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CONTENTS

ARTICLES AND NOTES

PATTERNS OF SETTLEMENT IN ICELAND: A STUDY IN PREHISTORY. Orri Vésteinsson 1

FEMALE EXPERIENCE AND AUTHORIAL INTENTION IN *LAXDŒLA SAGA*. Loren Auerbach 30

HISTORY OF THE TROLLS? *BARÐAR SAGA* AS AN HISTORICAL NARRATIVE. Ármann Jakobsson 53

ON THE OLD NORSE SYSTEM OF SPATIAL ORIENTATION. Tatjana N. Jackson 72

PROFESSOR JAMES E. CROSS 83

DAVID ANTHONY HOWELL EVANS 84

THE IRISH NICKNAME OF SITRIC CAOCH (D. 927) OF YORK. Andrew Breeze 86

FROM SAINT'S LIFE TO SAGA: THE FATAL WALK OF ALFRED ÆTHELING, SAINT AMPHIBALUS AND THE VIKING BRÓÐIR. John Frankis..... 121

THE LOCALISATION AND DATING OF MEDIEVAL ICELANDIC MANUSCRIPTS. Stefán Karlsson 138

RELIGIOUS IDEAS IN *SONATORREK*. Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 159

THE GATEWAY TO TRONDHEIM: TWO ICELANDERS AT AGDENES. Richard Perkins 179

CHRISTINE ELIZABETH FELL 214

Lotte Motz 217

Drengs and Thegns Again. Martin Syrett 243

Bleikir Akrar — Snares of the Devil? The Significance of the Pale Cornfields in *Alexanders saga*. David Ashurst 272

In Honour of St Óláfr: The Miracle Stories in Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga helga*. Carl Phelpstead 292

Gwyn Jones 307

Cursing the King: An Irish Conversation in *Jóns saga helga*. Rosemary Power 310

Fyr Kné Meyio: Notes on Childbirth in Medieval Iceland. Margaret Cormack 314

Barbarian Atrocities and Hagiographic Motifs: A Postscript to Some Recent Articles. Margaret Cormack 316

Kristni saga and its Sources: Some Revaluations. Siân Duke 345

Snorri Sturluson and the Creation of a Norse Cultural Ideology. Klaus von See 367

On Heiðr. John McKinnell 394

REVIEWS

The Book of Reykjahólar: The Last of the Great Medieval Legendaries. By Marianne E. Kalinke (Katrina Attwood) 88

Women in Old Norse Society and Old Norse Images of Women. By Jenny Jochens (Judith Jesch) 89

The Poetic Edda. Translated by Carolyne Larrington (Edward Pettit and John Porter) 92

Egils saga: Die Saga von Egil Skalla-Grimsson Translated by Kurt Schier (MarvinTaylor) 95

Isländische Antikensagas. Band I: Die Saga von den Trojanern, die Saga von den Britischen Königen, die Saga von Alexander dem Grossen. Translated by Stefanie Würth (Marvin Taylor) 98

Runes and Runic Inscriptions: Collected Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Viking Runes. By R. I. Page (Peter Orton) 99

Olaus Magnus: Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus, Romæ 1555; Description of the Northern Peoples, Rome 1555, Volume I. Translated by Peter Fisher and Humphrey Higgens (E. Christiansen) 108

Gruffudd ap Cynan: A Collaborative Biography. Edited by K. L. Maund (Stephen N. Tranter) 111

The World of the Vikings. CD-ROM for Windows (Katherine Holman) 113

The Poetic Edda, Volume 2: Mythological Poems. Edited by Ursula Dronke (Richard North) 219

Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda, Bd. 2: Götterlieder (Skírnismál, Hárbarðsljóð, Hymiskviða, Lokasenna, Þrymskviða). By Klaus von See, Beatrice La Farge, Eve Picard, Ilona Priebe and Katja Schulz (Peter Orton) 226

Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Representation in the Sagas of the Icelanders.By Vésteinn Ólason. Translated by Andrew Wawn (Martin Arnold) 229

Guðamjöður og arnarleir: Safn ritgerða um eddulist. Edited by Sverrir Tómasson (Andrew Wawn) 231

The Norn Language of Orkney and Shetland. By Michael P. Barnes (Glanville Price) 233

History of the Normans. By Dudo of St. Quentin. Translated with Introduction and Notes by Eric Christiansen (G. A. Loud) 234

English-Norwegian–Norwegian-English Dictionary of Archaeology. By Elizabeth S. Seeberg (Katherine Holman) 236

Iceland. Revised Edition. Compiled by Francis R. McBride (J. A. B. Townsend) 238

The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia. By Terry Gunnell (John McKinnell) 318

Maxims in Old English Poetry. By Paul Cavill (Peter Orton) 322

Selected Papers. By Bjarne Fidjestøl. Edited by Odd Einar Haugen and Else Mundal. Translated by Peter Foote (Katrina Attwood) 324

The Complete Sagas of Icelanders including 49 Tales. General editor, Viðar Hreinsson. Editorial team, Robert Cook, Terry Gunnell, Keneva Kunz, Bernard Scudder. Introduction by Robert Kellogg (Joseph Harris) 327

The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki. Translated by Jesse L. Byock (Desmond Slay) 329

The Icelandic Legend of Saint Dorothy. Edited by Kirsten Wolf (Katrina Attwood) 332

Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog. A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose. 1: a–bam. Edited by Helle Degnbol, Bent Chr. Jacobsen, Eva Rode, Christopher Sanders, Þorbjörg Helgadóttir (Jon Adams) 334

The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings. Edited by Peter Sawyer (Alison Finlay) 336

The Rewriting of Njáls saga: Translation, Ideology and Icelandic Sagas. By Jón Karl Helgason (Joe Allard) 338

Denmark. Compiled by LeeAnn Iovanni (John Horton) 340

The Language of the Ogam Inscriptions of Scotland: Contributions to the Study of Ogam, Runic and Roman Alphabet

Inscriptions in Scotland. By Richard A. V. Cox (Þórhallur Eyþórsson) 418

Recasting the Runes: The Reform of the Anglo-Saxon *Futhorc*. By David N. Parsons (Peter Orton) 420

An Introduction to English Runes. Second Edition. By R. I. Page (Peter Orton) 422

Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey. By James Graham-Campbell and Colleen E. Batey (Julian Richards) 425

The Emergence of Rus 750–1200. By Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard (Galina Glazyrina) 427

The Norwegian Invasion of England in 1066. By Kelly DeVries (Alison Finlay) 430

Morkinskinna: The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings. Translated with Introduction and Notes by Theodore M. Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade (Alison Finlay) 432

The Poetry of Arnórr jarlaskáld. An Edition and Study. By Diana Whaley (Guðrún Nordal) 436

Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets. Edited by Russell Poole (Heather O'Donoghue) 438

Sorg och elegi i eddans hjältediktning. By Daniel Sävborg (Joseph Harris) 440

The Sagas of Icelanders: A Selection. Preface by Jane Smiley. Introduction by Robert Kellogg. Edited by Örnólfur Thorsson. Assistant Editor Bernard Scudder (Tom Shippey) 446

Under the Cloak: A Pagan Ritual Turning Point in the Conversion of Iceland. By Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson (Siân Duke) 448

PATTERNS OF SETTLEMENT IN ICELAND: A STUDY IN PREHISTORY

By ORRI VÉSTEINSSON

FOR THE BETTER PART OF THIS CENTURY the settlement of Iceland, the *landnám*, has received surprisingly limited attention from scholars, considering its significance for our understanding of the Viking Age and Icelandic history.[1]

The reason for this is clear enough. When it began to be realised, by the middle of the century, that the Book of Settlements and the Sagas of Icelanders could not be used as accurate descriptions of persons and events in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, this period, which previously had been full of exciting history, was suddenly plunged into an impenetrable darkness.[2]

The retreat was sounded by Björn Þorsteinsson (1953) and Jón Jóhannesson (1956) who laid the foundations of the modern view of the history of medieval Iceland in the 1950s. Both attempted to build a general picture of developments based on Ari fróði's Book of Icelanders and to some extent on what each considered could plausibly be extracted from the Sagas. This left little more than an approximate date for the beginning of the *landnám* and an outline of constitutional developments garnished with the limited information provided by Ari on the early development of the Church in the eleventh century (*Íslenzk fornrit* I, 3–28). There was, as a result, too little meat left on the bones for there to be much opportunity for historical inquiry and for the past two generations of Icelandic historians the period before 1100 has been, to all intents and purposes, pre-historical, with a historical period beginning only with events described in the contemporary sagas of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It is also fair to say that the anthropological approach to the interpretation of the Sagas has only contributed to this inattention to the early period, allowing as it does for an atemporal view of the society of the Sagas, a society which belongs no

[1] This article is based on a paper given to the Viking Society in London, 7 March 1997, under the title 'New approaches to the Settlement of Iceland.'

[2] Melsteð 1903–30 is the last serious historical work making use of the Sagas as sources for actual events.

more to the tenth century than it does to the thirteenth (e. g. Sørensen 1977, 1993; Miller 1990).

It has therefore been left to a handful of archaeologists to worry about the settlement of Iceland, but while considerable work has been done in this field in the last fifty years, and we have now far more data to play with, it has not resulted in a significantly greater understanding of developments in Iceland in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries.[3] The reason for this is that until quite recently Icelandic archaeologists have, by and large, considered their task to be to retrieve objects and structures to illustrate studies of the texts and they have treated their results as capable of only very limited observations about the past (Eldjárn 1966, also Adolf Friðriksson 1994a, 1994b). In addition the principal issues that have occupied archaeologists, the dating of the *landnám* and the origins of the settlers, have not proved fruitful avenues of research in as much as nothing has turned up contradicting the long held view that Iceland was settled by Norsemen around and shortly after AD 870.

The dating of the landnám

Regarding the dating of the *landnám*, archaeological investigations continue to support Ari fróði's date of 871. In fact it now seems that his calculation was so accurate that it is almost uncanny. Traditionally, the evidence provided by archaeology has been based on artifact typology, in particular the typology of grave goods from pre-Christian burials. More than 300 such burials are now known in Iceland and a stylistic analysis of the grave-goods puts them squarely in the tenth century with only a handful of objects with a late ninth-century date and a single pair of brooches with an early or mid ninth-century date (Eldjárn 1956, 297–98, 394–96). While artifact typology cannot provide accurate dating for the *landnám* the sheer mass of this evidence makes all suggestions of an earlier *landnám* very implausible. Much stronger and more accurate evidence is provided by tephrochronology, the dating of geological and occupational deposits through the study of volcanic ash, or tephra. When volcanoes erupt they often emit large quantities of ash

[3] The exceptions come mainly from the natural sciences, where pollen analyses have produced a more detailed picture of the changes in vegetation following the *landnám* (Þorleifur Einarsson 1962; Margrét Hallsdóttir 1982, 1984, 1987; see also articles in Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1996) and analyses of fauna remains in early archaeological deposits have contributed to a better understanding of diet and farming practices (Amorosi 1989; McGovern *et al.* 1988).

which can be carried by winds over large areas. When the tephra sets, it forms a blanket which can be used as a chronological marker. The mapping of different tephra layers provides a relative chronology but when individual eruptions, or tephra layers associated with them, can be given a date, such layers become markers for absolute dates (Sigurður Þórarinsson 1944). For late medieval and modern times contemporary documentation provides accurate dates for many of the major tephra layers, but for the period before 1100 no such aids are available, and the dating of the tephra layers has to a large extent been dependent upon radiocarbon analyses. In the context of the settlement of Iceland, the dating of a tephra layer normally called the *Landnám*-tephra is of crucial importance. The *Landnám*-tephra is found all over Iceland except in the far West and Northwest and is commonly observed directly beneath the earliest indications of human habitation at early archaeological sites. A large number of radiocarbon analyses from early archaeological deposits associated with this tephra have given very early dates, back to the seventh and eighth centuries even.[4] Needless to say this has resulted in considerable confusion and speculation about the possibility of a much earlier settlement date than the traditional late ninth-century one. The majority of scholars have, however, remained sceptical of these radiocarbon results and several factors have been suggested which could cause a systematic error in radiocarbon dates from Iceland (Vilhjálmur Ö. Vilhjálmsson 1990; Páll Theodórsson 1993). While this remains to be proved, a much more reliable and accurate method for dating the *Landnám*-tephra has been developed. This comes from the study of ice-cores from the Greenland ice cap. An annual cycle of freezing and thawing leaves horizons in the ice-cap which can be counted in a similar way to tree-rings. Recently traces of the *Landnám*-tephra have been found in the ice-cap and this produces the date 871, with a margin of error of less than two years, for the deposition of the *Landnám*-tephra (Grönvold *et al.* 1995). There can as a result be no doubt any more regarding the date of the *Landnám*-tephra and any claim for human habitation in Iceland predating 871 must therefore be based on finding actual human deposits underneath this layer. Claims for traces of human activity beneath the *Landnám*-tephra have been made for at least three sites, all in southern Iceland. The

[4] Particularly from the early settlement sites in Reykjavík (Nordahl 1988, 32, 39, 55, 57, 62–63, 83, 113–14) and in Herjólfsdalur (Margrét Hermanns-Auðardóttir 1989, 45–54). See also Vilhjálmur Ö. Vilhjálmsson 1991.

claim for Reykjavík has recently been refuted in the light of further excavation in the long-house in question (Einarsson 1995) and the claims for Herjólfsdalur in the Westmann Islands off the south coast and for Bessastaðir just outside Reykjavík are as yet lacking proper documentation and cannot be verified. More significant is the by now substantial body of evidence for human occupation just above the *Landnám*-tephra, that is from soon after 871. At almost every medieval site which has been investigated, both coastal and inland, and in all parts of the country where the *Landnám*-tephra can be found, there are signs of building activity just above the layer. This strongly suggests that not only did the settlement of Iceland commence shortly after 871 but that the process was a rapid one with some sort of human occupation established in all inhabitable regions of the country by some point in the first half of the tenth century.

The origins of the settlers

Regarding the origins of the settlers, no traces of any Irish presence have been uncovered in the archaeological record, despite quite a considerable effort to locate them (Eldjárn 1989), and the whole 'Irish question' is still unanswered and likely to remain so (Gísli Sigurðsson 1988; Jakobsen 1988). While there can be no good reason to distrust the accounts of Dicuil and Ari fróði, in particular because the two can hardly be connected, the fact that no traces of hermits in the eighth and ninth centuries have been found suggests that their presence was very limited and sporadic, possibly only seasonal as described by Dicuil, and that it had no discernible impact on the Norse settlements. Celtic elements, most notable in place-names (Hermann Pálsson 1965), are quite reasonably ascribed to contacts between the Norse and the Celtic peoples of Ireland and Scotland made prior to the settlement of Iceland. Evidence for continued contacts is surprisingly rare, which suggests that while a significant proportion of the settlers of Iceland may have come via the British Isles, their descendants looked to Scandinavia and the wholly Scandinavian colonies, Orkney in particular, for trade and cultural and political contacts.

For quite some time it also seemed reasonable to pinpoint a specific region in Scandinavia as the place of origin of the Icelandic settlers. West and Southwest Norway has always been the favourite, but this is based more on the Book of Settlements than any sound archaeological evidence (Roussell 1943, 194; Hörður Ágústsson 1982, 255). Recently Northern Norway has also been named, but this also is not supported

by any archaeological evidence (Einarsson 1994, 17–39, 107–19, 139–40). In general it is safe to say that most scholars shy away from speculations concerning the precise origins of the settlers of Iceland.

How was Iceland settled?

It turns out then that what was known with reasonable certainty half a century ago is now known with more reasonable certainty, but the considerable work which has been put into obtaining these results has not turned up any new research questions or new aspects of the settlement process for further study. This is a big problem, not only because knowledge of early Icelandic society will continue to be incomplete as long as new subjects for research are not identified, but also because expensive excavations will fail to record vital information if the contexts in which this information may be meaningful are not known to the excavator. As long as this is allowed to happen it is not likely that new data will emerge which can significantly increase our understanding of the settlement and early society in Iceland.

Although the lack of raw data is the principal reason for the lack of interest in the *landnám*, it is not the only reason. There are data-sets available, the grave goods in particular, which can clearly be made to answer a series of important questions, but have not been subjected to analysis or discussion. It is therefore a lack of ideas, as much as lack of data, which has held back research into the *landnám.*

Instead of the question of when and where from, the aspect of the *landnám* most in need of study is how. While we can be fairly certain when Iceland was settled, we can only hope to understand where the settlers came from and, possibly more importantly, why they came, if we can appreciate how they went about colonising the country and what sort of society they built for themselves in the tenth century. Research into this aspect of the *landnám* also has the potential to increase our understanding and appreciation of the Sagas.

The following discussion represents a collection of observations made in preparation for a research project about land use and territorial division in medieval Iceland.[5] The sources used are on the one hand the landscape itself, the vegetation and indications about vegetation change, and on the other late medieval and early modern records relating to land use and patterns of land-ownership. The documentary evidence can at

[5] Institute of Archaeology, Iceland, Landnýting og landamerki á Íslandi á miðöldum.

best be stretched back to the twelfth century, but it only becomes abundant in the fourteenth. By studying patterns of land use and the division of the land into farming units in the fourteenth century the aim is to extrapolate backwards into the *landnám* period on the basis that these late medieval patterns must ultimately derive from choices made at the beginning of the *landnám.* In this context the reconstruction of boundaries between farms is vital because it is often the only way to understand the relationship between major and minor farms and to differentiate between primary and secondary settlements. Maps of farm-boundaries are not available for Iceland and the investigation has therefore been limited to areas where fieldwork has been carried out allowing modern boundaries to be compared with medieval ones. The regions used as examples here are Eyjafjörður in the north, a very densely populated region with good hay-fields and rich meadows but restricted access to summer grazing for sheep, and Borgarfjörður in the south-west, an area of more varied conditions, with farms ranging from huge lowland estates to small inland cottages. This is not an ideal choice, in particular because these regions have only limited access to the sea, and it is therefore not possible at this stage to relate these observations to those important parts of the country like the north-west and far east where the economy was based on marine resources as much as on animal husbandry.

The basic aim is to get an idea of social stratification by looking at differential access to resources and to identify issues in this context which can be debated fruitfully on the basis of archaeological and environmental data.

Where did people settle?

The first issue that needs to be discussed is the location of the first settlements. That is, in what sort of environment did the first settlers choose to place their farms and to what extent was this significant for later developments? The obvious place to start looking for answers to this question is in restraints imposed by the environment and by the economic practices of the settlers.

Ari fróði's claim that the whole country between the shore and the mountainsides was covered in woods when the first settlers arrived is well known ('Í þann tíð vas Ísland viði vaxit á miðli fjalls ok fjǫru', *Íslenzk fornrit* I, 5). It is also supported by pollen analyses which show that birch dominated the Icelandic vegetation prior to the *landnám* but declined rapidly in its aftermath. Birch will grow virtually anywhere

and it is believed that much of the country as high up as 400 metres above sea level was covered in birch forest at the time of the *landnám* (Margrét Hallsdóttir 1996; Þóra Ellen Þórhallsdóttir 1996). That is, all the inhabitable areas of the country were covered in wood when the first settlers arrived. The conditions least favourable for birch are very wet bogs and estuaries where flooding occurs periodically, and very sandy and gravelly soils such as are commonly found on beaches and at the outlets of smaller rivers. It is natural to expect that the first settlers sought out clearings of this sort to build their farms in. Not only were they thus spared having to clear the forest for the time being but it is questionable if forest clearance would have solved any of the problems facing the settlers in their first years. The forest was a resource in itself, both as pasture for sheep, cattle and pigs and as a source of firewood, charcoal and even construction timber. A more immediate problem than the need for open spaces will have been the need for winter fodder, for the cows in particular. Sheep, horses, pigs and calves can be grazed almost the whole year round in southern Iceland and need little extra fodder to help get them through the winter. Furthermore that fodder need not be of high quality; dried leaves from the forest would suffice. Cows on the other hand need to be kept indoors for a long period over the winter months and they need good quality fodder, especially if they are expected to produce milk. Dairy products were a central part of the Icelandic economy in the later Middle Ages and it is reasonable to expect that they had been so from the beginning. This is to some extent supported by the fact that very early sites like Herjólfsdalur in the Westmann Islands and Granastaðir in Eyjafjörður have produced a much higher number of cattle bones, relative to sheep bones, than later medieval sites (Amorosi and McGovern 1994). Large byres are also commonly found at early sites—examples are Herjólfsdalur, Hvítárholt and Papey—which indicates the importance attached to dairy products. In late medieval times and to the present day, hay as fodder for milch-cows has been produced on improved hay fields surrounding each farm. Little is known about the formation of these fields but the indications are that it must have been a slow process and that the early settlers would not have been able to prepare such fields and expect them to produce hay of markedly better quality than ordinary meadows for the first years of the *landnám*, possibly not even for the first generation. The only alternative to hay from improved fields, as fodder for milch-cows, is hay from meadows which are permanently or periodically submerged by water, usually in

spring flooding. Several species of grass and sedge, which are nutritious enough to keep cows alive and milking, thrive in such conditions. As wetlands of this sort are also the type of area least likely to be covered in woods, it is reasonable to assume that it was precisely in these conditions that the earliest farms were established. Flooded wetlands occur most commonly close to or on the coast in the estuaries of large rivers. Large rivers not only often provide excellent harbours, and we know that many of them were used as such in the Middle Ages, but they are also the easiest route along which to explore the country. Following this line of reasoning, we should expect to find the very earliest settlements in or near estuaries of large rivers and other early settlements in a string along the river as far inland as any wetland is associated with it (see Fig. 1, Land types in Borgarfjörður, opposite). The type of settlement this applies to is one which is likely to have become permanent and to have dominated later stages of the settlement process when it came to large-scale forest clearing and the occupation of less favourable land. Access to flooded wetlands was a valued resource in the late Middle Ages and a high proportion of the major estates based their economy partly on flooded meadows. It is quite reasonable to assume that many of these major estates owed their extensive landholdings and access to diverse and valuable resources to the fact that they were the first settlements in their respective areas. This is supported to some degree by the place-name evidence. It has long since been pointed out that among the largest farms in the country, farms which had churches on them and came to be centres of parishes, names describing natural features are much more common than among less important farms, and conversely that the place-name ending *-staðir*, the most common in Iceland, is relatively rare for the major estates (Olsen 1926, 63–76; Vigfús Guðmundsson 1926; also Þórhallur Vilmundarson 1971; Svavar Sigmundsson 1992, 133–37). While the majority of the place-names describing natural features, names like Hólar (Hills), Höfði (Headland), Nes (Peninsula), add little to our knowledge of the environment at the time of the *landnám*, a fair number refer to the vegetation. Among these, there are many that refer to wetlands, and names like Saurbær, Keldur, Mýri, Seyla and Fitjar are common on major church farms. As a group of names on major estates they are rivalled only by names indicating dry grassland, like Vellir, Grund and possibly Eyri. This latter group of names may point to clearings in the woodlands that were already there when the first settlers arrived, but this is much more difficult to verify than the existence of the woodless wetlands. In many

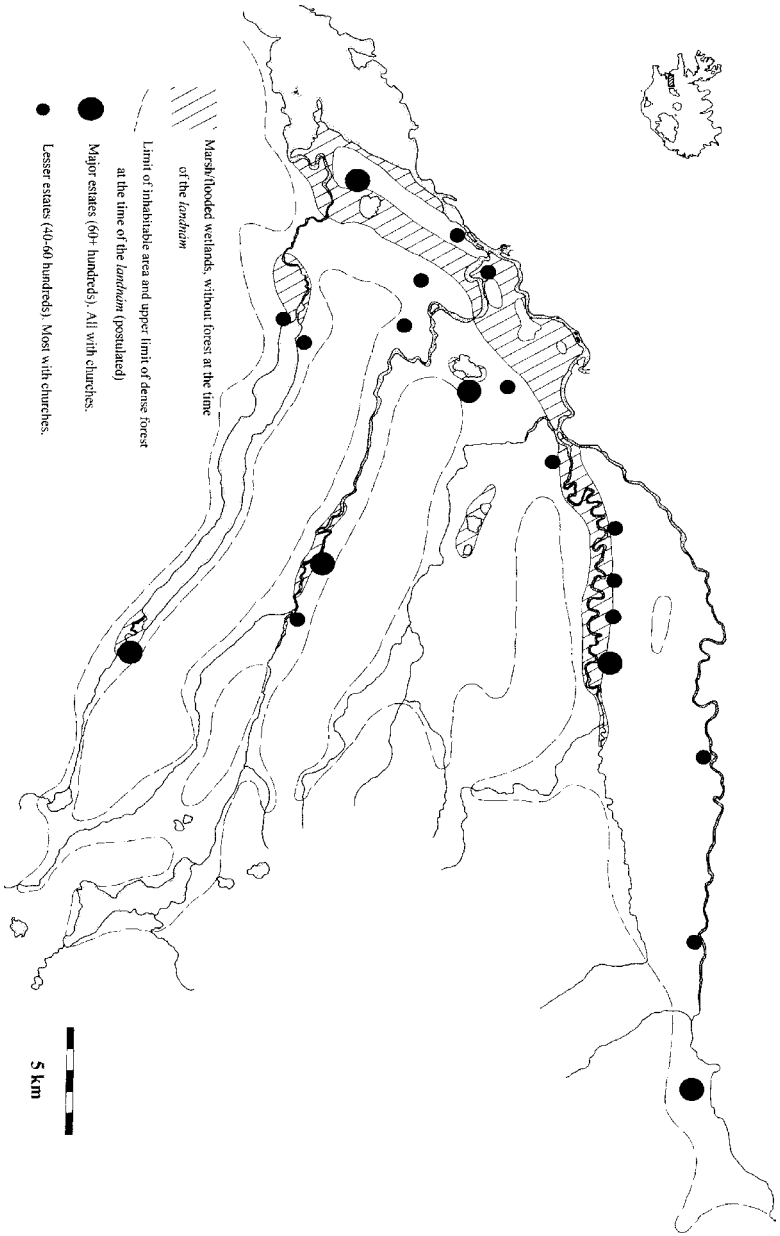

Fig. 1. Land types in Borgarfjörður. The map showes five districts (*hreppar*) south of the river Hvítá. Source: Orri Vésteinsson 1996b.

cases it can be shown, however, that farms with such names are situated close to flooded wetlands, where the dry grassland may have formed a belt between the wetlands and the woods. Such conditions would presumably have been ideal for building a farm and may be the reason behind the later importance of major estates like Grund in Eyjafjörður, Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur and Vellir in Svarfaðardalur.

It is perfectly possible that there were in the early stages of the settlement process different kinds of settlements which would have relied primarily on hunting, subsidised with light animal husbandry. There are places in Iceland where small populations could be sustained by hunting and fishing the whole year round. These are primarily islands off the coast like the Westmann Islands and the numerous islands in Breiðafjörður, where there is ready access to a variety of marine resources both in winter and summer. The large and well built byres at Herjólfsdalur in the Westmann Islands speak, however, against such a suggestion, and indicate that even where it was possible to rely on hunting as the main source of nutrition people chose to base their livelihood primarily on animal husbandry. It is possible that the first settlers began seeking out areas where animal husbandry could easily be subsidised by hunting and fishing, that they settled first on the coast and on off-shore islands and that when people began to search for places to settle inland they sought out rivers and lakes where fish could be caught throughout the winter. This could explain the very early settlement at Hofstaðir near Mývatn, which was occupied in a matter of years after the *Landnám*-tephra was deposited (Adolf Friðriksson and Orri Vésteinsson 1995). While the Mývatn area is far from ideal cattle country, it has good sheep grazing all year round, uniquely for its altitude and the north of Iceland in general, and the lake is rich in trout and bird-life. A midden currently under excavation at Hofstaðir has turned up all the normal domesticated mammals, sheep, cattle, horse and pig, but also large quantities of trout, bird bones and egg-shell fragments (McGovern *et al.* 1996) . This is suggestive of an economy based on animal husbandry but heavily subsidised by the local wildlife. Interestingly, bones from salt-water fish have also been recovered from this midden, and this is also the case with another early inland site in the north, Granastaðir in Eyjafjörður. This reminds us that people were capable of acquiring resources over very long distances, as Hofstaðir is more than 40 kilometres inland and Granastaðir little less, and this may also suggest that the inhabitants of these farms had a preference for marine foods, possibly because they originally came from a marine environment.

It will probably always be difficult to provide archaeological evidence for the different ages of the earliest settlements. It is notoriously difficult to estimate the time elapsed between the deposition of the *Landnám*-tephra and the first signs of building activity at a site. It is a greater problem, however, that the majority of early settlement sites which have been investigated are unsuccessful ones, that is, sites that were abandoned within decades of the original occupation. This is of course not surprising; one would expect a period of trial and error at the very beginning of the colonisation of an uninhabited country. An example of this is the site of Grelutóttir in Arnarfjörður in the north-west (see Fig. 2, Plan of Grelutóttir, below). The small long-house on this site was situated close to the beach by the outlet of a stream. It is likely that when the builders of this house settled here this shore-line was the only area not covered in birch forest. They therefore built their first dwelling near the beach but one or two generations later they moved it, presumably to the site of the farm Eyri which later became an important church-farm. The relocation of the farm was probably occasioned

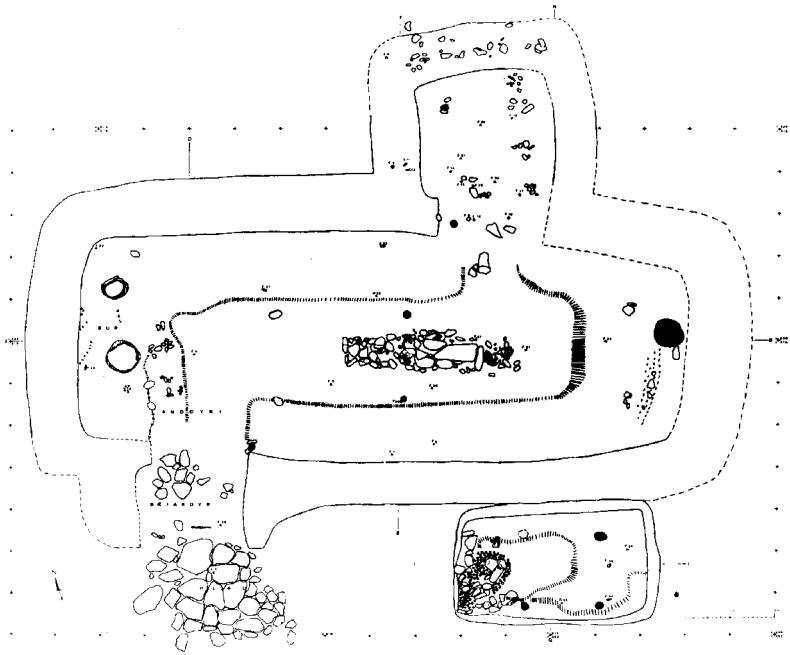

Fig. 2. Plan of Grelutóttir in Arnarfjörður. A tenth-century farmhouse with an adjacent pit-house (bottom of picture). Source: Guðmundur Ólafsson 1980, 32–33.

by the effects of forest clearance. The clearing of the forest made better farmland available higher up on the slopes, but it may also have caused instability in the soils in the overhanging mountainside, resulting in floods in the stream by which the original farm had been built; the site was covered with rubble from such floods (Guðmundur Ólafsson 1980). Such relocations of farms over short distances seem to have been common (several traditions to this effect are recorded in the Book of Settlements) but they will not have greatly altered the resource strategies or the land claims of the farmers in question.

The social organisation of the settlers

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the composition of the groups of people that came to settle in Iceland. It has always been assumed that each settlement consisted of a single family with relatives, servants and slaves and opinions have differed only as to the number and significance of the slaves. The Book of Settlements and the Sagas of Icelanders seem always to envisage that even if people sailed to Iceland in large groups of several families, each family would then establish its own farmstead with little or no economic or political links with the others. This of course is entirely in accordance with the general view of medieval Icelandic society that it consisted of isolated farmsteads controlled by independent farmers. It can, however, be reasonably suggested that this is an erroneous view and that the basis for it goes no further back than the nineteenth century when Icelandic farmers saw themselves exactly so, isolated and independent, and that the sagas can be read very differently. That would, however, require a discussion of the sagas which will not be attempted here. Instead it must suffice here to analyse the archaeological evidence, and this suggests that the earliest settlers sailed to Iceland in large groups of more than one family and that initially at least they stayed together. This is suggested most clearly by the site of Herjólfsdalur in the Westmann Islands off the south coast of Iceland (see Fig 3, Plan of Herjólfsdalur, opposite). It is one of the most complete early settlement sites excavated to date. This site has two long-houses with long-fires and raised benches along the sides, each accompanied by a byre with room for more than ten cows in each. In addition there are two smaller houses which were interpreted by the excavator as human dwellings on account of the cooking pits found in both, but it is of course not possible to see if these houses were occupied by different people from the inhabitants of the long-houses or if they had some specialised

Fig. 3. Plan of Herjólfsdalur in the Westmann Islands, off the south coast of Iceland. II and V are the long-houses (upper right-hand corner and lower left-hand corner respectively), each with an associated byre (VIII and IV). In one of the byres (VIII) there is a cooking pit indicating that it may also have been used for human habitation. Houses I and III have cooking pits and may have been used for habitation in addition to the long-houses. Source: Margrét-Hermanns-Auðardóttir 1989.

function, for instance in food preparation and storage. Furthermore, the inner half of one of the byres showed signs of human habitation (Margrét Hermanns-Auðardóttir 1989, 108–11). This is by no means the only early settlement site with more than one long-house. At Hvítárholt in Árnesþing three large long-houses were excavated along with five small pit-houses (Þór Magnússon 1973; see Fig 4, Plan of Hvítárholt, opposite, top). In Reykjavík the urban excavation found traces of two small long-houses side by side and a third larger one which was considered to be more recent (Nordahl 1988). At Bessastaðir south-west of Reykjavík an ongoing excavation has so far uncovered the remains of two long-houses (Sigurður Bergsteinsson, personal communication). At Goðatættur in Papey off the east coast a long-house with an accompanying byre with a habitation area was uncovered, remarkably similar to the set-up in Herjólfsdalur (Eldjárn 1989, 128–57). At Granastaðir there is an unexcavated house besides the one uncovered (see Fig 5, Plan of Granastaðir, opposite, bottom). A test trench led the excavator to suggest that this house was a byre, but judging from the section he has produced it could just as well be a long-house. At Granastaðir there is also a large pit-house which was clearly inhabited by humans (Einarsson 1994, 75–79, 92–94). In fact there is only a single early settlement site, that of Grelutóttir in Arnarfjörður discussed on pp. 11–12 above, that seems to consist of only a single long-house, though that house was in fact accompanied by two small pit-houses. All other early settlement sites have been investigated too incompletely for it to be safe to assume anything about the number of buildings at each site.

Excavations of late-medieval sites always turn up a single long-house, usually with adjacent rooms, suggesting a single household, presumably a nuclear family with relatives and servants. This and the ideas mentioned earlier on isolation and independence have led all the excavators of the early settlement sites with more than one long-house to suggest that the long-houses were not occupied contemporaneously, but that when one building was abandoned or fell into ruin another was built beside it. There is, however, nothing to suggest this in the stratigraphy of any of these sites and this is not the way in which people rebuilt their houses in later centuries. Excavations of Icelandic farm-mounds have shown that people normally rebuilt their houses on top of the earlier ones, often preserving both the shape and size of the earlier building. In fact, complete rebuilding was very rare; houses were repaired and rebuilt piecemeal for centuries on end, ensuring that the farmhouses occupied the same limited patch while accumulating into high mounds

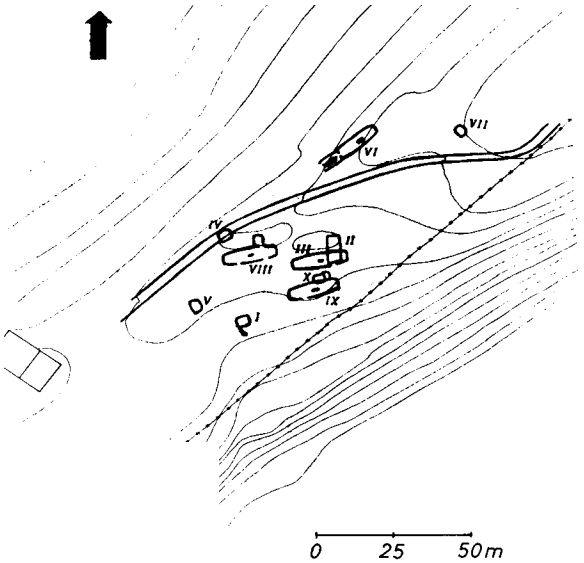

Fig. 4. Plan of Hvítárholt in Árnessýsla, S-Iceland. Nos III, VI, VIII and IX are long-houses, II is thought to have been a barn and the smaller buildings are pit-houses. Source: Þór Magnússon 1973, 11.

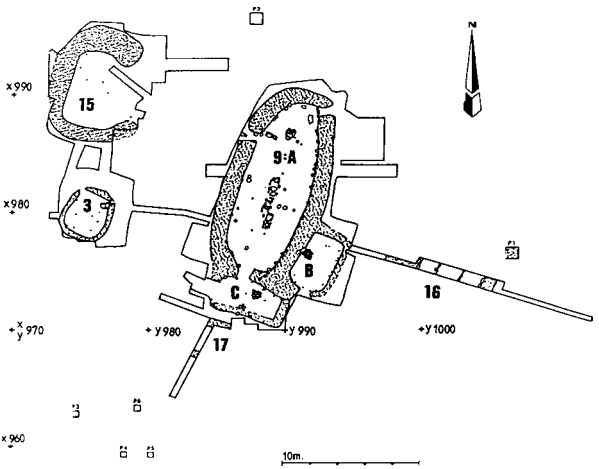

Fig. 5. Plan of Granastaðir in Eyjafjörður, N-Iceland. No. 3 is a pit-house which is believed to have been a dwelling, 9 is the long-house and 16 is a partially excavated building which the excavator suggested was a byre but which may equally plausibly be suggested to be a second long-house. Source: Einarsson 1994, 75.

of discarded building material and refuse (Mjöll Snæsdóttir 1991).[6] It is difficult to see why this pattern should not have been followed in the settlement period, especially as farm mounds are well known in both Norway and Orkney from the period prior to the Icelandic *landnám* as well as in later times (Bertelsen and Urbanczyk 1989). In the absence of any stratigraphic proof to the contrary, therefore, it is much more reasonable to believe that these early sites were occupied by more than one household at the same time.[7]

It is easy to see why this might have been preferable at the initial stages of the *landnám.* The first years in a new and unknown country will have been difficult for any group and there must have been obvious advantages in co-operating in the reconnaissance and initial clearing of the country. We may in this context be reminded of the three long-houses at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, a pioneer site if ever there was one. The abandonment of sites like Herjólfsdalur and Hvítárholt might suggest that once this initial stage of settlement was over, the ways of individual households parted and each household chose a new site some distance from the others. In these cases the original site was then abandoned completely, while at sites like Bessastaðir and Reykjavík a single household remained on the original site while others presumably moved away. This sort of scenario would be based on the presupposition that people either preferred to live in single households and abhorred the company of others or that the economy somehow dictated that the same site could not in the long run sustain more than a single household. This line of reasoning could prove treacherous, especially when it is considered that in late medieval and early modern times it was quite common for more than one household to share the same site and the same home field. In some cases these were independent households forming small hamlets, a pattern especially common in the coastal areas of the southern plains. Much more frequently, groups of households were made up of a single independent household, normally of high status, and a number of dependent and usually much smaller households on the same site or close by. Such groups of households often made up the core of the late medieval estates and suggest that it was advantageous for the running of large farming units to have more than one household working together. From looking at the two long-

[6] Compare also the farm mound at Bergþórshvoll where deposits are found all the way back to the tenth century (Eldjárn and Gísli Gestsson 1952).

[7] I am indebted to Mjöll Snæsdóttir for this interpretation of the early sites.

houses at Herjólfsdalur it is not apparent that one household was of higher status than the other; the slightly smaller long-house has for instance a much larger byre attached to it. Much the same picture emerges at Hvítárholt; no one long-house is significantly larger than the others. In these two cases it seems therefore that the households occupying the sites were of equal status.

The proximity of households at these early sites must surely imply economic co-operation, and if we also accept that the earliest and most successful settlements were those in the wetland regions, those which later appear as great estates with multiple households, it becomes reasonable to suggest that the people who sailed to Iceland settled together in groups of two or more households and that this pattern formed the basis for the Icelandic economy for centuries to come.

Estates and church lands

There is relatively abundant documentation on the great estates from late medieval times, as each normally had a church with a priest on it and the churches often owned parts of the estates. This property was listed in charters drawn up for each church and these give a comprehensive overview of the distribution of church lands among the great estates by the beginning of the fourteenth century. The indications are, however, that most of the major churches were endowed with most of their landed property back in the twelfth century (Orri Vésteinsson 1996a, 145–46, 151–73).

Churches could own land in several different ways, but those that concern us here are four (see Fig. 6, Churches and church lands in Borgarfjörður, overleaf). Firstly, a church could own a cottage on the estate where it was situated. Such cottages did not normally have defined boundaries and only a fixed proportion of the home field, meadows and pasture of the estate belonged to them. An example of this is the church at Hvanneyri which owned a single cottage situated in the home field of the main farm (*DI* I, 592). Secondly, a church could own one or more outlying properties, that is, cottages or small farms which were considered a part of the whole but were situated on the periphery of the farmland. An example of this is the church at Bær, which in the late twelfth century was endowed with three cottages, called 'útlönd', around the farmland proper (*Biskupa sögur* I, 284–87; *DI* V, 401–02). In this case the evidence gives an indication of the extent of the lands originally belonging to the estate. Thirdly, a church could own a fixed proportion of the whole estate, usually a third or a

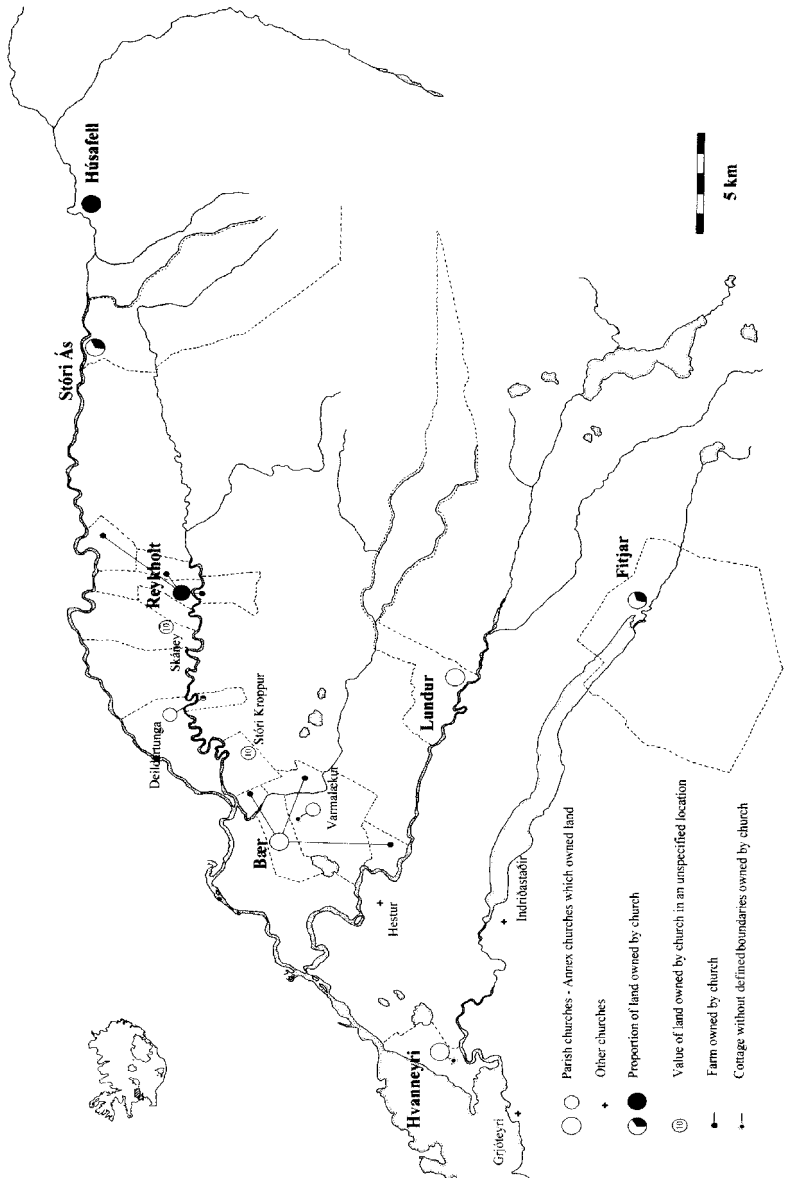

Fig. 6. Churches and church lands in Borgarfjörður. The map showes five districts (*hreppar*) south of the river Hvítá. Source: Orri Vésteinsson 1996b.

half. The charters often list all the farms and cottages which belonged to the church in this way and this can give an idea of the extent of the original estate. An example of this is the church at Fitjar which owned a third of the land it was situated on. It is clear from the charters that this included the farm Vatnshorn which *Laxdæla saga* would have us believe was the core holding of the estate (*DI* III, 124; IV, 119; *Íslenzk fornrit* V, 184). Fourthly, a church could own the whole estate. An example of this is Reykholt which already by the late twelfth century owned not only the land of Reykholt itself but also a number of smaller farms immediately adjacent to it (*DI* I, 279–80, 350–51). The boundaries of these suggest that this compact chunk of land formed the original estate.

If we compare this information with the boundary map, a distinct pattern emerges. Firstly, the estates themselves always occupy the best land in their respective areas and they also have the widest range of access to different resources. They tend to have direct access to upland pastures and if not, then they own defined pieces of uplands for summer grazing. They also tend to own forests and fishing rights and have more than one shieling. These holdings are not always concentrated in one area and the manpower needed to make use of the scattered holdings must have been considerable, a fact often commented upon by early modern priests who did not have the resources to make use of all the property belonging to their churches (e. g. *Jarðabók Árna Magnússonar og Páls Vídalíns* IV, 231). Secondly, the estates tend to be made up of two or three different types of holding: there is the main farm itself (it might even be called the manor), and there is a small and often fluctuating number of cottages in or around the home field of the manor. These did not have defined boundaries and sometimes not even defined areas of activity. Their inhabitants were economically and politically dependent on the estate owner and it is likely that the cottagers could easily have been called upon when the estate needed extra manpower and that this was their main usefulness to the owner. Thirdly, we often find a number of quite small but independent holdings on the periphery of estates. Holdings of this type were only independent in the sense that they could be bought and sold irrespective of the ownership of the estate. Their often quite limited access to resources and the poor quality of the land ensured that their farmers were both politically and economically dependent on the landowners and/or their powerful neighbours. It is possible that these peripheral holdings were originally shielings or some form of out-stations from the main farm which later developed

into independent farming units and may therefore represent a relatively late stage in the settlement process.

Immediately surrounding the large estates it is common to find medium sized or large single farms with a respectable access to resources (see Fig. 7, Andakíll and Bæjarsveit, below). This type of holding tends to occupy good quality land in regard to hay-making and pasture but may lack access to important resources like fish or peat or fire-wood. It is reasonable to suggest that this sort of holding represents latecomers among the settlers arriving from abroad. Possibly they were able to seize good quality land in between the already large estates because the estate farmers could not make any reasonable claim to such lands on account of a lack of manpower.

A secondary phase of settlement

The large estates occupy a significant, but nevertheless small, part of the inhabitable area of Iceland. The rest of this area is dominated by coastal and valley environments where farms are by and large medium or small in size and have all more or less similar access to resources. This is the sort of landscape which was covered in thick forest when the first settlers arrived and was initially not as ideally suited for settlement

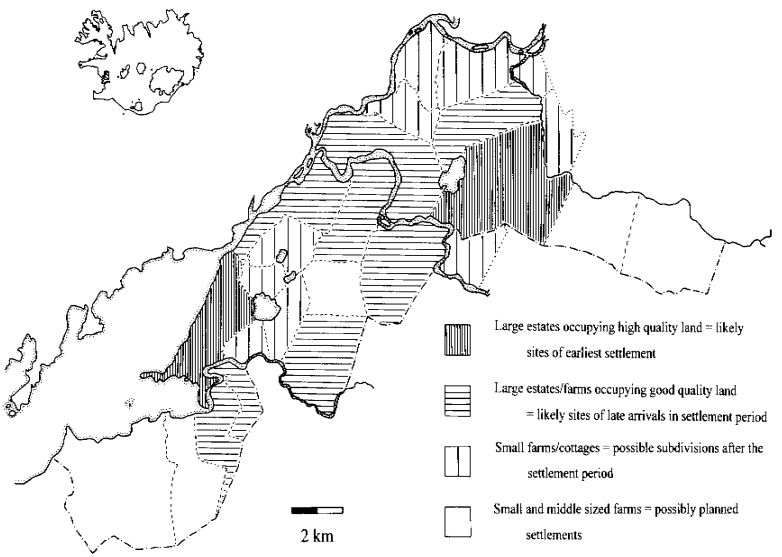

Fig. 7. Andakíll and Bæjarsveit in Borgarfjörður (part of larger area shown in Figures 1 and 6). Source: Orri Vésteinsson 1996b.

as the wetland areas. It is striking that in both Borgarfjörður and Eyjafjörður there is a large number of farms in areas of this kind which are almost exactly identical in size and shape and all have somewhat limited access to resources. In both regions farms of this type tend not to have enough land attached to them to have a shieling and many also lack access to peat or fire-wood (see Fig 8, Planned settlements in the parish of Hrafnagil in Eyjafjörður, overleaf). It is unlikely that any farmer would have occupied the land in this way if he had had a choice in the matter, and this pattern of landholding must surely suggest planned settlements. This is probably what one of the authors of the Book of Settlements had in mind when he said of the settler Blund-Ketill that he was a very wealthy man and that he had forests cleared in many places and established farms in the clearings ('Blund-Ketill var maðr stórauðigr; hann lét ryðja víða í skógum ok byggja', *Íslenzk fornrit* I, 84). This presupposes that Blund-Ketill had previously laid claim to the forests he later had cleared and also that this was something befitting a great and wealthy man. Huge land-claims were well known to thirteenth-century scholars and whatever the truth behind individual stories of such claims it is inherently likely that the owners of great estates somehow tried to control the settlement of those neighbouring lands which they could not make use of. It was for them a natural precaution to keep these settlements small; nobody likes a rival in his back garden, but a large number of politically, as well as probably economically, dependent smallholders can always come in handy. This must be the reason behind the general pattern of Icelandic settlement which has the largest units, in terms of land, people and yields, in the most productive areas and the smallest units on lands least favourable for agriculture.

It seems, then, that there were two distinct phases in the settlement of Iceland. First was the establishment of great estates mainly in wetland areas, and this was followed by a planned settlement of less accessible areas. But how can we date these processes? One way might be to look at the distribution of cemeteries in the later Middle Ages. Iceland's ecclesiastical landscape was unusual in that chapels and minor churches were found at every second to third farm in the country and all of them seem to have had cemeteries attached to them. A chapel cemetery was normally only used for the household of the farm where the chapel was situated and this seems to have been the main function of these buildings. The simplest explanation for the high number of chapels and lesser churches in Iceland is that they were the successors to the pre-

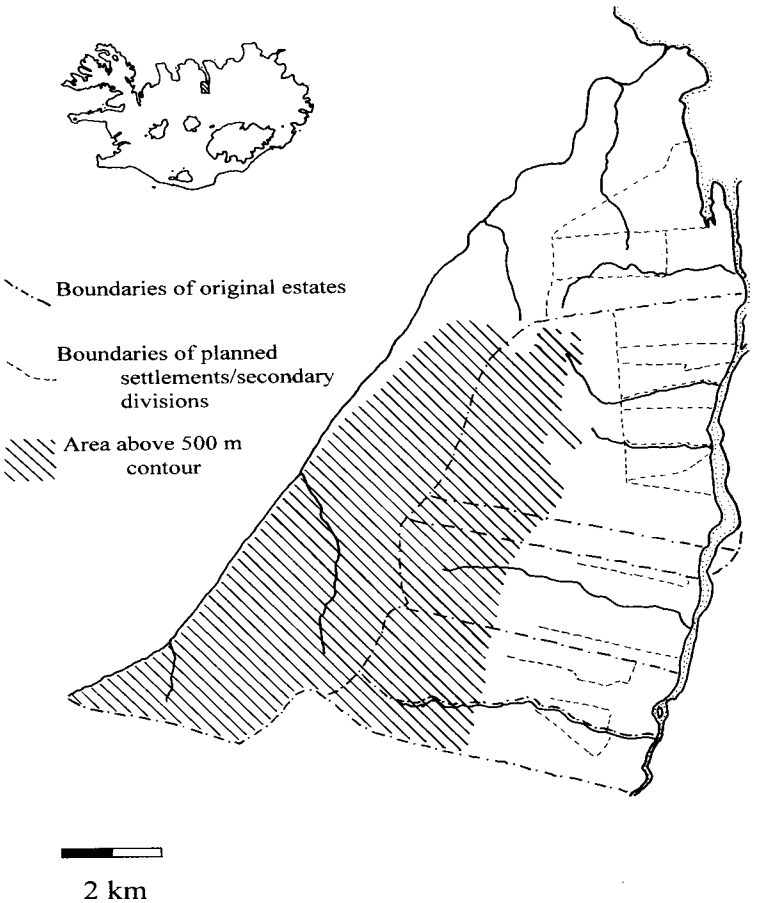

Fig. 8. Planned settlements in the parish of Hrafnagil in Eyjafjörður, N-Iceland. Source: Adolf Friðriksson and Orri Vésteinsson 1994, 1996a, 1996b.

Christian grave-fields which were normally situated just outside the home field of each farm. It seems that following the conversion in the year 1000 Christian cemeteries were established in different locations from the pre-Christian grave-fields, but on the same principles, that is, outside the home field and one for each farm. It follows from this that farms which have cemeteries or chapels associated with them are likely to have been established before the conversion, whereas farms without such a feature were probably only established after that event. This hypothesis still needs to be tested, but as a rule of thumb it seems to be useful. If it is applied to the smaller holdings which have been ascribed here to the second phase of settlement it emerges that this had only just got under way by the year 1000. Some of the larger farms in these less favourable areas had chapels, but the majority of such farms did not. This is in sharp contrast to concentrations of farms with much greater access to resources as for instance the cluster of church and chapels at Lundur, Gullberastaðir and Oddastaðir in Lundarreykjadalur. These three farms form a cluster and to them belong most of the highland pastures available to the inhabitants of the valley (see Fig. 9, Lundarreykjadalur, overleaf). The other farms in the valley are all much smaller and only two out of nineteen had chapels associated with them. The conclusion that the second phase of settlement was only partly under way by the year 1000 may be qualified by the likelihood that grave-fields were only established for independent farms and that outstations of different kinds could have a permanent settlement with all corpses brought back to the estate grave-field. This means that many of these settlements may have been long established by the year 1000 but that they were still being considered a part of some other farming unit, most likely a wetland estate. The majority of them must have got their independence in the eleventh century because by the end of that century the number of farmers paying assembly tax had reached the figure it would stay at for much of the Middle Ages and early modern times (*Íslenzk fornrit* I, 23; *DI* IV, 9–10).

Highland settlement

There is an aspect of the settlement which has intrigued many and needs to be discussed. This is the statement in the Book of Settlements that some of the settlers preferred to live high in the mountains because of the abundant pasture available there for sheep ('Sumir þeir, er fyrstir kómu út, byggðu næstir fjǫllum ok merkðu at því landskostina, at kvikféit fýstisk frá sjónum til fjallanna', *Íslenzk fornrit* I, 337). To many this

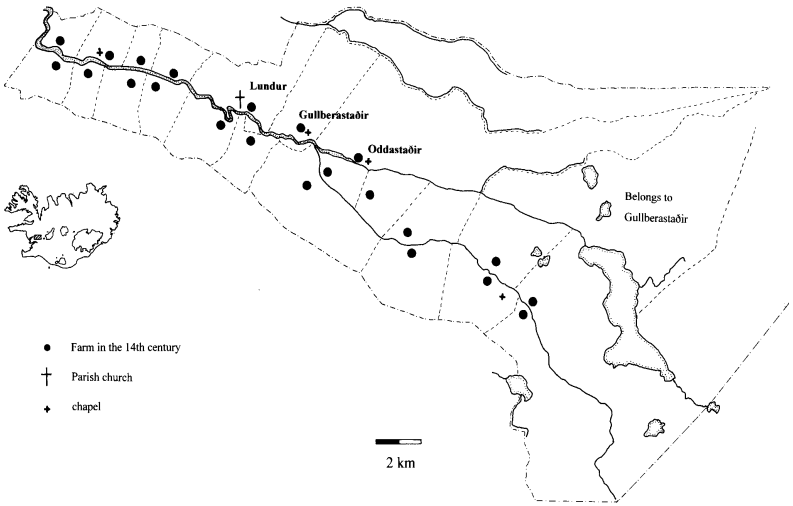

Fig. 9. Lundarreykjadalur in Borgarfjörður (part of larger area shown in Figures 1 and 6). Source: Orri Vésteinsson 1996b.

statement has seemed validated by the high number of early sites high up in the mountains, many of them further inland than any modern settlement has ever reached. In actual fact secure tenth-century dates can be found for only a handful of these sites and for the majority of them it is impossible to ascertain whether they were shielings or independent farms (Brynjúlfur Jónsson 1885; Bruun 1898; Eldjárn 1949; Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 1990; Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir 1992). In fact, only three sites are known from such highland areas which can with certainty be identified as tenth-century farms. Two of these are in Þórsmörk[8] and one in Bárðardalur.[9] Both these areas have been the scene of heavy erosion since medieval times and this has changed the landscape beyond recognition as well as revealing these early sites. It seems inherently unlikely that people would have preferred to become snowbound over winter with their sheep and nothing else to eat when there was still land available at lower altitudes. It is on the other hand

[8] Steinfinnsstaðir, dated by association with a pre-Christian burial, and Þuríðarstaðir efri, dated by artifact typology to the ninth/tenth to eleventh/twelfth centuries (Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir 1992, 41–46).

[9] Undir Sandmúla, dated by artifact typology, in particular a large silver hoard (Matthías Þórðarson 1910; Erkes 1911).

quite likely that the large estates would from an early stage establish shielings from which the upland pastures could be made use of. At some later stages in the settlement process independent cottages may have been set up in these areas but it seems that as soon as the forest had been cleared from the lowlands, these marginal areas became valued for their forest resources, both as pasture for pigs and cattle and more importantly as a source of charcoal. These marginal areas were by and large owned by the great estates and the rich churches associated with them and in some cases it can be shown that such property rights were quite ancient. An example is Geitland, which belonged to the church at Reykholt and was clearly associated with the farm in the *landnám* myth of the Reykhyltingar family.[10] As soon as forests became a valuable asset it is likely that the estate owners removed the cottagers from such marginal areas in order to preserve the woodlands and use them more efficiently.

Long after 1000 there were still pockets here and there which seem not to have been cleared and which were used by neighbouring farms as well as faraway estates for pasture and charcoal making. These are invariably the very worst areas for agriculture, with poor soils where erosion has invariably set in when the forest finally disappeared. In Borgarfjörður there are two areas of this kind. In Skorradalur a large number of estates and churches owned rights to pasture and woodcutting; here the last stage of the *landnám* was only accomplished in the sixteenth century with the establishment of four new farms, Grund, Grafardalur, Ytri Svangi and Eystri Svangi (*Jarðabók Árna Magnússonar og Páls Vídalíns* III, 160–61, 170). In Hálsasveit inland from Reykholt there seems to have been a swathe of forest separating the parishes of Reykholt and Gilsbakki on the other side of Hvítá; by the thirteenth century a large number of very small cottages had been established in this forest that seem to have specialised in ironworking (Smith 1995, 334–36), but they had disappeared along with the forest by the late fourteenth century.

[10] According to this the son of Grímr, who had settled at Hvanneyri in the wetlands at the mouth of Hvítá, was Úlfr, who took land in Geitland, and amongst his descendants was Þórðr Sǫlvason the ancestor of the Reykhyltingar (*Íslenzk fornrit* I, 77–79). The family's ancestry is, however, reckoned differently in *Melabók*, an incomplete version of *Landnámabók* which contains much material directly from the early thirteenth century *Styrmisbók* (*Íslenzk fornrit* I, 78 n. 1).

Conclusions

It has been suggested here that the very first settlers preferred to locate their farms in areas of flooded wetlands; that such settlements were inhabited by large numbers of people and quickly formed into large estates with a wide and varied economic base. Latecomers had to make do with slices of land in between these large estates. When all the really good and easily occupied land had been seized, a second phase was entered wherein land of lesser quality was chopped up into small units and sold or rented out to new arrivals or second-generation Icelanders. While the initial phase seems to have taken only a few decades the second phase may have stretched into the eleventh century.

The sheer size of the original estates and the number of households they sustained in later centuries suggests that they were from the beginning worked by large groups of people. How these groups of people were organised can only be guessed at. The long houses at Herjólfsdalur and Hvítárholt would suggest that there could be several households of equal standing whereas the later medieval pattern suggests that the situation was somewhat more unequal. It is possible that at such sites there were many households of different status, for instance one main household with a large number of servants and slaves and a number of smaller and dependent households. But it is just as plausible that they consisted of a single household with many families of different status, or a single household with a very large number of slaves. What can be maintained is that the successful wetland settlements which later appear as great estates were from the beginning worked by a large number of people, at least enough to fill two or more long-houses and probably always consisting of several families. The principal reason why a large number of people were required on each estate seems to have been the perceived need to maximise the utilisation of the greatest variety of resources. This probably far exceeded the bare minimum needed to survive, especially after the initial phase of settlement, and may suggest an economy geared towards equipping a chosen few with the means to eat, drink and show off.

If these suggestions are taken seriously, and should they be proved not far wrong by future research, it will have a serious effect on our understanding of medieval Icelandic society. Instead of being a land of isolated and independent farmers of equal status, it becomes a land of several hundred powerful farmers each in control of a considerable number of people on his own estate and having political authority over up to three thousand lesser farmers and cottagers bound to the estate

farmers by ties of ownership, and by the twelfth century also through church attendance and the payment of tithes.

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FEMALE EXPERIENCE AND AUTHORIAL INTENTION IN *LAXDŒLA SAGA*

By LOREN AUERBACH

MUCH HAS BEEN MADE of *Laxdœla saga* being the story of two men. These, of course, are Kjartan and Bolli: such promising young men who are ultimately led by circumstances beyond their control to tragedy and death (see, for example, Andersson 1967, 171–73). One of these circumstances, taking up a major part of the narrative, is the age-old motif of the love triangle, with the third element provided by Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir. I believe, however, that to see the saga this way is to miss the essential point, to miss what the author is really trying to communicate.

Laxdœla saga is not the story of two men, but of one woman. It could easily be called Guðrún's saga. The tragedy of *Laxdœla saga* is what happens to Guðrún: the strong, intelligent and potent woman who is forced into a submissive, 'female' role—an action which unleashes bitterness, anguish, evil and destruction.

In my view, the focal point of the saga is the scene in Chapter 40 where Kjartan tells Guðrún that he is going abroad and she asks him to take her with him. At this moment she is expressing directly to him that she is his equal and as capable as he; and indeed, the text up to this point has been at great pains to establish this equality. Kjartan's answer, however, is not only a flat refusal, but that she must stay behind to look after her father and brothers. In this instant he rejects the fact that she is equal to him in promise and ability, and pushes her back into a subservient 'female' role. It is from this moment that all the tragedy, all the death and destruction, in the saga unfolds. If Kjartan had accepted her as being of equal potential and capabilities and she had gone abroad with him none of it would have happened.

When this is seen as the fulcrum of the saga suddenly light is thrown on many other incidents. For instance there is the long and detailed narrative at the beginning of the saga concerning Unnr Ketilsdóttir. The story of Unnr and her organisation of her descendants demonstrates clearly how a woman can be influential, intelligent, respected and perfectly capable of fulfilling a 'male' role. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson suggest that the 'intense bearing on what follows' of

the early action of the saga is because 'the great diversity of characters and incidents in the early stages are all designed to show how the wealth and property inherited by Gudrun's lover, Kjartan Olafsson, were amassed by his ancestors' (*Laxdæla saga* 1969, 10). The use of 'all' implies that they consider this explication of Kjartan's ancestry to be the sole purpose for which the early portion of the saga is intended (as others do; see, for example, Andersson 1967, 172). I would contend that although this purpose is achieved, the nature of the way the story of Unnr is told—its emphasis, position in the saga and length—shows that it is there as an exemplum to be referred back to for the rest of the saga. Unnr's capabilities and intelligence are stressed at all times, together with her ability to handle herself with distinction when travelling abroad, even in the most trying circumstances. She takes on great responsibility and is shown to be more than equal to the task. Her story is the first detailed study of a single person in the saga, after merely perfunctory descriptions of her father and brothers. It is remarkably long, spanning chapters 4–7 (pages 7–13 of the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition), and remarkably detailed for a description of a peripheral character. Much less would have been sufficient if the sole purpose of describing her was to show how her descendants amassed their wealth.

Unnr makes her own decisions and acts on her own initiative in matters of great concern. She has a ship built in secret and transports all her wealth and living relatives away from Scotland, *ok þykkjask menn varla dœmi til finna, at einn kvenmaðr hafi komizk í brott ór þvílíkum ófriði með jafnmiklu fé ok fǫruneyti*, 'and people think that an instance is scarcely to be found of one woman having come away from such unrest with as much wealth and as large a company' (*Laxdæla saga* 1934, 7). Although she has with her many men *er mikils váru verðir ok stórættaðir*, 'who were of great worth and from important families', the company is *fǫruneyti Unnar*, 'the company of Unnr' (*Laxdæla saga* 1934, 7). It is she who makes the dynastic decisions as to who her female relatives will marry, and she who claims land, in her own name, and then gives it out to her (male) family and followers.

It is made clear that Unnr's decisions are good ones, that there is general approval of what she does; and the important families that descend from her and the place-names that are said to survive pertaining to her also imply approval and appreciation of her sagacity and the position of influence she held. She is spoken of with respect at all times. There is an interesting reversal of roles when her grandson, Óláfr feilan, tells her that he will rely on her judgement in the matter of his

marriage (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 11). It is usually female children who rely on their male parents' judgement in these matters. Unnr's death is also described very carefully to show how she maintained her control in death as she did in life: *þótti mǫnnum mikils um vert, hversu Unnr hafði haldit virðingu sinni til dauðadags*, 'people thought it very remarkable how Unnr had maintained her prestige to her dying day' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 13).

Unnr is introduced in the very first chapter of the saga, and named as *Unnr in djúpúðga*, 'Unnr the deep minded' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 3). She is named alongside her sisters Þórunn hyrna and Jórunn manvitsbrekka. There is also a point of great interest here. Margaret Arent notes (*The Laxdoela Saga*, 1964, 198):

> The byname *Manvitsbrekka* is compounded from *mannvit* meaning 'sense' and *brekka* meaning 'slope'. Its meaning as a byname is obscure, but *brekka* is frequently used as a simile for 'woman' in kennings.

Examples of *brekka* being used in kennings for 'woman' are readily accessible, appearing in *Katrínardrápa*, in *Gísla saga*, in the verses of Úlfr stallari, in *Hallfreðar saga* and in *Víglundar saga* (*Lexicon Poeticum* 1931, 63, 309, 313, 387, 402). The sense of *brekka* in kennings is of 'slope' as a land on which something, i. e. the other part of the compound, resides. *Hǫrbrekka* (Úlfr stallari) means 'linen-slope', i. e. a land where linen resides, i. e. woman. *Menbrekka* (*Víglundar saga*) means 'necklace-slope', i. e. a land where a necklace resides, i. e. woman. From this we can see that *manvitsbrekka* describes a place where *manvit*, 'intelligence' resides. Used as a name it must indicate that that person is a repository of intelligence. This makes it clear, especially coupled with the fact that within the conventions of the system of creating kennings the term *brekka* is associated with the female, that *manvitsbrekka* as a woman's name must denote an intelligent woman.

Thus we have two women specifically named for their superior intelligence, Unnr the deep-minded and Jórunn the intelligent woman, in the first one hundred words of the saga. This seems surely to indicate that female intelligence and potential are of importance to the author.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that of Ketill's five children, three were specifically named daughters, and it is of the daughters that our author has chosen to give extra information. This is unusual in itself: in the lists of families from the settlement times known to saga-writers, daughters, if mentioned at all, were usually outnumbered by sons by ratios of up to nine to one, and the usual maximum number of daughters mentioned was one. Multiple named daughters were certainly

the exception rather than the rule (Clover 1990, 116). Our author has chosen to begin the saga by describing a family with three daughters and only two sons—and a family in which it is the daughters who are outstanding.

We have seen how the story of one of these outstanding daughters, Unnr, placed at the beginning of the saga and given in such detail, sets an important precedent for the acceptance of the ability of women to take on traditionally 'male' roles. It is followed by many other exempla reinforcing this premise. A whole litany of strong, autonomous women parade before us. Such a multitude of strongly characterised women is unique in the sagas, as Jónas Kristjánsson points out: '*Laxdœla* differs from all other sagas in the prominence it gives to women in the story' (1988, 276). These women in *Laxdœla saga* are all seen to be operating potently within their environments, and their portraits illustrate in a variety of ways how women can be effective.

Þorgerðr Þorsteinsdóttir rauðs, the mother of Hǫskuldr, shows, as Unnr does, how a woman is capable of travelling abroad and of acquitting herself well in the process. We see Þorgerðr decide to go abroad and not only sail to Norway and make a new life for herself, but also sail back to Iceland. Again, much more detail is given about Þorgerðr's life and her character than is necessary for pure establishment of genealogical or financial relationships (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 14–16).

Jórunn, wife of Hǫskuldr, is introduced as *skǫrungr mikill í vitsmunum* 'a very outstanding person in intelligence' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 16). We see her make use of this intelligence: she is consulted about the marriage proposal and accepts it on her own consideration, *þann einn spurdaga hǫfu vér til þín*, *Hǫskuldr*, *at vér viljum þessu vel svara*, 'all the information we have about you, Hǫskuldr, would make us wish to answer this favourably' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 17). After her marriage she manifests herself as *vitr ok vel at sér ok margs vel kunnandi*, 'wise and capable and extremely knowledgeable' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 18). The culmination of her involvement in the saga is the use of her great intelligence to calm Hǫskuldr's anger in chapter 19 with wise words. In a speech that is extremely long by saga standards—23 lines in the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition—she placates Hǫskuldr with her wisdom. She is seen to be very effective in this situation: *Hǫskuldr sefaðisk mjǫk við fortǫlur Jórunnar*, 'Hǫskuldr calmed down greatly at Jórunn's persuasion'; and Hǫskuldr and Hrútr *taka . . . nú up frændsemi sína góða heðan í frá*, 'cultivate their kinship well from now on' because of Jórunn (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 48). It is incidentally interesting that this

is the opposite of the motif of woman as inciter, i. e. woman as creator of enmity between males, a common role for women in sagas. Here the woman is given a more positive role, as a creator of peace between males.

Melkorka is also presented as a highly intelligent woman, who is able to rise above great adversity and take control of her own identity by the only means that she has at her disposal in her situation—she refuses to speak for years. She is thus able to retain her own selfhood in the face of the worst of suppressive situations: being taken captive and sold into slavery. As she uses her initiative to maintain her identity and self-respect, her dignity and self-possession shine through: *Qllum mǫnnum var auðsætt stórmennsku-mót á henni ok svá þat, at hon var engi afglapi*, 'it was apparent to everyone that she had the mark of a great person about her, and also that she was no fool' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 27). Melkorka is not daunted by Hǫskuldr, the man who has bought her and given her protection; she makes her own plans for their son, Óláfr, and directs him to go abroad, even making her own arrangements for him to have the necessary finance (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 50). In doing this she not only facilitates Óláfr's journey abroad, but she defies Hǫskuldr: she tells Óláfr *at Hǫskuldi muni þá tveir hlutir illa líka, þá er hann spyrr hvárttveggja, at þú ert af landi farinn, en ek manni gipt*, 'that Hǫskuldr will then dislike two things, when he hears of each of them, that you are gone abroad and I am married' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 50). This is also not the first time she has defied Hǫskuldr: she objected to his fostering arrangement for Óláfr on the grounds that it was too lowly a placement.

Auðr, the ex-wife of Þórðr Ingunnarson, takes matters into her own hands and takes revenge for her humiliation in the face of her brothers' passivity. In going at night to attack her ex-husband physically, Auðr acquits herself in a role usually reserved for males. This is one of no fewer than three instances in *Laxdœla saga* of women drawing blood, two of which are against men. Auðr successfully wounds Þórðr and when she returns, her brothers, who had not had the courage to make an attack themselves, express their pleasure (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 98). Even the injured Þórðr expresses his appreciation of what she has done by saying she did only what she had to do (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 98). While the men are expressing their approval, however, it is Auðr who has accomplished revenge and the achievement is hers alone.

The other woman in *Laxdœla* who draws blood from a man is Vigdís, wife of Þórðr goddi and descendant of Unnr in djúpúðga. She is a woman vastly more effective than her weak husband. We see her

personally take on a family matter. Þórólfr, a distant relative, approaches her because he has heard that *Vigdís var meiri skǫrungr í skapi en Þórðr*, 'Vigdís had a much stronger character than Þórðr' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 31), and this certainly turns out to be true. Vigdís hits Ingjaldr on the nose with the money bag so that *þegar fell blóð á jǫrð*, 'at once blood fell to the earth' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 36) after the exposure of his and Þórðr's arrangement to capture Þórólfr. The two men are unable to resist her and she continues to control matters by subsequently declaring herself divorced from Þórðr (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 37). The Vigdís episode is another clear example of extensive detail of character and action being given with respect to a peripheral, female, character.

Þuríðr Óláfsdóttir is another woman who takes matters into her own hands. It is she who introduces the sword Fótbítr into her family. It is interesting to note here that the impetus for this unfortunate event is again mistreatment, or perhaps rather underestimation, of a woman by a man. Geirmundr's shabby treatment of Þuríðr prompts her drastic action (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 80). Þuríðr's rowing out to Geirmundr's ship and replacing his sword with the child is highly symbolic. She swaps her baby, the symbol of maternity and domesticity, for a sword, a symbol not only phallic but also one of war and battle, traditionally 'male' pursuits. Through her actions and initiative—the sabotage of the small boat—Geirmundr is powerless to react (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 82). It is also Þuríðr who later on in the saga expresses the importance of intelligence in a woman when she is encouraging Kjartan to woo Hrefna: *væntir mik, at þér þykki þar fara vit eptir vænleik*, 'I expect that you will think her intelligence matches her beauty' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 137).

We also cannot forget Þorgerðr Egilsdóttir, an extremely intelligent woman whose effectiveness is felt strongly throughout the saga. She is described early on as *skǫrungr mikill*, 'a very outstanding person' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 66) and we are told that *þat varð fram at koma er Þorgerðr vildi, til hvers sem hon hlutaðisk*, 'with whatever she put her hand to, what Þorgerðr wanted had to come about' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 66). We find throughout the saga that this is certainly the case.

Royal women too, show initiative and autonomy: Gunnhildr helps Óláfr in her own right, using her own resources (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 52), and Ingibjǫrg, sister of King Óláfr Tryggvason, obviously has a relationship of enough mutual respect with Kjartan for him to have confided in her about his relationship with and intentions towards

Guðrún, and for Ingibjǫrg personally to present him with such a fine wedding gift for Guðrún (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 131).

Thus we see how several variations of female effectiveness are set before the reader, illustrating the ability of females to be potent. In conjunction with each other these combine to form a backdrop sensibility which illuminates the story of Guðrún and highlights her tragedy. Peter Foote, referring to Unnr and Guðrún, notes that 'it is appropriate that the saga begins and ends with pictures of two old women, who after imperious and momentous careers are now described with small authentic touches that firmly anchor them in our own sort of reality' (*The Laxdale Saga* 1964, xiii). He does not explain, however, why he considers this 'appropriate'. I would suggest that this arrangement affirms how one woman sets the precedent for the other and emphasises the significance of the link. We are supposed to see the earlier woman as an example for the later. The very fact that the saga does begin and end with pictures of women is also unusual enough in itself in saga literature to warrant consideration that this may be an important and deliberate part of the author's design.

Once the reader has been exposed to these illustrative precedents, as we have seen, Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir appears. The saga is very careful both to stress Guðrún's potential and intelligence and to stress the equality between the two major players, Kjartan and Guðrún. Guðrún's story is where the author makes particular the general theme that is being explored.

When Guðrún is introduced the saga is very specific about her, and emphatic in the description of her potential. We hear that she is *kvenna vænst, er upp óxu á Íslandi, bæði at ásjánu ok vitsmunum*, 'the most promising woman brought up in Iceland, both in looks and in intelligence'. She is a *kurteis kona*, 'a courteous, well-bred woman', she is *ǫrlynd*, 'of a generous nature' and she is the cleverest and most articulate of all women: *Allra kvenna var hon kœnst ok bezt orði farin* (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 86).

The first time we meet Guðrún in person she is juxtaposed with Gestr Oddleifsson, well known from other sagas as a great sage. In chapter 33 Gestr greets Guðrún warmly and treats her as an equal—*taka þau tal saman*, 'they begin to talk together'—because, the author tells us, *váru þau bæði vitr ok orðig*, 'they were both wise and articulate' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 88). Gestr and Guðrún begin to talk together before any mention is made of the invitation to Gestr from Guðrún's father. This invitation is only given after a good portion of the day has been spent

together, and then expressed as her own wish as well as that of Ósvífr (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 88). Having heard Guðrún described, as discussed above, in the previous chapter this is the very first time we see her physically. It must also be borne in mind that Guðrún is here about fourteen years old: she has not yet married her first husband, to whom she was betrothed at fifteen (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 93). This incident is therefore even more remarkable an introduction to Guðrún in that we see a fourteen-year old girl converse as an equal over a great part of the day with a noted sage such as Gestr.

We find this first impression of Guðrún's superior intellectual qualities echoed and re-emphasised later in the saga when we learn that Kjartan enjoys talking to her *því at hon var bæði vitr ok málsnjǫll*, 'because she was both wise and eloquent' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 112). Guðrún's capabilities are also stressed in her independence. In chapter 35 Guðrún rides to the Alþingi in her own right: Þórðr Ingunnarson accompanies her, not the other way round (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 95). Likewise in chapter 33 she comes alone to the baths and spends time with Gestr; she does not need a chaperone (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 88).

There are also many instances where the author makes it clear that Guðrún is of an equal standing to her brothers. The saga often speaks of 'Guðrún and her brothers' and Guðrún is always mentioned first. For example, in chapter 39 Ósvífr speaks *til Guðrúnar ok bræðra hennar*, 'to Guðrún and her brothers' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 111) and, importantly, it is Guðrún who answers her father, not one of her male siblings. (This reminds us of Auðr, who took action when her impotent brothers were unable to find the courage to do so.) When Snorri goði is introduced in chapter 36 Guðrún is named out of the family: *áttu þau Guðrún þar mikit traust*, 'Guðrún and her family had great support from him' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 100). Even Kotkell speaks to Þorleikr about *Guðrúnu ok bræðr hennar*, 'Guðrún and her brothers' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 101).

The author also carefully and specifically presents the equality between Kjartan and Guðrún to the reader. Kjartan, when he is introduced in chapter 28, is described in similarly glowing terms to those that describe Guðrún. Kjartan and Guðrún are both introduced by the use of superlatives. Kjartan is *fríðastr* 'most handsome' and Guðrún is *vænst* 'most promising' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 76 and 86). These superlatives are both emphasised by constructions explaining that these qualities are the greatest in all Iceland. Kjartan is *allra manna fríðastr, þeira er fœzk hafa á Íslandi*, 'the most handsome of all men who have been born

in Iceland' and Guðrún is *kvenna vænst, er upp óxu á Íslandi*, 'the most promising woman brought up in Iceland' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 76 and 86). Margaret Arent, in her book *The Laxdœla Saga: Its Structural Patterns*, points out the closeness of this correlation: 'the author . . . uses Repetition and marking of their superior qualities to underscore their affinity. From the beginning, for example, it is made clear that both surpass all others in Iceland' (1972, 86). She notes further that these phrases do not appear in descriptions of anyone else in the saga and are used only to describe Kjartan and Guðrún (1972, 87).

This type of construction is used again to emphasise the explicit authorial statement of their equality made when we first see them together in chapter 39: *Þat var allra manna mál, at með þeim Kjartani ok Guðrúnu þætti vera mest jafnræði þeira manna, er þá óxu upp*, 'It was the talk of everyone, that between Kjartan and Guðrún there seemed to be the most equal match of those people who were growing up at that time' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 112). The effect of the emphasis on the equality between the two young people is so striking that they have been seen as 'almost the ordained partners for each other' (Dronke 1989, 207).

So thus we see Guðrún: articulate, intelligent, exceptionally wise, gracious and stately, generous and open-handed—the woman of most promise in Iceland at that time. She is shown to be at least of equal potential to Kjartan, her equivalent male, i. e. the young male of most promise then in Iceland. However, when they come into contact the discrepancy between male and female becomes clear. Kjartan is able to follow his desires, go abroad and fulfil his potential whereas Guðrún is not allowed to, although she sees herself as capable of doing so. Kjartan, as mentioned above, rejects her request and her potential and pushes her into a subservient 'feminine' role: '*Þat má eigi vera', segir Kjartan; 'bræðr þínir eru óráðnir, en faðir þinn gamall, ok eru þeir allri forsjá sviptir, ef þú ferr af landi á brott, ok bíð mín þrjá vetr'*, '"That cannot be", said Kjartan, "your brothers are not settled, and your father is old, and they will be completely without anyone to look after them if you go away abroad, so wait for me for three years"' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 115). She cannot come abroad with him, she must stay behind to look after her father and brothers. As has been mentioned above, the underlying tragedy of the saga is that Guðrún, who is clearly as strong a personality and as promising as Kjartan, is made unable to fulfil her evident potential, and her wise and generous disposition is destroyed. This leads to the overt tragedy of the deaths of Kjartan and

Bolli, which can be traced back to this one moment of suppression. This moment is particularly symbolic as the denial of the opportunity to fulfil her potential is made by her equivalent male, who does go on to fame and glory abroad; but the price of suppression of Guðrún's potential is high: eventually his and Bolli's deaths.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson gives a note in the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition of the saga (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 115 n.) to the effect that historically it could not have been true that Guðrún's brothers were young and unsettled at this point in the saga although it could have been true at the time of Guðrún's first marriage (at which time no objection was raised in the saga to Guðrún leaving the family home). This makes it clear that this episode, including this reason for Kjartan's refusal to allow Guðrún to come abroad with him, has been constructed specifically for the purposes of the author and not for historicity. This fact emphasises and highlights the significance of this episode in the author's thematic scheme.

This original suppression of Guðrún by Kjartan is compounded by Bolli's disregard of her wishes when he approaches her with his marriage proposal. Although she has given him a definite refusal, together with her reasons, he is not concerned with how she feels: *vænti ek þó, at Ósvífr muni mestu um ráða þetta mál*, 'nevertheless, I expect that Ósvífr will have the most say in this matter' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 129). This is followed by suppression by her father: *Bolla mun eigi frá hnekkt, ef ek skal ráða*, 'Bolli will not be turned away if I have my way', and by her brothers, who are concerned for themselves, not Guðrún: *Synir Ósvífrs fýsa þessa mjǫk; þykkir sér mikil slægja til mægða við Bolla*, 'Ósvífr's sons urged this strongly; they thought it would be a great advantage to themselves to have a marriage alliance with Bolli' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 129). Having built up Guðrún as a sympathetic figure with great potential, the author shows here several forms of suppression.

As has been mentioned at the beginning of this article, chapter 40 can be seen as the fulcrum of the saga. Before this the scene is being set; we are given precedents for accepting and appreciating female potency. The author goes to great lengths to make known Guðrún's abilities and intelligence and her equality with Kjartan, the male nominated as her equivalent. Finally, the two leading lights of Icelandic society, male and female, are put into a decision-making situation and the rest, as they say, is history. From chapter 40, until the end of the saga, we are dealing with the results of this act of suppression. We see Guðrún bitter, angry and frustrated. We see her rage and hurt in moments of explanation

of emotion unusual in saga writing, although her strength of character never allows her to break down completely. Whereas she had been described regularly by words such as *vitr*, 'wise', *ǫrlynd*, 'generous, open-handed' and *málsnjǫll*, 'eloquent', we see her become petty and hurtful in her bitter frustration; but above all we see the terrible consequences of such an act of suppression: the loss to the community and the terrible price to pay. It is not until after Bolli is dead that Guðrún is again referred to in a way that reflects the earlier descriptions of her: *er þat ok ekki ofmæli, at Guðrún er mjǫk fyrir ǫðrum konum um allan skǫrungsskap*, 'it is also not an exaggeration, that Guðrún greatly surpasses other women in all forms of nobility and strength of character' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 169). Unhappy retribution has been achieved.

Many scholars have, of course, noted the proliferation of women in *Laxdœla saga*. Peter Foote talks of a 'whole series of striking portraits' of women (*The Laxdale Saga* 1964, xiii). James Drever says that, apart from Guðrún, 'there are no less than six other "stirring women" who get more than a passing mention', and continues: 'this is, when one comes to think of it, a quite remarkable constellation' (1937–45, 109). A. C. Bouman notes that 'in no other Icelandic saga [do] so many women play their part as in *Laxdœla saga*' (1962, 113) and he elaborates on this (1962, 113–14):

> Even those whose portrait is drawn in vivid colours, would have been mentioned only in passing in most other sagas. Not so in Laxd[œla]. No sooner does the author come across a woman, say in a genealogy, of whom he knows that her merits stand out above the average, than he pauses in his narrative and takes his time to devote more than one chapter to her. He may even go out of his way to introduce a personality whose story is linked with the main theme by the thinnest threads possible.

Perhaps the threads seem thin because the link 'with the main theme' is being missed. Everyone has noticed the striking incidence of strong women in *Laxdœla*, but in spite of its noteworthiness, no one has suggested a reason for it, or considered that there might *be* a reason—that there may be, as I am suggesting, a purpose to this 'quite remarkable constellation'. The purpose seems clear to me, that the saga is dealing directly with the problems of strong women with regard to their potential to function in society on an equal level to men. Bouman notes that the saga 'is so exclusively interested in Unnr, that the figures surrounding her are kept in the shadow, and information about them, to be found in *Landnámabók*, is either reduced to insignificance or withheld from the reader', but he offers no suggestion as to why this is so

(1962, 114). My reading solves this problem immediately, as it also solves the problem of the seeming disparity in pace and interest between the beginning, middle and end sections of *Laxdœla.* There is a strong, consistent and clearly discernible thematic connection that runs all the way through the saga.

The author's concern for Guðrún's potential and capabilities is clearly evident in the portrayal of Guðrún after the killings of Bolli and Kjartan. She remains central to the narrative, with her fourth marriage described in detail. She stands the cost of the wedding feast herself (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 201), which is reminiscent of Unnr standing the cost of Óláfr feilan's wedding feast (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 11–12), another link between the two women; and the events at her wedding display her stature clearly. When the quarrel arises over Gunnarr Þiðrandabani, Guðrún immediately leaves the bridal bench and rallies her men. It is she who has the most followers and there is no chance of her relinquishing her position. Snorri goði has to advise Þorkell to back down because Guðrún is such a *mikill skǫrungr*, 'very outstanding person' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 203). Þorkell quietens down at this and, relative positions having been established, great affection is able to develop between Þorkell and Guðrún (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 203). The saga's conclusion with the famous question regarding whom Guðrún loved the most, and the resultant list of the men who were part of her life (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 228), also reinforces Guðrún's central role in the saga: this incident shows clearly that the men revolve around her, not the other way round.

Guðrún's centrality to the saga has, of course, been noticed several times before. Patricia Conroy, for example, in discussing the similarities between *Laxdœla saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða*, remarks that 'both their authors chose to structure their narratives . . . as stories about a woman' and that Guðríðr (*Eiríks saga rauða*) and Guðrún (*Laxdœla saga*) 'play more sustained roles in them than any of the men'. She considers that 'the *Laxdœla* author pioneered the use of the story of a woman' and that the author of *Eiríks saga rauða* copied this model (1980, 116, 125). Arnold Taylor, considering the author's involvement in *Laxdœla*, states that the saga 'is dominated by Guðrún' and that the author became 'so involved in this story of a woman—as no other saga writer ever did—that once she was on the stage he was unable to leave her, and nearly every incident is introduced to colour and enliven her portrait' (1974, 16, 20). He even goes so far as to say, when discussing the Brynhildr–Sigurðr legend, that 'Kjartan is developed into a new

tragic Sigurðr and Bolli into a Gunnar, but not, I would suggest, for their own sake, but to the greater glory of the woman Guðrún' (1974, 17).

The question of the ability of females to function on a par with males is also reflected in many other places in the saga. There are many marriages and generally a negative result is produced where the woman is not consulted or her wishes taken into account and a positive result is achieved when the woman is consulted and able to make her own choices. To give just one example of each kind: Guðrún's first marriage is entirely unsatisfactory in direct proportion to the complete lack of consultation with her, which is specifically pointed out: *Ekki var Guðrún at þessu spurð*, 'Guðrún was not asked about this' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 93); and this can be contrasted with, for instance, the happy and successful marriage of Óláfr and Þorgerðr Egilsdóttir. Their betrothal is described in detail. We learn initially, in a plain statement of fact, that Þorgerðr was also present at the Alþingi. Then much is made of the fact that Egill insists that he must consult his daughter. Egill says that although this is a very good match nevertheless *skal nú þetta við Þorgerði rœða, því at þat er engum manni fœri, at fá Þorgerðar án hennar vilja*, 'this shall now be discussed with Þorgerðr, because it is within no man's capability to get Þorgerðr without her agreement' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 63). Finally, although Þorgerðr is consulted by Egill, she does not accept the match on his recommendation, and the decision to marry Óláfr, after she has met him, is Þorgerðr's alone (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 65). It is interesting that in *Egils saga* there is no mention of this. Where the marriage of Óláfr and Þorgerðr is mentioned, the two young people's qualities are described and then we are told that *Egill kunni ǫll deili á Óláfi ok vissi, at þat gjaforð var gǫfugt, ok fyrir því var Þorgerðr gipt Óláfi*, 'Egill knew all about Óláfr and recognised that this was an honourable offer, and so Þorgerðr was married to Óláfr' (*Egils saga* 1933, 242). Therefore, this episode has been specifically invented for, or specifically included in, *Laxdœla saga* to suit the purposes of the author.

The characterisation of the striking abundance of 'stirring women' in the saga is also interesting. In *Laxdœla* the female characters are given emotions and motivation. We are given far more insight into their emotions than we are used to in saga writing. There is a distinct feeling that the author has an innate understanding of the way the female mind works. Peter Foote remarks: 'Of the characters in the saga it is the women who have outstanding vitality and naturalness . . . By contrast the chief men, Olaf, Kjartan and Bolli Bollison [sic] appear still more

wooden' (*The Laxdale Saga* 1964, xii-xiii). Jónas Kristjánsson enthuses that Guðrún 'seems truly feminine in her love of gorgeous things and in her seething jealousy' (1988, 277). Female sexual jealousy is particularly well observed: in Auðr's need to attack her ex-husband; in the incident where Jórunn hits Melkorka with her stockings when suddenly her presence becomes too much, and Melkorka angrily retaliates and punches her on the nose; and especially in Guðrún's reactions when Kjartan returns to Iceland and marries Hrefna.

By comparison, the male characters are one-dimensional. They are stereotypes, almost caricatures, compared to the complexity of the women. The descriptions of male characters are of their exteriors: their appearance, their attractiveness, their clothes, their prowess. This is pronounced enough to have been noticed by several scholars. Foote talks of 'a certain preference its author shows for ornament above substance in the presentation of masculine character' (*The Laxdale Saga* 1964, vi). Jónas Kristjánsson, in his *Eddas and Sagas*, notices a proliferation of 'splendour in physical beauty and manly prowess' (1988, 273). The translation of the saga's description of Kjartan in this book, translated coincidentally by Foote, gives the mood extraordinarily well (1988, 273):

> Kjartan Óláfsson 'was the handsomest of all men ever born in Iceland. He had well-marked features and a pleasing countenance, the finest eyes of any man, and fair colouring. He had an abundance of hair, silky bright and falling in curls'.

If one compares the descriptions of Kjartan and Guðrún the difference is striking. There is much more emphasis on Kjartan's appearance than on Guðrún's. Kjartan's appearance is described in detail, in a glowing description that Foote calls 'an idealised picture of virile beauty' (*The Laxdale Saga* 1964, xiv). That the description is concerned with his attractiveness as opposed to being a list of stock viking attributes is evidenced by the fact that *fagrt sem silki*, 'beautiful as silk' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 77) to describe hair is only used elsewhere in sagas in the description of one person—Hallgerðr langbrók Hǫskuldsdóttir in *Njáls saga* (*Njáls saga* 1954, 6; Bouman 1962, 123 n.). In marked contrast, Guðrún's physical appearance is not described at all. All the emphasis is on her mind: *allra kvenna var hon kœnst ok bezt orði farin*, 'she was the cleverest and most articulate of all women' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 86). Throughout the saga the author does not show any preference for 'ornament above substance' in the presentation of female characters, as one might expect. Although Guðrún is a central character, and we are

told that she is the most promising in looks as well as intelligence, we are not, at any point, told what she looks like or any details such as what colour hair she has. Only once in the saga do we even see Guðrún's clothes, and that is when it is necessary for the plot. In chapter 55 her clothes are described when, after the killing of Bolli, Helgi Harðbeinsson wipes the blood from his spear on the embroidered cloth she has tied around herself (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 168). We see the clothes of the men, however, all the time. We are very aware of Kjartan's clothes, for example, and of those of Óláfr and Bolli Bollason, and of their physical appearance. This is not so with any of the female characters. Not only with Guðrún, but with all the women the emphasis is on their qualities of mind and not on their physical exterior.

There seems to be a different sexual perspective in *Laxdœla saga* from that in other sagas. The author appears to understand women from the inside and men from the outside. As we have seen, this appears not only in the descriptions but also in the motivation and characterisation. We are given insights into the emotional motivation of the women that are far more explicit than for the men. As Foote rightly points out, 'insight into Gudrun's mind is given on several occasions, into Kjartan's almost never' (*The Laxdale saga* 1964, xi). Jónas Kristjánsson notes that 'Kjartan and Bolli Bollason appear a pair of handsome dummies when compared with Guðrún and Þorgerðr' (1988, 277). The general emotional level, too, is higher in *Laxdœla* than in other sagas. There appears to be a heightened appreciation of human emotion that sets *Laxdœla* apart. Jónas Kristjánsson notes 'a novel feeling for love between a man and a woman' and comments that 'such magnificent outward show and such tenderness of feeling are not to be found in the sagas we have so far discussed, and not in any of the kings' sagas either' (1988, 274). This seems surely to indicate a perspective different from the norm.

The structural function of the female characters in *Laxdœla saga* is also different from that in other sagas. *Njáls saga*, for example, which is also famous for its women, follows a more typical saga pattern in that the women, though important, are merely cogs in the machinery of the plot. They are there to move the plot along by their actions; the events are then dealt with and controlled by the men. The women perform a specific function as a foil to the men; they do not cause the saga to grow and develop emotionally like the organic women of *Laxdœla.* In *Njáls saga*, a typically 'masculine' saga, that job is left to the male characters. In *Laxdœla saga* it is women who are the emotional channel. The

author seems to be able to transmit emotion through the female persona, which gives rise to the very different atmosphere, the 'particular quality of attitude and temper' (Andersson 1967, 171) which has so often been noticed in *Laxdœla* when compared with other sagas.

Several other scholars have also detected this different sensibility. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, for example, notes that there appears from time to time a *kvenlegri smekkur en í hinum sǫgunum*, 'more feminine taste than in the other sagas' (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, vi) and writes of certain passages (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, xi–xii):

> Hér nýtur sagan vel næmleika þess og skilnings, sem söguritarinn hefur á tilfinningalífi kvenna, en hans sér víða merki í sögunni. Smekkur hans er nærri því kvenlegur, þegar miðað er við Íslendinga í fornöld.
>
> Here the saga profits from the author's sensitivity to and understanding of women's emotional nature, the signs of which are widely seen in the saga. His taste is almost feminine, when compared with Icelanders of old times.

Bouman suggests that 'surely our author differs from many others in that he cannot be accused of antipathy against women' and that the author's 'sympathy for women in general is of a different kind and serves a definite purpose' (1962, 114). He does not, however, go on to say what this purpose might be.

Although so many scholars have noticed these distinctive 'feminine' characteristics of the saga, strangely they have not made the connection that the author might have been a woman. Indeed, it was Peter Foote's comments that first suggested to me the possibility that this was a woman writing, although I am sure this was far from his thoughts when he made his observations. To my knowledge, the only time a female author has been suggested is by Helga Kress in her article '"Mjǫk mun þér samstaft þykkja": um sagnahefð ok kvenlega reynslu í *Laxdœla sǫgu*', and she too was surprised that this had not occurred to anyone else (1980).

It has been suggested, by Robert Kellogg (1973), that the remarkable use of the vernacular in Iceland's extensive body of literary prose may indirectly imply the participation of women in the creation of that literature. In reference to *Laxdœla saga* in particular, although he says, in what appears a flippant remark, that 'one may resist the temptation to speak of the *authoress* of *Laxdœla saga*', Kellogg does admit to the temptation being there to surmise that the saga 'draws upon a peculiarly feminine wisdom' (1973, 254, 256).

Particularly because of the subjects dealt with in the saga, it seems to me perfectly possible that in the time the sagas were being written a woman may have been writing; perhaps the daughter of a wealthy and

influential literary man, himself a saga-writer, who would have had intelligence, leisure, literacy and access to the concept of saga writing, perhaps a woman who knew herself to be as intelligent as the men around her and was herself frustrated by the obstacles to acceptance in her path or the paths of other women. There is such an all-pervading sense in the saga of the need to show that women can be just as capable, be as intelligent and have as much potential as men that I cannot believe that the author was not personally concerned with this problem.

When the saga is looked at in the light of all the above it is also interesting to see what has happened to it in translation. Due to the modular degree system, many university courses in Britain are now taught only or chiefly in translation, a situation that may well exist elsewhere too. Furthermore, the majority of English-speaking casual readers, which I would suggest is a larger population world-wide than readers speaking Icelandic—or indeed than readers speaking any other single language—will only read the saga in English translation. For these students or readers their only access to and experience of the saga is through the translation they read.

On looking at English translations we find immediately that Guðrún, after all these years, is still fighting her same fight, still fighting to be heard, to be accepted for the intelligent woman she is. When she is introduced in the saga the text describes her very specifically: *hon var kvenna vænst, er upp óxu á Íslandi, bæði at ásjánu ok vitsmunum* (*Laxdœla saga* 1934, 86). This means 'she was the most promising woman brought up in Iceland, both in looks and in intelligence'. 'Looks' and 'intelligence' are very carefully given equal importance, using the word *bæði*, 'both' to stress this. Her looks and intelligence are both aspects of her 'most promising' nature.

However, when we come to this passage in the Penguin translation by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, which is the most widely read and widely available English translation, we find: 'she was the loveliest woman in all Iceland at that time, and also the most intelligent' (*Laxdœla saga* 1969, 118). Her physical attributes are stressed and intelligence is an afterthought here. This is not what it says in the text, which carefully stresses that looks and intelligence are of equal importance. Thus this interpretation is in opposition to the intention of the text.

'Promising' is a primary meaning of *vænn*. The meaning 'loveliest' or 'most beautiful' is a strange choice to translate *vænst*, the superlative, in the sentence we are concerned with, since it sits so uneasily with the rest of the sentence—how can one be 'the most beautiful in

both looks and intelligence'?—whereas 'promising' sits very easily with the rest of the sentence and makes perfect sense.

This sentence describing Guðrún is not difficult to translate accurately. Muriel Press's translation has 'She was the goodliest of women who grew up in Iceland, both as to looks and wits' (*The Laxdale Saga* 1964, 96). Margaret Arent's translation, although she translates *vænst* as 'fairest' because she wishes to make a connection between *vænst* and the superlative *fríðastr* used of Kjartan (Arent 1972, 86), still retains the parity between looks and intelligence: 'She was the fairest of all women born and raised in Iceland, foremost in beauty and intelligence' (*The Laxdoela Saga* 1964, 75).

Magnus and Hermann then continue, in more subtle ways, to see Guðrún in a manner that is in conflict with what is presented in the text of the saga. On the same page, for example, they choose to translate *kœnst* (*allra kvenna var hon kœnst ok bezt orði farin*), as 'shrewdest' (*Laxdœla saga* 1969, 118). While meanings such as 'wise', 'skilful', 'expert', 'clever' are generally understood for *kœnn*, Magnus and Hermann select 'shrewdest', a word that can carry connotations of slight underhandedness, of self-promotion or of thrift and domesticity—very different connotations from the idea of Guðrún being the cleverest or most wise of all women, which is what the text gives.

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, incidentally, devotes five column inches to 'shrewd' and the definitions given, although mainly obsolete, are overwhelmingly negative. These range over 'depraved, wicked; evil-disposed, malignant . . . Bad-tempered; vicious, fierce . . . Mischievous, hurtful; dangerous, injurious . . . Of evil nature, character or influence . . . Evil, bad, unfavourable . . . Poor, unsatisfactory . . . Fraught or attended with evil or misfortune; having injurious or dangerous consequences; vexatious, irksome, hard . . . As an intensive, qualifying a word denoting something in itself bad, irksome, undesirable: Grievous, serious, 'sore' . . . Of ill omen; hence strongly indicative (of something unfavourable) . . . Given to railing and scolding; shrewish' (1933–77, II 1985). Although these meanings are not in general usage nowadays, such a pejorative history may perhaps inform the possible slightly distasteful senses of the word now. It is true that 'shrewd' can have a positive meaning, but it can also carry negative connotations, as discussed above, and these depart from the sense given in the text of the saga. As words are readily available which can translate *kœnst* accurately without including these negative connotations, it seems to me an inappropriate choice here.

There is another striking passage in the Penguin translation which imposes Magnus and Hermann's idea of Guðrún with particularly deep effect. A major weakness in the saga seems to be, on reading the Penguin translation, that in chapter 43, when Guðrún is persuaded to marry Bolli, she gives in so easily. This does not fit in with what we have come to expect of Guðrún from the rest of the saga. In only the previous chapter she has said that she will marry no man as long as she knows that Kjartan is alive, and now, just a couple of pages later 'since Osvif took so firm a stand over this, Gudrun, for her part did not give an outright refusal, despite all her reluctance' (*Laxdæla saga* 1969, 155). The use of the word 'despite' gives the impression that she was able to surmount her reluctance (possibly by her own choice) and that she was not entirely unwilling in the matter. This seems very out of character and makes the reader wonder about Guðrún. She appears suddenly fickle—perhaps she was not being truthful about her feelings for Kjartan? She seems now to lack integrity and the reader therefore loses confidence in Guðrún. This reflects on the rest of the saga from this point onwards as the sympathy for Guðrún that has been carefully built up is lost. As this happens in chapter 43 and there are another thirty-five chapters, a large portion of the saga is coloured by this. Sympathy for Guðrún that should be there through her unhappy and enforced third marriage and through the period of animosity between the peoples of Laugar and Hjarðarholt culminating in the death of Kjartan, and indeed sympathy that we should feel for her for the rest of the saga, is lacking because of her seemingly speedy capitulation.

However, when we come to the text of the saga we find this weakness does not exist. The saga gives us: *Ok er Ósvífr tók þetta mál svá þvert, þá fyrirtók Guðrún eigi fyrir sína hǫnd ok var þó in tregasta í ǫllu*, 'And when Ósvífr opposed her so strongly in this, then Guðrún for her part did not refuse but was nevertheless most unwilling in all respects' (*Laxdæla saga* 1934, 129). If we look at the other English translations we find that this has been translated much more closely. Press's translation has 'as Osvif took such a strong view of the matter, Gudrun, as far as she was concerned, would not give an utter refusal, yet was most unwilling on all points' (*The Laxdale Saga* 1964, 148). Arent's translation has 'seeing that Ósvíf was so set on the match, Gudrún did not refuse outright, but nonetheless showed her unwillingness on every hand' (*The Laxdoela Saga* 1964, 112). These are close translations of the text and the sense is quite different from that given in the Penguin translation. Unwillingness in every aspect of this marriage transaction

is what one would expect from Guðrún at this moment; it is entirely consistent with her previous actions and speeches. The text states this unwillingness clearly: Guðrún did not give an outright refusal but *var þó in tregasta í ǫllu*, 'was nevertheless most unwilling in all respects'. No doubt is left about the strength of Guðrún's unwillingness by the use of the superlative *tregasta*, and the construction *í ǫllu* can only mean 'in all respects' (of the transaction).

The translation 'despite all her reluctance' at this crucial moment implies, as we have seen, that Guðrún's 'reluctance' was easily overcome, which is in direct opposition to the statement of the text. As we have also seen, the text is easily translated closely and accurately here: it presents no problems of idiom, ambiguity or controversial words. Therefore, it seems strange to choose to translate it in this way. As discussed, this translation at this moment in the saga casts a quite different light onto Guðrún's character from that which is presented in the text, and this affects the reader's understanding of it right to the end of the saga. It certainly puts the whole of Guðrún's marriage to Bolli into a different light: because it does not seem to have been forced, but to have come from her own fickleness, the reader does not have much sympathy for Guðrún. In the text the enforced nature of this marriage is made clear, thus directing the reader's sympathies towards Guðrún for the rest of the saga rather than away from her (cf. Bouman: 'She is married to Bolli, much against her will: *ok var þó en tregasta í ǫllu*' (1962, 130)).

Further evidence of Magnus and Hermann's attitude to the depiction of Guðrún is found in their description of her in their Introduction. On page 42 of the Penguin translation they describe her thus: 'Gudrun Osvif's-daughter, lovely and imperious, as fierce in hatred as in love, proud, vain, jealous, and infinitely desirable'. This is their summing up of Guðrún. Where does it say 'intelligent', 'able', 'capable', 'strong-minded', 'clever' or any of the other qualities we have come to recognise in Guðrún from reading the saga? Almost all the adjectives used are pejorative: 'proud, vain, jealous'. This negative picture of Guðrún is nothing like the picture of her painted by the saga, one of a highly intelligent and capable woman of great potential, yet it is Magnus and Hermann's picture of her. The only remotely positive word used is 'lovely', but this is purely to do with her physical appearance. This leads us to their ultimate judgement: 'infinitely desirable'. Is this the most important thing about Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir? I think not. The text, as we have seen, dwells upon her mind, upon her qualities of character, and not on her physical appearance and desirability.

The extremely interpretative and, I believe, wrong translations at these important moments in the Penguin edition cause Guðrún's character to appear very differently from that carefully engineered by the saga author. Exactly the same happens to Guðrún as happens to her within the saga—she is forced to play a passive 'feminine' role where what is important is the way she looks, and her intelligence takes a second place. This is in direct opposition to what is clearly and painstakingly presented to us in the text. I believe this interpretation (and it continues throughout, affecting one's reading of the whole saga) actively subverts the author's intentions. The author takes great pains to show that looks and intelligence are equally important and, even more importantly, that men and women (particularly embodied by Guðrún and Kjartan) have equal potential. By shifting the emphasis away from what is presented in the text, Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson obfuscate major statements made by the saga and the saga author.

Magnus and Hermann conclude by telling us we can 'wonder still who it was she really loved the most' (*Laxdæla saga* 1969, 42), but this is not what really matters. They miss the point that it is what is done to Guðrún, what happens to her, the squandering of her potential, that is really significant.

The presentation of Guðrún's character, although the most striking, is not the only instance of Magnus and Hermann subverting the intention of the saga author. With Jórunn manvitsbrekka, for example, discussed above, they translate the nick-name as 'Wisdom-Slope' (*Laxdæla saga* 1969, 47), an epithet that means nothing to the modern reader, and offer no note or any attempt to elucidate its possible significance, although they claim to have studied Arent's translation with its 'useful Introduction and notes' (*Laxdæla saga* 1969, 43). (Press translates *Jórunn manvitsbrekka* as 'Jorunn "Men's Wit-breaker"' (*The Laxdale Saga* 1964, 1). While not technically correct, this 'translation' still has the effect of making readers stop and think when they find it in conjunction with Unnr 'the deep minded', so perhaps it is not so far from the author's idea, as it gives the sense of a woman who can at least equal, if not 'break', the wit of a man.

I believe that the way a work such as this is translated is extremely important, since, as I have suggested, the majority of readers of *Laxdæla saga* will not read it in the Old Icelandic. Therefore translators have a responsibility to put across as much of the ideas and intentions of the author as they can. The readers of a translation should be able to gain an experience of the text in their own language. Given that the Penguin

translation is the most widely available and most widely read English translation of *Laxdœla saga* I find the discrepancies between the translation and the text very worrying indeed. Those whose only access to the saga is through this English translation are denied the voice of the author, denied the opportunity to consider the points that he/she is trying to make. The author's clear exposition of certain subjects, as discussed above, is subverted by subtle (and not so subtle) interpretative rather than accurate choices in translation which shift the entire emphasis of the saga and leave a vast area of the author's exploration hidden.

I have tried to show three things here: that there are some serious problems with the Penguin translation of *Laxdœla saga*, that the author of *Laxdœla* was very possibly a woman (although, of course, this cannot be proved) and that, regardless of his or her gender, the author was actively trying to deal with the concept of the ability of women to function in society on an equal level to men.

Jónas Kristjánsson says of Guðrún that 'if she had been a man, the saga would probably be named after her' (1988, 276). This neatly exemplifies the problem that the saga author is trying to highlight and address: why should she have had to be a man to have the saga named after her?

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HISTORY OF THE TROLLS?
BÁRÐAR SAGA AS AN HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

By ÁRMANN JAKOBSSON

1. *Introduction*

BÁRÐAR SAGA SNÆFELLSÁSS is on the periphery of the literary genre Icelandic Family Sagas (*Íslendingasögur*), which, as is customary with a literary genre, is defined by its centre, the more renowned *Egils saga*, *Laxdæla saga* and *Brennu-Njáls saga.* Yet it has probably been allocated to this genre for ages. In the fourteenth century, it was incorporated into the vellum manuscript Vatnshyrna along with other Family Sagas, as the oldest manuscript of the saga is a fragment from the so-called Pseudo-Vatnshyrna, a sister manuscript to Vatnshyrna. *Bárðar saga* has been dated to the period 1280–1390, with popular inclination favouring a late dating.[1] Concerning the author of the saga, the least said, the better. There is clearly an authorial figure in the background, responsible for composing the saga from vast and dispersed material, but it is impossible to identify any author. There has been some speculation as to his identity, none of which is relevant to research into the saga as a work of literature.[2] This article deals with problems relating to the structural unity of *Bárðar saga.* Only when this has been elucidated can the search for the author have any significance.

2. *History or Fiction?*

Few would dispute the fact that *Bárðar saga* is an artistic narrative, regardless of its artistic merit. The modern reader would not hesitate to deem it highly improbable and therefore probably not based on fact. The inference would thus seem to be that *Bárðar saga* is a work of fiction, but this is problematical. The author of *Bárðar saga* would be an unlikely candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature. His narrative is

[1] The manuscripts and date of composition of *Bárðar saga* are discussed at length by Þórhallur Vilmundarson in the introduction to *Harðar saga* 1991, v–vii, lxix–lxxiv, xcviii–xcix, and I have little to add to that.

[2] According to Finnur Jónsson (1902, 86), the same author was responsible for *Víglundar saga* and *Bárðar saga.* Þórhallur Vilmundarson (*Harðar saga* 1991, xcix–cvii) links the saga with the monastery at Helgafell on Snæfellsnes.

full of seemingly unimportant tales and information drawn from *Landnámabók* and much trouble is taken to explain place-names on the Snæfellsnes peninsula. This would indeed be an oddity in a modern work of fiction and it is hardly surprising that Sigurður Nordal (1953, 269) found *Bárðar saga* 'et ejendommelig produkt, hvor man paa den ene side møder en stor interesse for genealogier, alle hentet fra ældre skrifter, paa den anden side fantastiske og halvmytiske troldehistorier, hvoraf en del kunde bygge paa lokale folkesagn'.[3] Paul Schach (1982, 202) similarly categorises the saga as either 'serious fiction by a superstitious author or a generic farce by a sophisticated one'. As a generic farce, however, *Bárðar saga* is completely unconvincing, as it is quite atypical of the genre. It is more convincing as serious fiction. That leaves the problem which puzzled Sigurður Nordal: on the one hand, the saga is replete with genealogical information and place-name lore; on the other hand its focus of interest is trolls, the inspiration possibly being regional folktales.

The problem is, of course, only a problem if it is assumed that narrative is either historical or fictional. In the view of Sigurður Nordal, these are fundamental opposites, but did the author of *Bárðar saga* take that view as well? In order to determine this, the important criterion seems to be whether the author believed in what he wrote, not whether present-day scholars do. A story of trolls and *landvættir* cannot, of course, be historical if one does not believe in the existence of such creatures. From the perspective of the disbeliever, a story with such a focus must be fiction, however poor, regardless of its close affinity with historical works. If the author, however, believed in the existence of trolls and suchlike, their presence in his work would not exclude it from being intended as a work of history. In fact, very little of what was regarded as history in the Middle Ages would pass muster in our age, e. g. *Historia regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth (cf. Grundmann 1965, 12–17).

It is customary in modern society to make a distinction between *natural* and *supernatural* phenomena. Such a distinction is, however,

[3] J. Gotzen (1903, 2) offers a similar description: 'Den grundstock der Bárðar saga bilden einzelne volkssagen, die man sich auf der Snæfellsneshalbinsel von Bárðr erzählte. Der verfasser verband sie mit einander und fügte aus eigener phantasie hinzu; er verflocht historische persönlichkeiten in die erzählung, benutzte stark die Landnáma und trug eine fülle von motiven zusammen, für die ihm die Fornaldar sǫgur und verwandte erzählungen reichliche vorbilder gaben.' According to Phillip Pulsiano and Jón Skaptason (1984, xvi), this apparent disorganisation reflects the genius of the author.

not entirely logical. To those who believe in the existence of trolls or elves, they are essentially a part of nature and subservient to its laws. Those who do not believe in the existence of non-human sapient creatures have no need for the supernatural, either; no category is needed for beings who do not exist.[4] When *Bárðar saga* was composed, Iceland was populated with all kinds of beings hidden to the normal eye. Natural forces, now considered non-existent, were then just as real as the sun, the wind and the soil (cf. Gurevich 1985, 38, 69–71). All sorts of evidence from medieval Iceland bear witness to a strong belief in dreams, prophecy, ghosts and all kinds of imaginary creatures which seems to have lost little of its strength through the Christianisation of Iceland (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1940, 71–72, 128–32). Belief in hidden people (*huldufólk*) was common in Iceland until the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries and for some people they are still a force to be reckoned with.[5]

To the author of *Bárðar saga*, Bárðr Snæfellsáss was as much a part of the past as Snorri goði was to the author of *Eyrbyggja*.[6] He is most decidedly a part of nature; once (ch. 6) his 'nature' is even spoken of. Our belief in the accuracy or probability of *Bárðar saga* should thus have no effect on whether it is classified as a work of history or fiction. Its inclusion in Vatnshyrna indicates on the contrary that, like other Icelandic Family Sagas, it was indeed to all intents and purposes an historical work. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen has recently argued that all the Icelandic Family Sagas were composed 'i overensstemmelse med den viden om fortiden, der var til rådighed, og deres forfattere harmoniserede denne viden til et stort helhedsbillede'. He considers them 'på én gang historisk virkeligheds*skildring* og litterær virkeligheds*fortolkning*' and finds that they are not 'skabt som en tematisk helhed i skønlitteraturens forstand' (1993, 18, 23–24).

Sørensen (1993, 33–51) argues that Icelandic attitudes to the past were transformed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The heroes of the past gained greater credence and the fashion of the age was to trace one's ancestry to prehistoric giants. Some of those ancient figures

[4] This argument stems from C. S. Lewis (1967, 66).

[5] At the beginning of 1996 the Icelandic Road-Building Institution (Vegagerð ríkisins) still took note of the alleged habitation of elves in its plans.

[6] In *Bárðar saga* Bárður is spoken of both as being a troll and a giant (pp. 111, 149) and a man (103, 127, 133, 135, 139). In this article the saga is quoted from the edition of Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson in the Íslenzk fornrit series (*Harðar saga* 1991).

were credited with a number of qualities since lost. Egill Skalla-Grímsson and other protagonists of the Icelandic Family Sagas were supposedly descended from half-human and beast-like ancestors and were thus partly supernatural in the modern sense. Bárðr Snæfellsáss is in this sense no more unbelievable than the semi-human Egill, and his troll-like nature is no barrier as such to his saga being a work of history. With this in mind, it may prove helpful to consider three characteristics of history which seem to me to emerge from a discussion by W. H. Auden (1968, 48–50). Firstly, works of history have interests different from those of works of fiction; they are often replete with names of people and places who do not contribute to the artistic unity of the work. Secondly, they demonstrate an historical and critical attitude; if something is obscure or based on insufficient evidence, its validity is questioned. Thirdly, the events and the dialogue must be plausible to those to whom the work is addressed. I have already contended that although some events and actors in *Bárðar saga* may seem strange today, this was not the case when the saga was composed. But this is not sufficient to determine whether it is a work of history or a realistic historical novel.

As Gotzen (1903, 14) pointed out, an abundance of toponyms is a dominant characteristic of *Bárðar saga.* In the last century these toponyms were proved to be for the most part authentic by Árni Thorlacius (1886). Recently Þórhallur Vilmundarson (*Harðar saga* 1991, lxxxii–xcviii) has argued that the author of *Bárðar saga* to a great extent used toponyms to create persons and events, even Bárðr himself. Though the saga may have some roots in false etymology, it is more probable that its explanations were based on legend, rather than simply fabricated by the author. The traditional method is to relate the story of an individual who dies or builds a farm on a spot which is afterwards supposed to be named after him, though other explanations might be more obvious. Dumbshaf is thus named after Dumbr the giant, Þúfubjörg after the sorceress Þúfa and Hítarhellir after the giantess Hít.

These etymological explanations, though for the most part obviously incorrect, are no more so than was the custom of the time.[7] On the other hand, they serve as unequivocal testimony to a great deal of interest in the historical past of Iceland. Thus, the author mentions the existence of the toponym Helguhóll, which is irrelevant to the plot, and a narra-

[7] Cf. what Þórhallur Vilmundarson has to say of false etymology in *Harðar saga* and *Þorskfirðinga saga* (*Harðar saga* 1991, xxx–xli, cxx–cxxviii).

tive about the later dealings of Bárðr with Þorkell bundinfóti is incorporated into the saga for no other purpose than to explain the toponym Bárðarhellir.[8] When Þorbjörn Grenjaðarson and Þórdís Skeggjadóttir built a farm at Tunga the story adds that this farm was later called Grænamýrartunga (p. 140). This trivial information, completely unnecessary for the saga's unfolding, is obviously aimed at those interested in the regional history of the Hrútafjörður area.

Bárðar saga's interest in toponyms is reminiscent of one of the main characteristics of history. It is brimming with information which does not serve the main narrative purpose. Just about everyone who attends the wedding of Þórdís Bárðardóttir and Tungu-Oddr (ch. 10) is mentioned by name. The same applies to the description of a Christmas feast at Hundahellir and the narrative dealing with the journey by the brothers Þórðr and Þorvaldr to the ogre Kolbjörn. This episode is folkloristic, as is true of a good deal of the material in *Bárðar saga.* However, Þórðr's description of the intended route is in direct speech and very detailed, as if taken straight from a road-guide, although nothing of interest happens on this journey. This demonstrates that although *Bárðar saga* draws on regional folklore, its perspective is historical. In folktales (*Märchen*), historical figures are seldom mentioned, but in *Bárðar saga*, the custom is not only to mention unimportant as well as important characters by name but also to add a lot of genealogical information (cf. Lüthi 1986, 4–23).

Not only is *Bárðar saga* full of historical information; most of that information is derived from *Landnámabók.* In a work of fiction this would be inappropriate, but in a serious work of history it is essential to use more ancient and thus more authoritative material. The function of this historical information is to link the life of Bárðr to the general history of Iceland. He is said to have arrived in Iceland along with Gnúpa-Bárðr (ch. 3), and to confirm this, *Landnámabók*'s account of the settlement of Gnúpa-Bárðr is incorporated. Helga Bárðardóttir is linked to Eiríkr rauði, the settler of Greenland (ch. 5), Miðfjarðar-Skeggi (ch. 5) and Skapti Þóroddsson (ch. 7), and Þórdís Bárðardóttir marries Tungu-Oddr (ch. 10). The brothers Þórðr and Þorvaldr are, for their part, said to be related to the Hjaltasynir, who in *Landnámabók* are credited with the biggest wake in Iceland (ch. 22). In addition to *Landnámabók* and *Bárðar saga*, most of these personages appear in several Family Sagas and are well-attested historical figures of the

[8] This was the opinion of Gotzen (1903, 30).

tenth century. Their presence in the saga was intended to add to its historical value.[9] The author of *Bárðar saga* selects the historical figures to connect with his hero in a purposeful manner and not in a haphazard fashion as Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1860, v) believed. The narrative incorporated from *Landnámabók* seems to have the purpose of mending the saga's defects, the principal one being that Bárðr and his family disappear from the history of Iceland. He has ten children but no grand-children; his family does not link the period of the saga to the period of its writing. Therefore Bárðr and his family must be linked with other families and the incorporations from *Landnámabók* serve this end.

It is quite possible that 'borrowing' from other works may serve to discredit *Bárðar saga* from the perspective of modern historical criticism. But such was not the case in the fourteenth century. Borrowings from *Landnámabók* made the saga more credible, as its reconstructed past corresponded to the past of *Landnámabók.*[10] There is, therefore, a definite purpose in the saga's use of *Landnáma.* All the same, it is difficult to ascertain how the historical perspective is applied in *Bárðar saga.* The author does not always use his evidence critically. All kinds of marvels are described as completely natural phenomena and there is a serious chronological error when Greenland is described as being inhabited when Bárðr escapes the tyranny of Haraldr hárfagri and settles in Iceland. Apart from this error, the chronology of the saga makes sense. Bárðr, of course, outlives other settlers of Iceland, since human limitations do not apply to him after he has entered the mountain.

The narrative style of the saga is objective and the voice of the narrator is the voice of a scholar. He hesitates to comment on the nature of Bárðr when he leaves human society but refers to public opinion: 'þykkir mönnum sem hann muni í jöklana horfit hafa ok byggt þar

[9] Oddr is mentioned in *Íslendingabók*, *Egils saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga*, *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, *Laxdæla saga* and others. Miðfjarðar-Skeggi appears in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, *Þórðar saga hreðu*, *Kormáks saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga* and *Hrómundar þáttr.* The Hjaltasynir are mentioned in *Laxdæla saga*, *Bolla þáttr* and *Grettis saga.* Skapti Þóroddson is mentioned in e. g. *Íslendingabók*, *Gunnlaugs saga*, *Brennu-Njáls saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Valla-Ljóts saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Ǫlkofra þáttr*, *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla*; he was lawspeaker of Iceland 1004–30. Eiríkr rauði has his own saga and is a part of Icelandic historical tradition from *Íslendingabók* onwards.

[10] Cf. Heffernan 1988, 137–42.

stóran helli' (p. 119), though he points to his upbringing in Dofrafjöll as a possible cause. After leaving human society, Bárðr becomes more distant from the narrative voice. Eyewitnesses are quoted to strengthen the author's narrative. Though he clearly believes in the historicity of Bárðr, he also takes no responsibility for the heathen gods Óðinn and Þórr, never claiming that they exist, but hiding behind the authority of public opinion.[11] The author never states whether Helga or Gestr had children but says that there is no report of any (chs 5 and 22). He treats some of his sources critically. When relating Helga's stay at Hjalli in Ölfus, the author corrects a common misunderstanding that Guðrún Gjúkadóttir stayed there (p. 123).[12]

Bárðar saga claims to be a work of history and has the appearance and characteristics of such. Thus, it seems probable that the historian considered himself to be relating the past 'wie es eigentlich gewesen ist'. Hans Kuhn (1968, 54) pointed out the inconsistencies between *Bárðar saga* and other sources and classified the author as 'ein klug und kühl überlegender Fälscher'. Modern historical criticism would indeed declare a lot of the information in *Bárðar saga* invalid; this, however, has no bearing on the belief of the medieval author who was unfamiliar with Ranke and E. H. Carr and probably believed that folktales from the Snæfellsnes region were sources as important as *Landnámabók* itself. If he is to be considered a forger, the next question must be: Why? What motive could a fourteenth-century saga author have for concocting a pseudo-historical work about a giant in Snæfellsjökull?

It is much simpler to conclude that the saga was motivated by the historical interest of an author familar with legends and folktales about Bárðr Snæfellsáss, most of them related to toponyms. Narrative from *Landnámabók* is used to link Bárðr to historical events and famous people of his century, not because the author is less heedful of the truth than was the custom of his time, but because this is the demand of the genre. Since Bárðr was on Snæfellsnes in the tenth century, he must have known certain historical figures. Thus, the historian describes him meeting them. This was his licence.[13] He is allowed to interpret history in this fashion. His saga is thus both history and high literature. He uses other sources to improve on his material, thereby making his saga more

[11] This is on pp. 127 ('þykkir mönnum sem þat muni Þórr verit hafa') and 163 ('þóttust þeir þá vita, at þat hefði Óðinn verit').

[12] Gotzen (1903, 23) considered this evidence of the existence of an older saga of Helga Bárðardóttir.

[13] Cf. Steblin-Kamenskij 1981, 17–37.

'authentic' and consistent with a past with which his audience was familiar. In addition, there are several motifs from the Icelandic Family Sagas in *Bárðar saga.* One is the narrative of the tyranny of King Haraldr hárfagri whose oppression makes Bárðr leave Norway, where the author copies almost word for word the narrative in *Egils saga.* Since *Egils saga* is much older, it is legitimate to assume that the author of *Bárðar saga* borrowed its description and used it for his own purposes.[14]

In *Bárðar saga* there are several motifs borrowed from the legendary sagas and folktales as well.[15] The passages containing them seem to be for the most part the work of the author. They fill the gaps left by the sources and are mostly in the second half of the story, where *Landnámabók* and toponyms are not so extensively used. *Bárðar saga* is not motivated by a creative outburst. Where the author lacks oral or written sources to base his story on, he embellishes the material he has, using events and figures from other historical works. The important thing is that they are true to the core of the saga: the nature of Bárðr and his family. The narrative motifs play the same role as the narrative incorporations from *Landnámabók*; they are important to the artistic unity of the saga. The structure of the saga is created by its author; he imposes order on various folktales, place-name interpretations and genealogies. His task was not only to choose the material for his story and the manner in which it is related, he also had to create order from chaos. Which brings us to another subject that has featured heavily in the scholarly discussion of *Bárðar saga.* Is it a single work or the combination of two sagas?

3. *One Work or Two?*

There is nothing in the manuscript history of *Bárðar saga* to suggest that it was ever anything other than one single saga. While there are slight variations from one manuscript to another, they are all derived from one text. However, *Bárðar saga* is demonstrably a disjointed piece of work which changes its direction halfway through when the son of Bárðr, Gestr, becomes the main character. It has thus been a popular suggestion that *Bárðar saga* is in fact two sagas pieced together,

[14] Cf. *Bárðar saga* 106–07; *Egils saga* 1933, 12.

[15] These motifs have been discussed by Þórhallur Vilmundarson, *Harðar saga* 1991, lxxvi–lxxix; Gotzen 1903; Pulsiano and Jón Skaptason 1984, xxi–xxiv. The Motif-Index of Boberg (1966) lists at least sixty identifiable motifs in the saga.

the story of Bárðr and the story of Gestr, though not all scholars have endorsed this. Among the proponents of this theory were Finnur Jónsson (1902, 86), Gotzen (1903, 37–39, 63), Sigurður Nordal (1953, 269) and Allee (1968), while Hungerland (1905, 390–91), Bragi Halldórsson *et al.* (1987, 59), Pulsiano and Jón Skaptason (1984, xiv) and Þórhallur Vilmundarson (*Harðar saga* 1991, lxxiii) have argued the opposite case. There is obviously a serious discord between the two parts of the saga. In the first half, where Bárðr himself is the dominant figure, there is almost no direct speech, but there is a good deal in the second half, where Gestr is more prominent. *Landnámabók* is used a great deal in the first half, very little in the second half. There are five verses in the first half, only one in the second.[16] The section of the saga in which Bárðr is the main character is almost exclusively confined to Snæfellsnes, the parts where Gestr is the protagonist take place in Húnaþing and Strandasýsla. John G. Allee considered the use of place-names to be typical of the difference between the two halves. The toponyms figure more prominently in the first half of the saga. The toponyms explained are for the most part far from human settlement and may have been unintelligible at the time of the writing of the saga. The verdict of Allee was that 'different minds were at work in *Bárðar saga* and *Gests saga* and . . . the different attitudes of these two minds can be most clearly seen by studying the way place names are used' (1968, 16).

While the difference emphasised by Allee exists, the fact of the matter is that *Bárðar saga* only exists as a single work. The question thus arises as to whether the different components of the saga make sense within the structure of a single work. How does the section where Gestr figures fit in with the saga that the author of *Bárðar saga* was composing? Could one author have composed a saga which has two distinct parts or are we dealing with a compilation of separate sagas by separate authors? These questions can only be answered by examining closely the structure of *Bárðar saga.*

The first section of the saga, in which Bárðr himself is the dominant figure, is more diverse than the second half and seems at first sight to be only loosely structured. The saga begins with information about Bárðr's ancestors and his youth, a sort of introduction to the main narrative which is common enough in Icelandic Family Sagas and

[16] Allee (1968, 17) considers the last verse to belong to the Gestr half; but this is at the end of a story which in most ways resembles the Bárðr half, and if we believe in a hypothetical **Bárðar saga*, the end of the saga would belong to this, and not to **Gests saga*, which would then have contained no verses.

indeed in biographies of all periods. The introduction serves the artistic function of delaying the appearance of the main character on the stage and at the same time it provides an historical causality, i. e. the nature of Bárðr is explained by his inheritance. Through the use of genealogy, the past and the present, the living and the dead, unite in an organic whole with a nature of its own. Thus a narrative of the hero's ancestors can predict his fate; as history repeats itself, the family's nature stays the same (cf. Clunies Ross 1993, 382–85). In *Bárðar saga*, the double nature of Dumbr (ch. 1) is emphasised, as is Bárðr's double nature to an even greater extent. He is a giant and thus handsome and of gentle disposition, but also a troll and thus moody and ruthless when he gets angry. His beauty is inherited from his mother, a being of unspecified nature who seems to represent the winter, and his wisdom from the sage giant Dofri in Dofrafjöll. This chapter is a description of Bárðr; he is explained in terms of his family and origins, a man and a giant and thus able to be originally one of the settlers of Iceland, and later a guardian spirit in a mountain. This is later used to explain why he enters the mountain: 'þat var meir ætt hans at vera í stórum hellum en húsum, því at hann fæddist upp með Dofra í Dofrafjöllum' (p. 119). Bárðr has mixed blood, being descended from giants, trolls and other beings. In entering the glacier, he is heeding the pull of this ancestry.

The settlement as described in the saga is also of great importance to the story as the origin of the history of Snæfellsnes, which in Bárðr has a founding father of enormous dimensions, akin to Skalla-Grímr or Geirmundr heljarskinn. The cause of the exodus and settlement is typical but the description of how Bárðr and his companions hallow the ground by giving names to places is unique (ch. 4).[17] The toponyms of Snæfellsnes become silent witnesses to the settlement of Bárðr. Each of the places where he makes his first sacrifice, where he first relieves himself and where he washes, derives its own name and its hallowed nature from its connection with the guardian spirit. The companions of Bárðr are also represented by toponyms. One by one, they settle in places which later become their memorial tombstones, relics of the past in the present. In this settlement chapter, Bárðr also makes his first appearance as the protector of the region in a typical story of exorcism and land purification, featuring Svalr and Þúfa who became troll-like ('trylldust') but were brought down by Bárðr.

[17] Helga Kress (1989, 135) considered this narrative to be the key to the saga: 'Bárðar saga fjallar um baráttu mannsins við náttúruna sem hann er að leggja undir sig með landnámi og stofnun samfélags.'

This is followed by the disappearance of Helga Bárðardóttir, following which the saga pursues two main strands. After this event, Bárðr takes up residence in the glacier and the next chapters deal with Bárðr as a regional protector, a sort of a collection of miracles where he shows himself to be a useful guardian spirit. This is described in general terms but there are also three examples, his aiding and abetting of Einarr Sigmundarson, Ingjaldr and Þórir Knarrarson. In the first case, Bárðr takes part in a conflict which was related in *Landnámabók*, where he is not said to have been present. These stories are no doubt based on regional folklore, and three verses, probably orally transmitted, are added in support of them, one in *Landnámabók*, two in *Harðar saga*. The longest narrative deals with the giantess Hetta who lures Ingjaldr, one of Bárðr's companions, out to sea. The tale has been shown to bear a remarkable likeness to a miracle story (Ólafur Lárusson 1944, 176) and has several parallels in medieval literature.[18]

The story of Helga Bárðardóttir is interlaced with these 'miracles', as it is the cause of Bárðr entering the mountain. A conflict arising from a game is exacerbated, as is common in the Icelandic Family Sagas, until Bárðr has killed two of his cousins and driven his half-brother from the region. This conflict is unique in the saga and can be shown to have four purposes. It adds new dimensions to the description of Bárðr, showing him to be both loyal to his friends and ruthless to those who have wronged him, and asserts his twofold nature which was commented upon at the beginning of the saga. Also, it moves Þorkell bundinfóti from *Bárðar saga* to the historical reality of *Landnámabók* where he settles Rangarvellir.[19] Thirdly, it causes Bárðr to enter the mountain and become guardian spirit of the Snæfellsnes region. Fourthly, it serves to introduce the tragedy of Helga Bárðardóttir.

Helga is described in the following manner: 'Helga var kvenna vænst. Hon þótti ok með undarligu móti þar hafa komit, ok fyrir þat var hon tröll kölluð af sumum mönnum; svá var hon ok karlgild at afli, til hvers sem hon tók' (p. 115). After Helga has drifted to Greenland she becomes the concubine of Miðfjarðar-Skeggi and saves his life, but he does not marry her and the saga comments that it is not known whether

[18] Gotzen 1903, 27–28. One is in *Víglundar saga* (82–84) where Þorkell skinnvefja also figures, and this has sometimes been taken to indicate that *Bárðar saga* is older than *Víglundar saga* and used by it. If this is so, one wonders why Ingjaldr is not mentioned in *Víglundar saga*, as he is said to be the uncle of Ketilríðr in *Bárðar saga*.

[19] *Landnámabók* 350–51. Gotzen (1903, 16) has commented upon this.

they had any children. When Bárðr learns of this, he brings her home but she has no joy thereafter, does not belong anywhere, travels around the country and is unable to find herself a new home.[20] Helga is neither troll nor human and this becomes her tragedy and, in fact, that of her whole family. This makes *Bárðar saga* essentially tragic in tone.

The story of Helga is an example of a story dealing with love between a human male and a female ogress, but from the opposite point of view to that taken in such stories. *Bárðar saga* is unique in describing this kind of relationship from the perspective of the woman, and thus a comic tale becomes tragic. It is no accident that Helga is confused with Guðrún Gjúkadóttir. She resembles her in being larger and fairer than her human contemporaries, doomed to drift, to recite verses of sorrow and play the harp. But she can also be violent, as the womanising Norwegian who tries to rape her discovers (ch. 7). The ultimate role of Helga in the saga is nevertheless that of a babysitter; she fosters her brother, Gestr, for a year, thus finally acting the role of a mother in spite of having no descendants, one more similarity with Guðrún Gjúkadóttir.

There were doubtless independent tales circulating about Helga, even poems, which may have been drawn on by the author of *Bárðar saga* (cf. Gotzen 1903, 20–23). The tale of Helga is, nevertheless, indispensable to the unity of *Bárðar saga.* The chapters following the settlement of Bárðr may seem discontinous but each of them has one of two functions: a) to provide a depiction of Bárðr and his use to the community, b) to relate the desperate attempts of Bárðr and his family to maintain their line by marrying into human families. The family line of Bárðr becomes extinct with his death and that of his children. This is the final tragedy of *Bárðar saga* and in chs 5–12 the futile attempts of Bárðr to prevent this fate are depicted (cf. Pulsiano and Jón Skaptason 1984, xvi). First he loses Helga but then he learns that she is alive and the mistress of a married man. He therefore fetches her home, since she and Skeggi are unable to have children together. This venture is nevertheless in vain: Helga leaves him and becomes a lonely wanderer.

Ch. 9 marks the beginning of a new attempt by Bárðr to maintain his line. He invites Tungu-Oddr to a Christmas feast and marries his daughter to him, while educating him in matters of law. The knowledge Bárðr has acquired in the mountains of Dofri must continue in the

[20] This is reminiscent of the story of the wandering Jew (Metford 1983, 259–60) which may in Iceland have become attached to Guðrún Gjúkadóttir, unable to die and doomed to walk the earth for the crimes she committed against her own family.

family. But the tragedy persists; after three years of childless marriage Þórdís dies, in spite of great love between the newlyweds.[21] The Oddr episode bears many resemblances to legendary sagas, portraying the fostering of the hero by giants, from whom he gains wisdom, and his subsequent marriage to a daughter of these giants who later dies (cf. Ellis 1941, 78–83). The difference lies in the context. This episode is not part of the saga of the hero (Oddr) but the saga of the giant (Bárðr), which changes its meaning entirely. Finally, chs 11 and 12 depict Bárðr's last desperate attempt to maintain his dynasty by seducing the daughter of Miðfjarðar-Skeggi in disguise and getting her with child.[22] The offspring of this union is Gestr, who subsequently takes over as the hero of the story.

The emphasis placed upon these procreative attempts by Bárðr and his family makes the saga a tragedy since, as is stated at the conclusion of the saga, they fail: 'Ekki er getit, at Gestr Bárðarson hafi nökkur börn átt. Ok lýkr hér sögu Bárðar Snæfellsáss ok Gests, sonar hans' (p. 172). The saga of Bárðr is more decisively concluded than any other Icelandic Family Saga, as the future is out of his family's reach. This makes the saga tragic, though modern readers may find some irony in this; as Hilda Ellis has pointed out (1941, 76), Bárðr is a teacher of genealogy but his own family comes to an end.

Various small episodes are woven into the saga, which, though unconnected with the main story line, serve as descriptions of the life of the inhabitants of Icelandic mountains or, occasionally, as light relief. One is the episode of Lágálfr (ch. 9). This is a folktale about a man who hits his wife, wherupon a passer-by cuts down a sack of meal which hits the man on the head and stuns him. Thus the side of the woman is taken, as is often the case in *Bárðar saga.* The same applies to the story of Skjöldr and Gróa. They come to Iceland with Bárðr but discover that their temperaments are ill-matched, and Gróa leaves her husband. The saga does not condemn this at all and in its description of troll feasts the females of the species (Hít, Jóra and Guðrún knappekkja) enjoy the same respect as the males. The saga also provides one of the few examples in medieval Icelandic literature of friendship between a male and a female on an equal basis, that between Bárðr and Hít (ch. 13).

[21] Hilda Ellis (1941, 72–75) has observed that sexual liaisons between humans and trolls invariably end unhappily.

[22] As Gotzen (1903, 43) and Pulsiano and Jón Skaptason (1984, xix) have suggested, he gains from this the additional pleasure of avenging himself on Skeggi.

Although the first half of *Bárðar saga* could at first sight be said to resemble a discordant collection of assorted material, it has been given a strong unity, so that there can be no doubt about the integrity of the saga until ch. 12, where the second half of *Bárðar saga* begins. From ch. 14 to ch. 21 two distinct tales are related which are so different in atmosphere from the first half that it is tempting to consider them the work of another author. The end of the saga (ch. 22), however, is mostly incorporated from *Landnámabók*, like much of the material in the first half of the saga. In addition, the last chapters of the first half form what could be seen as a prologue to the second half and have often been considered to belong to **Gests saga*, even though Bárðr figures in them. Hence there is some reason to believe that the connection between the first and the second half of the saga is stronger than has often been claimed. On the other hand, if these two Gestr-episodes are an integral part of the saga, the next question must be: What is their function in the saga?

The episode in chs 14–16 has several Icelandic and foreign parallels (cf. Gotzen 1903, 49–51; Boberg 1966, 117, 120, 139, 145 and 232; *Bárðar saga*, 153 n.). Its plot is simple: A troll promises to wed his daughter to a human with the purpose of luring him into a trap and killing him. The troll is conquered with the aid of a superhuman helper. The deep structure is a conflict between nature and civilisation as in most adventures and folktales.[23] Kolbjörn and his trolls represent nature and are repeatedly likened to animals. They eat in animal fashion 'ok rifu sem ernir ok etjutíkr hold af beinum'. When drinking mead they become 'svíndrukknir' and when Gestr hurts one of them he yelps 'sem varghundr'. Later they make 'miklu meira óhljóð en frá megi segja, því svá má at kveða, at þeira hljóð væri líkari nágöll en nökkurs kykvendis látum' (pp. 153–54). They are coarse and rude, noisy and quarrelsome and completely devoid of any kind of manners.

Kolbjörn is described in much the same vein: 'Sér hann mann, ef svá skal kalla. Þessi maðr var mikill vexti ok mjök stórskorinn; bjúgr var hans hryggr, ok boginn í knjám, ásjónu hafði hann ljóta ok leiðiliga, svá at hann þóttist önga slíka sét hafa, nef hans brotit í þrim stöðum, ok váru á því stórir knútar; sýndist þat af því þríbogit sem horn á gömlum hrútum; hann hafði stóra járnstöng í hendi' (p. 148). Kolbjörn is so

[23] It can indeed be described by Greimas's actant-model, Þórðr being the subject of the story, Sólrún the object, Gestr the helper and Kolbjörn the villain (cf. Hawkes 1977, 87–95).

beastlike that he hardly qualifies as a human, in contrast to Gestr and his family. He resembles a ram and his death is in fact portrayed as the slaughtering of a beast: 'Í því kom Gestr at ok þreif í hjassann á Kolbirni, en setti knéin í bakit svá hart, at þegar gekk ór hálsliðinum; hratt Gestr honum þá dauðum ofan af Þórði' (p. 157).

The story is full of traditional narrative motifs. The stealing of sheep is a specifically Icelandic one (Gotzen 1903, 48); a game as the origin of conflict is common in the Icelandic Family Sagas, as is a wise counsellor (Miðfjarðar-Skeggi) who knows exactly what has happened. Like the monster Grendel in *Beowulf*, the beast has a mother. Even this ogre is wise in this feminist story. The part that Gestr plays is nevertheless the defining aspect of the story. He is a 'trickster', a figure placed between nature and civilisation, who resolves the conflict and turns out to be the half-brother of the human protagonists, Þórðr and Þorvaldr. In this narrative, Gestr plays a role similar to Bárðr's guardian spirit role in the first half of the saga, a bit like 'Son of Tarzan'. The episode introduces Gestr in the role of Bárðr's substitute. Thus it serves as an introduction to the second episode, where Gestr is the protagonist.

When this episode is over, Norway again becomes the setting, for a conversion episode of sorts (chs 17–21).[24] It depicts a conflict between Christianity and heathendom and the message is that the assistance of the Christian God is more useful than the help of heathen gods, shamans and a guardian spirit like Bárðr. The episode is constructed around a traditional mound-breaking motif and tells of a journey from civilisation to nature where the antagonist is one of the living dead (cf. Boberg 1966, 159). Again, a traditional folktale-motif forms the basis of the story with the repetition of motifs giving it structure. Three ogres are forced to go underground. Heathen assistants are thrice powerless and the priest Jósteinn, representing Christianity, has to lend a hand; the fourth time King Óláfr Tryggvason himself has to help. The mound of Raknarr has to be broken into three times, and so on. This episode has analogues in other well-known texts, including the Bible, *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Icelandic sagas: *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Harðar saga* and several legendary sagas. These motifs will not be discussed here as they have been

[24] Gotzen (1903, 52, 61–63 and elsewhere) and Stefán Einarsson (1966) discuss the Christian influences in this part of the saga and similar motifs in the accounts of the conversion in *Flateyjarbók*.

commented upon by others. Raknarr himself is a demon, representing evil itself and far more dangerous than the trolls Gestr dealt with in Iceland.[25] On his quest, Gestr is armed with all kinds of useful gadgets as well as his own strength but nothing works except crucifixes, holy water and the will-power of saints and clerics.

The message of this episode is clear: Christ is the only God and his helpers are better in time of need than any guardian spirit. Heinz Hungerland (1905, 390) considered this to be the message of the story: 'Die einheit der komposition scheint mir gewahrt durch den gedanken des siegreichen ringen des Kristentums mit dem heidnischen volksglauben'. But it seems a great deal of effort to compose a long saga about a settler and regional protector on Snæfellsnes for the sole purpose of then showing his uselessness in comparision with the God of the Christians. Until ch. 17, there are only two scenes involving heathendom or Christianity. The dream of Bárðr in ch. 1 forebodes the new religion, and has several parallels in the Bible and Christian literature (Þórhallur Vilmundarson, *Harðar saga* 1991, xxvi). In addition, the heathen god Þórr appears in ch. 8, although his role there is very opaque. It is thus a gross overstatement to regard the conflict of heathendom and Christianity as the centre of the story. What, then, is the role of these final chapters? One explanation seems to suggest itself. The author of *Bárðar saga* must have realised that the Church would not look kindly upon an heroic saga about heathen protectors competing with Christ. The author's interest in trolls and *landvættir* must thus be reconciled with a Christian view of the world. Therefore, he inserts in his saga an apologetic conversion episode which proves that in spite of all his might, Bárðr is still inferior to God. This is indeed explicitly stated, when the author tells of Bárðr's education: 'váru þetta allt saman kallaðar listir í þann tíma af þeim mönnum, sem miklir váru ok burðugir, því at menn vissu þá engi dæmi at segja af sönnum guði norðr hingat í hálfuna' (p. 103).

On the whole, Bárðr and his family are kind creatures who assist people in need and must not be confused with evil trolls like Kolbjörn and his lot, Hetta, Torfár-Kolla, Svalr and Þúfa. Nevertheless, their time has passed when Christianity comes to Iceland. Bárðr realizes this and therefore his prophetic dream about the tree is 'ekki mjök skap-

[25] Jón Jónsson (1901), Gotzen (1903, 54–55) and Þórhallur Vilmundarson (*Harðar saga* 1991, 162 n.) have discussed the origin of this story and each has his own theory.

felldr' to him (p. 104).[26] His efforts to maintain his line are in vain and his defeat is complete when the fruit of his last attempt, Gestr, betrays the religion of his ancestors. Bárðr appears to him in a dream and curses him so that Gestr dies in his white christening gown. The family of Bárðr disappears as Iceland becomes Christian. This was inevitable and Bárðr knew it from the outset; this is one more factor making his saga a tragedy. At the conclusion of the saga, the only people remaining are those helped by Gestr: Þórðr, Þorvaldr and Sólrún. The saga reveals that their progeny were many. But Bárðr has no offspring. He is history.[27]

4. *Conclusion*

Bárðar saga has long been considered an Icelandic Family Saga and the saga belongs in this category, though its material may be somewhat extraordinary. The chief difference is that the main characters of *Bárðar saga* are trolls, not humans. The saga, however, makes no clear distinction between the two, as both trolls and humans were part of fourteenth-century reality. The source material of the author was both written and oral, chiefly *Landnámabók* and folktales from the Snæfellsnes region. The latter part of the saga is characterised by its use of motifs found also in the Bible and numerous other Icelandic and foreign literary sources. The author of *Bárðar saga* concocts facts to strengthen the unity of his saga, which was to him a work of history. *Bárðar saga* would not be considered 'historical' by modern standards, but historical criticism has changed drastically since the saga was composed. The historical value of folktales has been rejected and doubt has been cast on the historical value of *Landnámabók.* However, there is nothing to show that the author of *Bárðar saga* had any doubts of this kind. Scholars have doubted the historicity of *Bárðar saga* because there are elements of the 'supernatural' in it, but the author of *Bárðar saga* would not have known this term.

Bárðar saga may seem disjointed but I firmly believe that it is a unified work and that every part of the saga can be understood in the context of its main theme. The driving force behind the saga is an

[26] Schach (1982) has pointed out that the reluctance of Icelandic saga heroes to accept Christianity is a motif and does not have to be seen as a negative trait.

[27] The saga at one juncture tells us that 'helzt þat alla stund síðan, meðan Bárðr lifði' (*Bárðar saga*, 112) and also that 'í þann tíma var Hít tröllkona uppi' (142). These creatures obviously belong to the past. They are no more.

interest in the past which in this case is directed towards the superhuman Bárðr Snæfellsáss and his family. The saga places them firmly in the context of Icelandic history and uses *Landnámabók* to this end, linking Bárðr and his family to renowned Icelanders of the tenth century. The latter part of the saga is a necessary epilogue to make peace with the most powerful social institution of the fourteenth century, the Church. Bárðr Snæfellsáss and his family were part of a past which Icelanders tried to recreate in writing the Icelandic Family Sagas and other historical works, a part of the historical past and not a fabrication of a clever forger with unclear motives or a novel by a romantic artist, satisfying his boundless 'lust zu fabulieren'. *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* is an historical work of its own period that has become a work of literature with the passage of time.

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ON THE OLD NORSE SYSTEM OF SPATIAL ORIENTATION

By TATJANA N. JACKSON

PRINCIPLES OF SPACE ORIENTATION that characterise the *Weltmodell* of a medieval Scandinavian can be studied through the analysis of works of Old Norse literature. This is clear from certain published discussions of specifically Icelandic orientation, i. e. the semantics of orientation with regard to Iceland and to coastal navigation as reflected in the Icelandic Family Sagas (*Íslendingasǫgur*).

Since my interests mostly concentrate on the Icelandic Kings' Sagas (*Konungasǫgur*), I decided to examine them on the same subject. So as not to mix up my results with those of my predecessors I shall call principles of spatial orientation found in different saga genres by different names. I shall call 'Iceland-centred' those principles that have been observed in the *Íslendingasǫgur*, and 'Norway-centred' those that I manage to single out within the *Konungasǫgur*.

Before turning to my material I find it useful to give a summary of the results achieved in the study of 'Iceland-centred' orientation.

Two papers by Stefán Einarsson (1942 and 1944) are purely descriptive, but they have been brilliantly summarised and generalised by Einar Haugen (1957). Haugen's material, in its turn, has been re-presented and partially commented upon by Elena Melnikova (1978, 125–26; 1986, 33) and Kirsten Hastrup (1985, 51–57).

As it follows from the analysis of the *Íslendingasǫgur*, terms of cardinal direction were not monosemantic in Iceland; their meaning depended on the context in which they were used. Directions expressed by them could either correspond or not correspond to the compass. This means that the terms of direction could be used by the Icelanders with both 'correct' (better to say, 'approximately correct') and 'incorrect' meanings.

While summarising the material collected by Stefán Einarsson, Einar Haugen distinguished two types of orientation in space. He called them 'proximate' and 'ultimate'.

'Proximate' orientation is the one that is based on visual experience, both in the vicinity (cf. phrases like *fyrir norðan kirkjuna*, 'north of the church') and in the open sea, where celestial observation is the only possible way of defining one's location and of finding one's way. Cardinal terms are used in this case 'correctly'.

It is worth noting in this respect that the proper directions had been well known to the Icelanders since the time of their migration from Norway in the ninth century. They brought along with them not only the names of the four cardinal directions (*norðr*, *austr*, *suðr*, *vestr*), but also the names of the intermediate ones, those that reflected the peculiarities of the western coast of Norway. Thus, *landnorðr*, 'north by the land' meant northeast, *útnorðr*, 'north and out, away' meant northwest; correspondingly *landsuðr* meant southeast, and *útsuðr* southwest (cf. Stefán Einarsson 1942, 46; Haugen 1957, 451).

'Ultimate' orientation in space developed in land travel and in coastal navigation between the four Quarters (*fjórðungar*) that Iceland was divided into in 965 and which were named after the four cardinal directions. Going 'west' (from any geographical point within Iceland) meant movement towards the Western Quarter, going 'north' towards the northern part of Iceland, and so on. Accordingly, cardinal terms are used here 'incorrectly'.

The 'ultimate' system is the one where directions are described in terms of a goal (each Quarter being a goal). Kirsten Hastrup (1985, 55) stresses that in such usage social coordinates enter into the physical ('objective') coordinates of space. Along with traditional terms for the designation of direction (*norðr*, *austr*, *suðr*, *vestr*), use is made of prepositions and adverbs with spatial meaning, such as *inn*, 'inside', *út*, 'out', and *upp*, 'up', *ofan*, 'down'. According to Kirsten Hastrup's precise characterisation (1985, 57), 'ultimate' orientation was 'society-centred', as opposed to 'ego-centred', 'proximate' orientation.

Sagas (though in a lesser degree than geographical treatises) also bear a reflection of a third orientation principle, a 'cartographic' one (cf. Podossinov 1978) which is connected with a theoretical system of geographical ideas. We can find it in the opening lines of *Ynglinga saga*, the first saga of Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (I 9–10):

> Kringla heimsins, sú er mannfólkit byggvir, er mjǫk vágskorin. Ganga hǫf stór ór útsjánum inn í jǫrðina. Er þat kunnigt, at haf gengr frá Nǫrvasundum ok allt út til Jórsalalands. Af hafinu gengr langr hafsbotn til landnorðrs, er heitir Svartahaf. Sá skilr heimsþriðjungana. Heitir fyrir austan Ásíá, en fyrir vestan kalla sumir Evrópá, en sumir Eneá. En norðan at Svartahafi gengr Svíþjóð in mikla eða in kalda . . . Ór norðri frá fjǫllum þeim, er fyrir útan eru byggð alla, fellr á um Svíþjóð, sú er at réttu heitir Tanais . . . Hon kømr til sjávar inn í Svartahaf . . . Sú á skilr heimsþriðjungana. Heitir fyrir austan Ásíá, en fyrir vestan Evrópá.

Kringla heimsins is divided, according to Snorri, into three parts, *heimsþriðjungar*. In *Ynglinga sag*a, however, Snorri names only two of

them, the eastern one, Asia, and the western one, Europe, while in his *Edda* Snorri also names the third part of the world, Africa. Thus, in the 'scholarly' introduction to the *Ynglinga saga*, Europe occupies the western part—and in Snorri's *Edda* and in geographical treatises the northwestern part—of the world circle. It is quite evident that the introductory chapters of *Ynglinga saga* reflect Old Norse geographical ideas on a theoretical level. The world-view described here answers to the main medieval cosmological concept. At the same time most of those geographical data that are spread over the sagas have a clearly different character, being a fixation (although a specific one) of the practical knowledge of Scandinavians collected during the Viking Age.

However, a 'cartographic' view of Norway can be found in the sagas not only in the 'scholarly' introductions, but also in those cases when, following the plot, the author needs to describe the boundaries of Norway. Thus, we read in *Saga Ólafs Tryggvasonar* by Oddr Snorrason (1932, 83–84):

> Sa var konungr forðum er Nori het er fyrst bygði Noreg. en suþr fra Noregi er Danmork. en Suiþioð austr fra. En uestr fra er England. En norðr fra Noregi er Finnmork. Noregr er vaxinn með iij oddum. er lengð lanzins or utsuðre i norðr ætt fra Gautelfi oc norðr til Ueggestafs. En breiddin oc uiddin or austri oc iuestr fra Eiðascogi oc til Englandz sioar. En landit er greint oc callat þessum heitum Vik. Horðaland. Uplond. Þrondheimr. Halogaland. Finnmork.

This description is strikingly close to reality. The three outstretched parts are: 1) the main southwestern part of Norway, 2) the narrow strip of land going as far north as Finnmark, and 3) the southeastern region which used to be much larger than at present and reached as far as the Göta.

Norway has no southern and western land-borders; from those sides it is washed by the waters of the North and the Norwegian Seas. To the north of Norway, beginning with *Vegestaf*, there was Finnmark. The eastern border (with Sweden) ran along the Göta, then through *Eiðaskógr*, and in its northern part, along the mountain range *Kjǫlr*. Correspondingly, only the northern and eastern borders of Norway are mentioned:

> Óláfr konungr enn digri lagði þá undir sik allan Nóreg austan frá Elfi ok norðr til Gandvíkr (*Fagrskinna* 178).
>
> Fra ægestaf norðan oc allt til ælvar austr (*Ólafs saga hins helga* 27).

In *Viðbætir við Ólafs sögu hins helga* in *Flateyjarbók* (IV 11) there is the following passage:

> Hann [Ólafr Haraldsson] var einvaldskonungr yfir Noregi svá vítt sem Haraldr hinn hárfagri hafði átt, frændi hans, réð fyrir norðan Gandvík, en fyrir sunnan Gautelfr, en Eiðaskógr fyrir austan, Öngulseyjarsund fyrir vestan.

The description of Norway here corresponds closely to the one in a geographical treatise of the last quarter of the twelfth century (AM 198, 8°; *Alfræði íslenzk* I 11):

> Noregr er kalladr nordan fra Vêgistaf, þar er Finnmork, þat er hia Gandvik, ok sudr til Gaut-elfar. Þesa rikis ero endimork: Gand*vik* fyrir nordan, en Gaut-elfr fyrir sunnan, Eida-skogr fyrir austan, en Aunguls-eyiar-sund fyrir vestan.

This 'theoretical' understanding of Norway being stretched far from south to north (which in fact is not quite correct since the real direction is from southwest to northeast) finds its reflection also in those 'practical' parts of the Kings' Sagas which mainly tell of events in Norway. Saga heroes, primarily kings and earls, preparing themselves for battles, carrying out the Christianisation of their land, and solving their political problems, move from one place to another (within Norway) along its coastline, but they also go on long trips to the Baltic Sea, to the Atlantic Ocean or to the Mediterranean Sea. The directions of their movements are often indicated by saga writers.

To start my analysis I have taken *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* from Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (I 225–372) and tried to choose those cases in which the terms of direction *norðr*, *suðr*, *vestr*, *austr* and their opposites—*norðan*, *sunnan*, *vestan*, *austan* —are used.

The material falls naturally enough into two large groups: terms of orientation within Norway, and those outside.

When the saga tells us about journeys *within Norway* the most common direction is the *northern* one: *norðr* is mentioned twenty-eight times (226, 241, 243, 247, 261, 275, 276, 277 (three times), 278, 293, 302, 303, 308, 310, 311 (twice), 315, 320, 322, 324, 325 (four times), 334, 344), along with seven cases of *norðan* (245, 276, 278, 279, 307, 325, 343). It stands in clear opposition to the *southern* direction: *suðr* eighteen times (244, 246, 248, 249, 250, 272, 276, 277 (twice), 309, 321, 322, 324, 325, 328, 334 (twice), 348) and *sunnan* twice (244, 324). The terms are used both in a general sense (when we are told, for instance, about the king's plans to go to the north of his country next summer) and in situations when we are told about some concrete enterprises (the messengers are sent, as is told in the saga, north and south, both by land and by sea along the coast: *bæði norðr ok suðr með*

landi it ýtra ok it øfra 344). The terms can be applied to the whole coastline, from the southernmost point (from Agder *norðr á Rogaland* 277; *suðr til Víkrinnar* 334) to the far north (*norðr í Qmð* 325; from the island of Þjótta *suðr í Þrándheim* 322).

The *easterly* direction may also be singled out: seven times *austr* (228, 302 (twice), 303, 307, 309, 370) and *austan* twice (308, 314). But it is mostly used when describing territories in Norway (370), estates (302), people (308), the army from the eastern regions (314), etc., and rarely in connection with journeys.

The terms of direction can be applied not only to the whole country, but on a smaller scale. For instance, in the district of *Vík* (modern Oslofjord), one goes to the north of *Vík* from the south of *Vík* (303), i. e. from *Konungahella* on the Göta (310), etc. The king is said to have baptised all the people *austr um Víkina* (303). The king sails *suðr með landi*, *suðr um Stað*, and by early winter he comes *austr allt í Víkina* (309).

When the saga states that the king has given land to one of his kinsmen *norðan frá Sognsæ ok austr til Líðandisness* (307), the phrase is organised like the above quoted descriptions of Norwegian borders; only its northern and eastern boundaries are named because the sea forms the southern and the western boundaries.

It is easy to see that the saga describes journeys within Norway mostly in the northerly and southerly directions, while the easterly ones are rarely mentioned and the westerly never. Cardinal terms are used here 'correctly'. Accordingly we can say that the inner 'Norway-centred' system uses 'proximate' orientation, in Einar Haugen's terminology, although it is not restricted to local use but rather is extended to apply to directions throughout the large country of Norway.

Turning now to orientation *outside Norway*, as it is reflected in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, we can see that the system here has four main directions.

East. *Austr*—from Norway to Sweden (227, 229, 299, 311, 337); within Sweden (from Skåne to Gotland 255); from Sweden to Russia (*Garðaríki* 230); from Denmark to Skåne and *Gautasker* (260), to Sweden (349), to *Vendland* (349, 351). *Austan*—from *Vendland* to Norway (351); from Sweden to Denmark (351); from *Garðaríki* to the *Norðrlǫnd* via the Baltic Sea (252).

West. *Vestr*—from Norway to the *Vestrlǫnd* (291), to Orkney (241), to Ireland and Dublin (291), to England (320). *Vestan*—from Orkney to Norway (243), from Ireland to Norway (292).

South. *Suðr*—from Norway to Denmark (286), to *Vendland* (338); via Denmark, over Öresund and to *Vendland* (348); from the island of Bornholm to *Vendland* (252); from Sweden to Denmark (349). *Sunnan*—from Denmark to *Vík* (240); from *Saxland* to *Danavirki* (257); from *Vendland* to Norway (353).

North. *Norðr*—from Denmark to Norway (250).

Thus, the picture is as follows: to the east of Norway there are *Svíþjóð*, *Vendland*, *Garðaríki*; to the south, *Danmǫrk*, *Saxland* and again *Vendland*; to the west, *Orkneyjar*, *Írland*, *England*. The position of *Vendland* (the land of the Baltic Slavs) is dubious, since it lies to the south of the Scandinavian peninsula, near the 'southern' *Danmǫrk*, but traditionally Wends are considered to be among the *Austrvegsmenn*, the peoples living along the eastern route.

It is very significant that there is no occurrence of direction from the north (*norðan*). I find this phenomenon quite easy to explain; here we are dealing not with the 'ego-centred', but with the 'society-centred' orientation system. The centre of orientation here is not an 'ego', but a society, in our case the country, and this country is Norway. But Norway is a northern country. Its very name, *Nóregr*, has originated from the word *norðrvegr* that had served as a designation of a route to the north.

Old Norse sources have preserved four place-names of the type 'cardinal point + *vegr*/*vegir (vegar)*'. *Austrvegr* is often used, both in the singular and in the plural, while the three other directional terms are rarely used, and then mostly in early texts and only in the plural: *Vestrvegir* on a Swedish rune-stone, *Suðrvegar* in *Guðrúnarkviða II*, *Fóstbrœðra* saga and Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, and *Norðrvegar* in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*. These names could have served as designations of various actual routes in the easterly, westerly, southerly and northerly directions. Thus we see that medieval Scandinavians knew four 'ways' named after the four cardinal directions. The centre of this wind rose, as it may be called, could hardly have been Norway because the country itself was understood as one of the 'ways', the 'way' towards the north. It is evident that the original names of the country and its inhabitants, respectively **Norðvegr* and *Norðmenn*, could not have been of native origin (no peoples call themselves northern or southern). The name must have originated to the south of Norway, somewhere in the north of Europe (north Jutland?), or in the northern part of the Danish islands, or in the south of Scandinavia. And this is likely to have happened long before the sources in question were written down (Jackson and Podossinov 1997).

Early Scandinavians imagined the inhabited world (or the world visited by them) as consisting of four segments in accordance with the four routes corresponding to the four cardinal points. In the course of time all other lands in this system came to be viewed with respect to this country that occupies the northern 'segment'; I would even say, the northern quarter.

The position of other lands in their relation to Norway looks quite natural and even 'approximately correct', provided we take into consideration that sagas rarely use intermediate directions. Only once does the saga state that the wind *gekk til útsuðrs ok vestrs* (260).

Up to now I have not considered those cases that make us doubt the 'correctness' of the terms of direction in the orientation outside Norway.

The saga tells, for instance, how Óláfr Tryggvason came to England from Norway, sailed *allt norðr til Norðimbralands*, then again *norðr til Skotlands*, from there *suðr til Manar* (the Isle of Man), and then *til Bretlands* (Wales). From there he sailed *vestr til Vallands* (France), then he decided to return from the west (*vestan*) to England, but reached *Syllingar* (the Isles of Scilly), to the west of England (*vestr í hafit frá Englandi*, 264).

Óláfr Tryggvason's movements within Britain are described on the principles of 'proximate' ('correct') orientation. But suddenly he sails *vestr*, from Wales to France, and *vestan*, from France to England. These directions are not simply 'incorrect', but they are in strong opposition to the 'correct' ones. I can find two possible explanations: either Snorri was merely mistaken, or, in his understanding, France belonged to the Western lands (*Vestrlǫnd*), and a trip to France is described not in its relation to England, where the hero has just been, but in its relation to the position of Norway in this system of orientation.

In fact, this is not an accidental mistake made by Snorri. France is understood as a western country not only by him, but also by an anonymous author of another compendium, *Fagrskinna.* Thus, speaking about Sigurðr Jórsalafari (the Crusader) both authors tell us that Sigurðr had come from Norway to England and that next spring he sailed *vestr* to France (*Fagrskinna* 315; *Heimskringla* III 240).

His further trip to Spain also turns out to be a western journey. He comes to Lisbon, now in Portugal, but then a large city in Spain, as Snorri characterises it, where heathen Spain was separated from Christian Spain. All the territories *er vestr liggja þaðan* are heathen (III 242). Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson comments on this usage: '*suðr* would be correct. For a long time the river Tagus separated the lands of Christians and

Muslims' (III 242 n.). If we look at the map we shall see that this river runs from east to west. Thus, the lands lie to the north and to the south of it, and here Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson was quite right. But I don't think that he was right to draw our attention just to this particular place in the sagas, since there are many cases when the indicated direction is in contradiction with the real one. We should either make our comments in each such case or accept the picture of the world as it was in the eyes of medieval Icelanders.

It was a matter of pure chance that I chose *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* with which to start my analysis. To my great disappointment there was scarcely any mention of eastward movements (which interest me most). Nevertheless I would like to enumerate those passages of the Kings' Sagas, such as they are, where voyages *austr* or *austan* are mentioned.

East of Norway are *Svíþjóð* 'Sweden' (*Fagrskinna* 178), *Eysýsla* 'the island Saaremaa, near the coastline of modern Estonia' (*Fagrskinna* 167, *Heimskringla* II 9, 10), *Kirjálaland* 'Karelia' (*Fagrskinna* 178), *Finnland* (*Fagrskinna* 167), *Garðar*/*Garðaríki* 'Russia' with *Aldeigjuborg* 'Ladoga' (*Fagrskinna* 141, 143, 165; *Heimskringla* II 414–15; *Orkneyinga saga* 54). Travellers go *austan* from *Hólmgarðr* 'Novgorod' to *Aldeigjuborg* 'Ladoga' (*Heimskringla* III 3), which is not 'correct' at all, since in fact it is a movement in a northerly direction; and from Ladoga to Scandinavian countries (*Heimskringla* III 91; *Orkneyinga saga* 55). It is quite evident that all the lands round the Baltic Sea, as well as those within eastern Europe, beyond the Baltic Sea, were considered to be eastern lands. By the way, the name of the Baltic Sea in Old Norse sources is *Eystrasalt* (*Heimskringla* I 252).

This *easterly* direction was thus used not only with respect to countries, but to smaller regions and towns within those countries. And thus the description of movements became still more 'incorrect'.

We can find such absolutely 'incorrect' directions in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (371) where it is told, among other things, that a Norwegian Augmund of Spanheim went from *Bjarmaland* ('the land near the White Sea') *austr* to *Suðrdalaríki* ('the land of Suzdal'), and thence *austr* to *Hólmgarðar* ('the land of Novgorod'), and from there *hit eystra* ('by the eastern (or more easterly) route') to the sea, and thus as far as *Jórsalir* ('Jerusalem'). Even with only the slightest idea of a map of Eastern Europe, one can understand that the indicated directions have nothing to do with the real ones.

This illustrative material is not complete, although it is typical, I think, of the whole set of data concerning Eastern Europe. Any move-

ment within the 'eastern quarter' is nearly always claimed to be movement *austr* or *austan*, which in the majority of cases is 'incorrect'.

The problem of source reliability that always troubles a historian can be viewed from a new angle. Among other questions that have to be answered there appears one more: should we disbelieve saga information on Eastern Europe because its geographical terminology seems to lack consistency, or should we explain all these apparent exceptions by the specific character of the Icelandic *Weltmodell*? I prefer to take the second position.

I have again used intentionally the term 'quarter' when speaking about European lands. In the 'Norway-centred' world-picture there exist, as we could see, four segments: the northern (that is Norway itself); the western (the Atlantic lands such as England, France, Iceland, Orkney and others); the eastern (the Baltic lands and the lands far beyond the Baltic Sea such as Russia); and the southern (Denmark and Saxony). The set of lands in each segment is quite permanent. The movement from one segment into another is defined not according to the compass points, but according to the accepted naming of these segments. Thus, when somebody goes from Sweden to Denmark he is said either to go *suðr* (*Heimskringla* I 349) because Denmark belongs to the 'southern segment', or to go *austan* (*Heimskringla* I 351) because Sweden belongs to the 'eastern segment'. This number of examples can easily be expanded. But, to prove that such 'segments' are not merely my invention and that they really existed, I want to remind you of such names, found in medieval sources, as *Austrhálfa* 'eastern region', *Norðr(h)álfa* 'northern region', and *Vestrhálfa* 'western region'. It is worth noting that there is no mention of the name *Suðrhálfa* in Old Norse sources (cf. Metzenthin 1941, 8, 76, 117). I think the reason for this is that practically all the lands that we now consider southern belonged, according to the medieval Scandinavian world-picture, to western or to eastern lands.

There are no descriptions in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* of trips to *Bjarmaland* (on the White Sea) or even to *Finnmark* (which is somewhat closer to Norway). If there were such stories, we would undoubtedly encounter some cases of an adverb *norðan* being used, since this was the way to describe journeys from those lands (*Heimskringla* II, 232). It looks at first sight as if I am contradicting myself in saying, on the one hand, that the 'ultimate' orientation has no term *norðan* and, on the other, that journeys from *Bjarmaland* and *Finnmark* were described with the help of this term. But, in my view, *Finnmark* and *Bjarmaland*

were understood by Icelandic writers as part of the *Norðrvegr*, as a continuation (in the northern direction) of the Norwegian coast and territory. I am sure that it is not accidental that *Finnmǫrk* is named in the passage quoted above (p. 74) from *Saga Ólafs Tryggvasonar* by Oddr Snorrason not only as a land lying to the north of Norway, but also in the list of Norwegian lands. Compare in *Historia Norwegiæ* (78):

> Quarta H a l o g i a, cujus incolæ multum Finnis cohabitant et inter se commercia frequentant; quæ patria in aquilonem terminat Norwegiam juxta locum Wegestaf, qui Biarmoniam ab ea dirimit.

I am sure that journeys to these lands and back to Norway were described on principles of 'proximate' orientation.

We can say that when the Kings' Sagas speak of voyages outside Norway, spatial orientation is described in terms of a goal, this goal being one of the four segments of the world, and that the orientation is, in the majority of cases, 'incorrect'. I find it possible to say that this is nearly the same as the 'ultimate' system of orientation that had been formed in Iceland during journeys from one quarter into another and that found its reflection in the *Íslendingasǫgur.*

The specific character of the 'Norway-centred' system lies in the fact that while the 'Iceland-centred', 'ultimate' system of orientation had no permanent fixed centre, and the authors of *Íslendingasǫgur* effectively followed their heroes throughout Iceland, the 'Norway-centred', 'ultimate' system of orientation was constructed with respect to Norway. Such a transformation should not surprise us; it originates from the differences between the saga genres. The attention of *Íslendingasǫgur* is concentrated on Iceland as a whole, while *Konungasǫgur* are concerned with Norwegian history. That is why the attention of the authors of the Kings' Sagas is directed towards Norway, but not towards other lands and countries.

The spatial and geographical structure of saga texts is not homogeneous. 'Proximate' and 'ultimate' orientations cross and intermingle as, for instance, in the passage from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* discussed above (p. 78) where Óláfr sails to England (which must be understood as *vestr*), moves along its coast north and south ('proximate' orientation) and then goes *vestr* to France ('ultimate' orientation). The 'Cartographic' system of orientation is also observed in the same texts. This switching between systems causes problems for saga translators and interpreters. But these problems can be solved if attention is paid to the way of thinking of a medieval Scandinavian and to his *Weltmodell.*

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PROFESSOR JAMES E. CROSS (1920–96)

Jimmy Cross died on 18 December 1996. He was President of the Viking Society 1964–66, and a long-serving Member of Council. We miss his cheery presence, and it is meet, right and our bounden duty to pay tribute to his achievement.

Jimmy was a West-Countryman from the Forest of Dean. He went up to Bristol University in 1938 to read English, and it was there that the Second World War found him. He served in the Field Artillery, in North Africa, and at D-day in France, where he was severely wounded. In 1945 he returned to Bristol, took his first-class B.A. and went on to a Diploma in Education. He made his acquaintance with Scandinavia in 1947 when he was appointed English lektor at Lund University, holding that post for two years. In 1949 he returned to Bristol as a lecturer, becoming Reader in 1962, in which year he took his Swedish doctorate. In 1965 he was elected Baines Professor of English Language at Liverpool University in succession to Simeon Potter, and remained there until his retirement in 1987.

His *Festschrift*, published in 1985, catalogues his publications up to then. It is a formidable list as those who have tried to match his continuous stream of offprints know: more than seventy books, articles and notes, as well as many reviews. Nor did his research cease when he retired. A couple of dozen more items were to appear, including an important volume, a detailed study of a manuscript, Pembroke College, Cambridge, 25. In his introduction to that book he speaks of how he ignored 'the boundaries of separate disciplines', calling in the help of 'librarians, palaeographers, historians, experts on Latin and Celtic writings', as well as fellow Anglo-Saxonists. This was one of Jimmy's great strengths, his concern with the intermingling of cultures and disciplines. His Presidential Address to the Society is a case in point: his joint survey of the Old Swedish *Trohetsvisan* and a Chaucerian poem on a similar subject. It also informed his most important work, which traced relationships between Anglo-Latin and late Old English prose writings. Here he was one of the exponents of the study that was to develop into the prestigious *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* project.

He was eager to write on major themes like this, yet his restless mind did not neglect detail. In some of his most characteristic writings he would tussle at the meanings of Old or Middle English words that he thought had been neglected or misunderstood, probing their contexts. What we might call his Cross word-puzzles. Who but he would have written a learned article on the Anglo-Saxon elephant?

Though the British Academy did notice his existence by inviting him to give the Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture in 1972 ('The literate Anglo-Saxon'), Jimmy was one of those scholars, perhaps not untypical of his age and specialism, who are more honoured outside the United Kingdom than at home. He became an Honorary Docent of the University of Lund, a Visiting Professor at the University of Rochester, N.Y., and at Yale, a Senior Fellow of the Society for the Humanities at Cornell, and was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America. And he was a welcome lecturer in Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland.

It was a very full scholar's life, and we are fortunate to have known him.

R. I. PAGE

DAVID ANTHONY HOWELL EVANS

David Evans, M.A., a long-standing member of the Viking Society, died on 22 April 1997. He was born in 1932 in Sheffield, educated at Manchester Grammar School, The Queen's College, Oxford, and Háskóli Íslands, Reykjavík, at which university he was awarded the degree of Baccalaureatus Philologiae Islandicae. He began his professional career lecturing in Modern English at the University of Uppsala. He returned to England, where he lectured in Icelandic in Oxford. Later he went once more to Uppsala, after which he took up a post at Háskóli Íslands. Finally, in 1978, he was appointed lecturer with special responsibility for Icelandic studies in the Department of Old and Middle English at University College Dublin. Among David's most striking characteristics were his loyalty to his heritage and his devotion to his chosen fields of studies. He took pride in being of Welsh extraction and taught himself Welsh. His love of Greek literature, instilled in youth, remained with him all his life. He spoke Icelandic and Swedish with the greatest fluency and was proud to count himself among the pupils of Gabriel Turville-Petre and Einar Ól. Sveinsson. As a teacher he was patient and caring, and he was much admired for his learning as well as his wit and humour. At University College, in addition to his work in Icelandic and Old and Middle English, he took great interest in the work of the Classics Department, contributed significantly to the M.Phil. programme in Medieval Studies and frequently attended the postgraduate seminars in Irish Folklore. Everything that David did bore the imprint of his total

dedication to truth and scholarly standards. In his reviews, not least in *Saga-Book*, he spoke out loud and clear against inferior workmanship and unfounded speculations. His own scholarly contributions include the excellent article 'King Agni: myth, history or legend?' (in *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. Ursula Dronke *et al.*, Odense, 1981, pp. 89–105) and the carefully-executed edition of *Hávamál*, published by the Viking Society in 1986. This book I am proud to own in a copy inscribed by the author 'with thanks for thirty years' friendship in Reykjavík, Uppsala and Dublin'. In spite of his peripatetic career, David remained an Oxford man at heart. There, in his spiritual home, he kept a flat, which he visited as often as he could. He had looked forward to returning to Oxford for good after his retirement; but it was not to be. He was suddenly struck with severe illness, which he endured with characteristically stoic resolution, retaining his intellectual curiosity and his ironic wit to the very end. He will be missed: in his home country, in Ireland, in Sweden, in Iceland—and everywhere where scholarship, integrity and good humour are held in high esteem.

Bo Almqvist

NOTE

THE IRISH NICKNAME OF SITRIC CAOCH (D. 927) OF YORK

By ANDREW BREEZE

SITRIC, king of Dublin and York, figures in many history textbooks. The son of Sitric (d. 896) and grandson of Ívarr the Boneless (d. 873), Sitric Caoch had a turbulent career. In 888 he killed his brother Sicfrith; in 917 he defeated a Leinster army at Leixlip and recaptured Dublin; on 15 November 919 he killed Niall Glúndubh (who ruled much of northern Ireland) at the battle of Islandbridge, near Dublin; expelled from Dublin in 920, he invaded north-west Mercia and destroyed Davenport (now a suburb of Stockport in Greater Manchester); he became king of York in 921 on the death of his cousin Ragnald; on 30 January 926 at Tamworth he married the sister of King Athelstan. Sitric died in early 927, and was succeeded at York by Olaf Cuaran (a son by a previous marriage), whom Athelstan quickly supplanted (*ASNP*, 62–63; *BB*, 44–45; Stenton 1971, 334; Smyth 1975–79, *passim*; Sawyer 1978, 115; *EHD*, 218).

This note deals with Sitric's nickname *caoch*, which is occasionally applied to him by scholars (Dolley 1958, 275; *EWGT*, 136). It is rarely explained correctly, however. In discussing Sitric's son Olaf Cuaran, Dunn thus states that Olaf had an Irish name, 'just as his father Sihtric Caoch had been given an Irish cognomen (*caoch* "squint-eyed" or "blind")' (1965, 247; cf. Breeze 1997, who rejects Dunn's explanation of 'Cuaran'). In a Yorkshire Museum pamphlet, Hall similarly translates *caoch* as 'squinty'; Simon Evans, on the other hand, translates it as 'blind' (impossible here) and, better, as 'one-eyed' (Hall 1976, 17; *HGK*, 48–49). Dinneen understood Modern Irish *fear caoch* as 'dim-, one-, or squint-eyed man, a blind man' (*IED*, 159–60). More recently, *caoch* has been translated as 'blind, purblind', with no reference to one-eyedness or squinting (*FGB*, 185). Yet in the oldest Irish the sense *caoch* 'squint-eyed' was apparently unknown. There the standard sense is 'one-eyed'; also, more generally, 'purblind, dim-sighted' (*DIL*, s. v. *cáech)*. These senses of Old Irish *cáech* may be compared with those of its cognates Middle Welsh *coeg* 'vain; blind'; Old Cornish *cuic*, which glosses *luscus vel monophthalmus* 'one-eyed'; Latin *caecus* 'blind'; and Gothic *haihs* 'one-eyed' (*GPC*, 529; Mac Mathúna 1979; Vendryes 1987, 6). Old Irish *cáech* is also used as an epithet, as of the Ulster king

Congal (d. 647), who (like the legendary Cormac mac Airt) was deprived of the sovereignty of Tara when he lost an eye (Byrne 1973, 58). Early Irish law stipulated that no king with a physical blemish could rule (Binchy 1970, 10). Marjorie Anderson notes that Congal is also known as *Cláen* 'the squinting' (1973, 150, n. 139). Whatever Congal's exact handicap, the existence of both *cláen* and *cáech* shows that the Irish distinguished a squint from loss of an eye.

In the light of this evidence, there seem no grounds for believing Sitric had a squint, still less that he was dim-sighted or blind. If he had been unable to see well, he would have made a poor general. Thus the obvious interpretation of Sitric's Irish epithet *cáech* is 'one-eyed'. The careers of Admiral Nelson, General Kutuzov (who defended Russia in 1812), and General Dayan show that a blind eye need be no bar to military effectiveness; and Sitric, a successful leader in war and peace despite the loss of an eye (presumably in fighting), may be added to their number.

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REVIEWS

THE BOOK OF REYKJAHÓLAR: THE LAST OF THE GREAT MEDIEVAL LEGENDARIES. By MARIANNE E. KALINKE. *University of Toronto Press.* Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1996. xii + 322 pp.

This erudite, yet engaging, book represents the culmination of Marianne Kalinke's recent work on Icelandic hagiography, several strands of which are brought together in this first full-length study of *Reykjahólabók* since Agnete Loth's edition of 1969–70 (*Editiones Arnamagnæanæ* A 15–16).

As Kalinke's title suggests, the principal significance of *Reykjahólabók* (Sth. Perg. fol. nr. 3), apart from the intrinsic quality of the texts it preserves, resides in two things: its place in historical time and its relationship to Continental hagiographic traditions. The manuscript was produced by Björn Þorleifsson of Reykjahólar during the late 1530s, just as Icelandic Catholicism entered its final throes. It comprises twenty-two saints' legends, three of which are essentially copies of twelfth-century translations from Latin. The remaining texts were newly translated by Björn from Low German sources (see p. 27). In the first part of her study, Kalinke seeks to establish a receptive and compositional context for *Reykjahólabók*. After an initial survey of the development of hagiography, and changing attitudes to it, in the German language area (pp. 1–23), Chapter Two comprises a thoroughly researched and well written account of religious and scholarly life in Iceland in the decades preceding the Reformation. In particular, Kalinke focuses her discussion on what is known of Björn Þorleifsson's educational background (pp. 27–32), and on an enumeration of hagiographic material known to have been available in Icelandic libraries during the sixteenth century (pp. 34–44).

Perhaps the most valuable part of this book is the fascinating account of the sources of Björn's original translations in Chapter Three (pp. 45–77). Kalinke takes issue with the view propounded most fully by Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Ole Widding (in articles in *Maal og Minne* (1960), 105–28, and *Germanic Review* 37 (1962), 237–62) that the *Reykjahólabók* legends are poor translations from the fifteenth-century Low German *Dat Passionael.* In an examination of episodes from the *Reykjahólabók* versions of *Hendreks saga ok Kunegundis*, *Jeronimus saga* and *Augustinus saga*, Kalinke demonstrates that the Icelandic texts derive from different redactions of the legends from those preserved in *Dat Passionael* and that, where its own sources have survived, *Dat Passionael* can be shown to have condensed them considerably. Close comparison between Erbernand von Erfurt's *Heinrich und Kunegunde* and *Hendreks saga ok Kunegundis* (pp. 52–54) suggests that, contrary to Bekker-Nielsen and Widding's impression, the Icelandic text is faithful to both the style and the content of its source in the pre-*Passionael* tradition. The immediate sources of the Icelandic legends are no longer extant, and *Reykjahólabók* thus represents the only witness to certain Low German branches of the hagiographic tradition which antedate *Dat Passionael* and its High German counterpart, *Der Heiligen Leben.*

Björn Þorleifsson's contribution to *Reykjahólabók* is examined in Chapter Four, which sheds interesting light on the nature of 'authorship' in late-

medieval Icelandic texts and manuscripts. A comparison of passages from the legends copied from existing Old Norse translations—those of SS. Ambrose, Lawrence and Stephen—with corresponding episodes in the *Codex Scardensis*, Mombritius and *Legenda aurea* versions indicates that Björn was a scrupulous transcriber and that, in some respects, his exemplars were superior to those used by the revisionist scribe of *Codex Scardensis* (pp. 81–95). That the sources of the translated legends were now-lost Low German texts is confirmed by Kalinke's exhaustive analysis of the 'Low Germanic' features of Björn's syntax and diction (pp. 95–105). Björn's concern for the overall tautness and internal logic of *Reykjahólabók* and its place in his wider hagiographical *œuvre* are discussed on pages 106–22. The paradox of the legendary's historical backdrop is alluded to here and explored in detail in Chapter Eight (pp. 245–48), where Kalinke concludes that, like Snorri Sturluson and Haukr Erlendsson before him, Björn was inspired by the literary qualities of the stories he sought to preserve.

The remainder of Kalinke's book is concerned with these literary qualities, and here, again, many of the concerns of the author's earlier work are evident. In Chapter Seven ('Sacred Romances'), for example, folklore elements in *Gregorius saga biskups*, *Hendreks saga ok Kunegundis* and *Osvalds saga* are considered in the light of bridal-quest motifs in romance literature. Kalinke suggests that the legends gain from being read in the context provided by other texts in the manuscript (though a list of contents would have helped in this respect). Her own retellings and readings are both learned and entertaining—I was amused to discover, for example, that S. Nicholas's remarkable vision of the 'whirling fish' may be explained as a transmission error (pp. 142–43).

The preface to *Flóres saga konungs ok sona hans* (quoted on p. 165) states that 'eru þeir fleiri menn, er lítil skemtun þykkir at heilagra manna sǫgum'. Let us hope that this highly enjoyable, scholarly study does much to redress the balance.

KATRINA ATTWOOD

WOMEN IN OLD NORSE SOCIETY. By JENNY JOCHENS. *Cornell University Press.* Ithaca and London, 1995. xvi + 266 pp. OLD NORSE IMAGES OF WOMEN. By JENNY JOCHENS. *University of Pennsylvania Press.* Philadelphia, 1996. xvi + 326 pp.

For some years now, Jenny Jochens has been one of the most prolific of scholars working on the perennially interesting theme of the role played by women in Old Icelandic history and literature. Thus the prospect of seeing this theme developed at book length, not once but twice, fills the reader with pleasant anticipation. These two volumes (henceforth *WONS* and *ONIW*) do not disappoint, in that they present a wealth of fascinating detail, never before collected to this extent. *WONS* offers a full picture of the lives of medieval Icelandic women, covering 'Marriage', 'Reproduction', 'Leisure', 'Work' and 'The Economics of Homespun'. From *ONIW*, the reader gathers an impression of the complex images of both divine and human females in Old Norse literature (categorised as 'Ancient Female Figures', 'Goddesses', 'The Warrior Woman', 'The Prophetess/Sorceress', 'The Avenger', 'The Whetter' and 'The Nordic

Whetter'). The justification for publishing two volumes, rather than a mammoth 'Old Norse Women', is thus apparently that one is essentially historical in approach, the other literary. Yet Jochens herself recognises that this division is artificial: not only are most of her sources 'literary' (though she does make use of laws), while her approach is essentially historical, in both books, but she also deliberately begins with the same thought linking 'historical' and 'literary' women in both. In *WONS*, Chapter One is entitled 'Guðný Bǫðvarsdóttir and Guðrún Gjúkadóttir: Nordic-Germanic Continuity', and in *ONIW* these two female figures are each given a subsection in the first chapter entitled 'The Germanic-Nordic Continuum'.

WONS, the duller book, is also the more successful. Jochens has read her sources carefully, extracted everything of relevance, and ordered it logically and systematically. Her historian's training gives her a certain bias towards the laws and the *samtíðarsögur*, but she also makes full use of *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur*. An Appendix on 'Sources' gives a sketchy account of the problems of historicity, with a superficial nod to 'poststructural theories' (p. 181), but on the whole Jochens' approach is that the texts mean what they say and, on these topics and in these sources, this works well enough. Jochens tries to make use of the fact that the sources are Christian, while many of them describe a world that is pagan, to develop an argument that women's history is more characterised by continuity than men's, but can only come to the rather contradictory conclusion that 'an underlying continuum characterises issues of women and gender in the Germanic-nordic world, a continuum modified by Christianity and technological advances' (p. 161). *Ça change, mais c'est la même chose.* The book does not need this woolly framework and Jochens is at her best when disentangling the fascinating details of laundry day (p. 123), storing curds (p. 131) or the significance of 'shaggy coats' (p. 144).

ONIW, too, is a useful collection of material. The sources now range from Tacitus, through runes and poetry, to *fornaldarsögur* (though still including other sagas and laws), and the approach is historical in the sense that Jochens gives a chronological or evolutionary explanation for everything. Thus, 'the invading patriarchal Indo-Europeans swept . . . away' the 'religion of the original inhabitants of the Germanic-Scandinavian territories where a full-fledged mother goddess reigned in some distant period' (p. 80). Or 'the brother-sister bond was more ancient than the husband-wife contract' so that, in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, Sigrún's 'brother Dagr's response to her curse is indicative of the old way of thinking' (p. 151). Jochens is much exercised by the 'decline of the female element' in religion (p. 79), magic (p. 128) and royal power (p. 173), yet concludes that 'most often strong women are images constructed by male imagination' (p. 214). Thus, the 'continuity-change' paradox governs *ONIW* as much as *WONS*. For Jochens, medieval Icelandic literature reveals 'the patriarchal tenor of the nordic world' in which it was produced (p. 214), but also resonates 'with a common Germanic background' (p. 206). In the obligatory Appendix on 'Sources', Jochens is not concerned with historicity, as in *WONS*, but with the paradox of Christian authors who, 'three centuries into the new millenium', could 'draw coherent pictures of pagan women'

(p. 233). Like many authors before her, Jochens seems most fascinated by women when they are pagan and dabble in magic, just as 'in nordic mythology Germanic men were prone to resort to women when they faced the unknown or the inexplicable' (p. 139).

Both books damage their cause by their presentation: it is depressing to find that two university presses did not apparently care enough either for academic precision or for the English language to edit Jochens' work more ruthlessly. *WONS* gets off to a bad start with lower-case *þ* used instead of upper-case *Þ* in the first four pages of the text (also sporadically elsewhere in the book, at pp. 68–72, 76, 265–66). Both books abound in stylistic infelicities (the following examples are taken from *ONIW*): Danicisms in the syntax (e. g. a Scandinavian use of the definite article as in 'the pagan Sweden', p. 48) or in the form of literal translations ('distributed on two persons', p. 165; 'little black skin book' [of the Codex Regius], p. 207; 'workwoman', p. 283); English words misused ('Malinowski interpreted myths as social charts', p. 33; 'a gray oxen', p. 44) or misspelled ('prophesy' as a noun, *passim*; 'born' for 'borne', *passim*); and mixed metaphors ('None of these strands can be isolated in a pure state . . . and the final amalgam of medieval civilization was achieved as the writings of the first two were filtered through the consciousness of the third', p. 13; 'This vignette was my lodestar', p. 29). This lack of precision can muddy the argument. Admittedly it is difficult to find a good English equivalent of *Hetzerin*, but Jochens has used 'female inciter' in *WONS*, p. 199, and in a previous article, and the choice of 'whetter' in *ONIW* is bizarre, particularly as her use of the term is gender-specific. Her feeling for the Old Norse language can also be shaky, and her lack of control of linguistic concepts is revealed in a number of unsuccessful stabs at etymological or onomastic explanation: *Guðríðr* is a 'derivative' of *Guðrún*, *WONS*, p. 13; in *fordæða*, 'the prefix *for-* adds a negative connotation to *dað* [sic] (deed) and designates a female by its form', *ONIW*, p. 128; 'Ildico suggests Germanic origin (similar to Norse Hildigunnr)', *ONIW*, p. 137; of *hvǫt*, 'the word is similar to English "whet"', *ONIW*, p. 163. This culminates in a gloriously bizarre explanation of how 'Kálfr's nickname [i. e. Eggjar-Kálfr], acquired together with a pagan wife, may have been the single spark that inspired Snorri to expand Sigríðr's role to *eggja* her new husband to avenge the alleged loss of her two sons', *ONIW*, p. 177. Many of Jochens' translations of Old Norse quotations could also have been sharpened up; thus nouns are sometimes translated as adjectives (*WONS*, p. 61), or the same line (*ok hugða ek þat args aðal*) is translated differently on two adjacent pages (*ONIW*, pp. 60–61). Her translations of Eddic poetry, in particular, tend to the impressionistic: a random example is when *Hárbarðsljóð* 30, *gladdak ena gullbjǫrto, / gamni mær unði*, is translated as 'the gold-bright one was happy / to give me pleasure' (*ONIW*, p. 58). These are not just typographical mishaps, but suggest a scholar uneasy with the language of her sources, which is unfortunate when she herself lays great stress on the linguistic and onomastic evidence (*WONS*, pp. 18, 20, 29–30, 42, 51, 61, etc.; *ONIW*, pp. 25–26, 65, 73–74, 76, 110, etc.).

JUDITH JESCH

THE POETIC EDDA. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by CAROLYNE LARRINGTON. *The World's Classics. Oxford University Press.* Oxford and New York, 1996. xxxiv + 323 pp.

Translations of the *Poetic Edda* into English are numerous. To date there are four well-known complete verse renderings, all of which have recently been reprinted: Henry A. Bellows (*The Poetic Edda*, 1923), Lee M. Hollander (*The Poetic Edda*, 1962), W. H. Auden and Paul B. Taylor (*The Elder Edda: A Selection*, 1969; and *Norse Poems*, 1981) and Patricia Terry (*Poems of the Vikings*, 1969, revised as *Poems of the Elder Edda*, 1990); there are also translations of some (not most) of the poems in the edition of Olive Bray (*The Elder or Poetic Edda*, 1908) and the superb work of Ursula Dronke (*The Poetic Edda* vols I and II, 1969 and 1997). Andy Orchard's version is forthcoming from Penguin in 1998. In prose we have the old renderings of *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (*CPB*), and of select poems in Daniel G. Calder *et al.*, *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry*, vol. II (1983) (*SA*). None of these translations is satisfactory, however: Bray, *SA*, and (at present) Dronke are incomplete, and the former two lack explanatory notes; *CPB*, Bellows, Hollander, and Auden/Taylor use unpalatable archaic diction, and are often forced into distortion in their attempts to reproduce Norse metrical forms in English; Hollander, Bellows, Bray and Auden/Taylor also obscure the organisational design of the main manuscript of the *Edda* by reordering the poems; most of these renderings (Dronke and *SA* excepted) also contain numerous manifest inaccuracies. In view of this an accurate, informed, and aesthetically pleasing new translation is a clear desideratum (cf. the opinion of Joseph Harris in Carol J. Clover and John Lindow, eds, *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, 1985, pp. 73–74). Carolyne Larrington's book fails to meet this need.

Larrington's short Introduction provides brief details of related works in Old Norse; a synthesised view of the Norse cosmos; outlines of the chief gods, races and heroes, and of 'mythic history'; sections dealing with the reception and critical interpretation of the *Edda* by English writers and by scholars; and details of Norse metre, which are marred by inaccurate descriptions of the stanza forms, and which are in any case somewhat otiose, since there is no real attempt to reproduce metre in the translation. The book is completed by an annotated index of names. There is general confusion over names, with no statement of principle about their treatment; some are translated in the text (e. g. 'New-moon' for *Nýi*, *Vǫluspá* 11.1.), some only in the Index (e. g. *Hild*, 30.4.), others not at all (e. g. *Draupnir*, 15.1., *Gunn*, 30.4.).

Larrington bases her translation on the latest edition of the standard text, *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, I. Text, ed. Gustav Neckel, 5th edn, rev. Hans Kuhn (Heidelberg, 1983) (*NK*). A detailed examination of her translation unfortunately shows it to be riddled with basic errors and stylistic infelicities; we have space here to record only the former from the first poem in the Codex Regius MS, *Vǫluspá*, but the lengthy list produced from this single text will provide sufficient indication of the overall unreliability of the book. This is the more surprising given that *Vǫluspá* is the

best-known poem in the collection, one for which detailed commentary and a glossary are available in the English version of Sigurður Nordal's edition (1978), and that the translator claims (p. x) that 'the poetry is not difficult to understand'. Numbers refer to stanzas/lines in Larrington's translation. The comments given reflect our own work on a new one-volume parallel text edition of the Edda.

Vǫluspá: **1.3.** 'wished', rather 'wish'; *vel* omitted. **2.1**. 'I, born of giants, remember very early' (!), rather 'I remember giants, born long ago'. **2.2.** *hǫfðo* omitted; 'then' is weak for *forðom.* **2.3.** 'I remember', second instance is an unwarranted addition. **2.4.** 'Measuring Tree', absent from Index, and not a proper name in *NK*. **3.4.** 'chaos yawned', the concept is rather of a void; *enn* omitted. **4.1.** 'First', rather 'Then'; 'the earth', rather 'land(s)'. **4.2.** 'the glorious ones who shaped the world between' (!), rather 'they who shaped glorious Midgard'. **4.3.** 'the hall of stones', rather 'the stones of the hall [i. e. earth]'. **4.4.** 'plants', rather 'leek' or 'grass'. **5.1.** 'Sun' personified (but not 'Moon'), an instance absent from Index. **5.3.** 'hall', rather 'halls'. **5.4.** 'place', rather 'places'. **6.1.** 'Powers' absent from Index. **7.1.** *Iðavelli* translated as 'Idavoll Plain' here, but as 'Idavoll' in 60.1.; Index lists both under 'Idavoll'. **7.2.** 'they', rather 'they who'; 'altars', *hǫrg* is sg. **7.3.** 'their' added. **10.1.** 'Then', rather 'There'. **10.3.** 'Many', rather 'many'. **10.4.** *dvergar* misconstrued as acc. **11.2.** 'West' wrongly numbered 11.1. in Index. **11.3.** 'and' added. **11.4.** Second 'and' added. **11–12.** Gap between stanzas inconsistent with statement on p. xxix. **12.1.** Second 'and' added. **12.2.** 'Colour and Wise', order follows *Hauksbók*, unnecessarily and without indication. **13.** All instances of 'and' added, except the second in 13.3. **14.2.** *lióna kindom* omitted; 'the people of Lofar', rather 'down to Lofar'. **14.3.** 'from the stony halls', rather 'from the stone of the hall [i. e. earth]'. **14.4.** 'dwelling', *siǫt* is pl.; 'Loamfield', *Aurvanga* is pl. Index mistakenly lists this as identical to the dwarf name Loamfield (*Aurvangr*) in 13.4. **15.3.** 'and' added. **16.3.** 'they'll', rather 'it will' (*þat* refers to *tal*). **17.3.** 'Ash' and 'Embla' wrongly numbered 17.4. in Index. **19.3.** 'valley', *dala* is pl. **19.4.** 'ever green', *æ* modifies *stendr*, not *grœnn.* **20.3.** 'is called', rather 'they called'. **20.4.** 'slips', *skíði* is sg. **20.5–6.** Misleading punctuation. **20.6.** 'sons', rather 'children'. **22.2.** 'seer' for *vǫlo*? Cf. title *The Seeress's Prophecy*; *vitti hon ganda* is problematic, but 'she charmed them with spells' is remote from most opinion. **24.1.** *oc* omitted; 'over', rather 'into'. **24.4.** 'indomitable' mistranslates *vígspá.* **25.3.** *alt* omitted. **26.3.** 'broke apart', rather 'were trodden on'. **27.3.** 'she sees, pouring down, the muddy torrent', rather 'she sees a river flowing in a muddy fall'. **27.4.** and **28.7.** 'wager', rather 'pledge'. **28.2.** 'the' unnecessary. **28.6.** 'Mimir', an instance absent from Index. **29.2.** 'a rod of divination', *spáganda* is pl.; the meaning 'spirits of prophecy' is more likely. **29.3.** 'all the worlds', rather 'every world'. **30.1.** 'coming', *komnar* is pp. **30.3.** *enn* omitted; *ǫnnor* misconstrued as referring to *skildi.* **32.1.** 'so' added; 'lovely' mistranslates *mær.* **32.2.** and **32.4.** 'began (to)' + inf., simple preterite perhaps better. **32.3.** 'very quickly', rather 'soon'. **35.2.** 'Loki' wrongly numbered 35.4. in Index; 'she recognized' misconstrues *áþeccian* 'like'. **36.1.** 'from poison

valleys', rather 'through poison-valleys'. **36.2.** 'of', rather 'with'; 'Cutting' wrongly numbered 36.4. in Index. **37.3.** 'Never-cooled Plain' entered as 'Never-cooled' in Index. **37.4.** 'who is', rather 'and he is'. **38.3.** 'fall', *fello* is pret. (*falla* is the *SnE* and *Hauksbók* variant); 'roof-vents', *lióra* is probably sg. **38.4.** 'the', rather 'that'. **39.1.** 'in' redundant. **39.3.** 'those who', *þannz* is sg.; 'seduced', *glepr* is pres.; 'the close confidantes', *eyrarunu* is sg.; 'of other men', rather 'of another'. **39.4.** 'Nidhogg' wrongly numbered 39.7. in Index; 'bodies', rather 'corpses'. **39.4–5.** 'sucks . . . tears', *saug* and *sleit* are pret. **39.5.** 'the corpses of men', rather 'men'. **40.1.** 'an', *in* is def. art. **40.2.** 'offspring of Fenrir' perhaps needs explanatory note; 'Fenrir' wrongly numbered 40.4. in Index. **41.1.** 'The corpses of doomed men fall' (!), rather 'He fills himself with the flesh (or blood) of dead men'. **41.2.** 'the gods' dwellings are reddened' (!), rather 'he reddens the dwellings of the gods'. **41.3.** 'the next summer', *sumor* is pl. **42.1.** *þar* omitted. **42.3.** *um hánom* omitted. **42.4.** and **43.4.** Inconsistent translation of *hani* obscures parallelism. **43.1.** 'for' mistranslates *um.* **44.2.**, **49.2.** and **58.2.** 'rope', rather 'bond, fetter'. **44.4.**, **49.4.** and **58.4.** Inconsistent translation of *sigtýva* obscures parallelism. **45.2.** 'bond', *sifiom* is pl. **45.3.** 'much' mistranslates *mikill.* **46.1.** 'are at play', rather 'play'; 'catches fire', rather 'is kindled'. **46.2.** 'Giallar-horn' not hyphenated in Index. **46.3.** 'Heimdall' wrongly numbered 46.2. in Index. **47.1**. 'tree', rather 'ash'. **47.2.** 'is loose', rather 'breaks loose'. **47.4.** 'Surt' wrongly numbered 47.7. in Index; 'kin', rather 'kinsman'. **48.2.** 'Giantland', an instance absent from Index. **48.3.** 'howl', rather 'groan'; 'their' added. **48.4.** 'princes' mistranslates *vísir* 'wise ones'. **49.1.** *nú* omitted. **50.3.** *enn* omitted; 'in anticipation' has no basis in text. **50.4.** 'corpse', *nái* is pl.; n. to *Naglfar* on p. 266 uncritically accepts Snorri's description of its being made from the nails of the dead. **51.2.** 'waves', rather 'sea'; 'Loki' wrongly numbered 51.4. in Index. **51.3.** 'There are the monstrous brood with all the raveners' (!), rather 'All the kindred of the monster journey with the wolf'. **52.2.** 'the sun of the slaughter-gods glances from his sword', questionable interpretation—'the sun shines from the sword of the slaughter-gods' is more orthodox. **52.3.** 'crack open', rather 'crash'. **53.3.** 'Surt' wrongly numbered 53.6. in Index. **53.4.** (and elsewhere) 'must', rather 'will'. **54.** Numbered 55 in *NK*. No mention of the repetition of the half stanza refrain in *Hauksbók.* **54.2.** 'Vidar' wrongly numbered 54.3. in Index; 'Beast of Slaughter', rather 'carrion beast' for *valdýri* (absent from Index, and not a proper name in *NK*). **54.4.** 'Loki' wrongly numbered 54.7. in Index; 'Loki's', rather 'Hvedrung's'. **55.** Numbered 55H. in *NK*; no indication given that this stanza is found only in *Hauksbók.* **55.1.** 'in the air', rather 'across the sky'. **55.2.** 'terrible jaws of the serpent', rather 'jaws of the terrible serpent'; 'above' is weak for *í hæðom* 'in the heights'. **55.4.** brackets unnecessary; 'Vidar' wrongly numbered 55.7. in Index. **56.1.** 'of Earth', rather 'of Hlodyn'. **56.3.** 'of earth' mistranslates *miðgarðz.* **56.4.** 'leave' is weak for *ryðia* 'abandon'; 'homesteads', *heimstǫð* is sg. **56.5.** 'Fiorgyn' wrongly numbered 56.10. in Index; 'child', rather 'son'. **58.1.** *nú* omitted. **59.2.** 'Earth', rather 'earth'; 'Earth' absent from Index. **59.3.** 'water-fall', *forsar* is pl. **60.4.** 'Mighty One', rather 'Mighty god'. **61.3.** *hǫfðo* omitted. **62.1.** 'Without sowing the fields', rather 'Unsown fields'. **62.2.** 'ills' for sg.

bǫls. **62.4.** 'sage's', questionable—*NK* has *Hroptz*; 'palaces', rather 'victory-sites'. **63.2–3.** 'widely, the windy world', rather 'the wide wind-world'. **64.3.** 'noble lords', rather 'trustworthy men'. **64.4.** 'spend their days in pleasure', rather 'enjoy pleasure throughout eternity'. **65.2.** 'judgement-place', rather 'divine rule'. **66.3.** 'Nidhogg' wrongly numbered 66.5. in Index.

It is regrettable that Oxford University Press should lend its name to a work of such deficient scholarship, still more regrettable that as a result many new readers will place their trust in its accuracy.

EDWARD PETTIT
JOHN PORTER

EGILS SAGA: DIE SAGA VON EGIL SKALLA-GRIMSSON. Herausgegeben und aus dem Altisländischen übersetzt von KURT SCHIER. (Series:) *Saga: Bibliothek der altnordischen Literatur,* (subseries:) *Island—Literatur und Geschichte.* (No volume number in series.) *Diederichs.* München, 1996. 391 pp.

The present volume is a 'completely revised edition' of Kurt Schier's *Die Saga von Egil,* which the Diederichs Verlag had published as volume 1 of a short-lived series *Saga* in 1978. According to an advertising leaflet from 1996, the new series called *Saga: Bibliothek der altnordischen Literatur* is to encompass five subseries and two companion volumes, with two or three volumes appearing each year; for the subseries *Island—Literatur und Geschichte* alone twelve volumes are projected. Should this ambitious plan succeed (at this writing four volumes have appeared), it will put an end to the long interregnum in the German-speaking world that has followed the lapsing out of print of almost all the texts of the venerable *Sammlung Thule.* (A set of five new translations by Rolf Heller, including *Egils saga*, had appeared in 1982 but is also currently out of print.)

The translation has been revised on many points of detail: the few inaccuracies pointed out in reviews of the 1978 edition have been corrected (though the correction made by D. A. H. Evans in *Saga-Book* 24:5 (1997), 355–56 appeared too late), the diction has frequently been modernised and the word order adjusted for clarity, longer compound sentences have been split up, and additional paragraph breaks have been introduced. The text has moved slightly further in the direction of modern idiomatic German, but it remains accurate and stylistically close to the original (tense shifts are retained and personal and geographical names remain untranslated, for example), which is Schier's stated goal. The footnotes have been eliminated and their content relegated to the endnotes and the index of names.

Rather too modestly, Schier claimed in 1978 to have translated the verse into 'prose' (1978, p. 11), a statement that was repeated by that edition's reviewers but was nonetheless patently untrue, as proved by the word order (e. g. 'nicht rühm ich dessen sehr mich', *lausavísa* 11). For the new edition he has gone further in the direction of poetry and now admits to using a 'rhythmically tightened structure' with some alliteration, while continuing to reproduce the

kenning constructions faithfully (1996, p. 17). The resulting compromise is both accurate and aesthetically pleasing, without the disadvantages of a strict *dróttkvætt* imitation. The *lausavísur* have been made still more accessible by the introduction of prose paraphrases into the fine-print apparatus following each strophe.

The 'Einführung' (pp. 11–19) is now more than twice as long as its 1978 version, but only minor changes have been made to the rest of the apparatus, which consists of additional texts (the full texts of Egill's three long poems, Ohthere's travelogue), seventy pages of endnotes, a thirty-five-page 'Nachwort', a bibliography, genealogical tables, maps, a name index and a subject index. The five archaeological illustrations in the 1978 edition have all been eliminated, two maps added, the bibliography shortened, the timeline removed from the 'Nachwort' and made a separate appendix, and slight rewordings and additions (primarily a sprinkling of references to recent scholarship) made to the notes and 'Nachwort'.

Sad to say, the revised apparatus was not proof-read as carefully as its predecessor. There are dozens of new typographical errors (I found only two that were carried over from the first edition), most involving elementary problems of word processing: character spacing, paragraph indenting, capitalisation, the use of italic and bold type, the use of quotation marks vs. italics for quotations and for secondary work titles (lack of consistency on this point repeatedly leads to confusion), hyphenation at line breaks, and the 'special' characters of Icelandic and German (some appear in the wrong place or not at all; some acute accents are missing). One cross-reference was left with the page numbers from the 1978 edition uncorrected: on p. 338, the reader should be referred to pp. 270–73, not 301–04, for the notes on the battle of Vínheiðr. Carelessness is especially evident in material added or changed since 1978. A telling example is on p. 320: after a reviewer of the first edition (Joseph Harris in *Speculum* 55 (1980), 396) pointed out that the reference to *Haupteslösung* here should really be to *Sonatorrek*, this correction was undertaken, but the result is both misspelled and in the wrong font. Another compounding of errors occurred when the note to the place name *Eyr* (ON *Eyrr*) in ch. 19 was expanded by—evidently thoughtless—copying from the corresponding note of Sigurður Nordal's in his edition ('*Eyrr* er *Skáneyrr*; þar var fyrrum fjölsóttur kaupstefnustaður'): the headword was changed from the correct *Eyr* of the 1978 edition (this is the form used in the translation) to *Eyrr* and supplemented by the tag 'auch *Skáneyrr* ("Eyr in Schonen")'. This is followed, as in 1978, by the correct geographical and historical identification, which is good, but as the name *Skáneyrr* occurs nowhere in *Egils saga*, it has no business being a headword in a textual note, and in any case neither name should have had a double *r* (or an acute accent) here. To add to the confusion, the phantom has been absorbed into the name index as well: '*Eyr* (*Eyrr*) = *Skaneyr* (*Skáneyrr*)'. Other examples of this kind could be mentioned. More serious is the fact that when the bibliography was shortened (inexplicable enough in itself), twelve of the works cited in abbreviated form in the notes and 'Nachwort' were left stranded there without corresponding entries in the bibliography. Also, the

number of references given under certain headwords in the subject index (e. g. 'Neiding', 'Runen') has been reduced—it is not clear whether by accident or design.

Other things were not changed that might have been. It is puzzling that Schier acted on almost none of the specific points of criticism that the first edition's reviewers had made regarding the lexical consistency of the translation (especially Marianne E. Kalinke in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 79 (1980), 301–02) and details of the apparatus (especially Harris, *loc. cit.*). The systematic transliteration of *æ* as *ae* instead of *ä* (*Saeun*) and *œ* as *oe* instead of *ö* (*Moer*), though not criticised by earlier reviewers, is in my opinion a pointless irritant in a German-language text: although it does establish unambiguous transliterations for *æ* and *œ*, others remain ambiguous (*ö* = both *ø* and *ǫ*, *d* = both *d* and *ð*, vowel length is unmarked), so this is no justification; nor can pronunciation be an argument, since the table on p. 240 tells readers that the sounds are pronounced *ä* and *ö*; the practice is not followed consistently anyway (*Ägir*); and most importantly, it is bound to disturb and mislead readers—such as the book's own typesetter, who divided *kva-edi* on p. 247.

A certain logical inconsistency resonates throughout Schier's commentary. In the newly written parts of the introduction, on the one hand, Schier repeatedly reminds the reader of the necessity of treating the sagas as literary creations of the thirteenth century and distances himself from the idea that they 'reflect "Germanic" thought and action, "Germanic" behaviour and ethical norms, in short the "Germanic" mind, and are therefore a part of our own past' (p. 11). He has toned down or deleted some of his earlier remarks in the 'Nachwort' on the historicity of *Egils saga* and its value for the study of Germanic religion. But there are also signs that he is not entirely willing to relinquish a belief in the saga's historical reliability that deviates considerably from the consensus of modern saga scholars. What is one to make, for example, of the bald statement that 'Egil is a historical person . . . and much of the scaldic poetry attributed to Egil was really composed by him' (p. 12)? Similarly, on p. 338 Schier triumphantly cites the information given in *Arinbjarnarkviða* as proof that the saga's account of Egill at York must be based on fact—and as a lesson that one cannot judge the historicity of a story by its plausibility—even though on p. 322 he had grudgingly had to admit with Baldur Hafstað that Egill's authorship of the poem cannot be proved. Contradictions aside, the apparatus remains full and reliable, even if it may not deserve Harris's label 'thorough and up-to-date' to the extent that the 1978 version did.

Marvin Taylor

ISLÄNDISCHE ANTIKENSAGAS. BAND I: DIE SAGA VON DEN TROJANERN, DIE SAGA VON DEN BRITISCHEN KÖNIGEN, DIE SAGA VON ALEXANDER DEM GROSSEN. Herausgegeben und aus dem Altisländischen übersetzt von STEFANIE WÜRTH. (Series:) *Saga: Bibliothek der altnordischen Literatur,* (subseries:) *Unterhaltung und Gelehrsamkeit.* (No volume number in series.) *Diederichs.* München, 1996. 342 pp.

This collection of 'sagas of the ancient world', which apparently is to be followed by at least one more volume with the same title, contains German translations of the *Hauksbók* recensions of *Trójumanna saga* and *Breta sǫgur,* including the poem *Merlínusspá* (which is translated into Wagnerian long lines), and of the longer version of Brandr Jónsson's *Alexanders saga* (AM 519 a, 4to), together with the younger 'Letter of Alexander to Aristotle'. The volume inaugurates a subseries devoted to 'entertainment and learning' in Kurt Schier's new series *Saga,* and it follows the plan familiar from Schier's *Egils Saga*: the translations are preceded by a 'Vorwort' (pp. 7–8) and followed by notes (pp. 283–300), a 'Nachwort' (pp. 301–24), a bibliography, and an index of personal and place names for each saga.

Würth has produced an eminently readable and idiomatic translation, though this entailed taking certain liberties with the text. Conjunctions are added, deleted or changed (e. g. *ella* > 'und', p. 35), often in such a way that parataxis becomes hypotaxis; lexical consistency is not a high priority, nor does Würth shy away from introducing specialised terms such as 'Omen' and 'Orakel' in place of Icelandic circumlocutions (pp. 27, 46); the sequence of tenses is normalised in such a way that shifts occur only between sentences. Although the apparatus contains extensive discussion of the translation procedure the Icelandic writers followed, Würth reveals next to nothing about her own procedure (she says only that tense shifts were retained 'as far as possible', p. 8), so it is difficult to say how many of the discrepancies between original and translation are deliberate. In any case, some translations are clearly wrong, which is regrettable for a book that is sure to be relied on by medievalists of various disciplines for translations of these important texts, even though I am inclined to give it higher marks for accuracy, all in all, than Rolf Heller was willing to do (in *Germanistik* 38 (1997), 844). Some syntactic phenomena were not recognised, such as the conditional force of the present subjunctive in 'hafi (hann) . . . vil ek . . .' (p. 46), the compound genitive in 'einka vin foður mins oc minn' (p. 242), the preposition *at* (not conjunction of result) in 'at þat ma hverr maðr ætla . . .' (p. 154), or the interrogative conjunction *hvárt* (not pronoun) in 'Hvart hyggið er . . .' (p. 159). Würth makes a family of five siblings out of 'Kastor ok Pollox af Sparta brœðr Eline . . . ok Klitemestre ok Agamemnon' (p. 16); the text is corrupt, but *Agamemnon* cannot be a genitive parallel to *Klitemestre*, and Finnur Jónnson solved the problem a century ago by inserting *átti* after the last *ok*: 'and (she) was married to Agamemnon'. Many logical links between clauses are distorted (a baffling example is the passage on the snakes on p. 276: both Würth's translation and her explanatory note are contradicted by the Icelandic), and the boundaries between indirect speech, direct speech and narration are occasionally misplaced (as on pp. 13, 45, 47);

the paragraph break on p. 148 should logically have come two sentences earlier. A recurring problem is the translation of genuine superlatives as if they were intensives (e. g. 'þickir sv saga sannlegvz' > 'sehr glaubwürdig', p. 44, similarly p. 47). I did not find other lexical mistranslations as serious as those cited by Heller, but there are numerous minor inaccuracies: 'vier Fesseln' (p. 22) for *.iii. fiotra* 'drei Fesseln'; 'seiner Natur eher entspreche' (p. 25) for *nær sinv skapi vera* 'ihm lieber sei'; 'Ich hoffe' (p. 26) for *vettir mik* 'Ich erwarte'; 'Hör doch die ewige Schmach' (p. 30) for *heyr þar eilifa vfrægð* 'Welch ewige Schmach'; 'so geschah nun mehrerlei gleichzeitig' (p. 35) for *þa dro nv til hvartveGia* 'dazu führte nun mehrerlei'; 'hier' (p. 44, twice) for *þar* 'dort'; 'mit List' (p. 46) for *smiðvelvm* 'mit mechanischen Vorrichtungen'; 'Ketten' (p. 46) for *festar* 'Seile'; 'schrecklich' (pp. 229, 231) for *hervelegan, herveligre* 'erbärmlich'; and others. There are also omissions, such as *ok þaðan* (p. 47) and *hinir nanvstv* (p. 48).

The apparatus is less full than that in Schier's *Egils Saga*, but the reader can look forward to a separate monograph by Würth on the subject of the Icelandic *Antikenroman*, which is promised in the bibliography. Besides supplying background information on the Norse texts and the principal Latin sources, the notes and 'Nachwort' concentrate on cataloguing the stylistic and substantive changes made by the translators. While many remarks are useful, some remain speculative, since neither a precise Latin source text nor a clear manuscript history is available for all parts of all the texts, and some are presented in a rather confusing way. The reader who turns to the 'Nachwort' after having read *Die Saga von den Trojanern* in this book will be puzzled to learn on pp. 307–09 that 'die *Trójumanna saga*' (without specification of manuscript) added direct speech to the account of Hercules's attack on Ilium and omitted the content of Paris's dream: this is true of all manuscripts of the saga *except* the one translated in this volume. (The note to p. 24 explains the manuscript transmission of Paris's dream correctly.) By eliminating repetition in the apparatus, room might have been made for more informative notes. The mythological prologue unique to the *Hauksbók* version of *Trójumanna saga,* one of the most intriguing texts in the book, gets surprisingly short shrift, and various problems are oversimplified; for example, Würth's notes on the *interpretatio Germanica* of Saturn and Jupiter (to pp. 11, 13, 17, 64, 160, 184) paint an incomplete picture of the variety of name-equations attested in other texts. Aside from some inconsistencies in the treatment of names, I found only half a dozen typographical errors, none serious.

MARVIN TAYLOR

RUNES AND RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS: COLLECTED ESSAYS ON ANGLO-SAXON AND VIKING RUNES. By R. I. PAGE. Edited by DAVID PARSONS. Bibliography by CARL T. BERKHOUT. *The Boydell Press.* Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1995. xiii + 346 pp.

These twenty-three articles, written over thirty-seven years, are here reprinted in the order of their original publication with two exceptions: the first, 'Quondam et Futurus', a survey by Professor Page of the current state of Anglo-Saxon

runic studies, written specially for this book, and the twenty-first, '*Runeukyndige risteres skriblerier*: the English Evidence', dating from 1987 but never before printed. The essays deal chiefly with Anglo-Saxon runes and runic inscriptions, though two are included on the Scandinavian runes of the Isle of Man. Professor Page's scholarly interests are, of course, much wider than this collection might imply; just how wide is revealed by the full list of his publications from 1957 to 1994 which closes the volume.

A distinctive feature of this book are the brief, newly-written 'Postscripts' appended to most of the articles, in which Page considers new evidence that has come to light since he originally wrote and recent developments in scholarly opinion relevant to his topics.

'Quondam et Futurus' (1994) ranges widely over Anglo-Saxon runic studies. R. Derolez's contention that we should treat epigraphical and manuscript runes as manifestations of a single tradition rather than of two separate ones is queried. Page thinks the choice is much wider: 'there may have been many different permutations of runic and roman knowledge' (p. 4) among Anglo-Saxon inscribers and scribes. A more important question, he argues, is the degree to which the two traditions, both obviously rooted in epigraphy, have diverged by the time of the surviving Anglo-Saxon inscriptions and runic manuscripts. Variations between roman and runic letters in inscriptions are difficult to interpret, partly because of our imperfect dating techniques and partly because we cannot judge who was responsible for the choice of script—the inscriber or some supervisor of his work. Page emphasises the practical and technological considerations—the amount of space on the artifact, for example, or the availability of tools capable of forming curved shapes—which may lie behind the choice. B. Odenstedt's recent survey of the forms of runic letters in the very earliest (i. e. pre-750 AD) Germanic runic inscriptions is criticised: Page lists a number of English omissions from Odenstedt's corpus (St Cuthbert's coffin, some coins), and queries several of his inclusions.

In 'Northumbrian *æfter* (= in memory of) + Accusative' (1958), Page examines what may be a special linguistic feature of Northumbrian inscriptions. OE *æfter* most commonly governs the dative; but the accusative is frequent in some Northumbrian glosses. It is uncertain whether this usage represents genuine Nb. OE dialect or results from an attempt to imitate the grammar of Latin constructions (Latin *post*, 'after', takes the accusative). The relevant examples, mostly from the various early Anglian glosses, are set out. Most later Nb. inscriptions show *æfter* governing the dative. Thornhill I, Wycliffe, N. R. Yorks., and Yarm, N. R. Yorks., may show accusative forms though the inflections are ambiguous. Page concludes that we cannot prove the existence of a Northumbrian use of OE *æfter* (= 'in memory of') with the accusative, though 'the possibility of such a usage is too great to be rejected out of hand' (p. 22).

'An Early Drawing of the Ruthwell Cross' (1959) outlines the history of the monument from its partial destruction in the seventeenth century to its transfer to a specially built chamber within the Ruthwell church in 1887. The damage suffered by the cross has obscured some of its runic inscription but parts of what was lost are recoverable by reference to early drawings. Previously the

earliest known drawing was William Nicolson's, made in 1697 when the lower stone was already broken; but Page here publishes his rediscovery of a drawing (now in Cotton Julius F. VI, fol. 352) of part of the cross's runic inscription made by Reginald Bainbrigg *c.* 1600, before the cross was broken. Bainbrigg's accuracy as a transcriber is only fair; but Page thinks we may rely on his '+ond' or '+and' as the first letters of the cross's short version of the OE poem *The Dream of the Rood*, and some pointing at the ends of the first verse-lines of sections *a* and *b* of the inscription.

'Language and Dating in Old English Inscriptions' (1959) begins by observing that if the language of an inscription is to be used to date the monument on which it appears, we must be sure that the inscription is contemporary with the monument. The Whithorn head-stone, the Chester-le-Street stone, the Monkwearmouth stone with 'tidfirþ', the Hartlepool 'hilddigyþ' stone, the three Thornhill rune-stones and the Lindisfarne rune-stones are all put forward as possible examples of stones fashioned some time before they were inscribed. The possibility of the use of deliberately archaistic linguistic forms in inscriptions is considered. Comparing English material from early manuscripts of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Page concludes that the Ruthwell Cross inscription might well be contemporary with it (i. e. early eighth century), though the back mutation evident in Ruthwell's form 'h*êa*funæs' suggests a date a little later than Bede's *HE*—towards the middle of the eighth century.

The chief aim in 'The Bewcastle Cross' (1960) is to see if inscriptions II and IV on the monument contain (as was commonly claimed when Page wrote) references to Alcfrith, son of Oswiu King of Northumbria, and his wife Cyneburuh, daughter of Penda King of Mercia. The supposed mention of Alcfrith in inscription II includes the sequence: '[.]lcfri|*', where the first letter may be either the *a*-rune or the *o*-rune and the asterisk represents a runic character 'of which the form is clearly visible but the value undetermined' (see p. 49, note 12). Inscription IV reads 'kynibur*g' and contains the same mystery-rune as '[.]lcfri|*', though here it almost certainly represents *u*. Inconsistencies in J. Maughan's records of the cross, combined with the evidence of earlier transcriptions, lead Page to conclude that 'the inscriptions on the Bewcastle Cross were altered after his [Maughan's] early readings and before his later one' (p. 60)—probably between 1852 and 1857. An examination of pre-Maughan transcripts of inscription II reveals a consistent level of disagreement with the monument's readings as they now appear. No evidence emerges affecting the interpretation of the mystery-rune following the sequence 'olcfri' (or 'alcfri'); but Page concludes that the connection of the monument with Alcfrith cannot be supported.

'The Old English Rune *ear*' (1961) is about the rune transliterated *êa* and generally believed to represent the final addition to the English runic series. Its name probably means 'grave, earth', though scholarly opinions differ considerably. The values of the rune are the reflex of Gmc *au*; the diphthong in OE *beheoldon*; the breaking of either Gmc *a* or Gmc *e* before *r* + consonant; and the back mutation of *e*. Page favours Keller's view that the *êa*-rune is formally an adaptation of the Gmc *a*-rune, though it might also have something of the

Anglo-Frisian *o*-rune in it. It is the only Anglo-Saxon rune representing a diphthong, which raises the question of why it was needed at all when diphthongs could easily have been represented by a sequence of two existing runes.

'A Note on the Transliteration of Old English Runic Inscriptions' (1962) emphasises the pitfalls of studying Old English runic inscriptions in a transliterated form. For instance, it is wrong to identify the graph *œ* in the transliterations 'gi*d*rœ[*fi*]d' and 'limwœrig*n*æ' of forms from the Ruthwell Cross inscription as an Anglian dialect feature. The ligature in a manuscript written in the roman alphabet might be so interpreted; but *œ* in these forms is only the modern, conventional transliteration of the *eþel*-rune (for West Germanic $\bar{o}$ in conditions where it is subject to *i*-mutation); it tells us nothing about the quality of the vowel in the inscriber's language. The interpretation of the *æsc*-rune in inscriptions from parts (at least) of Mercia and Kent presents a similar difficulty; in these areas, OE *æ* was raised to *e* so that the name of the rune would become *esc*, not *æsc*, and the rune might therefore have been regarded as standing for the raised vowel. Dialectal variation of this kind is obviously concealed by any formal system of transliteration.

'The Use of Double Runes in Old English Inscriptions' (1962) sets out the standard view that the earliest runic inscriptions do not employ double runes, 'even to express long or repeated sounds' (p. 95), but questions if this is as true of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions as it plainly is of Scandinavian ones. The evidence of East and continental West Germanic inscriptions is inconclusive. In Old English inscriptions, most examples of double runes for single sounds and of single runes for double sounds are paralleled either in manuscript spellings or in non-runic inscriptions. Double vowel runes are sometimes open to interpretation as indications of vowel-length, a practice which, again, is attested in manuscript texts. Page concludes: 'the irregular spellings discussed above do not prove the existence of an Old English runic rule of writing single symbols for double or repeated sounds' (pp. 102–03).

In 'Anglo-Saxon Runes and Magic' (1964) Page notes the tendency of runologists to fall back on the uncertain theory of Germanic rune-magic when faced with inscriptions they cannot interpret. Here he re-examines the evidence for rune-magic in Anglo-Saxon England. The most positive Scandinavian evidence is runological: supposedly magical words, particularly the words *laukar*, *alu*, and *agla*, occur on objects with 'amuletic or sacral' uses. The literary evidence, mostly from Eddic poetry, is suspect: 'texts usually leave it uncertain whether the runes are magical in themselves or because of the words they form' (p. 108). On the Anglo-Saxon side, literary evidence for rune-magic is found in Bede's story of Imma's loosening of his bonds by magic in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Although *litteras* in Bede's text need not refer to runes in particular, Ælfric, in his version of Bede's story in the *Catholic Homilies*, translates using the word *runstafum*, showing that he understood runic magic to have been involved. The strongest Anglo-Saxon runological evidence is the inscriptions on three amulet rings—Greymoor Hill, Bramham Moor, and a third recorded in a Bristol collection (Page discusses these inscriptions in more detail in a later essay, pp. 303–04).

'Ralph Thoresby's Runic Coins' (1965) describes a Swedish coin with runic inscription known to have belonged to the Leeds antiquary, Ralph Thoresby, but now untraceable. The antiquary William Nicolson identified it as runic in 1691 and transcribed the runes as *Thur gut luetis*, though it was George Hickes in 1701 who interpreted it correctly as *Thor deus populi*, or *Thor nationis deus.* There were also at least two other runic coins, both Anglo-Saxon *sceattas*, in Thoresby's collection: an *Epa* coin, and a rarer type with the inscription *Æþiliræd.* A coin identical with Thoresby's *Æþiliræd* coin as described reached the British Museum sometime before 1868 and Page thinks it is Thoresby's, though he can find no record of its purchase. The 'Thor' coin was sold in London in 1764, to the Duke of Devonshire according to the records, though there is mention of a later owner in 1778. We hear no more of the coin after that. Thoresby's *Epa* coin has also disappeared.

'The Old English Rune *eoh*, *ih* "Yew-tree"' (1968) is difficult to summarise briefly. This rare rune is represented in the Dickins system of transliteration by the yogh, though its values are uncertain because it seldom occurs in inscriptions of which the meaning is clear. C. L. Wrenn thought it represented Germanic *hw*, but Page suspects it represents a front vowel. A reconsideration of the phonology and semantics of the rune's name and its values in Anglo-Saxon usage leads to a revised transcription of the Caistor-by-Norwich inscription as *raihan* which Page would here interpret (according to a rather strained chain of inference beginning with the root **rei-* 'coloured', 'dappled') as 'painter', 'rune-master'.

'The Runic Solidus of Schweindorf, Ostfriesland, and Related Runic Solidi' (1968) is a review article based on P. Berghaus and K. Schneider, *Anglo-friesische Runensolidi im Lichte des Neufundes von Schweindorf (Ostfriesland)* (Cologne and Opladen, 1967). The Schweindorf runic solidus, discovered in 1948, is considered by Berghaus and Schneider to be related to the *hada* runic solidus from Harlingen, Friesland, and the *skanomodu* runic solidus, of unknown origin, in the British Museum. Page questions Berghaus's confident numismatic dating of all three solidi (on the basis of the supposed derivation of features of their design from certain Roman coin-types) to the sixth century. He reports on a new examination of the *skanomodu* piece in the British Museum: the expert view is that the coin was struck, not cast as Berghaus maintains. On the runes themselves, Page argues that both **hada** and **skanomodu** are personal names rather than (respectively) a common noun meaning 'fighter', and a three-word sentence: *skan o modu*, meaning 'Er hat immer durch Mut geglänzt'. The Schweindorf inscription is **weladu**, of which a number of interpretations are possible. The linguistic dating of all three solidi is shown to be fraught with all manner of uncertainties.

In 'Runes and Non-Runes' (1969) Page rids the Anglo-Saxon corpus of 'texts which have been wrongly or doubtfully listed as runic' (p. 162), and suggests a few additions, most of them recently discovered: rune-stones at Monkwearmouth, Orpington and Lindisfarne, the Leningrad Gospels, the Loveden Hill urns, the Dover brooch, the Welbeck Hill bracteate, the Sarre pommel, and (probably) the York wooden spoon and the cow's foot-bone from Hamwih inscribed 'catæ'.

In 'How Long Did the Scandinavian Language Survive in England? The Epigraphical Evidence' (1971), Page reassesses the material from inscriptions both runic and roman relevant to this topic, first considered, in conjunction with the evidence of place-names and loanwords, by E. Ekwall in his 1930 article 'How Long Did the Scandinavian Language Survive in England?'. Taking Norse inscriptions in England first, Page adds to the list some texts not considered by Ekwall and eliminates others as irrelevant or valueless; but he concludes that as a group they 'tell us little of the continued use of the Norse tongue in the lands the Vikings settled' (p. 190). Of inscriptions in English from the Danelaw dating from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, Page concludes that although the Barking cross and the Aldbrough and Kirkdale sundials all show Norse linguistic influence, the evidence is meagre. The dearth of Norse-influenced inscriptions in England should not, however, be taken as evidence that there were few Norse speakers in the country. The 'Postscript' to this article adds some brief information about more recent finds.

In 'Anglo-Saxon Texts in Early Modern Transcripts: 1. The Anglo-Saxon Runic Poem' (1973), Page criticises Hempl's claim of 1903–04 that it was George Hickes who added material from the runic page of MS Cotton Domitian IX to the printed version of the Old English *Runic Poem* in his *Thesaurus* (Oxford, 1703). Hickes's edition of the poem, based mainly on MS Cotton Otho B. X, became our only source of knowledge of the poem's text when Otho B. X was damaged by the fire of 1731. Page doubts if Hickes borrowed the extra material directly from Domitian IX; he thinks it had already been added to Otho B. X by some modern hand and he suspects Robert Talbot, the early Tudor antiquary who, as R. Derolez has shown, annotated the runic page in Domitian IX and was certainly interested in alphabets and runes.

'Some Thoughts on Manx Runes' (1980) raises the question of why so small an island as the Isle of Man should have so many (twenty-nine) known Viking-Age rune-stones. Part of the reason, it is suggested, may be that the search for rune-stones on Man has been particularly energetic. Early drawings or casts of rune-stones once known but now untraceable may supply information about some of them; and Page here reconstructs a lost inscription from the village of Andreas on the basis of a transcript in MS BL Loan 29/259. The rebuilding of many of Man's churches in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought many of the inscriptions to light. Most of the stones are grave-stones and one must assume that they were originally set up in churchyards, as is confirmed by Page's list of the original find-spots. The 'Postscript' records the finding of two further pieces of rune-inscribed stone in Man.

In 'The Manx Rune-Stones' (1983), Page criticises Magnus Olsen's 1954 edition of the island's runic inscriptions as outdated and here offers 'a general view of the corpus' (p. 226). He suggests that the rune-stones 'combine two energetic traditions . . . a local Celtic one of raising crosses, and the incoming Norse one of raising runic memorials' (pp. 227–28). There are Norwegian parallels to the commemorative formula found on most of the Manx stones, though their use of the word *kross* 'cross' derives, in Page's view, directly from Celtic influence on the Scandinavian runemasters of Man. Page draws attention

to 'some diversity of practice' in the earliest Manx inscriptions, 'showing that the introduction of the script was not a simple one' (p. 237). Appendices to this essay offer (I) provisional transcripts of most of the Manx inscriptions; (II) illustrations of Manx fuþarks and variant rune-forms; and (III) an analysis of the grammar of the inscriptions in terms of classical Old Norse.

'On the Transliteration of English Runes' (1984) emphasises that runes should not, ideally, be transliterated into the roman alphabet; scholars 'should be encouraged to approach these texts in runic terms' (p. 245). Moreover, difficulties stand in the way of any simple system of transliteration. The fact that some runes vary radically in form requires a system of indicating the choice of forms made in any given inscription. Sound-changes over time must sometimes be assumed to have affected the name of the rune and consequently its value (a point made earlier in Page's 1962 article: 'A Note on the Transliteration of Old English Runic Inscriptions', summarised above). Page argues for a system of transliteration for English runes distinct from the Scandinavian system. He deprecates some features of Dickins's system, but praises others and uses it as the basis for a new, improved version of his own.

'New Runic Finds in England' (1987) revises the estimate of the corpus of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions represented in Page's 1969 article 'Runes and Non-Runes' and his 1973 book *An Introduction to English Runes*, in which he listed between 60 and 70 runic objects. The book contained two maps of finds of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions with clear provenances, one for the pre-650 period plotting ten objects, the second for the post-650 period plotting over forty objects. Page notices here nine new runic inscriptions (in addition to coins) discovered since 1973. All are on portable objects, and of the seven that are datable, five are pre-650. Most come from the same areas as the objects plotted on the earlier of Page's two 1973 maps (the south of England and the east midlands in the earlier map, the north of England in the later). The content of the new inscriptions is on the whole disappointing, though one (part of a pair of tweezers from Brandon, Suffolk) exhibits a clear personal name, 'aldred'. The 'Postscript' mentions six yet more recent finds and a few additional runic coins.

'A Sixteenth-Century Runic Manuscript' (1987) concerns a paper manuscript (CCCC 379) in the hand of the Tudor antiquary Robert Talbot (*c.* 1505–58) left to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 1575 by Archbishop Parker. Folio 9^{r} contains a roman alphabet against each letter of which appear the names of the corresponding runic letters in a mixture of Old English and Scandinavian forms; Latin glosses on the rune-names, probably added later than the rest of the text; and (in four cases) the actual runic characters. Page identifies various rune-rows, both English and Scandinavian, and associated annotations on folio 5^{r} of MS St John's College, Oxford, 17, as Talbot's source for this material. Talbot reveals a limited understanding of runic conventions, for example by lumping English and Scandinavian runes and rune-names together. Page argues that Talbot took the name of the rare *k*-rune, *calc*, from MS Cotton Domitian IX in the British Museum—a manuscript Talbot certainly knew because he added Latin glosses to the rune-names it contains.

In the rather uncharacteristic '*Runeukyndige risteres skriblerier*: the English Evidence' (1987), Page explores the literacy of inscribers and readers of English inscriptions (runic and roman, Old English and Latin), and considers the extent to which Anglo-Saxon inscriptions generally succeed as communicative utterances. The inscribers of appeals for prayers for the souls of the dead obviously expected readers of their work. Some of the Hartlepool stones are of this type; but they were discovered 'under the earth's surface in obscure connection with graves', perhaps 'beneath the skulls of the dead' (p. 299) in some cases. Hartlepool I is so well preserved as to suggest that it has always been below ground level. For this text, Page suggests, 'there may have been no living audience'; Page also believes that the names on St Cuthbert's coffin 'may not have been intended to be read by people' (p. 299). Page turns next to evidence of the literacy of the inscribers themselves. He thinks that an informal text 'cut on an object of no substantial value' is 'more likely to be the autograph of a literate carver' (p. 300). The rough quality of the inscription on the cremation urn from Loveden Hill, Lincolnshire, suggests that 'the inscription, once incised, had achieved its object: it was important to cut the runes, not to read them' (p. 300). Page tests the literacy of the carvers of the Thornhill stones according to whether or not their word-division is sensible. Only Thornhill I fails the test: its words are unsatisfactorily split between lines. Page concludes: 'Each inscription needs studying within its context, expressed as precisely as possible. And we must not assume error or illiterate practice too easily' (p. 313).

In 'Roman and Runic on St Cuthbert's Coffin' (1989), Page argues against the popular idea of a connection between runes and paganism by pointing to the evidence of the Overchurch stone in the Wirral that runes were officially accepted in late Anglo-Saxon England for ecclesiastical purposes in memorial inscriptions. Runes were even welcome in the scriptorium: the *þorn*- and *wynn*-runes penetrate bookhand by the eighth century, and the eighth-century Blythburgh, Suffolk, bone writing tablet, no doubt used in the scriptorium, contains a runic inscription. St Cuthbert's coffin, with its mixture of runes and roman, proves that runes were not 'thought unsuited to professional Christian or learned use' (p. 317) in Northumbria at the end of the seventh century, though Page thinks that the runic letters in this inscription are 'secondary, dependent on a pre-existent roman' (p. 321). Page finds other examples of this 'casual mixture of the two scripts' (p. 322) among East Northumbrian inscriptions in particular, as well as some parallel runic and roman texts. He cannot explain the mixture of runic and roman on St Cuthbert's coffin, but 'can at least set its inscriptions into a context that is both local and learned' (p. 323).

In the final essay, 'Dating Old English Inscriptions: the Limits of Inference' (1990), Page returns, though pessimistically, to an old problem. St Cuthbert's coffin can be dated by its historical references. Of non-runic inscriptions (apart from coins), the Kirkdale, N. Yorks., sundial contains reference points placing it between AD 1055 and 1065. Other inscriptions are datable within broad limits from the known dates of the institutions which produced them, for example

grave-markers from Lindisfarne, Monkwearmouth and probably Hartlepool. Typology and style, which provide the art-historian's chief points of reference, are not very reliable. Obstacles to the linguistic dating of inscriptions are the difficulty of establishing the linguistic significance of their forms and the fact that some inscriptions are too brief to offer a large enough linguistic sample for dating purposes. Inscriptions often come from areas of Anglo-Saxon England from which no manuscripts survive, so it is usually impossible to use manuscript texts as a control in assessing the significance of inscribed forms. A further complication is that we need to take account of the possibility of deliberate archaism: this could, if present, compromise linguistic dating. Palaeographical dating—dating by reference to the forms of letters used—is possible in theory though always difficult in practice. Page concludes: 'it is unlikely that dating will be other than approximate until a lot more primary material comes to light' (p. 336).

This is a most valuable and enjoyable book. Professor Page often emphasises how little we know of Anglo-Saxon runes, though he still finds plenty to say about them. Although his corpus has not yet appeared and may never do so, this volume reveals the weight of his contribution to the establishment of the texts of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions over the years; much of the work here, based as it is on a minute study of the inscriptions in their original context and on records of examinations of them made when they were more legible than they are now, will never be superseded and all later runologists will be grateful for it. But Page's book provokes some rather bleak reflections on the future direction of the study of Anglo-Saxon runes. Page himself, though enviably well-equipped as a student of most aspects of Germanic language and literature, has often insisted on the importance of remaining within the rather strict limits of Anglo-Saxon runology—limits that he himself has done much to define and within which he operates with unrivalled effectiveness. But experts in other fields—linguisticians, for example, or anthropologists—could scarcely fail to contribute something to our understanding of this runic material; indeed, a few of the topics on which Page writes here, particularly magic and literacy, really require the attention not only of runologists but also of other kinds of specialist. One wonders, however, if these specialists will dare to enter this field, for runology alone is clearly an exacting enough subject to fill an academic lifetime. Collaboration between runologists and other kinds of scholar might be the answer, though arrangements of this kind involving medievalists have never been common and seem to arise more by accident than design.

David Parsons has re-edited these essays very well, though it is a pity that the book contains no index of the inscriptions mentioned. The 'Erratum' slip supplies a representation of a rune which was omitted from p. 5; but there are other, similar omissions of runic characters on pp. 167 and 285. I was held up for a moment by the fact that, although the letters *æ* and *œ* are clearly differentiated in normal font, they are almost identical in italic (on pp. 87 and 89, for example). On p. 254, line 22, 'need' should be 'needed'. Finally, on p. 177 I was startled to read that in the eighteenth century John White of Newgate Street 'was a well-known dealer in antiquaries, which he sometimes made

himself.' Perhaps Professor Page, with the aid of this fascinating (if very expensive) book (£49.50), will make some too to follow in his footsteps.

PETER ORTON

OLAUS MAGNUS: HISTORIA DE GENTIBUS SEPTENTRIONALIBUS, ROMÆ 1555; DESCRIPTION OF THE NORTHERN PEOPLES, ROME 1555, VOLUME I. Translated by PETER FISHER and †HUMPHREY HIGGENS. Edited by PETER FOOTE, with Annotation derived from the Commentary by †JOHN GRANLUND, abridged and augmented. *Works issued by the Hakluyt Society*, second series, 182. *The Hakluyt Society*, London, 1996. xcvii + 288 pp.

The emergence of Sweden as a Protestant power was an involuntary and haphazard process, which lasted nearly as long as the much bloodier Reformation in England. Like Henry VIII, Gustavus Vasa plundered his clergy, bullied his subjects and mistrusted Papists and Lutherans impartially; his sons and grandson tended to put foreign policy before confessional commitment. It was the belief of exiled Swedish Catholics that their country had been deceived into schism, and was only waiting for a change of heart in the ruler, or a new dynasty, to rejoin the true faith. This was the *raison d'être* of the Magnus brothers, Joannes and Olaus, successive archbishops of Uppsala, who from 1530 to 1557, at various addresses on the continent (Gdansk, Vienna, Padua, Venice, Vicenza, Bologna, Trent, Rome) waged a war of words on two fronts.

On one, they hoped to convince their king and nobility that both tyranny and heresy were odious in themselves and inconsistent with the grandiose past and future of the kingdom, so that Gustav would come to his senses and expel those 'perfidious and sordid Lutherans who would never be able to propose anything notable, anything grand, anything worthy of kingly majesty'. On the other, they tried to persuade Catholic Christendom that Sweden was a rich country, worth conquering by the forces of the Counter-Reformation, preferably the Emperor's. They proposed this more than once to Charles V, and set out the project in a memorandum to Campeggio (convincingly dated 1538 by Foote). They were apparently untroubled by the inconsistency of these appeals. The Swedes, invincible in war, in wisdom and in virtue, would simply join and obey whichever ruler, native or foreign, defended their ancient faith—provided he were not a Dane of any description. For there was common ground between the papal pensioners and many of their fellow countrymen in the 'false memory' of a great Gothic past, and the true one of a frightful blood-letting by the last Danish king in 1520, at Stockholm. Olaus had witnessed the 'Bloodbath'.

Joannes and Olaus developed these themes with tireless versatility and art in their four great books: Olaus' *Carta Marina*, an atlas of the North published in 1539, and *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (published in Rome, at his own Brigittine press, in 1555); John's *Historia* of the metropolitan see of Uppsala (completed 1536, published 1557) and *Historia de Omnibus Gothorum Sueonumque Regibus* (finished 1540, published 1554). John's work was on sale in London by 1559, to the annoyance of the Danes, and *De Gentibus*, which

Olaus 'composed for many years with toil and in the shadows' became an immediate best seller. Both histories were presented to William Cecil in 1561 to further a planned match between Queen Elizabeth and Erik XIV, even though they included mordant criticism of Erik's father. The Vasas were parvenu kings, obsessed with 'the verdict of history', and anxious to validate their policies through the control of historical writing; but they founded their claim to rule on inheritance from the ancient Gothic kings glorified by the Magnuses, and on revulsion from Danish tyranny—a revulsion which the work of the brothers kept alive. The contest between the king and the exiles was not as unequal as it might seem.

Dispossessed, proscribed, dependent, sickly, horseless and hungry, the Magnuses were reduced in 1541 to lodging 'in a little room where the altar and the table and the bed and the privy appeared to be combined', and the smell was so bad that two friendly Spanish doctors prescribed incense and open windows. But they saw themselves as the mouse gnawing at the net that held the Swedish lion captive, and by importunity, by charm, by zeal, by duplicity and by doggedness they could deploy powers far subtler than those available in dull Stockholm, where Gustavus inhibited the few clever men he had on his side, while the press vented 'scurrilous religious pamphlets on the lowest level of verbal utterance' (Alrik Gustafson). They had papal patronage, imperial sympathy, the superb presses and engravers of Venice, the international brotherhood of humanism (Hosius, Cochlaeus, and Dantiscus were their correspondents) and the interest of useful prelates such as Cardinals Campeggio and Pole, the patriarch Querini of Venice, Archbishop Schaumburg of Cologne and Bishop Nausea of Vienna. They were always poor, but the ultimate failure of their cause was not their fault. No more elegant, ingenious and popular books were devoted to the aim of purging the heresies of the North by fire, except Sir Thomas More's.

The political context of these works has been memorably expounded by Kurt Johannesson, whose *Götisk Renässans* (1984) was translated by James Larsson, and published by the University of California as *The Renaissance of the Goths in Sixteenth-Century Sweden* in 1991. But the texts are not easy to come by; *De Gentibus* appeared in facsimile in 1971, and is now scarce. The English translation of 1658 is a sloppy rendering of an epitome by Scribonius, and Granlund's commentaries are naturally in Swedish. This fine translation of the first five books is therefore a long overdue treat for the English reader, who may be surprised to discover a Swede who anticipates Camden, Burton, Aubrey and Hakluyt in the range of his curiosity and observation.

In order to advertise the importance of Sweden, he sublimated that frigid political limbo into an imaginary great power called Scandia, or Scandinavia, which ought by rights to include the whole Northern world: Norway, Finland, Karelia, and much of Denmark. The Swedes themselves he addressed as members of a greater Gothic cousinhood extending over all Europe, through the dispersal of thirty-two nations from Scandinavia in ancient times. In their spectacular homeland, all that is fiercest, hugest and weirdest in nature brings out all that is bravest and best in man. These *folies de grandeur* tickle both Counter-Reformation crusaders and Swedish patriots; the learned he attracts by

incorporating 'the universal ideas of . . . Cassiodorus . . . by origin a Goth' and by borrowings and analogies from a long series of authorities, beginning with Herodotus and ending with Salviani's *Histories of Aquatic Animals*, published while *De Gentibus* was being put to bed. This constant reference to classical sources disarms, or at least distracts the sceptic who, for example, might doubt whether Gilbert the wizard lies spellbound in the crypt of Visingsö church, visible to tourists; do not the tourists risk their lives by going underground, even as the ancients were endangered in the labyrinths of Daedalus and King Porsenna, and in the very Plutonium (III, 20)? And the wood-cut of the naked man supine under rune-written staves is memorable enough to carry the story. Most of these pictures are evidently based on Olaus' own sketches: stark, vivid, and deliberately strange, to hold the eye and trap the mind.

His reputation as a naturalist is based on his careful descriptions, mostly from memory, for he more than any 'heard on Lavernia Scargill's whispering trees'. Learn from him of the twenty varieties of snowflake (I, 22), of the thirty effects of intense cold (I, 19), of the morphology of ice (I, 21), of the art of snow-balling and snow-castling (I, 23), of the technology of ice-transport (I, 28), of the shape of rocks (II, 31), of how rivers foam in spate (II, 18). Such passages command respect for their sometimes poetic precision, so that it is easy to forget that they serve in a rhetorical army deployed against heresy and tyranny. The same may be said of his evocations of the smell of drying fish (II, 6), of Lapps hunting (IV, 12) and of his explanation of how skis work, which failed to convince Pope Paul III (I, 4).

The problem of converting the Lapps to Christianity was his, as metropolitan of the North, and the Lutheran Ziegler had attributed the fewness of the baptised Sami to the avarice of the popes. Both the Magnus brothers had trekked far into the back country (in 1518 and 1526) and knew this to be a lie. Far from fleecing his Lapps, Joannes had spent more on visitation than he got in dues; and Olaus, in passages reminiscent of Las Casas and Quiroga on the American natives, insists that the respectable lives and dignified ceremonies of these peoples would make them amenable to Christian teaching, if only missions were not hindered by the Lutheranising king (IV, 18). The success of the Finnish churches proved it. But the king has impoverished his bishops and has left his arctic empire to the encroachments of the schismatic Muscovites. Where are the 'golden knights' of Sweden, who used to wage the holy war on behalf of the northern churches?

Formerly, the Swedes themselves were sunk in 'gross errors'. In Book III, Olaus expounds Nordic paganism by repeating the euhemerist interpretations of Saxo Grammaticus, with Gothic embellishments. The reality of witches, wizards, shape-changers and spirits, ancient and modern, is not disputed, but legendary wonders are usually distinguished from observed or reported ones. The tale of the involuntary fratricides of Jönköping (I, 31) is offered 'rather as told by the ancients, than as proven' (*approbatione*: not 'matter for approval' as Fisher has it); and Olaus leaves the details of witchcraft 'to all who investigate this madness too closely' (rather than 'who closely investigate these pointless activities': it is an affliction, not a waste of time).

He was a moralist as well as a naturalist, and he applies some moral to nearly everything: thus, big modern clocks 'provide a comfort for great men', but little ones with springs are so dear as to be daylight robbery (I, 32). The fine natural complexion of northern women reminds him of how his brother disliked the rouge applied to the cheeks of Venetian girls (IV, 11); the sad songs at Lapp weddings are reactions to the 'godless crimes' committed among them by Swedish officials (IV, 8); the lack of coin in Bothnia proves the honesty and modesty of the people who live there (IV, 5); and even the violence of ancient giants, heroes and war-lords was redeemed by their exemplary temperance and austerity. Saxo's *Starcatherus* becomes an honorary Swede, and the doubting reader is shown a picture of him heaving a stone monolith in each hand, one of them inscribed THE SWEDISH CHAMPION in runes (p. 237). The achievements of the Amazons are ascribed to the determination of young women to preserve their chastity against libidinous men, and the eulogy of Queen Amalasuintha by Cassiodorus inspires a further homily on the high value of sexual abstinence; for Olaus saw the Lutherans as especially detestable nun-violators, out to corrupt the North with dirty foreign pictures of naked women.

The appearance of this book in 1996 is the first-fruit of labours reaching back to the original commission by the Hakluyt Society in 1972, and it could not have been published at all without subventions from Sweden and elsewhere. The whole work is 22 books long (not as many as the Old Testament—a rare lapse by Foote, on p. xli—but the same number as Augustine's *City of God*) and contains 777 chapters and an epilogue (half the date of its completion, 1554, and the exact life-span of Lamech, who 'toiled and laboured with [his] hands so long on ground which the Lord has cursed' in Genesis 5: 29); and no clear notice is given of when the rest will come out. The first volume will be especially useful for the introduction by the editor and translator. It sets a standard of printing and annotation which deserves all praise, and more cash. Hakluyt needs subscribing members; this book—free to members, £35 to others—will convince many that they need Hakluyt.

E. Christiansen

GRUFFUDD AP CYNAN: A COLLABORATIVE BIOGRAPHY. Edited by K. L. Maund. *Studies in Celtic History*, XVI. *The Boydell Press.* Woodbridge 1996. xii + 217 pp.

The significance of a biography of Gruffudd ap Cynan to Scandinavian studies may not be immediately apparent to those who, like the present reviewer, were not familiar with his genealogy (. . . *Avloed Vrenhin Cuaran mab Sutric mab Avloed Vrenhin mab [Harald] Harfagyr mab Brenhin Denmarc*, '. . . Óláfr Kvarán, son of Sigtryggr, son of King Óláfr, son of Haraldr Hárfagri'; cf. p. 88). It becomes rapidly clear from reading the work of Maund and his collaborators that there are at least two aspects of Gruffudd's career which should be of interest to readers of *Saga-Book*. Gruffudd himself emerges as a figure whose biography is inextricably interwoven with the historical events of the later Viking Age and whose personal history is explained by and exemplifies the

shifting orientations of the North Sea islands within the gravitational fields of the developing entities of continental Europe and Scandinavia in the mid-twelfth century. In addition, contemporary accounts of his reign, in particular the *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* and its attendant genealogies, are interlinked with similar accounts in the Scandinavian field, in particular the historiography of Magnús berfœttr in prose sources and in skaldic poetry.

Scandinavianist readers of the volume may be instinctively drawn to Judith Jesch's substantial contribution on 'Norse Historical Traditions and the *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*' (pp. 117–47). Here Jesch is concerned with assessing the impact of Norse historiography on the fabrication of a *vita* and a genealogy for Gruffudd. Whereas earlier historians, e. g. van Hamel, have assumed that the Norse elements in the *Historia* were a product of Hiberno-Norse, presumably oral, tradition, Jesch argues for the direct influence of the Norse historiographical tradition on the *Historia* and in particular on the creation of a genealogy reaching back to Haraldr Hárfagri, mirroring twelfth-century Norwegian concerns with the legitimation of Magnús berfœttr's territorial claims. Rather than Scandinavian Ireland, the Orkneys would seem to be the key point in this model of transmission (cf. pp. 144–46). Jesch's article shows consideration for a readership without specialist knowledge of the problems of Old Norse source criticism, her treatment of editorial issues being exemplary.

The articles that follow, Nerys Anne Jones on the possible audience of the *Historia* (pp. 149–56) and Ceri Davies on its retranslation into Latin in the sixteenth century (pp. 157–64), though intrinsically interesting, have no direct bearing on Scandinavian issues, whilst the final essay in the collection, J. E. Caerwyn Williams on the poet Meilyr Brydydd (pp. 165–86), is instructive above all in the opportunity it gives for assessing the role of the Welsh equivalent of the *hǫfuðskáld* in the twelfth century. David Moore's 'Gruffydd ap Cynan and the Medieval Welsh Polity' (pp. 1–59), on the other hand, is by no means as restricted in scope as the title might imply. In essence, it is an exposé of the development of Gruffudd's power from its insecure beginnings to the establishment of a state strong enough to hold its own against Norman expansion. Scandinavian support was crucial at key stages of this process, Grufudd's Hiberno-Scandinavian ancestry enabling him to mobilise Irish military support and use Norse ships as the backbone of a fleet (cf. p. 26). Norse historians will see in this narrative an instructive parallel to the rise of Sverrir in Norway. Similarly, in C. P. Lewis's succinct account 'Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Normans' (pp. 61–77) we find reminiscences of the struggles of the Norse kings. Lewis reminds us that Gruffudd's rise to power was set in a geographical and oceanographical milieu in which sea-power and coastal domination were crucial, and in which ships of Viking descent still formed the model for marine transport among the North Sea peoples. A vital component of Gruffudd's success was his ability to draw at will on this form of mobility. The remaining two essays in the collection, David Thornton's 'The Genealogy of Gruffudd ap Cynan' (pp. 79–108) and Maund's own contribution, 'Gruffudd, Grandson of Iago: *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* and the Construction of Legitimacy' (pp. 109–16; with the colon but not the sub-title printed disconcertingly through-

out the running title), both deal with the treatment of the Scandinavian element in Gruffudd's genealogy, the obvious repute of his Norse ancestors forming an integral part of the propaganda by which legitimacy and suitability as king were to be established and being therefore given prominence in the biographical and genealogical material.

The volume, as one of the *Studies in Celtic History* edited by David Dumville, makes few concessions to the non-Celticist; quotations are frequently given in the Middle Welsh of the sources without translation and single words are given in mutated forms where the sources, but not the English matrix sentences, require them; 'Gruffudd's war-band . . . was no more than a *gedymdeithas*' (p. 51); I wonder how many Scandinavian scholars world-wide wishing to check this unexplained term would know that they should look up under C in a standard Welsh dictionary. Similarly, they would probably be disconcerted to find that the only index lemma to Magnús berfœttr has his cognomen as *berfœtts*, presumably from Ordericus Vitalis (cf. p. 29), leading to the awkward possessive 'Magnus Berfœtts's Norsemen (p. 30; cf. 'the *Brut y Tywysogyons* (sic) *obit*', same page) despite the conventional Icelandic spelling's having been used throughout by Jesch. In the Bibliography, Icelandic words do not fare well; *Þ* is used for *Þ* (or *þ*) throughout, diacritics are missing from *sögum* (p. 190) and *Landnámabók* (p. 197; if this and the preceding *Gormflaith and the Northment* (sic) are misprints in the source it would have been tactful to indicate the fact), *Halldórs þættir* (p. 198) appear as *Halldúrs Pættir*. All these in themselves are trifling slips but reinforce the impression, despite *Book of Tuliesin* (for *Taliesin*, p. 199), that the book is intended primarily for Celticists and not for specialists in the Scandinavian matter. This ought not to be the case; the 'Collaborative Biography' is a valuable contribution to inter-disciplinary studies of the history and literatures of the North Sea cultures and will be a welcome addition to specialist libraries on Scandinavian studies even in those institutes where no Celtic languages or literatures form part of the curriculum.

STEPHEN N. TRANTER

THE WORLD OF THE VIKINGS. CD-ROM for Windows. *York Archaeological Trust and The National Museum of Denmark. Multimedia Management and Past Forward Ltd.* York, 1996.

This CD-ROM is the result of a three-year collaboration between the York Archaeological Trust and The National Museum of Denmark. It consists of two separate software interfaces, one designed for schoolchildren, teachers and general use (the Evidence Boxes), and the other for university, college or independent researchers (the Research Database). Currently retailing at £62.50, the CD-ROM is within the individual's as well as the institution's price range.

The Evidence Boxes

Starting the Evidence Boxes program, the user is presented with a conventional window that contains twelve boxes overlying a colour picture of a fjord scene.

Each of these twelve boxes is labelled with a topic, such as: *Sources of evidence*; *Where did they settle? Why did the Viking world expand? Transport and Travel*; *Arts and Crafts*; *Power and Politics.* A double-click with the mouse on one of these boxes opens the box, and another window appears, containing icons that represent further sub-divisions within the topic. For example, *Sources of information* contains the categories *Documents*; *Runes*; *Sagas*; *Coins*; *Sculpture*; *Excavation*; *Hoards*; *Place-Names*; *Buildings.* If you click the Voice icon in the toolbar of this second window, a short introductory narrative on the topic is provided. A double-click on any of the icons takes the user into the topic's sub-divisions, where another short, more specific, narrative can be played. Within these sub-divisions, there is a series of pictures, with a short and simple text, that one can browse through with forward- and backward-pointing arrows.

Difficult or technical words are hypertext-linked (i. e. if you click on them, a brief explanation appears in a box), and places mentioned in the text are linked to a simple location map (of Europe). These hypertext-links further allow users to search for other references to the item or place that they have clicked on. There is also a search facility provided (*Find*, under the Navigation menu), which allows the user to search the boxes, glossary or atlas. A total of some 850 colour photographs are contained in the Evidence Boxes, and any of these can be marked and saved to disk as bitmap files, and thus subsequently printed out.

The narratives and the written text accompanying the pictures generally provide a clear and accurate introduction to a topic, covering a variety of sometimes complex themes in a sensible way. The sub-division of the categories also allows a variety of viewpoints to be put forward, rather than simplistic generalisations. For example, the introductory narrative to the Evidence Box *Why did the Viking world expand?* tells us that 'All sorts of ideas have been put forward but probably there is no single explanation'. The sub-categories in this box take these various ideas as their themes. Sometimes, however, the narratives and pictures do seem to focus too narrowly on one particular part of the topic. For example, the discussion of *Power of the Kings* in the *Why did the Viking world expand?* box concentrates almost exclusively on the physical remains of Harold Bluetooth's complex at Jelling. The ten pictures and the narrative on England in the *Where did they settle?* box deals mainly with the early Viking raids, including two virtually identical photographs of Bamburgh Castle. The settlement is described in the last but one box, where we are merely told that Vikings settled in large numbers, especially in York and Yorkshire.

Nevertheless, as a whole, the Evidence Boxes provide a balanced picture of the Viking Age, and one that is considerably wider in scope than many children's books. In these days of multimedia, the lack of moving images may make this less exciting than other historical CD-ROMs, but the narrative, the easy browsing between the pictures and the sheer wealth of high-quality photographic material should provide some compensation. As a final comment on the Evidence Boxes, it can be noted that the word *helmet* is glossed: 'A hat made

of metal or leather to protect your head during battle. Viking helmets did not have horns on them.'

The Research Database

'*The Research Database is for university, college or independent researchers who need flexible access to the most complete collection of information on the Vikings published to date. Over 3600 high quality 24-bit colour pictures of Viking sites, landscapes, objects and reconstructions have been scanned from original slides and packed onto a single CD-ROM.*'

This database is accessed through a search tool. The user is presented with a dialogue box that allows one to search the database by *Country*; *Region*; *Site*; *Name*; *Material*; *Type*; *Theme*; *Keyword*; *Reference number*. Within each of these options is an alphabetic list of the items relevant to that type of search. Items including the Scandinavian letters *å*, *ä*, *æ*, *ø*, and *ö* are listed as though they were *a*, *ae* and *o*, when they are not the initial letter. However, when they are the first letter of an entry, they are listed at the end of the alphabet under *Å–Ø*. There is no option for a free-text search, but it is possible to conduct Boolean searches, by clicking on the *more* button, which presents the user with a further two search boxes that can be added to the first search specifications (and/or).

What perhaps strikes one first when using the search tool is the rather haphazard way that the database entries are classified and spelled. For example, under *Keyword: R*, we find *Ringerike*, *Ringerike stone*, and *Ringerike style*, with the first and last categories both about the Ringerike style, while the second entry is for the Vang rune-stone, which is decorated in the Ringerike style. Under *Keyword: D*, the misspelling *Doomsday* is listed, but turning to the entries, we find the correct spelling, *Domesday*. Under *Keyword: R*, a list of rivers is given, but turning to one of these, the Ouse, we find that this is not listed under *Keyword: O*.

Some cities, such as Uppsala and Tórshavn (spelt both as *Torshaven* and *Torshavn*), are classified as regions as well as sites, and some regions, such as Telemark and Jylland, are listed under the both the *Region* and *Site* categories. Indeed, there generally seems to be a problem with classifying and spelling Scandinavian place-names: Telemark is entered twice in the *Region* category, first as *Telemark* and then as *Telemarken*; Jutland is not listed under *Site* or *Region*, but is listed under *Keyword*, and there is no indication that it is the same as Jylland (listed under *Site*, *Region* and *Keyword*); only Jämtland is listed under *Region*, but both *Jämtland* and *Jamtland* are given under *Keyword*; Sjælland in Denmark is listed three times, as *Sjælland*, *Sjaelland*, and *Sjællnd* (sic); and Skálholt in Iceland is listed with and without the length marker over the letter *a*. Stöng, the farm site in Iceland, is not listed under *Site*, but is found under *Keyword*. Even Scandinavia is listed twice under *Keyword*, once correctly and once as *Scandanavia*.

The Name category includes items such as *Adze*, *Amulet* and *Anchor*, rather than names of places or people. Names of individuals are instead generally listed under the *Keyword* category, which seems the most comprehensive list and thus the best category to search by. There are still some difficulties in

tracking down the information one requires: for example, all the kings included in the database are found under *King* in the *Keyword* category rather than under their individual names, a fact which I only discovered by accident.

Sometimes the entries that are found in a particular search do not seem to relate very closely to the search category. For example, a search under *Theme: Subsistence* found pictures of bear-tooth and boar-tusk amulets, and there was no information to relate them to the topic. Under *Theme: People*, one was presented with pictures of Norse gods as depicted in manuscripts and sculpture. A search under *Theme: Leisure* reveals a pendant in the shape of a human head, again leaving one somewhat at a loss as to how this is relevant. Perhaps more seriously, a search under the *Keyword: Hnefatafl* gives four entries (nos 3628, 3634, 3640, and 3648). However, the search *Theme: Leisure* reveals only one of these, while adding a further four entries (nos 3564, 3566, 3604, 3644) that refer to the game *hnefatafl*.

A search under *Keyword: Runestone* reveals 159 entries, while a search under *Name: Runestone* produces just 156 entries, and a search under *Keyword: Rune* gives just 48 entries (several of which concern rune-stones). It can be noted, for example, that the St Paul's rune-stone from London (no. 5963) is not listed under *Runestone*, but is found under *Rune* (and described as a grave marker). The list of entries found in the search *Keyword: Runestone*, displayed on the right-hand part of the screen, gives the database reference number and the word 'Runestone', without any further details about the object. This makes it difficult to find a particular rune-stone without browsing through the list, although an alternative search on the geographical location will eliminate this problem. The database entry that is currently selected is pictured, with a caption, in the left-hand side of the window. Clicking on the picture with the mouse reveals details about the picture, the find-place of the object (although it is somewhat misleadingly called the location), and an institution that may be contacted for further information.

Perhaps the single most serious problem with the database as a research tool is the lack of bibliographical references where the researcher can read more about the object. Again, in the case of the *Runestone* search, their reference numbers in the published catalogues *Sveriges runinskrifter*, *Danmarks runeindskrifter*, and *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* are generally not provided. When they are occasionally given (in the captions), they take the form 'Runestone 123', without the country or county prefixes (although these can be reconstructed through the 'location' details that are provided).

This lack of bibliographical information is felt even more strongly because the captions that accompany the photographs are so generalised as to be almost useless to most researchers. For example, one of the rune-stones at Fresta, Uppland, Sweden (no. 5542) is accompanied by the caption: 'Smooth snakes decorate the surface of these runestones. Even though they are 1000 years old they look remarkably like the modern cartoon snakes we see today'. Incidentally, the photograph of this rune-stone (with its prominent cross) seems to have been confused with that of another rune-stone from Fresta (no. 2982), which has the caption: 'Crosses on runestones are thought to be a sign of Christianity',

but which is a close-up of the runic snake and lacks any illustration of a cross. The fatuousness reaches a high in entry number 58 which has a photograph of a cow, the location of which is given as Field, England, and the caption 'All living things contain a tiny but measurable amount of carbon 14'! Although it is not indicated in the database, this caption and photograph are actually taken directly from the Evidence Boxes (Box: *When, dating the Viking Age*, category *Carbon 14 dating*), as part of an interesting and well-explained narrative about how carbon 14 dates are obtained. Some of the captions are also misleading: at least half of the pictures of Jarlshof on Shetland show the pre-Norse broch site, accompanied by the caption: 'The Norse settlement at Jarlshof, one of the most important Viking Age sites in the British Isles and the first to be positively identified as Viking'.

Strangely, the information accompanying the database entries is sometimes less detailed than the information contained in the Evidence Boxes. For example, when one looks at the *Sagas* section of the *Sources of evidence* Evidence Box, a picture of Fenris wolf in a seventeenth-century manuscript is said to be taken from AM 738, 4to, bl. 43^{r}, but on checking the Research Database, the user is not given the manuscript reference. It was only by chance that the Evidence Box contained this picture and the fuller information.

The lack of cross-referencing in the captions is sometimes annoying: database entries 5564 and 5566, both described as coming from Lund, Skåne, and entry 5554, described as coming from Kulturen, Lund, are all the same runestone, and there is no information given to link the three. Similarly, a search under *Keyword: Mary* gives two entries and photographs of apparently the same coin from Lund, without any indication that this is the case.

The lack of contextual material is also a problem. For example, if one searches for entries relating to Trondheim in Norway, eight entries are found, but no information is provided about the circumstances of the finds or the history of the town. Nor is there any consistent information relating to the date of the artefacts, such details appearing randomly in the captions.

There are other more or less minor quibbles with the database. Entry number 3998 is supposed to show a sculptural representation of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer, but actually has a photograph of a street sign bearing the name Feasegate (a search under *Keyword: Feasegate* reveals the same photograph). The runestone (no. 3842) from Hovslund, Jutland is shown in mirror image in the Evidence Boxes: *Sources of evidence: Runes* and in the magnified photograph in the Research Database, while it is shown correctly in the thumbnail photograph in the Research Database. Some of the photographs are duplicated, as in the case of two pictures of the settlement site at Braaid, Isle of Man (nos 1407, 6741).

In conclusion, it must be asked whether it would not have been better to have separated the two parts of the CD-ROM. Some of the problems with the database seem to reflect uncertainty about the division between the Evidence Boxes and the Research Database. The overall impression one gets from the Research Database is that it was decided to assemble a large number of photographs on CD-ROM without any clear ideas about what limits *The World of the Vikings* might have or what purpose it was to serve beyond that of

providing a visual record. Nevertheless, while much of the above focuses on negative details, it must be stressed that this CD-ROM is indeed an excellent visual archive, providing an unparalleled opportunity of viewing a very wide variety of artefacts from a very wide range of places. In particular, the artefacts from regional and local museums and the inclusion of recent finds, such as those from the urban excavations in Scandinavia, the British Isles, the Baltic and Russia, are very valuable and make the material more accessible. And it is, after all, frequently true that one picture can say more than a hundred words.

KATHERINE HOLMAN

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FROM SAINT'S LIFE TO SAGA: THE FATAL WALK OF ALFRED ÆTHELING, SAINT AMPHIBALUS AND THE VIKING BRÓÐIR

By JOHN FRANKIS

THE ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF in *Njáls saga*, chs 154–57, has long been recognised as something extraneous to the saga (Goedheer 1938, 87–102, and references there cited). It was evidently included because *fimmtán menn af brennumǫnnum fellu í Brjánsorrostu,* 'fifteen of the men involved in the burning died in Brian's battle [i. e. Clontarf]' (*Njáls saga* 1954, 453), but much of the account has no obvious relevance to the main events of *Njáls saga*, and the narrative technique is different. Above all, the Clontarf episode is characterised by what is, compared with the rest of the saga, a simplistic dichotomy of good and evil, with elementary black-and-white characterisation, representing Brjánn as a saint and Bróðir as totally evil, with no hint of the moral ambivalence that characterises such figures in the saga as Skarpheðinn Njálsson or Mǫrðr Valgarðsson. The different tone of this episode appears most strikingly in the account of the death of the viking leader Bróðir, which is as follows (*Njáls saga* 1954, 453; cf. also *Njál's saga* 1960, 341 n.):

> Var þá Bróðir hǫndum tekinn. Úlfr hræða reist á honum kviðinn ok leiddi hann um eik ok rakti svá ór honum þarmana; dó hann eigi fyrr en allir váru ór honum raktir.
>
> Then Bróðir was captured. Úlfr Hræða opened up his belly and led him round an oak-tree and so pulled out his entrails from him; he did not die until they were all pulled out of him.

To the modern reader this will seem both repulsive and absurd and neither attitude is altogether inappropriate; what would be inappropriate would be an unquestioning assumption that the account has any historical validity or that it represents in any simple way actual reality. As is now widely recognised, medieval historical, or quasi-historical, writing was often shaped by literary considerations and in this case a powerful shaping literary genre is identifiable (Morse 1991, 138–58). The Clontarf episode with its moral polarisation strongly suggests the genre of hagiography, as several commentators have noted (Lönnroth 1976, 131, 226–36; McTurk 1992, 115–16, 120–21), and it is above all

in saints' lives, far more than in chronicles, romances or family sagas, that one finds lurid and spectacular accounts of torture and death shaped by a convention that is ideological and fundamentally unrealistic. As one writer, referring to the lives of female saints but using terms of wider validity, puts it: '[the saint is] flogged, lacerated, burnt and boiled, and dismembered in some way, as it might be with awls or razor-edged wheels' (Wogan-Browne 1991, 315). Death in Icelandic family sagas is normally too serious a matter to receive this kind of fantasy treatment, which is one reason why the account of the death of Bróðir is so discordant with the main saga narrative. As it happens, there are models in hagiographic writing for the bizarre manner of Bróðir's death, and it is to be hoped that the interest of tracing the route by which this motif reached Iceland may justify concentrating on so intrinsically unsavoury a theme.

Commentators have pointed out that essentially the same story of Clontarf, with the same method of killing, appears in *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar*, and the resemblances are so close that one version is likely to derive from the other. Probably *Njáls saga* has priority, at least for this detail, but for the present discussion it is not important which came first (*Þorsteins saga* 1950, civ–cv, 301–02). The same method of inflicting death also appears, but with reference to a hero rather than a villain, in a later work, *Orms þáttr Stórólfssonar* (Faulkes 1967, 74–77, 100–01). This text is late enough to have derived this detail from *Njáls saga*, though it differs in that what had there been a punishment for evil (perhaps prefiguring the pains of hell) here becomes a test of endurance (indicating, if not a potential for sanctity, at least an unshakeable moral strength), so *Orms þáttr* may derive the motif directly from a hagiographical source rather than by way of *Njáls saga.*

Several commentators, notably Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Jón Jóhannesson and Faulkes in their respective editions, seem prepared to believe that, whether or not the account of the Battle of Clontarf has any historical accuracy, the grotesque method of execution is plausible (e. g. Faulkes 100, 'This method of execution seems to have been quite widespread in the middle ages'), though the parallels cited hardly constitute reliable historical evidence; the method seems in fact to owe less to realism than to a gruesome fantasy. To clarify this one must note the exact details of the account, however distasteful they may seem. One must note first that what the passage does not describe is death by disembowelment as the result of a wound inflicted in battle: Boberg (1966, 237, item S.139.1) gives a large number of references under the heading,

Murder by twisting out intestines, but most of these refer not to murder but to wounds inflicted in battle (e. g. in *Gísla saga, Svarfdæla saga, Gǫngu-Hrólfs saga* and Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* VI.vii.9). One reference, in *Egils saga einhenda*, is to a wound inflicted on a monster and another, in *Bósa saga*, concerns a boar. The reference in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* is to a non-fatal wound. Most are in late texts (*fornaldarsögur*) of an obviously unrealistic kind. Secondly, the concern here is not with murder but with execution, and even here one must still note that various methods were available. The passage in *Njáls saga* does not refer to the historical practice of execution by hanging, drawing and quartering, all too well confirmed by reliable records over a long period, in which the work was done by an executioner and the victim was neither able nor required to collaborate in his own death; rather the saga gives us a morbidly imagined variation of disembowelment, according to which the victim is made to bring about his own death. One alleged parallel cited by some commentators (from Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* XII.iv.2) describes in fact a different method, according to which the victim's intestines are removed by winding them round a cylinder (in Saxo a log), the work being done by executioners, not by the victim. This is stated by Saxo to be a punishment inflicted on Baltic pirates, and it is a method that is familiar in medieval hagiography in accounts of the martyrdom of St Erasmus, in which the instrument of martyrdom is a windlass. The use of what was thought of as nautical equipment evidently arose from that saint's legendary association with seafaring and one might have more confidence in the historicity of Saxo's account if the men involved were not seafarers (Saxo Grammaticus 1931, 335; Farmer 1978, 133). The martyrdom of St Erasmus is a common motif in medieval art (e. g. in *The Hastings Hours*, of Flemish workmanship for an English patron; Turner 1983, 134–35, Pl. 53b) and it is particularly well represented among mural paintings in Denmark, where nine churches retain paintings of the martyrdom; there is also at least one in the former Danish province of Skåne, though all are a good deal later than Saxo (Saxtorph 1986, Index s. v. Erasmus; Haastrup 1991, 159). Another parallel cited by Faulkes (1967, 100) is in Helmold's *Chronicle of the Slavs,* I.52, but the wording there is unclear and could refer to the windlass method; in any case, the account concerns the martyrdom of Christians and has a strong hagiographic tone. As with all tortures inflicted on saints in medieval hagiography, one cannot affirm that these things were never done in practice, but one would wish to have reliable evidence if one

were to claim historicity for any of the more lurid processes described in any account that duplicates material from saints' legends. The method of execution described in *Njáls saga* should thus be seen as a hagiographic fantasy in which the victim is made to do the work himself rather than suffering the ministrations of an executioner (who might or might not use a mechanical aid such as a windlass). The origins in hagiography do not of course preclude the later circulation of the motif in popular tradition, and Desmond Slay kindly points out to me that the fatal walk occurs in a Danish folk-tale as the method of execution inflicted on the robber Jens Long-Knife (Simpson 1988, 60–61; Bødker 1958, 112–13). Whatever the ultimate source of this fantasy, it can be shown that there is a route by which it could have reached the saga-authors from earlier hagiography. Accounts of evisceration by making the victim walk round a stake appear in a number of texts and together they form a pattern showing how this motif circulated in England and was then probably transmitted to Norway, where the author of *Njáls saga* may have found it, or from where it could have been transmitted to Iceland by some intermediary.

The fatal walk round a stake is first mentioned, as far as I have been able to establish, in the early twelfth century in Geffrei Gaimar, *L'Estoire des Engleis* (Bell 1971, 153), where it appears in the account of the murder in 1036 of Alfred Ætheling, the son of King Ethelred ('the Unready') and brother of the future King Edward the Confessor. The historical details of this appalling episode are clear in outline if not in detail. Having been in exile in Normandy, Alfred came to England on the death of Cnut and fell into the hands of enemies (probably supporters of Cnut's son Harold) who blinded him, and he died of his injuries in the monastery at Ely; his followers were also treated with extreme brutality. The earliest sources of information for these events are the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, MSS C and D, s. a. 1036, and the *Encomium Emmæ Reginæ* (composed *c.*1040–42); later accounts relevant to the present consideration are in William of Poitiers, *Willelmi Conquestoris Gesta*, and the *Liber Eliensis*; but none of these mentions the fatal walk (*ASC* I 158–60, II 211–15; Campbell 1949, lxiv–lxvii, 42–47; William of Poitiers, 1217–18; Blake 1962, 159). Gaimar in his account expands on the historical material by adding the motif, here clearly fictitious, of the fatal walk (lines 4825–35):

> Idunc si pristrent Elvred,
> Enz en Ely l'en unt mened,
> Iloc firent ses oilz crever,

Entur un pel le funt aler,
Le gros büel l'en orent trait;
Od aguilluns qu'aveient fait
Le firent tant entur aler
Pur sa büele deramer
Qu'il ne pot mes ester en piez.
L'aneme s'en vait e il sunt liez,
Qui en tel guise le murdrirent.

> Then they took Alfred, led him to Ely and there had his eyes put out; around a stake they made him go; they pulled out his large intestine; with goads that they had prepared they made him walk round so as to tear out his entrails, until he could no longer stand on his feet; his soul departs and they who murdered him in this way are glad.

The motif of the fatal walk is introduced from some unknown source to augment the narrative as Gaimar found it in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (on Gaimar's sources in general see Bell 1971, lii–lxxvii, supplemented by Freeman 1996, 189–90). As well as narrating Alfred's death, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the *Encomium Emmæ* also describe the brutal treatment suffered by his followers; William of Poitiers broadly repeats these details but to the list he adds an item not found in either of the earlier sources: *partim diro fine necavit horribiliter evisceratos*, 'some he [Harold] put to a cruel death, horribly eviscerated'; this same sentence is also repeated in the *Liber Eliensis* (Blake 1962, 159), and Gaimar presumably took this detail from one or other of these texts (probably from William, as the *Liber Eliensis* may have been too late to be available to Gaimar) and transferred it from Alfred's followers to Alfred himself. It seems to me unlikely that Gaimar invented the method of evisceration by walking round a stake; he may have come across it in some hagiographical source and, prompted by the reference to evisceration in William of Poitiers, introduced it so as to transform history into hagiography in his account of a murder that was widely seen as a martyrdom. I know of no exact hagiographical source, but there are elements of resemblance to the legend of St Lucy, who, in some versions, perhaps later, had her eyes torn out, while in others, notably the Old English life by Ælfric, she was disembowelled (*heo wearð þa gewundod þæt hire wand se innoð út*, 'she was cut open so that her insides came out'); this resemblance may of course be a coincidence and I do not know any version of the Lucy legend before the twelfth century that combines the motifs of blinding and disembowelment (Farmer 1978, 250–51; Ælfric 1966, I 216, line 127). There

was a movement to regard Alfred as a saint, as so often happened with murdered royalty. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle affirms that his soul is with Christ, the *Encomium Emmæ* asserts that he was a martyr and that miracles occur at his tomb in Ely (*ASC* I 160; Campbell 1949, 44–47); the *Liber Eliensis* likewise claims that his soul is in paradise and that visions of lights appear at his tomb, adding in one manuscript that his body is now placed beside the altar of St Alban, a detail that has some bearing on the subsequent development of the motif of the fatal walk (Blake 1962, 160, note *a*). The cult of Alfred Ætheling was evidently short-lived; no doubt it was to his disadvantage as a potential saint that he never actually became king, and there is some uncertainty as to whether he was or was not the elder brother and thus a leading candidate for the throne. Actual consecration as king might well have ensured his canonisation, as happened in the case of his murdered uncle, Edward the Martyr, whose cult as a saint was much longer-lived (Fell 1971; Rollason 1989, 141–42). Alfred is commemorated in Ely calendars of the twelfth century but after that his cult declined (Dickins 1937, 18–19).

Gaimar's account of the manner of Alfred's death is followed in another Anglo-Norman historical text, *An Early French Prose History of the Kings of England*, probably from the late twelfth century (Tyson 1975, 13):

> e a Alvred furent les oils crevés, e la boele luy fu trete fors del cors e a une estache afermé, e il fu chacé entur le estache ke tote la boele le vint hors entur le estache e il dunc chet mort.
>
> Alfred's eyes were put out, his entrails were pulled out of his body and fastened to a stake, and he was chased round the stake so that his entrails came out round the stake, and he fell down dead.

Tyson identifies a number of sources for the *Prose History*, but none of them, as far as I can trace, includes the motif of the fatal walk, which must be presumed to have come from Gaimar. Christiansen (1980–81, I 271) refers to an account of the death of Alfred Ætheling by the fatal walk in a Welsh chronicle, *Brenhinnedd y Saeson*, but this is presumably derived from Gaimar and supplemented from sources that implicate earl Godwin in the murder.

The *Liber Eliensis* locates Alfred's tomb in Ely beside the altar of St Alban and this connection points to the next example of the fatal walk. St Alban was of course the protomartyr of Britain, a pre-Anglo-Saxon (probably third-century) British saint, whose cult was nonetheless fostered by Anglo-Saxons from Bede to Ælfric and beyond. The cult was

naturally centred in St Albans, the traditional site of his martyrdom, and it was claimed that his relics were held in the abbey there, but the relics of St Alban became the subject of one of the most bizarre disputes of medieval English ecclesiastical history (Vaughan 1958, 198–204). The dispute arose between the monasteries of St Albans and Ely because the relics of St Alban were evidently taken from St Albans to Ely in the eleventh century for reasons that are not clear. Ely claimed that the relics were a gift brought by Ecgfrith, Abbot of St Albans, who fled to Ely in 1070 and died there in exile (Blake 1962, 176–77; Knowles *et al.* 1972, 65–66), while St Albans claimed that the relics were temporarily loaned to Ely for safe-keeping; thereafter the dispute over who was entitled to the relics, and who actually held them, continued for several centuries. In the mid-thirteenth century Matthew Paris of St Albans claimed, rather implausibly, that the authentic relics had never left St Albans and that what had been taken to Ely were the bones of a nameless monk, but he over-elaborated his argument by alleging that the monks of Ely, when ordered to return the relics to their original home, sent back a chest of worthless bones (*GA* I 34–36; Coulton 1936, 134–37). The whole affair is complicated by the possibility that the relics may well have been stolen from Ely by Danish raiders: *ASC* MS E, s. a. 1070 states that King Swegn (Svein Estridsson) raided England and stole various treasures from English churches, including Peterborough and Ely, and shipped them to Denmark (Clark 1970, 2–4). The loot included stolen relics, among others an arm of St Oswald and possibly the relics of St Alban, for it was subsequently claimed that these were in Denmark (Clark 1970, 2–3 and 64; Vaughan 1958, 202; *KLNM* IX 345, s. v. *Helgenskrin*). The Danish prince Knut (Svein's son), who was involved in the next attack on England in 1075 (*ASC* I 211–12; Clark 1970, 5–6 and 69) and may have taken part in the raid of 1070, became king of Denmark in 1080 and built a church in Odense dedicated to St Alban, with shrines containing alleged relics of Alban and Oswald (King 1962–63, 146–47; 1962–65, 197–99; Abrams 1995, 240). It was in this church in Odense that Knut was killed before the altar of St Alban in 1086, because, according to the *Roskilde Chronicle*, he had attempted to impose a poll-tax, *tributum quod nostrates 'nefgiald' uocant* (Gertz 1917–18, 23–24). Denmark thus acquired its first royal saint. The church in Odense was rebuilt *c.*1090 and dedicated to the new saint, and in 1096 a Benedictine monastery was founded there by monks invited from Evesham, which was henceforth the main English connection for Odense, but the alleged relics of St Alban

remained there and may be those that are still to be seen to this day; the crypt of St Knud's church contains two glass cases, one with the skeleton of the king, the other with more fragmentary remains that are not named and which may be those that were alleged in the Middle Ages, perhaps correctly, to be the bones of St Alban (Nyberg 1981, 110). That the claim of Odense to hold the relics of St Alban was taken seriously in St Albans is shown by Matthew Paris's obviously fictitious story (apparently modelled on a story previously told about Peterborough) of how a monk of St Albans went to Odense and succeeded in stealing the relics and sending them to England. Matthew implausibly places these events during the Danish attacks of the ninth century (long before there was any Christian foundation in Odense), because his story has to ensure that the relics were back in St Albans when the dispute with Ely arose in the eleventh century (*GA* I 12–19; Vaughan 1958, 202–03).

There was thus a good deal of uncertainty about the actual location of the relics of St Alban. Three places, St Albans, Ely and Odense, claimed to hold them, and by the mid-twelfth century it became clear that the abbey of St Albans needed some sort of insurance against the consequences of this uncertainty. Odense now had a new patron saint, Knut, and Ely's main appeal had always been (and long continued to be) the shrine of St Etheldreda (Audrey), an appeal now augmented by the presence of Alfred's tomb, but if St Albans no longer had St Alban himself, its main attraction might be thought to have disappeared. It is thus hardly surprising that the monks of St Albans felt the need for another saint with unchallengeable relics to attract the pilgrims and patronage that were such an important source of income, and fortunately one was almost ready to hand in the writings of that great twelfth-century deviser of fictions, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

The rise of the legend of St Amphibalus has frequently been described (Faral 1930; Tatlock 1934; Levison 1941; Westhuizen 1974; McCulloch 1981). The appearance of Amphibalus ('St Overcoat', as one commentator has sardonically called him) in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (Wright 1985, 50; V.v in some older editions) is no doubt due to a misunderstanding of *amphibalus*, 'cloak, robe', a rare Greek loanword in Latin, and probably also to a wrong inflection in a manuscript of Gildas used by Geoffrey; Tatlock (1934, 249–50) shows that the correct reading, *sub sancti abbatis amphibalo*, 'under the cloak of the holy abbot', must in some manuscripts have been miscopied as *sub sancto abbate amphibalo* (a reading attested in

the earliest printed edition), which looks as if it ought to mean 'under the holy abbot Amphibalus'. Unfortunately the plea of honest misunderstanding can hardly be extended to the whole cult of St Amphibalus as developed in St Albans in the late twelfth century, which shows a remarkable doggedness, and some ingenuity and imagination, in constructing and authenticating the cult of a fictitious saint. A Latin *Life of St Alban and St Amphibalus,* composed about 1166–83 by William of St Albans (*AS* 146–70), gave the process an appearance of authenticity, though of course it had to be presented not as something new but as the rediscovery of something old. William of St Albans proves himself to be a master of picturesque fantasy in claiming that his work was translated from a sixth-century English source, though Matthew Paris later refined on this by claiming that the lives of the two saints were found in a manuscript in the British language that was discovered in a hole in a wall in St Albans Abbey; as soon as the manuscript had been translated into Latin, it crumbled into dust (*GA* I 26–28). William's *vita* follows existing sources for the life of St Alban, but to this he adds, citing the authority of Geoffrey of Monmouth, a wholly fictitious life of St Amphibalus. If William believed, as many monks of St Albans presumably did, that relics had been stolen from St Albans by monks of Ely, there was a kind of rough justice in his taking in return from sources referring to Ely the technique of the martyrdom that he devises for Amphibalus, for the fatal walk of Alfred Ætheling here becomes transferred to the new, though allegedly much older, saint; and if this in any way detracted from Alfred's glory as a pioneer of this form of suffering, no one in St Albans was likely to complain. At any rate, Amphibalus, once an unoffending cloak, is made to take the same perambulation (*AS* 158):

> Quem mox arripientes et tractantes atrocius expoliaverunt, visceraque ejus ferro patefacta, palo in terram defixo circumligantes, et flagellis nimiis Sanctum Dei concidentes, in circuitu ejusdem pali ambulare fecerunt. Cumque beatus Martyr, Dei munere, inter tot angustias constitutus, nulla daret doloris indicia; illi acriores effecti eum quasi ad signum statuunt, et cultellis lanceolisque quod reliquum erat corporis confodiunt. Vir autem Domini, tamquam nihil mali pateretur, vultu hilari stabat constantior; et signa sui martyrii toto jam corpore præferebat: prodigiosum cunctis de se præbens spectaculum, quod post tanta supplicia, post tot mortis genera, adhuc vivere potuisset.
>
> They straightway seized him, beat him ferociously and stripped him, and cutting open his entrails with a sword they fastened them round a stake set in the ground; they lacerated the holy man of God with great blows of a

> whip and made him walk round this same stake. When the blessed martyr, resolute in the service of God among such afflictions, gave no sign of pain, they stabbed with knives and spears the remaining parts of his body. The man of God, however, as if he had been exposed to no evil, stood firm with a joyful countenance and displayed the signs of his martyrdom in all his body, presenting a marvellous spectacle of himself to everyone there, that after so many tortures and so many kinds of death he could still be alive.

This of course is typical hagiographic writing. Even if Gaimar had had some hagiographic source for his account of Alfred, he had treated the motif in the customary manner of his chronicle genre, but William of St Albans restores conventional hagiographic emphasis on the holiness and superhuman capacity for suffering of his hero-saint, and the dominant impression on the reader is one of almost ludicrous unreality. William's *Life of St Alban and St Amphibalus* is a splendid piece of rhetorical writing that does great honour to its subject, but for the cult of a saint, particularly a newly discovered one, a *vita*, however splendid, was not enough; a successful cult required relics that pilgrims could venerate and to which offerings could be made. It therefore comes as no surprise that relics were duly found, as indeed William's *vita* had predicted they would be (Levison 1941, 356; McCulloch 1981, 768). According to Matthew Paris, a layman of St Albans was visited in a dream by St Alban, who gave instructions for locating the remains of Amphibalus. The monks searched in the spot indicated, and bones were duly found. It has been suggested that the place was probably the site of a pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery (Levison 1941, 356), for the monks found an *embarras de richesses*, so that what was to have been the relics of St Amphibalus actually had to be identified as the relics of the saint and his companions; the alleged relics were then translated into the abbey church of St Alban and given a newly constructed shrine (*GA* I 192–93; *CM* II 301–08; Vaughan 1984, 49). Henceforth Amphibalus frequently appears in calendars with his feast-day on 25 June (St Alban himself having 22 June), and a life of St Amphibalus, including the motif of the fatal walk, is thereafter regularly appended to lives of St Alban. The motif eventually enters the English language in the poem on the two saints by Lydgate (Westhuizen 1974).

That the cult of Amphibalus was centred in St Albans is reflected in a number of manuscripts produced in the abbey there. This was of course the home of Matthew Paris, who was not only the greatest of all thirteenth-century English monastic chroniclers, but also a celebrated hagiographic author in both Latin and French and an outstanding artist. Matthew Paris's Anglo-Norman poem, *La Vie de Seint Auban*, based on

a Latin *vita* that Matthew had written (*CM* I 148–54), includes the life of Amphibalus; it survives in Matthew's own hand with his own illustrations in Dublin, Trinity College MS 177 [E. I. 40] (facsimile, James 1924; Morgan 1982, 130–33). Matthew's poem (Harden 1968) sets out the manner of Amphibalus's death in detail (lines 1601–10):

> Un peel en terre afichent li paien criminal
> E la buele en sachent du ventre Amphibal,
> Cum liun ki desire char de cors bestial.
> Au peel l'unt ataché a grant turment cural;
> Les meins li unt lié d'une resne a cheval;
> Nel lessent reposer, ne nul liu prendre estal,
> Entur le pel l'enchacent cum a chemin jurnal.
> De lances e cuteus e gros bastun poinnal
> Ferent, batent e poinnent cist pautener vassal
> Ke tut est esculé l'entraille corporal.

> The evil pagans fix a stake in the ground and they pull the intestine out of Amphibalus's belly like lions that want flesh from an animal's body. To the stake they fastened it with great torment of the heart; they tied his hands with a horse's reins; they do not let him rest or stop anywhere, around the stake they chase him, as if he were walking for a whole day; with lances, knives and great pointed sticks these wicked soldiers strike, beat and prick him until all his entrails come out.

Matthew also gives an abridged account of the process in the rubric to his illustration of this episode (Harden 1968, 58), and his illustration in the Dublin MS, fol. 45r, gives a clear depiction of the scene; a similar illustration also appears in another St Albans manuscript, not in the hand of Matthew Paris, now London, British Library MS Royal 2. B. vi, fol. 10v (James 1924, Pl. 27; Morgan 1982, Pl. 286 and nos 85–86). No doubt Matthew's Anglo-Norman poem helped to make the theme of the fatal walk more widely familiar in England, and the illustrations by Matthew and others would also have contributed to this. The fame of saints could spread in various ways, but in this case there are specific circumstances that may account for the transmission to Scandinavia of the legend of Amphibalus and the fatal walk.

In Denmark the cult of St Alban probably declined in popularity after the cathedral in Odense acquired the relics of St Knut at the end of the eleventh century, so the rise of the cult of Amphibalus in twelfth-century St Albans may well have gone unnoticed in Denmark. It is hardly likely to have been emphasised by the monks of Evesham who were the new mentors for the cathedral priory in Odense, though, as mentioned above, the motif of the fatal walk as a method of execution

survives in Danish folk-tradition. There was, however, at least one other Scandinavian foundation dedicated to St Alban, the Benedictine monastery at Selje on the coast of Norway between Bergen and Trondheim, and Norway was of course the destination of a celebrated journey made by Matthew Paris in 1248. Apparently the only surviving record of this journey is that left by Matthew himself in his *Chronica Majora* (*CM* V 42–45; Vaughan 1984, 158–61). According to Matthew, the monastery of St Benedict at Holm (now Nidarholm, near Trondheim), which he claims was founded by Cnut the Great together with St Benet of Holme, Norfolk, had by 1147 fallen into grave financial difficulties and complete disarray, and appealed to Rome for help. The pope, according to an alleged papal letter quoted by Matthew, asked the abbot of St Albans in England to send Matthew to sort out the problem in Holm, and Matthew interpreted this as requiring him to act 'as a reformer of the Benedictine order and visitor of the Benedictine abbots and monks in the kingdom of Norway' (Vaughan 1984, 161). What actually happened in Norway is not known. We have only Matthew's account, which suggests that he went full of high hopes, proud of his role as emissary of the pope and prepared to lay down the law to all Norwegian Benedictine abbots, but which ends rather uninformatively: 'the affair was undertaken with success, so that the abbot of Holm in Norway continued in peace and prosperity, and through God's grace the monastic order, though exposed to danger, breathed more easily, as did other monasteries in that region' (Vaughan 1984, 161). The reference to 'other monasteries' implies that Matthew had wider contacts than solely with Holm, as one would expect from his interpretation of the papal brief, and it is hardly conceivable that he would have ignored the monastery of St Alban at Selje; indeed, Matthew informs us that the abbot of Nidarholm, whose affairs Matthew had been sent to investigate, had actually died *in cœnobio videlicet Sancti Albani in Selio* (*CM* V 43; Vaughan 1984, 159). Matthew must therefore have had some contact with Selje, and one might expect him, as the greatest living authority on St Alban, to have wished to update the monks of Selje on the hagiography of their patron saint, with the added account of Amphibalus and his spectacular martyrdom, not least in order to correct the prevailing Norwegian view that Alban was the brother of Sunniva, the legendary Irish princess shipwrecked and martyred at Selje, to whom the earliest church at Selje had been dedicated. The origins of Selje are very obscure (see Abrams 1995, 241, and the other studies cited there), and there is even a possibility that the Alban of Selje may have been not the

British martyr but a German saint of the same name, but Matthew is unlikely to have known of any other Alban and his reference to the monastery of St Alban in Selje seems to imply that he identified that Alban with the patron of his own monastery at St Albans; any other identification would presumably have elicited some comment. The version of the legend of Sunniva in *Flateyjarbók* (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, chs 194–96) shows an awareness of the conflict between different versions of the legend of Alban, one by implication widely current, perhaps in Iceland but presumably especially in Norway, the other specifically localised in Selje, and it is this Selje version that identifies Alban (admittedly slightly unclearly) as the first Christian martyr in Britain (*Flateyjarbók* 1860–68, I 246):

> Þat finzst skrifat at brodir Sunnifu sa er Albanus het hafui verit j þessu hinu helga lide ok farit vestan vm haf med Sunnifu. en þui er her ekki af honum sagt at synizst efanligt þat. en þo segia þat sumir menn þeir er j Selju hafua verit ok þar er kunnikt at þar se mikil kirkia helgut guds pislarvott Albano er fyrstr uar pindr firir guds nafnn ok segia þeir menn suo at þar se halæitliga dyrkat hǫfut þess Albani, er drepinn uar a Æinglande.
>
> It appears in some writings that Sunniva's brother, who was called Alban, was in this holy company and travelled from the west across the sea with Sunniva, but he is not mentioned here [i. e. in the legend of Sunniva just narrated], since that seems uncertain. However, some men say who have been in Selja, and it is well known there, that there is a great church there dedicated to God's martyr Alban, who first suffered for God's name; these men say that the head of this Alban, who was killed in England, is sublimely venerated there.

It is possible, though obviously unprovable, that the currency of the English version of the legend of Alban in Selje is part of the legacy of Matthew Paris's visit to Norway.

There seems to be no evidence extant in Norway concerning Matthew's visit, but one detail of his account, his story of the ship in Bergen harbour whose mast was struck by lightning, is authenticated in a Norwegian source. This is recorded by Matthew as an event that befell the ship in which he had sailed from England and from which he had just disembarked, and what must be the same event is also related in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ch. 260 (Vaughan 1958, 6; Vigfusson 1887, 256). There are differences of detail sufficient to show that each account is independent of the other, but both accounts place the incident shortly after the great fire of Bergen on 9 June 1248 (a few days after in the saga, the following day in Matthew). Moreover, the ascription to Matthew of a painting now in Norway points to the possibility

of a wider impact than could be deduced from Matthew's own account of his visit; Vaughan discusses the possibility of Matthew's influence on Norwegian painting and plausibly conjectures that a painting by Matthew on an oak panel, now in Oslo, was actually taken to Norway by Matthew as a gift to King Hákon or to the monastery of Holm (Vaughan 1958, 205–07 and 228–29). Against this background, it seems quite plausible that Matthew Paris might have introduced to the Norwegian court and monastic circles the legend of the death of Amphibalus, both verbally (whether in Latin, French or even English) and visually through an illustration of the incident, whether brought from England or made on the spot. At any rate, Matthew's visit to Norway in 1248 is the most obvious channel by which the hagiographic motif of the fatal walk passed from England to Scandinavia, and ultimately to Iceland to become incorporated in *Njáls saga.*

As already mentioned, there is a fundamental difference between the sagas and the other sources. In the stories of Alfred Ætheling and Amphibalus the fatal walk is part of the sufferings of a martyr, a treatment that is mirrored in *Orms þáttr*, but in *Njáls saga* and *Þorsteins saga* it is a punishment inflicted on an evildoer. At first sight this looks like a rather arbitrary and unmotivated transference of a tale of saintly suffering to a context and genre in which it seems out of place. A reason for this transference of the motif appears, however, in the narrative sequence in which it is placed in *Njáls saga.* Just as Gaimar seems to have introduced the motif of the fatal walk into his account of Alfred Ætheling because of a rather vague reference to evisceration in William of Poitiers, so the author of the Clontarf episode may have been similarly prompted by the reference to human entrails in *Darraðarljóð*, which is linked in the saga with the Battle of Clontarf. Whether or not *Darraðarljóð* originally had any connection with Clontarf is not relevant here; what is relevant is that the author of *Njáls saga* (or possibly the author of whatever account of the battle was used as a source for that saga) took it to be so, and the imagery of severed heads and entrails in the poem influenced the narrative of the deaths of Brjánn and Bróðir. The poem contains the following lines (stanza 2), referring to the loom on which the destinies of men are woven (*Njáls saga* 1954, 455):

Sjá er orpinn vefr	The warp was set up
ýta þǫrmum	with the entrails of men
ok harðkléaðr	and weighted down
hǫfðum manna.	with men's heads.

It appears that the Clontarf narrative has been developed (perhaps by the author of *Njáls saga*, perhaps by the author of a source-text) as an overtly Christian response to *Darraðarljóð*. Brján's head is cut off by Bróðir and Bróðir's entrails are pulled out in return. In parallel accounts in hagiography (in Ælfric's *Life of St Edmund*, for example, Ælfric 1966, II 326, lines 176–80), the saint's head miraculously grows back onto his body, signifying the perfect body of the Christian resurrection, but no miracle will restore the mutilation of the pagan (indeed, apostate) Bróðir, whose suffering will continue throughout eternity. The pagan web of destiny with its severed heads and entrails has no power over the Christian, but the pagan is for ever subject to its gloomy hopelessness. In this way the picturesque imagery of the pagan poem is developed for a didactic religious purpose, and the grotesque manner of the viking's death emphasises a literary shift to the conventions of hagiography and religious propaganda.

Finally, it may be noted that in *Orms þáttr* the fatal walk is paralleled by the rite of the blood-eagle: the giant Brúsi malevolently inflicts the former on Ásbjǫrn and Ormr inflicts the latter as punishment on Brúsi. It has been suggested that the rite of the blood-eagle is a literary convention, perhaps arising from a misunderstanding (Frank 1984; additional references in Frank 1990–93; see further McTurk 1994). It is certainly my view that the motif of the fatal walk is a purely literary convention, and in this case the antecedents of the motif are traceable. Whether this has any bearing on the rite of the blood-eagle is uncertain, but both motifs may exemplify a taste for gruesome detail that appears in some later medieval Icelandic writing, a change in taste that might be seen as reflecting W. P. Ker's classic dichotomy of epic and romance, if not Steblin-Kamenskij's theory of the baleful effects of religion (Ker 1908; Steblin-Kamenskij 1973, 45–48, 100–122). Few would deny that *Njáls saga* is a work of epic seriousness, while the death of Bróðir introduces an element of fantasy and unreality that is foreign to the pervading tone of the saga-narrative, and if this episode also introduces an element of brutality and savagery this is because of the shift from the values of the family-sagas, in which death has a seriousness and finality, to the values of saints' lives, in which suffering and death are a transient part of mankind's progress to the joys of heaven. How far this shift is aesthetically justified at this point is however another matter.

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I have occasionally modified editorial punctuation in quotations.

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THE LOCALISATION AND DATING OF MEDIEVAL ICELANDIC MANUSCRIPTS

By STEFÁN KARLSSON

AS IS APPARENT FROM THE TITLE, the subject of this paper is the localisation and dating of medieval Icelandic manuscripts.[1] In this context I intend to touch on the identification of scribal hands in more than one manuscript, that is to say, the establishment of groups of manuscripts on the basis of common hands, and to consider attempts to identify individual scribes or at least to place them in a particular environment.

In my view, investigations of this sort can serve many purposes well beyond just satisfying pure curiosity, necessary though curiosity certainly is in a scholar. In many cases our work resembles that of the detective, although we seldom succeed in making our expositions as exciting as a detective-thriller.

Identification of scribes is not only of interest for the study of Icelandic biography and genealogy. Along with the dating and localisation of a group of manuscripts on the basis of common hands, it can contribute to our knowledge of where in Iceland manuscripts were produced and in what sort of environment. We can also get information about what literary genres were of interest in the communities in question.

A fairly secure dating for Icelandic manuscripts is more or less essential for students of literary history who are concerned with chronology and literary development. This is because the age of the oldest manuscript of a given text constitutes, of course, a *terminus ante quem* for that text. There are some interesting cases where this simple principle was ignored. In Stefán Einarsson's typological dating of the later *riddarasögur* (1957, 164; 1961, 204–05), for example, *Dínus saga drambláta* and two other sagas were put around 1500 or even after that date. In fact there are good reasons for dating the oldest manuscript of *Dínus saga* (AM 575 a 4to) to about or even before 1400, and the oldest manuscripts of the other sagas to the 15th century (*ONPInd* 1989, 172, 383, 268).

[1] This article is based on a paper given to the Viking Society in November 1996; parts of the contents have been incorporated in other papers of which one has been published, cf. Stefán Karlsson 1998.

Moreover the dating of manuscripts is, of course, of enormous importance for students of linguistic history. In grammars of Old Norse, sound-changes and morphological innovations are often dated in a rather unsubtle manner which can be deceptive. When, for example, it is stated that short /ǫ/ and short /ø/ fall together in about 1200 and long /æ/ and /œ/ fall together in about 1250 then this is an assertion which needs explanation. It is true that we find the first signs of these sound-changes at about these dates. But the concise way they are often formulated in modern grammars might give the uninitiated the idea that they took place either by the waving of some magic wand or even by a legislative act of the Icelandic parliament. In the large Icelandic speech-area we can, I think, reckon that it took something like fifty to a hundred years for a linguistic innovation to be carried through over the whole country. In some cases it may have taken considerably longer. Besides, we still have areas where older forms linger on, and where changes have not been carried through which took place centuries earlier elsewhere in the country.

Although we believe we know the main features of Icelandic linguistic history, much remains obscure, not least about where particular linguistic innovations have arisen and in which directions and how quickly they have spread. As is well known, the most radical changes which have taken place in Icelandic since the Middle Ages are in pronunciation, and certain shifts in the sound-system find no expression in orthography because no syncretism of sounds resulted. Other changes are, of course, manifested in the written language, but up till now it has been impossible to say with certainty exactly where in the country any innovation had its origin. The sparse and scattered population of Iceland and the lack of any significant urbanisation until the present century have meant that there have been no influential centres for linguistic innovations, and this, in turn, has been one of the reasons for the relatively conservative character of the Icelandic language.

It has also proved difficult to follow the spread of linguistic change. One reason is the very uneven distribution of the preserved documentary sources. There is no specifically dated and localised original charter preserved from before 1300. And up into the fifteenth century the overwhelming preponderance of charters is from northern Iceland. This means that it is almost impossible to get from the charters of this period any overall picture of the linguistic situation outside the northern part of the country.

In an article on the external circumstances affecting the development

of Icelandic, Helgi Guðmundsson (1977, 319) drew attention to the fact that the Icelandic speech-area was circular in form. This meant that linguistic innovations could gain ground on both sides, until, by a sort of pincer movement, they conquered the whole country. But the converse could also happen: a linguistic innovation might well succumb in a campaign on two fronts against the forces of linguistic conservatism. There is evidence in the written sources for quite a number of linguistic innovations which seemed to establish themselves and flourish for a few centuries, only to disappear entirely at a later date. The problem is that we have been unable to define with any certainty the dialect-areas in which they manifested themselves at a given time, and therefore they are rarely of value in localising a particular manuscript in which they appear.

One factor that makes it difficult to establish well-defined dialect areas and boundaries in Iceland is, of course, the mobility of its population (Jón Helgason 1931, 36–37; Helgi Guðmundsson 1977, 318–21). It may perhaps appear paradoxical that such mobility existed at the same time as Icelandic society remained extraordinarily static down the centuries from an economic point of view, but that is in fact the case. This mobility took various forms, of which two are most relevant to the present discussion. First, from the late Middle Ages down to the present century labourers moved from one part of the country to another because of the seasonal nature of employment. Second, the clergy often changed residence, as did members of the wealthiest families who commonly entered into marriages, inherited farms and settled down in places far from where they were born. One result of this mobility was doubtless what might be termed linguistic infiltration, which in turn contributed to a somewhat complex dialectal situation. Another factor undoubtedly was that many scribes had a role somewhat similar to that of itinerant journeymen. I shall return to them later.

What I should like to consider, then, are the methods that have been used for dating and localising medieval Icelandic manuscripts. I shall also touch on various conclusions which earlier scholars have come to in this field, and others I have come to myself, not all of which I have so far published.

Just as the great majority of Icelandic sagas are anonymous, so it is only in exceptional cases that the scribes of preserved manuscripts are named. The best known exception to this generalisation is the original part of the largest extant Icelandic medieval manuscript, *Flateyjarbók* (Gl. kgl. sml. 1005 fol., now in SÁM). This contains primarily sagas

about four Norwegian kings, but with lengthy interpolations from Sagas of Icelanders and other sagas that are connected in their subject-matter with the missionary kings Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr helgi. In a prefatory note in the hand of one of the scribes of *Flateyjarbók*, we are told that the book's owner was Jón Hákonarson, a prominent landowner of Víðidalstunga in Húnavatnssýsla, in the western part of the northern Quarter. We are also given the names of the book's two scribes, Jón Þórðarson and Magnús Þórhallsson, both of them priests, and are told which part of the codex each of them wrote and that Magnús illuminated the whole book. Elsewhere in the codex, 1387 is given as the year in which the book was written, but its youngest parts are a little later nonetheless, inasmuch as the annals which the manuscript contains continue as far as 1394 (Stefán Karlsson 1970b, 298–99). A single leaf from a manuscript containing an otherwise unknown *riddarasaga* called *Grega saga*, AM 567 4to, XXVI (now in SÁM), has also turned out to have been written by Magnús Þórhallsson. Finally, on the basis of orthographically accurate copies by later scribes, I think I have convincingly shown that a largish codex called *Vatnshyrna* which contained a number of Sagas of Icelanders but which perished in the Copenhagen fire of 1728 was at least partly written in Magnús's hand (Stefán Karlsson 1970b). Long before this, however, the production of *Vatnshyrna* had been thought to be due to Jón Hákonarson's initiative because genealogies at the end of two of the sagas it contained are traced down either to Jón himself or to the woman we think was his wife (Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1860a, xiv–xvi; 1860b, ix–xi).

The manuscript Perg. fol. nr 2 in The Royal Library in Stockholm has saints' lives as its contents and the heading to one of these is: *Hér byrjar Benedictus sögu er Ormur Loftsson skrifaði*, 'Here begins Benedictus saga, which Ormur Loftsson copied'. The majority of the twenty-five other sagas in the manuscript are written entirely or partly in the same hand as *Benedikts saga*, and Peter Foote, in the introduction to the facsimile edition of the codex, detected the same hand in two leaves from another codex containing saints' lives (AM 238 fol., VIII). The scribe Ormur Loftsson must be identical with the person of the same name who was the Norwegian king's *hirðstjóri* (governor) in Iceland for a shortish period. He lived partly in western Iceland and partly in the western part of northern Iceland, dying probably at an early age before 1450 (Foote 1962, 10–12 and 17–18).

Then there is a single leaf, probably the final one, from a liturgical manuscript designated AM 80 b 8vo (now in SÁM), in which the scribe

provides specific information about the book's genesis in a colophon. He gives his own name as Jón Þorlákssson and the name of the person who commissioned the book as Bjarni Ívarsson and says that Bjarni was also its illuminator. Bjarni lived at Meðalfell in Kjós in south-western Iceland but presented the book 'to the Virgin Mary at Munkaþverá', that is, to the Benedictine monastery at Munkaþverá in Eyjafjörður in northern Iceland. The year is given as 1473 (Kålund 1884–91). The reason why Bjarni gave this fine gift to a monastery in a far-off part of the country could well be that his wife (who was, by the way, a sister of the Ormur Loftsson I have just mentioned) came from the wealthy farm of Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður which lies only twelve kilometres or so south of Munkaþverá. There is also circumstantial evidence that Bjarni, who himself came from south-western Iceland, may have grown up in the household of his aunt Margrét Vigfúsdóttir at Möðruvellir (I will be coming back to her later on). It is quite possible that Bjarni was sent to school at Munkaþverá, even though he never took orders. The scribe of the manuscript, Jón Þorlákssson, who was also a layman, has been identified as the scribe of the preserved fragments of various other liturgical codices and also of a little prayer-book which Sir Joseph Banks presented to the British Museum in 1773 (BL Add. 4895). The legend about Jón Þorlákssson is that the three fingers he used for writing did not grow stiff when rigor mortis set in at his death (Magnús Már Lárusson 1958; Jón Helgason 1968; Ólafur Halldórsson 1971; Andersen 1979; Stefán Karlsson 1979b).

Then there are examples of a scribe being mentioned in a manuscript without our having any further information about him. AM 152 fol. (now in SÁM) is a large saga-codex containing *Grettis saga* and also various *riddarasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*. It was written by two scribes, one of whom wrote the first quarter of the codex, including *Grettis saga*. In the margin of the part of the codex containing *Grettis saga*, on f. 46v, we find written: *Þessa sögu hefur skrifað bróðir Bjarnar Þorleifssonar*, 'The brother of Björn Þorleifsson wrote this saga'. Earlier scholars, most recently Jón Helgason (1958, 74), took it for granted that the Björn Þorleifsson mentioned here was the king's governor of that name who was killed by Englishmen in 1467. But it was later discovered that the scribal hand in question appeared in various charters, amongst them three from the years 1511–12 (*DI* VIII, nos 299, 327 and 334[2]) which concern the farm of Svignaskarð in Borgarfjörður in

[2] Bps. A I Fasc. XVIII 42, XVIII 43 and XII 6 in Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands.

western Iceland. On this farm there lived a man by the name of Þorsteinn Þorleifsson, who was half-brother to another Björn Þorleifsson, a grandson of the king's governor of the same name (Louis-Jensen 1969, 241–43). This younger Björn Þorleifsson is best known as the scribe, and perhaps also part-compiler, of the last great work of Icelandic hagiography, which goes under the name of *Reykjahólabók*. In addition to charters, his hand is also found in fragments of a couple of other codices which contain religious works (Overgaard 1968, ciii–cxi; Loth 1969, xxi–xxxv). In contrast with this, his half-brother Þorsteinn Þorleifsson's hand appears in fragments of a legal manuscript (Stefán Karlsson 1970a, 138).

The incorrect identification of the scribe of AM 152 fol. made by earlier scholars is closely related to the stagnation in the development of Icelandic script and orthography in the period between the great plague of 1402–04 and the Reformation. That stagnation was such that a number of codices which we now know to have been written in the first half of the sixteenth century, or about the middle of it, were formerly dated to the fifteenth.

To conclude this part of my paper, I will mention a group of codices in which the names of the scribes in marginalia have been the cause of trouble and divided opinion. Four manuscripts were seen to belong to this group as much as a hundred years ago. Three of them are among the largest codices from the end of the Middle Ages: the saga-manuscript AM 510 4to, the *rímur*-manuscript AM 604 4to, and AM 713 4to, which contains a large collection of Catholic poems. In addition, there is a small manuscript, AM 431 12mo, which contains a life of St Margaret of Antioch and prayers for women in labour. All four of these manuscripts are now in SÁM.

Now because the scribe of this last manuscript, 431, is referred to as Jón Arason, and because the manuscript contains some prayers in Latin, it was assumed by most scholars that this group of manuscripts was written by Jón Arason, the last Catholic bishop of Iceland. But in a long article, Jón Helgason (1932) produced strong arguments to show that, in fact, the bishop had no part in the production of these manuscripts. He pointed out that the two names Jón Arason and Tómas Arason appeared in marginalia in the saga-manuscript 510 and a 'séra Ari' in marginalia in the *rímur*-manuscript 604. After Agnete Loth had noticed that at the end of one of the sagas in 510 the book was said to have been written by *þrír feðgar*, that is either a father and his two sons, or a grandfather and his son and grandson; and after I had found one of

the hands of this manuscript-group in a charter written at Staður in Súgandafjörður in the Western Fjords in 1549 in which the priest Ari Jónsson was one of the witnesses (*DI* XI, no. 629[3]), Ólafur Halldórsson (1966, 25–26) clinched the conclusion put forward by Jón Helgason just as a possibility in his article that the scribes of this group of manuscripts were the priest Ari Jónsson from the Western Fjords and his two lay sons, Jón and Tómas. This Ari Jónsson was the grandson of a Jón Þorláksson who was either identical with, or a brother of, the well-known scribe of liturgical manuscripts whom I mentioned earlier (p. 142). Since 1966, more manuscripts have been added to the group, a little encyclopaedic manuscript and various law-books, so that we see that this college of scribes, up there in the Western Fjords, concerned themselves with most of the genres of Iceland's medieval literature (Stefán Karlsson 1970a, 139). Up to now, nobody has tried to ascribe individual parts of the manuscripts in this impressive group to particular members of the trio, but this should not be impossible despite the fact that, at first glance, the hands in these manuscripts resemble each other to the point of confusion.

There have always, of course, been groups of scribes who wrote individual characters and expressed individual phonemes in the same way. But in writing in general the graphic and orthographic possibilities were so numerous that it is highly improbable that any two scribes would adopt exactly the same combinations. It is true, on the other hand, that the probability is undeniably greatest in precisely the sort of situation we seem to have here, where two sons were presumably taught to write by their father.

In what I have said so far, I have given a few examples of how dated and localised charters can help us to identify the writers of manuscripts. Now the writers of Icelandic charters were, like the majority of scribes of the codices, anonymous. But we can sometimes identify the scribe of a charter with a reasonable degree of certainty, because his name will often appear in the charter itself, either as one of the parties in the particular piece of business or as one of the arbitrators or witnesses who execute the charter. If one has just one solitary charter, of course, it is usually useless to attempt to single out one of the persons named as the scribe. But if one has two or more charters in the same hand, then things become easier (and then normally in direct

[3] AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. LI 23 (now in SÁM).

relationship to the number of charters one has). This is because a greater number of charters reduces the number of persons who can be seen to have been present on all the occasions when the charters were executed or to have had an interest in them all. And it is also an advantage if the relevant charters are chronologically spread over a longish period, since this reduces the possibility that likely candidates had the same secretary the whole time; and one can in certain cases observe small changes in writing which can contribute to a closer dating of any manuscript which might be in the charter-writer's hand.

When one has succeeded in identifying the hand in a charter with one in a manuscript, then identification of the scribe is obviously made easier if the manuscript's content gives some hint as to who the scribe was. This was the case with the earliest identifications of manuscript writers on the basis of charters. The first was Peter Andreas Munch's identification (Munch 1847) of lawman Haukur Erlendsson, who lived chiefly in Norway, as the main scribe of the manuscript *Hauksbók* (AM 371 4to (now in SÁM), AM 544 4to and AM 675 4to), a manuscript which was already connected with him by the genealogies in the version of *Landnámabók* it contains and because the writer of 371, on a now lost leaf, had given his name as Haukur Erlendsson. The second was Gustav Storm's identification (Storm 1888, xxi; cf. also Stefán Karlsson 1963, xxxix) of the priest Einar Hafliðason, *officialis* and administrator at Hólar, as the scribe of the so-called *Lögmannsannáll* down to 1361, a set of annals whose contents suggested him as their compiler and also partly their author. As far as *Hauksbók* is concerned, I have tried to establish a closer dating of those parts of the manuscript which are written in the same hand as two charters written by Haukur in 1302 and 1310 (*IO* nos 4 and 5, both in Riksarkivet in Oslo), and on the basis of minor palaeographical differences between the two charters, I have attempted to demonstrate that the major part of what Haukur wrote in *Hauksbók* (371 and parts of 544) was written between the dates of the two charters (Stefán Karlsson 1964).

In the course of the last few decades, scholars have recognised hands found in charters in manuscripts whose contents did not already point in a particular direction. But this is relatively rare in the period before 1400. There are two reasons for this. First, the corpus of Icelandic charters for the period prior to 1400 is rather limited—not many more than a hundred original charters. Second, there is the difficulty that scribes in the fourteenth century used two different types of writing: on the one hand, a style they used for writing codices, which may be called

a Gothic book-script, on the other a semicursive which they primarily used in writing charters. It seems that the most productive scribes mastered both styles and there are actually a few examples of a scribe using both styles in a single codex. But otherwise it is often almost impossible to recognise the style a scribe uses in writing codices from the one he uses in writing charters, and vice versa.

One reason why it is of such value to recognise the hand of a charter in a codex or to establish a close relation between the hands of charters and those of codices is, of course, that charters are dated and localised. Particularly where several charters exist in the same hand as a codex, it may be possible to arrive at a very accurate dating of the codex on the basis of a development in the writing which can be observed from one charter to the next. On the other hand, a dating based solely on a codex's script and spelling cannot reasonably be more accurate than to a period of a least fifty years.

The place where a charter was executed does not necessarily give any information about the place where the scribe lived nor, if we find manuscripts in the same hand, the place where he wrote these. Scribes were mobile, and the more competent amongst them were presumably in certain cases called upon to carry out their work in several different places. When we have a number of charters in the same hand, they will normally have been written in different places, not necessarily just within the same area, but sometimes in places quite far apart. Any concentration we find at or around a given place will, of course, give a hint as to the place where the scribe lived. And when one is able to put a definite name to the scribe of a charter, then other sources can make localisation of the scribe in question considerably easier.

I will give a single example of this which will also serve to show how careful we must be if we are to make use of localised charters as sources for dialect geography. A short contribution by Pierre Naert (1956) included in its title the words 'Med þessu minu optnu brefi'. This phrase, *með þessu mínu opnu bréfi,* literally, 'by this my open letter', is found at the beginning of numerous charters, and Naert had collected from *Diplomatarium Islandicum* cases where an intrusive *t* was found between the *p* and the *n* in the word *opnu*, the dative singular neuter of the adjective *opinn*, 'open'. In all, he found the spelling in thirty-eight charters from the period 1449–1567. They were spread over northern Iceland, western Iceland and the most westerly parts of southern Iceland. But the greatest concentration was in the southern part of Strandasýsla on the eastern side of the north-western peninsula,

and it was therefore reasonable to conclude that it was somewhere in that region of Iceland that the sound-change represented by the spelling in question had its origin. On the other hand, it is a little difficult to think of the rather isolated Strandasýsla as the dynamic centre of a linguistic innovation which subsequently spread elsewhere. And when one takes a closer look at the charters which figure in Naert's list, then one sees that at least a quarter of them, including all those from Strandasýsla, are written in the same hand in the years between 1488 and 1514. This hand is also found in certain other documents which were not in Naert's list, either because they did not contain the spelling in question or because they were not accurately reproduced in *Diplomatarium Islandicum.* In all, there are some thirteen charters in this one hand. The majority of them concern one and the same person, so it is reasonable to conclude that we have here the actual scribe. This person was called Þorbjörn Jónsson and he was a farmer at Kálfanes in Steingrímsfjörður in Strandasýsla. He seems to have travelled quite a lot and to have written documents, partly for other people, at various places in the north-western peninsula, and also at some distance off to the south in the monastery on Viðey and at the bishop's seat at Skálholt. Þorbjörn was an unusual character. The first time he appears in historical sources is in a document executed in 1487 by Raymundus Peraudi, the Pope's commissioner for indulgences in Germany, which grants an indulgence to Þorbjörn and his wife; the document is in Icelandic and was written by Þorbjörn himself, with the addition of a couple of Latin prayers in the same hand (*DI* VI, no. 524)! In addition we are told in two further documents that he received absolution for some unspecified transgressions from his bishop on Viðey in 1494 (*DI* VII, no. 269) and from his archdeacon at Kálfanes probably in 1499 (*DI* VII, no. 447). In 1514 he also received absolution from his archdeacon in Vatnsfjörður *ab adulterio* (*DI* VIII, no. 401). The last time we come across him is at Skálholt in 1515 in a charter where the bishop licenses a building erected by Þorbjörn in Steingrímsfjörður as a chapel and grants nine days' indulgence to people each time they go there to hear mass (*DI* VIII, no. 439). All five of these documents are in the same hand.[4] I will be coming back to Þorbjörn later on.

In the identification of Haukur Erlendsson and Einar Hafliðason as writers of codices, a combination of two factors was involved. First,

[4] AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. XXVIII 13, XXXII 21, XXXIV 16, XLII 15 and XLII 25 (all now in SÁM).

certain things in their codices pointed to them as scribes or patrons; and second, the appearance of the same scribal hands in charters which concerned them and which were written many years apart made it highly likely that they had contributed to the writing of the codices in question with their own hands.

In certain cases it is possible to localise manuscripts, without necessarily pointing to a named scribe, on the basis of some local connection of the texts. This method was used in the last century to localise AM 279 a 4to, which became known as *Þingeyrabók* (*DI* I, nos 80 and 112), because its oldest parts, written in the second half of the thirteenth century, contain among other things information about foreshore rights belonging to the Benedictine monastery at Þingeyrar.[5] In the 1960s, it became apparent that the latest parts of the codex are written in the same hand as certain documents which concern Jón Þorvaldsson who was abbot of Þingeyrar at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and he probably wrote these documents himself (Stefán Karlsson 1963, xxix–xxxiii). The same hand is found as one of those in AM 624 4to, which contains exempla and many other texts, including *Visio Pauli* (Tveitane 1965, 6–7). Two of the oldest hands are also found in other manuscripts, one of them in fragments of a manuscript of *Gregorius saga* and Gregory's *Dialogues* (NRA nos 71, 72, 72b, 76 and 77, and AM 921 4to, IV), and another in the oldest extant fragment of *Karlamagnús saga*, NRA 61 (Stefán Karlsson 1992). Both the manuscripts of which these fragments are the remains were probably in Norway in the medieval period and are therefore one of several indications that the scriptorium at Þingeyrar to some extent produced manuscripts with an eye to exporting them to Norway (Stefán Karlsson 1979a, 8–9).

Information about who owned a manuscript or the place it was kept can also provide evidence about its place of origin. The value of such evidence is, however, naturally qualified by the length of time between a manuscript's date of origin and the date of such information. Thus it has become clear over the years that several of the manuscripts which Árni Magnússon in his time acquired from Skálholt, and which on that

[5] One of the oldest parts of this manuscript, 'Skipti á spákonuarfi', was dated to about 1200 (*DI* I, no. 80) or a little later (Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, xviii), probably since it contains a reference to a statement by abbot Karl (d. 1212 or 1213). But it is not certain that Karl's statement would have been written down in his lifetime, and in any case one cannot assume that AM 279 a 4to is the original of this document.

basis were in some cases formerly regarded as products of Skálholt, were in fact written in other parts of the country. This is very understandable. Ecclesiastical establishments not only produced manuscripts; they also received them as gifts and bequests. And as far as Skálholt is concerned this was particularly necessary because its stock of books was greatly reduced by various fires (Stefán Karlsson 1967a, 57–58[6]).

An example of a generally accepted localisation of a group of manuscripts on this basis is to be found in Ólafur Halldórsson's exhaustive monograph, *Helgafellsbækur fornar* (1966). Here Ólafur presented various indications that a large group of manuscripts from the second half of the fourteenth century, established as a group on the basis of common hands, had been written in the Augustinian monastery at Helgafell. One of these manuscripts is AM 226 fol., containing among other things material from or connected with the historical books of the Old Testament, known as *Stjórn.* Also belonging to the group are several manuscripts of saints' lives, including Codex Scardensis with its lives of the apostles, the manuscript of the Óláfr sagas AM 61 fol., and some law-books, including the beautifully illuminated *Skarðsbók.*

In his 'Tesen om de två kulturerna', Lars Lönnroth put together a very useful list of most of the groups of manuscripts known at the time to have had one or more scribal hands in common, with brief comments (1965, 65–73). Now in my view the production of manuscript books in the Middle Ages in Iceland was not limited to the ecclesiastical foundations and clerics to quite the degree that Lönnroth argued. He is, of course, right in arguing that wealthy farmers often commissioned ecclesiastical establishments or local priests to carry out literary work for them, perhaps primarily copying and compiling, the sort of work that *Flateyjarbók* exemplifies. We can, of course, as Lönnroth suggests, talk about two cultures in medieval Iceland, one clerical, the other secular. But we must never forget that the bearers of the secular culture belonged to a Christian community, and more people than we have specific information about would have received at least some education, sometimes in monastic schools, without going on to be ordained as priests (Stefán Karlsson 1970a, 133 and 136).

In a critique I wrote of Lönnroth's arguments (1970a, 131–40), I argued that the ability to read and write was more common amongst the

[6] There are more manuscripts than are mentioned here that Árni got from Skálholt and have been shown to have been written elsewhere.

secular population of medieval Iceland than he was inclined to admit.[7] I have, of course, never argued that all or even the majority of Icelandic farmers in the Middles Ages were able to read and write. On the other hand, I suggested that it was probable most of the landowning farmers, and with them, of course, the chieftains, and certain other people, were able to do so. This literate group, however, was only a minority of the total number of farmers. Among the farmers who leased the farms they worked there was undoubtedly a significant disparity depending on the value (and with that the scale of the farming) of the farms they leased.

In this connection I will mention that in a study still to be published I have tried to use a source from the middle of the seventeenth century to get an idea of what proportion of the farmers of that time could read and write. The documents are from assemblies which were held throughout the country in 1649 in connection with the swearing of oaths of allegiance to Frederik III as absolute monarch (*Skjöl* 1914).[8] In a number of these documents we are told that all those who were able to write signed them themselves. The material proved to be rather variable, but my conclusion is that it is probable that about 20–25 per cent of all farmers could write. The document from one such assembly in Barðastrandarsýsla in the Western Fjords is the clearest because it tells us from which farm each person came. This particular assembly covered forty farms, which can be divided into three categories according to the valuation they are given in an inventory from 1710 (*Jarðabók* 1938). Sixteen farms were valued at twelve hundreds or less; of the farmers on these farms there was only one who signed. Eight farms in the second class were valued at sixteen hundreds; from them two farmers signed. Finally, sixteen farms were valued at eighteen hundreds or more, and from these seven of the farmers signed—that is nearly half of them. This shows, I think, that there was a close correlation between economic prosperity and social status on the one hand and the ability to write on the other.

Before I move on from this old dispute of mine with Lars Lönnroth, I will just mention one further point. I myself, and others before me, have quoted statements from the sixteenth century, by Peder Palladius, bishop of Sjælland, in 1546, and by two slightly later Norwegian writers, about the remarkable, in fact almost universal, literacy of the

[7] Later modifications of some of his views appear in Lönnroth 1990, 9.

[8] These documents are preserved in the Rigsarkiv, Copenhagen, in the section 'Island, Færø, Grønland' as nos 42–44.

Icelanders. I disagree with Lönnroth that the statements in question are so similar in wording that they have no independent source value. The bishop writes in general terms that he observes 'that there are not many to be found in the country who cannot themselves both read and write their mother tongue.' Absolon Beyer of Bergen writes in 1567 that it is customary among the Icelanders to teach their children to read and write, 'females just as much as males, and young lads are put to studying their law-book until they know it off by heart.' And the archdeacon Peder Claussøn Friis, writing in 1580, begins with an echo from Saxo Grammaticus to the effect that the Icelanders had writing and composing as a substitute for warfare and goes on to say that every farmer could read and write and that they taught their children to do the same, and concludes with the statement that every member of the *lögrétta* (public court of law) had his own copy of the law-book with him at the Alþingi (Stefán Karlsson 1970a, 133–35).

In this article of 1970 I accepted that these three statements exaggerate, but even so they presumably contain an element of truth in representing literacy in sixteenth-century Iceland as a good deal more widespread than in the neighbouring countries. There is no evidence that literacy was given any special impetus by the Reformation; in any case the Reformation had not been carried through in the whole of Iceland when Palladius was writing. On the other hand, it is possible that Icelandic clergy of the time might have stressed the country's vigorous literary tradition to Palladius, who functioned more or less as their archbishop after the Reformation, and might have exaggerated literacy there as an argument for Iceland having its native language as the language of the Church. As we know, this was not what happened in Norway and the Faroes, which were also under Danish rule.

We can, of course, be entirely certain that the two bishop's seats in Iceland were centres for the production of books, although there are very few preserved medieval manuscripts that can be connected with them as having been written there. On the other hand, as I have said, there are various groups of manuscripts which with varying degrees of probability appear to be the products of monastic houses. I have mentioned the large group dated to the fourteenth century connected with the Augustinian monastery at Helgafell and a smaller one from the thirteenth century connected with the Benedictine monastery at Þingeyrar; there is also a larger group of fourteenth-century manuscripts that has been linked with the monastery at Þingeyrar (Johansson 1997, 9–18

and 66–80). Other groups have with varying degrees of probability been identified as monastic products: one from the second half of the fourteenth century (Louis-Jensen 1968, 10–13) and another from the middle of the fifteenth century (Stefán Karlsson 1963, lx–lxi) have been associated with Benedictine Munkaþverá in Eyjafjörður; one from the middle of the fourteenth century (Stefán Karlsson 1967a, 26–29)[9] and another from a century later (see below) with Augustinian Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur; and one from the late fourteenth century (Lönnroth 1965, 71–72) with the Benedictine nunnery at Reynistaður in Skagafjörður.[10]

I will elaborate a little on the later of the two groups of manuscripts that have been linked to the monastery at Möðruvellir. It consists of two large manuscripts written around the middle of the fifteenth century, one of which has been divided into two, AM 81 a fol., which contains *Sverris saga*, *Böglunga sögur* and *Hákonar saga*, and AM 243 a fol., which contains *Konungs skuggsjá*. The other manuscript, Perg. fol. nr 7 in The Royal Library in Stockholm, contains various *riddarasögur*. The two manuscripts are connected by the fact that two identical, or at least closely related, hands appear in both (Holm-Olsen 1961, 15; Jónas Kristjánsson 1964, xiii–xiv), and in addition a number of other scribes were involved, some of whom have written just a few lines.

Now when Ludvig Holm-Olsen wrote his introduction to the facsimile edition of 81 a, he established that one of the main hands of these manuscripts was to be found in a charter (*DI* V, no. 77[11]) written in 1451 at the farm of Myrká in Hörgárdalur, that is, not far from the monastery at Möðruvellir. Because of the large number of hands in the group, Holm-Olsen concluded that these manuscripts were in all probability written at some ecclesiastical establishment, possibly at the bishop's seat at Hólar or at one of the monasteries, either Möðruvellir

[9] The localisation in this case is based on very weak foundations.

[10] The handwriting of these manuscripts is very like that in documents mostly relating to Brynjólfur ríki Bjarnarson of Akrar in Skagafjörður, who was for a time steward of the monastery at Reynistaður, and his son (Stefán Karlsson 1963, xxxvii–xxxix), and their origin (or at least that of some of them) has been linked with this family (Ólafur Halldórsson 1963; Stefán Karlsson 1970a). Peter Foote (1990, 38–60) has given a comprehensive account of this group of Skagafjörður manuscripts and considered the likelihood of whether they originated in a monastery or in the household of a great secular landowner. Cf. also Ólafur Halldórsson 1993, 17–22.

[11] AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. XIII 1 (now in SÁM).

in Hörgárdalur or Munkaþverá in Eyjafjörður (Holm-Olsen 1961, 14–16).[12] Jónas Kristjánsson (1964, xiv–xvi) and especially Lönnroth (1965, 72) favoured Möðruvellir, and so did Holm-Olsen in his later works (1986, xix–xxiii; 1987, 11–12), though with greater reservation. In the introduction to his edition of 81 a, he said (1986, xxiii): 'a codex with as many scribal hands as 81 a and 243 a have can hardly have been written in any other place than one of the monasteries', and here Holm-Olsen is thinking of either Möðruvellir or Munkaþverá.

Now I must confess that I am very sceptical of such arguments. I think it is faulty logic to argue (as others have done besides Holm-Olsen) that because a manuscript is written in a number of different hands it was necessarily written at an ecclesiastical establishment. We must not forget the large farms to be found in Iceland at the time. In them the country's wealthiest families resided and probably at least the male members of these would have been able to read and write. In addition, most of these larger farms were at the same time great church-places where one could find up to four clerics, two priests and one or two deacons. There might, then, have been almost a dozen literate people at such places, and they would in my opinion have had all that was needed to allow them to function as cultural centres producing books (Stefán Karlsson 1967b, 81). Also, as Jonna Louis-Jensen has pointed out in another connection (1969, 249–50), it is possible to explain the many minor hands that have written just a few lines of a manuscript as those of literate guests who perhaps put in an appearance at the place while a manuscript was actually being written.

Furthermore, a strong argument that the two manuscripts under discussion were not written in the monastery at Möðruvellir, nor indeed at Munkaþverá nor Hólar, is that not a single one of the many hands contained in them is also found in any of the considerable number of documents from the same period which concern these three ecclesiastical establishments.

I have a different suggestion to make. At the farm of Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður, which is about forty kilometres south of the monastery of the same name, a document (*DI* V, no. 331[13]) was written in 1463 in a hand very similar to one of the hands common to the two manuscripts

[12] 'The manuscript [AM 81 a fol.] evidently served as an exercise-book in the teaching of penmanship at one of Iceland's educational centres, an episcopal residence or a monastery' (Holm-Olsen 1961, 9).

[13] AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. XV 21 (now in SÁM).

in question (Jónas Kristjánsson 1964, xiii), and a related hand is found in two transcripts of documents written at the same place in 1461 (*DI* V, nos 221 and 222[14]). Möðruvellir was one of the largest farms in the country and there was a church there served by two priests and a deacon (*DI* V, p. 307). At the time it was owned by Margrét Vigfúsdóttir, whom I mentioned earlier (p. 142 above), a lady of a distinguished, partly Norwegian, family (Einar Bjarnason 1964). She was an aunt of the Bjarni Ívarsson whom I mentioned before (p. 142) as a donor and illuminator of a book. In 1436 Margrét married Þorvarður Loftsson of Möðruvellir, son of Loftur Guttormsson, one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in Iceland in the early decades of the fifteenth century. But only ten years afterwards Þorvarður died and she lived on at Möðruvellir as a widow for some forty years. That she had an interest in art is apparent from the inventories of churches in the district, which list works of art she had given them, and to her own church she presented a fine English altar-piece of alabaster (*DI* V, p. 308) which can still be seen in the little wooden church from the last century now standing at Möðruvellir.

From a marginal note in 243 a it is clear that the lawman Þorvarður Erlendsson, a grandson of Margrét Vigfúsdóttir, owned 81 a and 243 a for a time (Holm-Olsen 1961, 14–15; 1987, 10), and the oldest name to be found in the marginalia of Perg. fol. nr 7 is the rare name Ívar Narfason (Jónas Kristjánsson 1964, xxxvi); but this was the name of a grandson of Bjarni Ívarsson, Margrét's nephew (Einar Bjarnason 1964, 83–86), possibly her foster-son,[15] who married Soffía Loftsdóttir, a sister of Margrét's husband Þorvarður. I conclude, then, that in all likelihood these manuscripts come from the farm Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður; a cultural centre such as this was undoubtedly capable of producing books. The circumstances surrounding the above-mentioned manuscripts and others belonging to the same group will be discussed further by Christopher Sanders in his introduction to a forthcoming facsimile edition of Perg. fol. nr 7.

Before finishing, I will mention a single manuscript which also has been linked to an ecclesiastical establishment.

[14] AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. I 1 (now in Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands) and VI 23 (now in SÁM).

[15] Bjarni Ívarsson's brother Guðmundur seems to have been brought up in Margrét's household at Möðruvellir; their father Ívar hólmur Vigfússon was killed in 1433 (Einar Bjarnason 1964, 82–89).

AM 551 a 4to contains the end of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* and also *Víglundar saga* and *Grettis saga.* Of the four scribes of this manuscript, the one who wrote the major part of it also wrote various marginal notes, including this sentence in the margin of *Grettis saga*: *Standi þar fyrst, því að mál er að krjúpa krossi,* that is, 'Let it remain so for the time being; it is time to kneel before the Cross.' In his facsimile edition of the manuscript, Jón Helgason (1954, viii) took this as evidence that this scribe was a cleric or a monk. This view was accepted by Lars Lönnroth (1965, 64), who also thought that the *faðir minn góður*, 'my good father', to whom in other marginalia the scribe makes apologies for the shortcomings of his work, was his abbot. Certainly the word *faðir* can have the sense 'abbot' and can also mean 'confessor'. But in this case it is really more natural to interpret these marginal notes in 551 a as addressed to the scribe's natural father, identical with the *frændi,* 'kinsman', of whom he takes his leave in another note elsewhere in the manuscript.

The fact is that it is apparent from a comparison of the hands that the person who wrote this saga-manuscript is identical with that same amanuensis of charters I mentioned earlier, the one who wrote the dative neuter singular of *opinn* with an intrusive *t*, Þorbjörn Jónsson of Steingrímsfjörður in the north-western peninsula. And I have also found Þorbjörn's hand in two incomplete erotic poems in AM 155 b 8vo[16] and in a medical miscellany, AM 434 a 12mo,[17] which contains, amongst other things, a prayer to the Holy Cross.

Þorbjörn was not a member of society's highest class, but he was a travelled and landowning farmer. And layman though he was, he was also a member of the Universal Church. It was therefore natural for him to interrupt his scribal work for a while and kneel before the Cross.

[16] Printed in Ólafur Davíðsson 1894, 308–09.
[17] Printed in Kålund 1907; facsimiles of two pages pp. 42–43.

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RELIGIOUS IDEAS IN *SONATORREK*

By JÓN HNEFILL AÐALSTEINSSON

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE of the Icelanders during the tenth century, in the days of the pagan Nordic religion, is a relatively closed book to modern people.[1] The source material is scant and fragmentary, and most of it has already passed through the hands of several generations of people who were strongly opposed to the pagan Nordic beliefs of the tenth century. Nonetheless, in spite of everything, it remains possible that even today we are in possession of certain examples of trustworthy source material in which tenth-century people give personal descriptions of their own religious attitudes and views about individual gods. I am here referring to those poems and occasional verses (*lausavísur*) dealing with religious subjects which are said to have been written by tenth-century poets.

I ought to stress two things, however, before going any further. First of all, it is unlikely that we will ever be completely certain about whether the poems and occasional verses attributed to tenth-century poets are actually their work or not. Secondly, we do not know whether these works have been preserved in an uncorrupt state, that is to say, whether they still have the same shape as that in which they were originally composed. Both these considerations have to be borne in mind whenever any attempt is made to evaluate the work of tenth-century poets as source material for their religious beliefs.

Egill Skalla-Grímsson (*c.*910–90) was more prolific than any other Icelandic poet of the tenth century. A great deal of his poetry deals with gods and beliefs, and in this regard his poem *Sonatorrek* has a special position. Certain doubts have been raised as to whether Egill really was the author of everything that has been attributed to him, and *Sonatorrek*

[1] This article originally took the form of a lecture that was presented at University College London on 17 October 1996. I would like to express my gratitude to Richard Perkins for inviting me to give the lecture, and to Richard Perkins, Peter Foote and Michael Barnes for their useful notes and comments on it. A draft version of the lecture was earlier presented at a meeting of Vísindafélag Íslendinga in April 1990, and note has been taken of various comments made at that time. Finally, I would like to thank Terry Gunnell for his useful comments and careful translation.

is one of those that have been called into question (Bjarni Einarsson 1992). Opinions on this matter vary so greatly that there is little reason to spend much time on it here (Sigurður Nordal in *ÍF* II, v–xvi; Guðrún Nordal *et al.* 1992, 239–42).

Sonatorrek has been explained as meaning 'Loss of Sons', *torrek* then meaning 'heavy loss' (Cleasby and Vigfusson 1975). It is possible, however, that a more original meaning is contained in the title, and that *Sonatorrek* means *torrekin sonahefnd*, 'a revenge for sons that is hard to achieve' (Sigurður Nordal in *ÍF* II, 257 n.; Ásgeir Bl. Magnússon 1989).

In this present article I mean to discuss the religious ideas expressed in *Sonatorrek*. Three things in particular come into question here.

First of all, how do the religious ideas expressed in the poem about the fate of the poet's sons after death fit in with the general Scandinavian belief that those who die in battle will go to Óðinn in Valhǫll, those who drown will go to Rán, and those who die of illness end up going to Hel?

Secondly, what does the poem tell us about the belief and world view of the poet who composed it?

Finally, to what extent do the conclusions that we can draw from *Sonatorrek* support those conclusions that can be drawn from other sources about religious belief at this time?

The editions of *Sonatorrek* that I will mainly be referring to in this article are those of Sigurður Nordal in *ÍF* II (1933) and E. O. G. Turville-Petre in *Scaldic Poetry* (1976). Before continuing any further, however, I ought to give a little information about the poem, its author and the reason why the poem was composed.

Sonatorrek is believed to have been composed in about 960, and is preserved in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, which in all likelihood was written 1220–40. The saga itself has been preserved in a number of manuscripts which scholars, led by Jón Helgason (1961, 29), have divided into three main groups. The most important manuscript in the first group is Möðruvallabók (M, AM 132 fol.) written *c.*1325–50. This version of the saga has formed the basis of all printed editions of the saga. The second group (the so-called Ketilsbók group, which I will be referring to simply as K) is based on two nearly identical copies of the saga which were made by the Reverend Ketill Jörundarson, who died in 1670. The main manuscript in the third group is known as Wolfenbüttelbók, or simply W. This comes from the mid-fourteenth century. For readings in the text of *Sonatorrek*, in addition to the printed editions, I have made use of photocopies of the K manuscripts.

The first strophe of *Sonatorrek* is preserved in M and in certain seventeenth-century manuscripts related to W, which itself has a lacuna at this point. One and a half other strophes from *Sonatorrek* (st. 23 and the first half of st. 24) are also contained in Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda. The complete poem, however, is only preserved in Ketill Jörundarson's manuscripts, K1 and K2, which are believed to be copies of a vellum manuscript dating from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Jón Helgason believed that the first strophe of the poem was the only strophe of *Sonatorrek* to have been recorded in the original version of *Egils saga*, and that the poem had been written down elsewhere and was fitted into the lost manuscript that formed the basis for Ketill Jörundarson's copies. Jón Helgason believed that the original recording of the poem must have taken place at the time when early poems were still being collected from oral tradition, that is to say, before the middle of the thirteenth century (Jón Helgason 1961, 29). Turville-Petre (1976, 28) supports Jón Helgason's words, and says of *Sonatorrek*, 'It was inserted, presumably from an oral source, at an early date, when ancient poetry still lived orally.'

Egils saga ch. 78 recounts the events leading to Egill's composition of *Sonatorrek* as follows: Egill's young and promising son, Bǫðvarr, drowned off the coast. Egill found the corpse washed up on shore and took it to the grave-mound of his father, Skalla-Grímr. He then rode back home and entered his bed closet, locking the door behind him. He lay there for the whole of that night, the next day and the following night. On the third day, Egill's wife Ásgerðr had a horse fetched, and sent someone off as fast as possible to inform their daughter Þorgerðr at Hjarðarholt. Þorgerðr came to Borg late that evening. She immediately went to her father in his bed closet and said that she wanted to go the same way as he. They were then given water to drink in the bed closet, but on drinking it, discovered that it was milk. The saga now runs as follows:

> Then Þorgerðr said, 'What shall we do now? This plan is now at an end. Now, father, I want us to lengthen our lives in order that you may compose a memorial poem for Bǫðvarr which I will write on a (rune) stick, and after that we may die if we wish to.' . . . Egill said that it was unlikely that he would be able to compose even if he tried, 'but I will make an attempt at it,' he said. Egill had had a son called Gunnarr, who had also died a short time before that. And this is the start of the poem.

Sonatorrek is quite an accessible poem. It is written in the *kviðuháttr* verse-form, though this is used with a certain freedom. The material is

well organised and the poem is not difficult to understand—wherever the text has been preserved in an uncorrupt state. In other places, however, the text is obviously somewhat corrupt and distorted, and it has proved difficult for scholars to solve all the difficulties that this has caused. In this connection, it is worth remembering Sigurður Nordal's comment on the subject (*ÍF* II, 245 n.): 'Even though we know that corrections must be necessary, we rarely know where they should be made or how.' Nordal's words should be borne in mind whenever any attempt is made to explain any unclear wording in *Sonatorrek.*

Before going any further, I will outline the subject matter of the poem. The poet starts by describing how difficult it is to compose. He senses the end of his family line, and says that it is hard for those who bear their deceased relatives out of the house (stt. 1–4). He remembers the death of his mother and father and then, for several strophes, turns especially to the drowning of his son. He says that the goddess Rán has been hard to him, and that if he could gain revenge with his sword, Ægir's days would be numbered. The poet is, however, powerless against 'ship-killer' (*skipsbananum*); everyone can now witness the helplessness of an old man (stt. 6–9). The sea has taken much from the poet. His son, the shield of the family, was well made, and deserved to be allowed to grow and mature. He always followed his father's advice and was a support in all ways (stt. 10–12). The poet thinks about the death of his brother Þórólfr. After his death the poet has had no real fighter by his side in battles. Friends grow fewer, and none can be trusted any more (stt. 13–16). No one can take the place of a dead son except another son. The son of the woman has reached his destination. The picture of Ægir again appears before the eyes of the poet, who describes his weakness (stt. 17–19). In st. 20, the poet turns to the son that died in his sick-bed, and in st. 21 tells of a son that Óðinn has received into the home of the gods. The next three strophes deal with the relationship that has existed between the poet and Óðinn, and in the final strophe of the poem, the poet paints a picture of himself facing Hel whom he claims to await both gladly and fearlessly.

The next thing that needs to be done is evaluate whether the religious ideas of *Sonatorrek* fit in with other available evidence on religious ideas from the tenth century. The first part of *Sonatorrek* makes it very clear that the poet's son has drowned. Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* and other thirteenth-century prose works give several accounts of how those who drown end up in the keeping of the sea goddess, Rán. Snorri's *Edda* states that Rán had a net in which she caught all those

men who came into the sea: *Rán átti net þat, er hon veiddi í menn alla, þá er á sæ kómu* (1931, 121). *Eyrbyggja saga* expresses a similar idea when Þóroddr and his companions appear soaking wet at their own wake: *þá hǫfðu menn þat fyrir satt, at þá væri mǫnnum vel fagnat at Ránar, ef sædauðir menn vitjuðu erfis síns* (*ÍF* IV, 148).

Rán appears in a similar way in the poems of the Poetic Edda. In *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, it is said of a ship that was saved: *snørisk ramliga | Rán ór hendi* (*PE* 1962, 134). In *Helgakviða Hjǫrvarðsonar*, Atli, addressing Hrímgerðr who has made an attempt to sink his ship, speaks of *ræsis rekka | er þú vildir Rán gefa* (*PE* 1962, 144).

Considering the evidence of these works, it might be presumed that the composer of *Sonatorrek* would have expected his drowned son to rest with Rán and Ægir. As mentioned earlier, the poem clearly states that the poet believes Rán and Ægir took his son away from him. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find several scholars interpreting three strophes in *Sonatorrek* (stt. 10, 18 and 21) as suggesting, as will be shown below, that after Bǫðvarr drowned, he went to Óðinn in Valhǫll. According to most other sources (like the Prose Edda and poems of the Poetic Edda), Valhǫll was reserved for those who died in battle (de Vries 1957, 377–79 and references; Simek 1993, 113; Halvorsen 1975, 464–65 and references). There is clearly some conflict of ideas here.

I will now re-examine the three strophes in question in order to see exactly how strong the logic is behind the traditional interpretion that scholars have tended to give. The tenth strophe of *Sonatorrek* runs as follows:

Mik hefr marr	The sea has
miklu ræntan,	robbed me of much,
grimmt es fall	it is cruel to
frænda at telja,	count the death of relations,
síðan's minn	since mine
á munvega	on *munvega*
ættar skjǫldr	shield of family
af lífi hvarf	vanished from life.

Most of this strophe is very clear and easy to understand. The main problem is the meaning of the word *munvega.* Sigurður Nordal (*ÍF* II 250) explains *munvegar* as meaning *gleðivegir* ('paths of joy') and in support refers first to the name *munarheimr* ('the world of love') in *Helgakviða Hjǫrvarðssonar* 42 and then to *goðheimr* ('the world of the gods') in st. 21 of *Sonatorrek. Goðheimr* in st. 21 is undoubtedly

Valhǫll, and thus, if we follow Sigurður Nordal's explanation, it is natural to assume that Bǫðvarr must have gone there. Turville-Petre supports Nordal's interpretation, giving the following explanation of *á munvega*: 'on the paths of joy, the road to Valhǫll' (1976, 34). Many other commentators and editors have accepted this interpretation.

Nonetheless, in the light of the widespread belief expressed in early works that those who die at sea go to Rán rather than to Valhǫll, I think we should look more closely at the interpretations given by Nordal and Turville-Petre. Certainly, there is no doubt about the wording of the text in K. The key word is certainly *munvegar*.

The masculine word *munr*, in the genitive *munar* or *muns*, is very old in the Scandinavian languages. *Muns* appears in Wulfila's fourth-century translation of the Bible meaning 'mindedness', 'intention', 'thought' and so on (Köbler 1989). In ancient Scandinavian, *munr* has three meanings: 1. Intention, mindedness and thought; 2. Longing, will, joy; and 3. Love. Compound words stemming from *munr* are *muntún* ('the home-field of thought') and *munstrǫnd* ('the shore of thought/love/longing') which are used for the head or breast.

In view of the meaning implied by the use of *munr* in early works it seems to me that it would be most natural to interpret *munvegar* as meaning 'the paths of thought, of the spirit or of the mind', and to understand the word in an unspecific sense as referring the field of spiritual existence to which all people go when they die. In line 8 of st. 10, Ketill Jörundarson writes in two words that the son has departed *af lífi*, 'from life', on these *munvegar* and it seems to me much more natural to write it thus than as *aflífi* as is usual.

In st. 10, the poet is giving a frank description of his deep grief at the death of his son, and it would thus be highly contradictory for him in this context to talk about happiness or 'paths of joy'. Furthermore, if we take a closer look at the concept of *munarheimr*, 'the world of love', as it appears in *Helgakviða Hjǫrvarðssonar*, we may note that that poem is essentially a love poem. The bird asks Atli (*PE* 1962, 140):

Sáttú Sigrlinn,	Did you see Sigrlinn
Sváfnis dóttur,	Sváfnir's daughter,
meyna fegurstu,	the most beautiful maiden
í munarheimi?	in *munarheimr*.

The 'most beautiful maiden in *munarheimr*' here might be taken to mean 'the most beautiful girl in the world of love', or the most beautiful girl it was possible to imagine.

Later in the same poem, Sváfa says (*PE* 1962, 149):

Mælt hafða ek þat	I had said it
í munarheimi,	in *munarheimr*
þá er mér Helgi	when Helgi
hringa valði.	chose me rings.

Both examples of *munarheimr* in this poem occur in descriptions of events pertaining to the world of love. These descriptions are quite alien to the circumstances in *Sonatorrek*. The two examples can therefore hardly be regarded as comparable. As a result, I think it impossible to interpret *munvegar* in st. 10 as being 'paths of joy', and even less permissible to conclude that with these words the poet is stating that his son has gone to Valhǫll.

It might be added that in st. 11 of *Sonatorrek*, the poet wishes that the son had been allowed to grow and mature until *her-Gauts hendr of tæki*. These words are considered to mean either that the son would manage to mature until he had 'gained warrior's hands', or until he fell in battle and went to Óðinn. Whichever meaning is right, both contradict the idea that the poet thinks his son has already arrived in Valhǫll.

What, then, is the poet saying about the fate of his son when he states that he has vanished *af lífi á munvega* ('from life onto the paths of thought/mind/the spirit')? I think it is simplest to interpret the words as meaning that the poet believes his son has disappeared from the living world onto the paths of the invisible existence of thought or the spirit, in the world of the departed. In fact, then, with these words, the poet is saying little more than that his son is dead, and from the words of st. 10 alone it is impossible to draw any further conclusions about exactly where he believes his son has gone after death.

I will now turn to st. 18 of *Sonatorrek* which runs as follows, according to K:

Erumka þokt	I am not pleased
þjóða sinni	by my compatriots
þótt sérhverr	even though everyone
sátt um haldi;	keeps the peace;
bír er bískips	*bír bískips* has
í bæ kominn	arrived in the farm
kvánar son	the son of my wife
kynnis leita.	searching for *kynni*.

The first part of this strophe is easy to understand. The poet finds no pleasure in the company of others even though people keep the peace. Some commentators have altered *þokt* in the first line to *þekt*, but this has the same general meaning and thus makes little difference.

The second half of the strophe, however, has caused numerous headaches. A wide variety of proposals for alterations in the text have been offered. The fifth line, *bír er bískips*, has caused particular problems.

Most commentators have suggested that the word *bir* should be altered to read *bur* or *burr*, 'son'. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell suggested the couplet should read *burr es býskips í bæ kominn*, 'the son has come to the farm of the ship of bees', which would then probably refer to the sky (Vigfusson and Powell 1883, 279). Finnur Jónsson (*Lexicon Poeticum* 1966, 73) suggested the alternative reading *býskeiðs* instead of *býskips*, meaning 'the son has arrived in the farm of the track of bees', which would again imply the sky.

Sigurður Nordal (*ÍF* II, 1933, 253) proposed the alteration *burr's Bileygs í bæ kominn*, meaning that the son has come to the one-eyed Óðinn (Bileygr). Many later editors and translators have adopted Nordal's interpretation, some of them without making any comment at all or any mention of the fact that the original text has been altered. Magnús Olsen suggested alterations first of all to *Bylræfrs* (1936, 240 ff.) and then later to *Bilskeiðs,* which he saw as meaning the same as Bifrǫst (1962, 74 ff.). According to both interpretations it means 'the sky'. Ernst A. Kock, however, went even further with his proposal of *hýskis í bæ*, 'to the living place of his family' (1937, 13). In his edition of *Sonatorrek* in 1976, Turville-Petre takes note of all the alteration proposals I have mentioned, but adopts none of them. He simply prints the original K text, *bir er bískips*, indicating that it is an uncertain reading and leaving a gap in his translation.

Before going any further I would like to look carefully at the text of st. 18 in its original form in the manuscripts, and first of all at the troublesome word *bískips*. To the best of my knowledge, most scholars have ruled out the use of the original word. *Bískips*, however, is composed of two parts: the prefix *bí* and then *skips*, the genitive singular of *skip* 'ship'.

Bi is an old prefix. According to Icelandic etymological dictionaries and various other sources, it was common in Gothic and the West Germanic languages (as in Gothic *bimaitan* 'circumcise', *bigraban* 'surround by diggings', *bigairdan* 'gird'; German *besuchen*; Old Saxon *bikuman*; Old English *becuman*). The old prefix has since disappeared in Icelandic and the other Scandinavian languages. It had the meaning of 'with' or 'about', and remnants of this meaning are still found today in several Norwegian and Swedish words (see, for example, Ásgeir Bl. Magnússon 1989, 53; Alexander Jóhannesson 1920, 119).

In early Norse works, the prefix *bi* appears in a number of places, as in these words:

Bígyrðill 'belt', 'the waist' or some kind of framework. The word is used in *Þórsdrápa*, from the late tenth century (Snorri Sturluson 1931, 109).

Bílífi 'the high life', which appears on three occasions in *Alexanders saga*, which was translated into Icelandic by Brandr Jónsson in about 1260 (1925, 19, 35 and 45).

Bífala 'place in (somebody's) care'. The word appears in a seventeenth-century paper manuscript at the end of the medieval *Páls saga biskups* (in *Biskupa sögur* I, 1858, n. 7): *En Páll biskup bífalaði sik og hana [hjǫrð sína] á vald almáttugs guðs, áðr hann var frá oss kallaðr.*

Bístanda 'assist'. The word appears in *Stjórn* (see Cleasby and Vigfusson 1975).

All the above words are regarded as being foreign loanwords in Icelandic,[2] but there is some discussion about whether they were borrowed from Old English or Old High German (Halldór Halldórsson 1980, 16).

The preposition *bi* also appears in a runic inscription on a spear hilt from Kragehul in Denmark, believed to come from shortly after AD 400. The ending of the inscription has been taken to read: *víge *bi g(eire)*, 'I fix on the spear' (Alexander Jóhannesson 1920, 119–20).

Considering the above examples of the use of the prefix *bi*, it seems to me in no way ridiculous to assume that the word *bískips* might also have entered Old Scandinavian as a loanword, especially if it is possible to trust the words of *Egils saga* that the poet who composed *Sonatorrek* spent a long time living in Norway, travelled to Sweden and even farther to the east, and after that dwelt for a period in England. Such a man was more likely than others to resort to a foreign borrowing when under pressure. *Bískips* is an adverb and means 'beside the ship' or 'near the ship'. It is formed like the adverb *miðskips* and blends easily with the Icelandic language.

There are two main reasons that I feel weigh most heavily in the case for allowing the word to remain unaltered. 1. *Bískips* as a foreign loanword is no less easily understood in Icelandic than a word like *bígyrðill* 'frame, belt'. 2. The word *bískips* is clearly written in the extant manuscripts containing *Sonatorrek.*

[2] Baldur Jónsson examined these examples with me. I am grateful to him for his scholarly comments.

The next thing is to consider whether *bískips* in this sense fits in alongside the other words of the second half of the strophe, thus leading to a good understanding of st. 18 as a whole, and I now turn to the word *bir*, which scholars have commonly altered to *burr*. In post-medieval manuscripts, *bir* might be a spelling for *byr*, i. e. *byrr* 'breeze'. This latter word is common in early kennings which are connected to either the sky or the sea. *Byrræfr* ('breeze-roof') and *byrtjald* ('breeze-tent') mean the sky, while *byrskíð* ('breeze-ski'), *byrsóti* ('breeze-horse') and *byrstóð* ('breeze-horses') are used as kennings for ships (*Lexicon Poeticum* 1966). In *Skáldskaparmál*, Snorri Sturluson (1931, 116) writes that the sea might be referred to as *hús sanda, þangs* or *skerja*, 'the house of the sand, seaweed or skerries'. It can also be referred to as *land dorgar, sæfugla, byrjar* ('the land of fishing line, seabirds or breeze'). The last of these kennings, 'land of breeze', would probably be in the form *byrland*. Going on from there, it would not be too far-fetched to propose the kenning *byrbær*, 'the farm of the breeze'. If we consider the whole line, *byrbæ bískips* ('the farm of the breeze beside the ship'), it is clear that the farm meant must be in the sea, if it is not actually a reference to the sea itself, especially if the ship in question is lying on the bottom of the ocean.

The reading presented here involves two parts of a compound word being taken from different verse lines.[3] In Old Norse poetry it is not all that rare for there to be so much space between two elements of a compound. One might compare *rein- . . . -vári* and *Ið- . . . -uðr* in Snorri Sturluson 1931, 100 and 112. This phenomenon (tmesis) exists in poetry attributed to Egill Skallagrímsson, for instance in the line *í dal-miskunn -fiska* (*ÍF* II 119). The proposal I make below for the meaning of the strophe is therefore not based on anything out of the ordinary. Moreover, no letter found in the manuscript needs to be changed. The conclusion of st. 18, then, can be read as follows: *Kvánar son er kominn í byrbæ bískips kynnis leita.* This would then mean: 'The son of the woman has come to the farm of the sea beside the ship in search of company.'

Before going any further, I think it is necessary to take a closer look at the expression *kynnis leita.* When explaining these words, Sigurður Nordal refers to ch. 31 of *Egils saga*, where the three-year-old Egill is quoted as saying that he has the same *kynni* (i. e. relatives) as his

[3] This fact is noted because of comments that were made in the discussion that took place on this subject at the meeting of Vísindafélag Íslendinga.

brother Þórólfr at his maternal grandfather's farm. Going on from this, Sigurður Nordal interprets *leita kynnis* as meaning 'visit one's relatives' (*ÍF* II, 81 n.). Most other scholars have taken up Nordal's interpretation and considered that according to the words of st. 18, Bǫðvarr was heading for a meeting with his deceased relatives.

This interpretation might pass, but I do not think it is the most obvious. Personally I would draw a line between the expressions *at eiga kynni* and *at leita kynnis*. To my mind, *at eiga kynni* somewhere means that you know you will find good friends and relations there, and can happily visit them whenever you wish. *At leita kynnis*, on the other hand, seems to me to be understood most naturally as meaning that you are looking for new company in a place as yet unknown to you. If we examine matters from this new viewpoint, the interpretation of the poem changes completely. The anguish of the the poet composing a work about the death of his son becomes deeper. He no longer imagines his son visiting deceased relatives, which in some ways might be seen as a consolation, but rather heading into unknown territory in the grip of Rán and Ægir.

I now turn to st. 21 of *Sonatorrek*, which has been interpreted as a description of Bǫðvarr's journey to Valhǫll. In relation to this strophe, I shall be considering what the poem tells us about the religious belief of the poet who composed it.

The strophe runs as follows:

Þat mank enn	I still remember
er upp um hóf	when he raised
í goðheim	into the world of the gods,
Gauta spjalli,	the friend of Gauts,
ættar ask	the ash tree of the family,
þann er óx af mér	the one which grew from me
ok kynvið	and the family tree
kvánar minnar.	of my wife.

Gauta spjalli, 'the friend of Gauts', is definitely Óðinn, and in this strophe the poet describes how Óðinn has taken the poet's son to himself in the home of the gods, Valhǫll. This description, however, does not have any sense of the anguish which characterises those strophes of the poem which deal with Bǫðvarr and his fate. In K, st. 21 is very clear, and there are no difficulties about the way in which the strophe should be read. The problem relates more to the initial words and the position of the strophe in the poem as a whole. It has sometimes been argued that the poet is again talking about Bǫðvarr, the son that

drowned a few days before, but it should be noted that though the first part of *Sonatorrek* deals with Bǫðvarr and his drowning, in fact after st. 18 where he states that Bǫðvarr has arrived in the *byrbær bískips*, and st. 19 where he feels that he is facing a stern-faced Ægir, the poet leaves Bǫðvarr. In st. 20, he goes on to describe the sick-bed death of his innocent and well-made son. St. 21 then commences with the words *Þat mank enn*, 'I still remember'. These words seem to me to contain a direct reference to events which must have taken place some time before the other events described in the poem, that is before the drowning of Bǫðvarr and the death of the other son. I have previously suggested that st. 21 probably refers to a third son who must have died in battle (Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1991, 16).

It should be noted that stt. 21–24 of *Sonatorrek* form a complete unit in which Óðinn plays a central role. St. 22 runs as follows:

Áttak ek gótt	I had a good relationship
við geirs dróttinn	with the lord of the spear,
gerðumk tryggr	I grew trustful
at trúa honum,	in believing in him,
áðr vinátt	before friendship
vagna rúni	the wagon friend
sigrhǫfundr	author of victory
um sleit við mik.	broke with me.

This strophe has usually been interpreted as follows: 'I got on well with the god of the spear and had steadfast faith in him until the friend of wagons, the author of victory, broke friendship with me.'

There are several uncertain features in this interpretation of the strophe which need closer examination. The first part is clear and easy to understand. Here, the poet claims to have had a good relationship with Óðinn and to have been loyal to Óðinn as his personal god. This statement about the loyalty of an individual to a pagan Nordic god is more strongly worded than any other extant source concerning the old Nordic faith. Sigurður Nordal has paid special attention to this half-strophe in his article 'Átrúnaður Egils Skalla-Grímssonar'. In this article Sigurður Nordal assumes that Egill will have been brought up believing in the agricultural gods of farmers, that is, Þórr and Freyr. As an adult, however, he rejected them and took up faith in Óðinn. The first part of the strophe is a clear reference to such a change of opinion, or complete revision of faith (Sigurður Nordal 1924, 157–59).

The second half of the strophe, however, has proved to be more problematic. The fifth line in K is *áðr umat.* Scholars have read a

variety of things out of these words, but all of them agree that the nonsense word *umat* must be a confused spelling of some other word meaning 'friendship', though any such known word in this position would provide an extra syllable which would make the line too long for normal *kviðuháttr*. Sigurður Nordal proposed the word *vinan*, Magnus Olsen (1936, 245) *vinúð,* and Jón Helgason (1961, 38) and Turville-Petre (1976, 39) read *vinátt*, but none of these word-forms appears anywhere else. The words *vagna rúni* in line 6 (actually written *vagna runne* in K) have been interpreted as meaning 'the friend of wagons', someone who is usually associated with wagons or rides in one. Several scholars (e. g. Sigurður Nordal in *ÍF* II, 255; Turville-Petre 1976, 39–40) believe that this must also be a kenning for Óðinn, although it is doubtful whether it is possible to point to any other kenning for Óðinn in which he is associated with wagons, or indeed whether there is any evidence anywhere to suggest any special link between Óðinn and wagons. On the other hand there is little question that the *sigrhǫfundr* of line 7, 'the author of victory' or 'he who decides victory in battle', must be Óðinn. The idea that Óðinn decides who should have victory is common in early poems.

The second half of st. 22 of *Sonatorrek* would thus seem to contain a number of elements which do not fit in with the accepted facts and beliefs encountered in other old Scandinavian sources. First of all, the words *vinan, vinúð* and *vinátt* which have been suggested as replacements for *umat* in the manuscripts are not known in any other sources. Secondly, it seems unlikely that the expression *vagna rúni* (or *runne*) could be a kenning for Óðinn since no indisputable link between Óðinn and wagons is suggested in other sources. Finally, according to the various interpretations of the second half of st. 22, Óðinn broke his friendship with the poet. In spite of this, the following strophe begins with the poet stating (in the present tense) that he makes sacrifices to Óðinn. St. 23 runs as follows:

Blótka ek því	I do not make sacrifices to
bróður Vílis	the brother of Vílir
goðjaðar	the chief of the gods
at ek gjarn sék;	because I am eager;
þó hefr Míms vinr	yet Mímir's friend
mér um fengnar	has given me
bǫlva bætr	consolation for woe
ef hit betra telk.	if I look on the good side.

The brother of Vílir, the chief of the gods, and the friend of Mímir is of course Óðinn, and the conclusion that can be drawn from the strophe is that, in spite of everything, the poet feels that without eagerness he makes sacrifices to Óðinn to comfort himself.

It is not clear why the sacrifices made by the poet lack eagerness. Moreover, the poet's statement that in spite of everything, for personal consolation, he makes sacrifices to a god who earlier broke friendship with him sounds very strange.

Before proceeding any further, I would like to see whether there is a possibility of reading anything out of the second half of st. 22 other than the traditional interpretation. I start with *áðr*, the first word in line 5. This is traditionally understood as the equivalent of a conjunction meaning 'until', with the events of the second half of the strophe chronologically later than those of the first. But it can equally well be read as an adverb, 'previously', and this has the effect of making the events of the second half of the strophe earlier than those of the first.

Vinátta is the only known word which could fit the meaning that has been read out of the word *umat* in the second half of st. 22. As was mentioned above, however, this word would make the line one syllable too long. The odd lines of *kviðuháttr* normally have only three syllables. But it has long been acknowledged that the composer of *Sonatorrek* makes very free use of the metre. For example, in st. 1/5 there are five syllables ('esa nú vænligt'), though the first two count as one by resolution; there are four in st. 11/5 ('ef sá randviðr') and st. 23/5 ('þó hefr Míms vinr'). Since other strophes of *Sonatorrek* have a varying number of syllables in the fifth line, I think it quite permissible to emend to *vinátta* in the fifth line of st. 22.

As mentioned above, the sixth line of st. 22 is written *vagna runne* in K, and many scholars have felt it necessary to interpret this as a kenning for Óðinn, especially in the light of the fact that the second kenning in this half-strophe, *sigrhǫfundr*, 'the author of victory', is unquestionably related to this particular god. *Runne* could be a spelling of *runni*, the weak form of *runnr*, though this does not occur in early Icelandic. As I have said, *rúni* 'friend' is the reading that most scholars have favoured, and the kenning *vagna rúni* certainly works as a description of someone who tends to ride in a wagon. Nonetheless, to my mind, there is good reason for also considering *vagna runnr* as an alternative, especially since the word *runnr* is a common element in early kennings for 'man', *runnr* meaning 'bush' or 'tree'. *Vagna runnr,* 'wagon man' would then be comparable to *sigrunnr* which is a kenning

for Óðinn in the poem *Húsdrápa*. *Vagna runnr*, on the other hand, would be most naturally interpreted as a kenning for Þórr, similar to the expression *vagna ver,* 'wagon man', which is found in *Alvíssmál*, and then should in *Sonatorrek* be genitive dependent on *vináttu.* In other words, by changing only one letter of the existing text in K, we have a kenning for Þórr in this strophe. The alteration made here is extremely minor, and in making this suggestion, I am also bearing in mind what manuscript experts have told me about the last letters of words in early manuscripts being those which cause the greatest uncertainty.

If the changes I have proposed are accepted, the half-strophe in question reads as follows:

áðr vináttu
vagna runns
sigrhǫfundr
um sleit við mik.

This half-strophe can be interpreted in the following way: *áðr um sleit sigrhǫfundr vináttu vagna runns við mik*, that is 'before this (i. e. before I took up firm belief in Óðinn), he broke Þórr's friendship with me.'

The interpretation fits particularly well with the earlier argument proposed by Sigurður Nordal, and mentioned above, that Egill was brought up believing in Þórr, but later abandoned that faith, and took up belief in Óðinn (Sigurður Nordal 1924, 159). As I have stressed, the alterations in the text of the manuscript needed to bring about this understanding are in fact minor. The incomprehensible word *umat* is changed to the common word *vináttu*, which is based to some degree on the spelling of the former word. A single letter is then changed in another incomprehensible word in what follows in such a way that it gives us a meaning that is appropriate for the circumstances. The fifth line becomes four syllables in length rather than three, but this represents no greater departure from normal *kviðuháttr* than is found in other strophes of *Sonatorrek*, and anyway this abnormally long fifth line is countered by the sixth line which now has only three syllables instead of four. As a result, in performance, the half-strophe as a whole becomes much lighter and more fluent.

To my mind the most important features of the changes that I have proposed are, first of all, that a difficult kenning has been made easy, and secondly that the religious relationship existing between the poet and Óðinn has been made more convincing, more consistent and generally more comprehensible. According to the interpretation that I have proposed here, Óðinn never broke his friendship with the poet; indeed,

to my mind, a poet with the temperament that the composer of *Sonatorrek* had would hardly have gone on sacrificing to a god who let him down in times of need.

In this article I have touched on several of the religious ideas that appear in *Sonatorrek.* In the final part I summarise the main conclusions reached and trace the pattern of religious faith displayed in the work that faces us after making the minor alterations that I have proposed.

The poem commences with the poet's statement about how difficult it is to drag poetry, the plunder of Óðinn, from the hiding place of thought. In the second strophe, poetry, the joyful find of the gods, creeps out of the place of mind, but is not easily drawn from there as a result of deep sorrow. Anguish and hopelessness hang over the third and fourth strophes; the foam howls at the cliffs, the family is about to fade, and the man who carries out the bones of his kinsman is heavy in thought. In the fifth strophe, the poet remembers the deaths of his father and mother and at that point it is as if poetry finds release, the poet carrying his subject like timber out of the holy sanctuary of words clad in the leafy decoration of language.

The actual memorial poem for the drowned son commences in the sixth strophe. It is first stated here that Hrǫnn (daughter of Ægir and Rán) has cruelly caused a deep gash in the family. This injury that the personified sea has caused remains open and unfilled. In the seventh strophe, the poet states that Rán has treated him badly and that he is impoverished as regards loving friends. The sea (*marr*) has broken away part of himself. In strophe 8 he continues that if he could revenge himself for these offences with his sword, the 'Ale-brewer' (Ægir, the sea) would be finished. If he could kill the brother of *hroði vágs,* the 'storm of the bay', i. e. Ægir, he would go against him and *man Ægis*, 'the wife of Ægir', i. e. Rán. But the poet (st. 9) is powerless against 'the ship-killer', and the helplessness of an old man is there for all to see.

The tenth to twelfth strophes deal solely with the drowned son and what he was like. First the poet states that the sea (*marr*) has robbed him of much, and that it is painful to discuss the deaths of close relatives now that the shield of the family has vanished from life on the road of the departed. He would certainly have been very promising material if he had managed to mature until he had attained the hands of a warrior. He was always obedient to his father, stood with him and supported him against all others.

In the next three strophes, the poet remembers his brother in particular, or rather the lack of his brother. He has no one courageous at his side

any longer, and it would be hard to find anyone in the world that he can believe. Now people take compensation payments for their relations.

St. 16, of which only two lines survive, deals with asking for payment. The next three strophes, however, return to the son that drowned. The poet says first that nothing can replace a son except for another son who has been bred to come in place of the first. The poet feels uneasy in company. The son of the woman has come to *byrbær bískips,* 'the farm of the breeze beside the ship', in search of fellowship. The poet sees Ægir facing him with a heavy countenance, and describes his powerlessness.

At this point the poem changes subject. The actual memorial poem to Bǫðvarr has come to an end. St. 20 deals with the poet's son who died on a sick bed. He was innocent and careful in his choice of words. For the next four strophes, Óðinn takes a central position. In st. 21, the poet states that he still remembers when Óðinn took his son to himself in the home of the gods. There is no obvious grief in this strophe. In direct continuation of this (st. 22), the poet describes the good relationship he has had with Óðinn since taking up steadfast belief in this god who broke his friendship with Þórr. The poet makes sacrifices to Óðinn, the god of poetry, not because the poet is by nature a great man for sacrifices, but rather because Óðinn offers spiritual consolation if one turns to him wholeheartedly (st. 23). The poet received the art of poetry from Óðinn, as well as his shrewdness at being able to sense the enmity of deceitful people (st. 24). These four strophes contain no fewer than seven kennings for Óðinn. In the final strophe of *Sonatorrek*, the poet faces Hel and awaits his death with equanimity.

I return briefly to the questions that were raised at the start. As regards the first, about conformity of belief, it seems clear that the composer of *Sonatorrek* expected those who drown to go to Rán, those who die in battle to go to Óðinn, and those who die of illness to go to Hel. This belief reflected in the poem parallels what can be read out of most other written sources from early Scandinavia, such as those which were mentioned above (pp. 162–63).[4] On the other hand, on the basis

[4] Jónas Kristjánsson (1992, 108–09 and 112) argues differently. He suggests that the idea that men who die in battle go to Óðinn and those who die of illness go to Hel is a piece of fiction invented by Snorri Sturluson. There is no space here to discuss Jónas Kristjánsson's argument in detail, but it might be noted that it is partially based on a different reading of certain strophes of *Sonatorrek* than that presented here.

of my examination it is clear that the ideas regarding the gods and the spiritual world that are depicted in *Sonatorrek* are somewhat different from those which usually appear in early Nordic works.

Óðinn is the only male god to appear by name in *Sonatorrek*. He is mentioned at the start of the poem as having sought the mead of poetry, and at the end the poet spends four strophes tracing his relationship with the god and his belief. Óðinn is presented as a trustworthy god whom the poet of *Sonatorrek* has sincerely believed in and still worships. The poem places particular stress on the fact that Óðinn was also the bestower of precious poetry.

Sonatorrek's picture of Óðinn as a trustworthy personal god is, to the best of my knowledge, unique in early Scandinavian sources. Many sources refer to Óðinn as an unreliable, highly devious deity. As *Hávamál* states, *Hvað skal hans tryggðum trúa?* ('How much can you believe in his good faith?'). When he is described in detail, as in Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga*, the main emphasis tends to be placed on Óðinn's magical skills and magical power (*ÍF* XXVI, 17–23).

Concerning the world picture presented in *Sonatorrek*, it is interesting how great a role the various personified forces of the sea play in the poem. Rán and Ægir are very much alive and active, as is one of their daughters, Hrǫnn. *Marr* or *Særinn* ('the Sea') is personified. We also hear of Ægir's brother, *Hroði vágs* ('the storm of the bay'), which is probably another name for *Hræsvelgr* ('Wave-sweeper', one who cleans all loose objects from the surface of the sea and destroys them; see Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1990, 16–20). Rán and Ægir are presented in the poem as the equivalents of gods, gods of a world of death, because they are said to have taken the son to themselves in the dwelling place of the drowned.

In that part of the poem which deals with the personified figures of the sea and their activities, no other gods are named. The ideological world that appears in this part of the poem is thus quite different from that which appears in various other works that deal with pagan Scandinavian belief, for example, accounts of how the ships of the missionaries coming to Iceland ran into difficulties at sea. The ship carrying Stefnir Þorgilsson sank in high waves and storm. Pagan believers said that the powerful gods who were still in the country brought this about (*Kristnisaga* 1905, 17), but neither Ægir nor Rán is named. When the missionary Þangbrandr ran into similar difficulties, the poetess Steinunn said that Þórr had caused this, and that Christ had not been

able to prevent it (*Kristnisaga* 1905, 27–28). Once again, there is no mention of either Ægir or Rán.

For the main part, these missionary accounts reflect the same world view and belief as that found in most other sources dealing with pagan Nordic religious practice. There it appears that Þórr and Freyr were the gods that were most commonly worshipped in Iceland during the tenth century, while the worship of Óðinn hardly existed at all (Turville-Petre 1958, 23–24; Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson 1988, 19–22). As I have noted above, the picture of belief given in *Sonatorrek* is in many ways very different from what appears in other sources dealing with pagan Nordic belief in Iceland.

The difference between the attitudes, ideological worlds and deities presented in *Sonatorrek* on the one hand, and those in most other sources on the other, is an interesting and challenging area of research. An attempt has been made here to solve some of the problems involved, but it can by no means be regarded as a complete examination of the poem. It will be necessary to carry out further investigations into particular strophes of the poem and their probable accuracy of preservation before any final conclusions can be drawn about the age and subject-matter of *Sonatorrek.*

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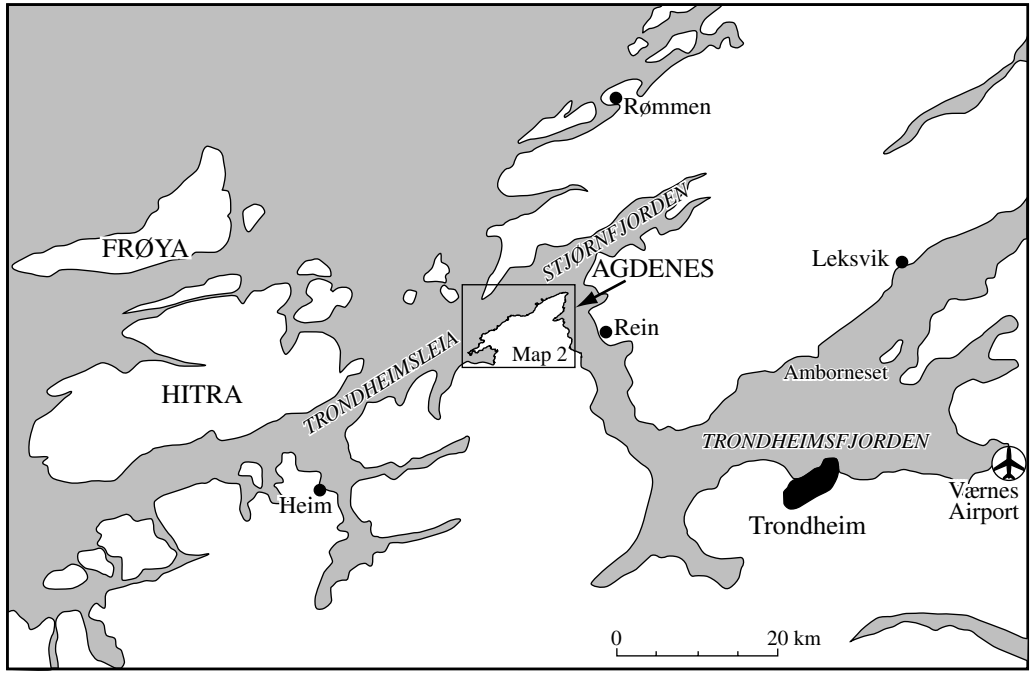
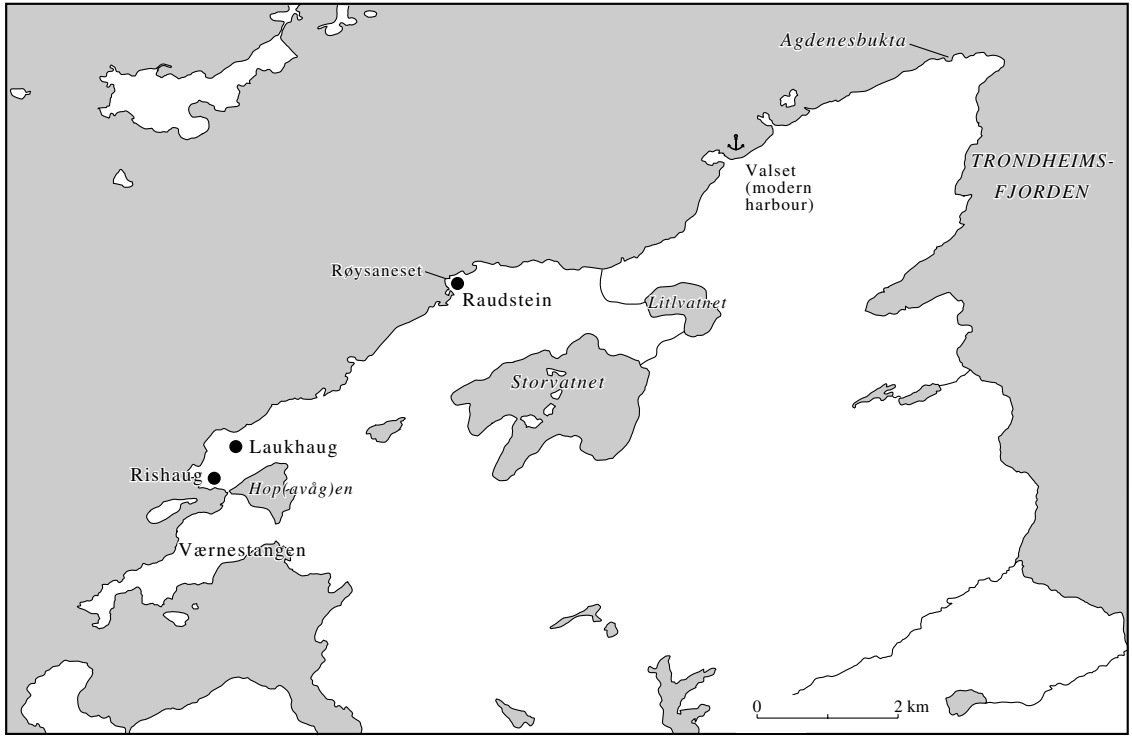
THE GATEWAY TO TRONDHEIM: TWO ICELANDERS AT AGDENES

By RICHARD PERKINS

THE TENTH INTERNATIONAL SAGA CONFERENCE was held in Trondheim, Norway, in August 1997. Many of its participants, modern pilgrims to the great centre of medieval Norse culture, arrived by air, landing at the airport at *Værnes*, some 30 km east of the city centre. Værnes is, as it were, the gateway to Trondheim in the the age of the jet-plane and air travel. In the Middle Ages, Trondheim had some sort of counterpart to Værnes in *Agdenes* (Old Norse *Agðanes*) which lies about 40 km to its north-west on the southern side of the mouth of Trondheimsfjorden. At a time when long-distance travel was, of course, very often by sea, harbours at Agdenes served Trondheim in perhaps something of the same way as Værnes does today. Because of dangers in rounding the headland itself, difficult currents in the fjord and often contrary winds, passengers and pilgrims frequently disembarked at Agdenes and made the final part of their journey overland. The place is mentioned on various occasions in the Kings' Sagas (cf. *KL*, s. v. *Hamn*, *Norge*). For example, *Heimskringla* (*ÍF* XXVIII, 255) tells us that King Eysteinn Magnússon (r. 1103–1123) built a church, fortification and harbour here. And at least what are perhaps the remnants of this harbour's mole are still to be seen in Agdenesbukta, just to the west of the tip of Agdenes (*NtT* 100–05, 116). Ships may also have found havens on Agdenes somewhat further to the west (in Litlvatnet, Hop(avåg)en; *NtT* 105–09). King Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217–1263) also fortified the place (*KS* III, 462) and down the centuries, Agdenes, at the entrance to the fjord, must have had considerable strategic importance for the control and defence not only of Trondheim itself but also the whole of the surrounding Trøndelag (*NtT* 120–28). And as we shall see, there were, so to speak, direct connections between Agdenes and, for example, the major harbour at Gásir in northern Iceland. It must have been the place where many Icelanders first set foot on Norwegian soil and the place where many of them said their last farewells (Steen 1942, 296). Since, then, one of the themes of the conference was 'Norway as seen from Iceland in the sagas', it seemed appropriate to focus a little attention on Agdenes. This I did, albeit



Map 1: Trondheimsfjorden



Map 2: Agdenes

somewhat obliquely and as a pretext for discussing other issues, in a paper presented to the conference entitled 'The gateway to Nidaros: two Icelanders at Agdenes' (= *GtN*; reproduced in the conference's proceedings, *Preprints*, 521–31). The present contribution is, like *GtN*, divided into two distinct parts. Its first section, 'Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld at Agdenes', has more or less the same form as it had in *GtN*. The second section, 'Sneglu-Halli at Agdenes', on the other hand, represents a palpably altered version of its counterpart in *GtN*, made in the light of further investigations and comments and other help from various quarters. In working on this revision I have benefited not least from Merete Moe Henriksen's unpublished thesis *Nøkkelen til Trøndelag* (= *NtT*) which appeared in late 1997 and which covers, with full bibliography, not only the archaeology of Agdenes but also references to it in the written sources. A re-reading of Olrik and Ellekilde's monumental *Nordens gudeverden* (=*NG*) and of Svale Solheim's *Nemningsfordomar ved fiske* (= *NvF*) has also proved fruitful.[1]

Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld at Agdenes

The story of Hallfreðr Óttarsson's conversion to Christianity by Óláfr Tryggvason in Trondheim is well known. And the account in *Hallfreðar saga* of how Hallfreðr arrives in Norway prior to his conversion is of interest in the present context. It may be quoted from the Möðruvallabók-text of the saga (from *ÍF* VIII, 151–52, with one minor change), but with certain variants or additions (in round brackets) from the version of the saga in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta* (*ÓT* I, 347):

> Ok eitt sumar, er hann [i. e. Hallfreðr] kom af Íslandi, þá lágu þeir við Agðanes. Þar hitta þeir menn at máli ok spurðu tíðenda. Þeim var sagt, at hǫfðingjaskipti var orðit í Nóregi; var Hákon jarl dauðr, en Óláfr Tryggvason kominn í staðinn með nýjum sið ok boðorðum. Þá urðu skiparar (skipverjar

[1] 'Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld at Agdenes' relates, in turn, to material from my presidential lecture to the Viking Society in November, 1993. I hope to publish further on these matters before long and then with acknowledgements of help from various quarters. In revising the second section, 'Sneglu-Halli at Agdenes', I have benefited from comments and other assistance from several colleagues and here would like to mention particularly Bo Almqvist, Margaret Clunies Ross, Anne Grønli, Geir Grønnesby, Jannie Roed, Frode Klepsvik, Jørn Sandnes and Claes Wahlöö. I am especially grateful to Merete Moe Henriksen for making her thesis available to me and for giving me answers to a number of queries. The editors of *Saga-Book*, particularly Anthony Faulkes, have made a number of suggestions for improvement and saved me from various errors. What shortcomings remain are, of course, my responsibility.

> allir) á þat sáttir, at slá í heit (til þess at þeim gæfi byr at sigla brottu af Nóregi nǫkkur til heiðinna landa), ok skyldi gefa Frey fé mikit (ok þriggja sálda ǫl) ef þeim gæfi til Svíþjóðar, en Þór eða Óðni, ef til Íslands kœmi, en ef þeim gæfi eigi í brott, þá skyldi konungr ráða. Þeim gaf aldri í brott, ok urðu at sigla inn til Þrándheims.
>
> And one summer, when he [i. e. Hallfreðr] arrived from Iceland and they were lying off Agdenes, they fell into conversation with some men and asked what news there was. They were told that there had been a change of rulers in Norway: Hákon jarl was dead and had been succeeded by Óláfr Tryggvason who had a new religion and new laws. Then the mariners (all the ship's company) agreed to make a vow (so that they could at least get a fair wind to sail away from Norway to some heathen land); and they should give much of value (and three measures of beer) to Freyr if they got a fair wind to Sweden but to Þórr or Óðinn if they got to Iceland. But if they got no wind at all, then the king should have his way. They had no wind and were forced to sail in to Trondheim.

Subsequently Hallfreðr meets Óláfr Tryggvason and the king stands sponsor to him at his baptism. The moral of this story is clear. It is, of course, essentially of Christian authorship and, in Christian eyes, it is a Christian god who controls the winds. The heathen Icelanders pray to their pagan gods to give them a wind to escape from a Norway under the sway of the Christian Óláfr. But no such wind comes and they are forced to sail into Trondheim and be baptised there. The Christian god is mightier in his power over the winds. And this is not the only place in Norse literature where we find the Christian god (or his saints) controlling wind and weather. And the heathen deities were seen as having the same function. Thus, for example, Snorri writes of Óðinn in ch. 7 of *Ynglinga saga* (*ÍF* XXVI, 18): *Þat kunni hann enn at gera með orðum einum at sløkkva eld ok kyrra sjá ok snúa vindum hverja leið er hann vildi.* And in chapter 7 of *Gautreks saga* (*FN* IV, 28–31) King Víkarr is sacrificed to Óðinn in the hope of getting a favourable wind (cf. also the sixth book of Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*). The evidence that Freyr was able to provide a fair wind is perhaps somewhat less, but by no means negligible. And when we turn to Þórr, there is ample evidence that he was thought of as a wind-god. For example, Adam of Bremen specifically tells us that amongst the things Þórr was said to have control of were the winds (cf. *MRN* 244). In chapter 21 of *Flóamanna saga* (*ÍF* XIII, 280) when the hero Þorgils's ship is becalmed on a voyage to Greenland, some of the people aboard suggest that sacrifices should be made to Þórr for a fair wind (*at þeir mundu blóta Þór til byrjar*; note the alliteration). At the beginning of Dudo's *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniæ ducum* there is a gruesome

account of human sacrifice made to Þórr for the purpose of getting, amongst other things, it seems, a favourable wind (cf. *MRN* 94). And in *Landnámabók* (*ÍF* I, 250), we are told of Helgi magri Eyvindarson that he believed in Christ but had recourse to Þórr when on journeys by sea and in difficult situations: *Helgi var blandinn mjok í trú; hann trúði á Krist, en hét á Þór til sjófara ok harðræða.* Now there is a source which appears to tell us of the way, or one of the ways, Þórr was thought able to produce a wind. This is *Rǫgnvalds þáttr ok Rauðs* (= *RR*) which is incorporated into *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta* (*ÓT* I, 313–22, 325–27, 328–32, 349–51) and also appears as a separate entity in AM 557, 4to. *RR* tells the story of how Rauðr is living on an island off Hálogaland. He has inherited from his foster-father a temple (*hof*) dedicated to Þórr and also, it appears, an image of the god. He puts such a spell on this image that it is able to converse and walk with him around the island. Later in the story, the proselytising Óláfr Tryggvason heads for Rauðr's island with the intention of converting him and the other people there. The text of the version in *ÓT* (I, 328/9–329/5) is as follows (normalised, with certain minor adjustments and variants unnoted):

> En er konungr kom norðr fyrir Naumudal, þá ætlaði hann út til Rauðseyjar. Þann morgin gekk Rauðr til hofs síns sem hann var vanr. Þórr var þá heldr hryggiligr ok veitti Rauð engi andsvǫr, þó at hann leitaði orða við hann. Rauð þótti þat mjǫk undarligt ok leitaði marga vega at fá mál af honum ok spurði hví þat sætti. Þórr svarar um síðir ok þó heldr mœðiliga, sagði þetta eigi fyrir sakleysi, 'því at mér er,' segir hann, 'mjǫk þrǫngt í kvámu þeira manna er hingat ætla til eyjarinnar ok mjǫk er mér óþokkat til þeira.' Rauðr spurði, hverir þeir menn væri. Þórr sagði, at þar var Óláfr konungr Tryggvason ok lið hans. Rauðr mælti: 'Þeyt þú í mót þeim skeggrǫdd (328/19; AM 325 IX 1b, 4to: *skeggraust*; Flateyjarbók: *skeggbrodda*) þína, ok stǫndum í mót þeim knáliga.' Þórr kvað þat mundu fyrir lítit koma. En þó gengu þeir út ok blés Þórr fast í kampana ok þeytti skeggraustina (328/21). Kom þá þegar andviðri móti konungi svá styrkt, at ekki mátti við halda ok varð konungr at láta síga aptr til sǫmu hafnar sem hann hafði áðr verit ok fór svá nǫkkurum sinnum. En konungr eggjaðisk því meirr at fara til eyjarinnar ok um síðir varð ríkari hans góðvili með guðs krapti en sá fjándi er í móti stóð.
>
> And when the king got north of Naumudalr, he determined to go out to Rauðsey. That morning, Rauðr went to his temple as was his habit. Þórr was rather downcast and gave Rauðr no reply even though he addressed him. This seemed very strange to Rauðr and he tried in many ways to get Þórr to talk and to find out what the matter was. Eventually Þórr answered, albeit in very weary tones, that he had good reason for his mood, 'for,' he said, 'I am put in a very difficult predicament by the intended visit to our island of those men for whom I have the greatest loathing.' Rauðr asked who those men might be. Þórr said it was King Óláfr Tryggvason and his force.

> Rauðr said: 'Sound (*þeyt þú*) the voice of your beard (*skeggrǫdd*/*skeggraust þína;* or, if we accept Flateyjarbók's *skeggbrodda þína* (also found in AM 557, 4to) 'sound (the bristles of) your beard') against them and let us resist them doughtily'. Þórr said that that would be of little use. Even so, they went outside and Þórr blew hard into his whiskers (*blés Þórr fast í kampana*; or less probably, 'puffed out his cheeks') and sounded the voice of his beard (*þeytti skeggraustina*). Straight away there arose a head-wind against the king so strong that he could not withstand it and he had to retire to the same harbour as he had set out from. This happened several times but the king felt spurred on all the more to get to the island. And eventually, by the power of God, the king's good intentions prevailed over the devil who was offering him resistance.

Now it is my contention that, by representing Þórr as being able to produce a wind, whether favourable or contrary, by blowing into his beard, *RR* is giving expression to a generally held belief about the god. We have here something more than just the invention of the author of the *þáttr*. I cannot produce in detail here all the arguments in favour of this proposition, but some of them may briefly be mentioned.

The idea that a powerful figure, whether mortal or supernatural, could produce a wind simply by blowing is a common one in folk-belief (Watson 1984, 327–29). Thus modern Cretans say of an unwelcome wind from the south which affects their island, 'Colonel Gaddafi is blowing.'

The verb *þeyta* is particularly used of the blowing of wind-instruments and in the passage under consideration, Þórr appears to 'play' his beard like a wind-instrument. It is a common idea that supernatural figures produce wind(s) by playing instruments (Watson 1984, 242, 245, 254). Thus Boreas, the north wind, was represented as an old man with flowing grey locks blowing a conch-shell trumpet.

Þórr's beard seems to have had particular potency and when in the first stanza of *Þrymskviða* he gets into a rage and shakes his beard, we can well imagine that this may have had meteorological repercussions.

The passage under discussion seems to suggest that the wind might be equated with the voice of Þórr (cf. the elements *-rǫdd*, *-raust*). The idea of the (noise of the) wind as the voice of some supernatural being appears to be found in mythology and folklore elsewhere in the world (Watson 1984, 261).

But the main argument in this connection is that in later Icelandic sources we find Þórr and other supernatural figures (e. g. Kári) appearing to produce a wind by blowing into their beards. The following are three examples out of some five or six I have been able to gather:

(a) We find that Matthías Jochumsson (1835–1920), in his poem

Þórs-mál has this verse (Matthías Jochumsson 1902–1906, III 202):

> Lítið lograstir
> leiftra við himin;
> Þór er að þeyta
> þrúðga skeggbrodda,
> hljóðar húmstormur,
> hræðist kyn þjóða.

Matthías's *Þórs-mál* is based on Longfellow's *The Challenge of Thor* (in his *Tales of a Wayside Inn*), which, however, has no exact equivalent to the verse just cited.

(b) In *Höddu-ríma* by Eggert Ólafsson (1726–1768), it is said of Kári that he *óðum blès í skegg-broddana* (see *Kvæði Eggerts Olafssonar* 1832, 202); we are told, 'þessi ríma var gjörð í góðum byr, á ferð frá Kaupmannahöfn til Vestmannaeya, árið 1750.'

(c) In *Bjarni í Skemmunni* by Theodóra Thoroddsen (1863–1954), there is a reference to *vindstrokurnar, sem hann gamli Bárður Snæfellsás sendir okkur úr skeggbroddunum* (see Theodora Thoroddsen 1960, 156).

In view of this material, then, we can reasonably conclude that in the ancient Norse world, Þórr was thought of as able to produce a wind by blowing into his beard. With this conclusion arrived at, we return to Hallfreðr, now in Trondheim, newly baptised although perhaps rather reluctantly.

The poet stays with Óláfr Tryggvason, although not in entirely happy circumstances: Óláfr takes exception to the heathen content of some of his poetry. Also Hallfreðr quarrels with two of the king's courtiers, Óttarr and his brother Kálfr. He kills Óttarr and is condemned to death, and although this sentence is subsequently commuted, relations remain strained. We then find this episode in ch. 6 of *Hallfreðar saga* (*ÍF* VIII, 162–63; again from the Möðruvallabók-text, with, in round brackets, the same additions from the version of the saga in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta* as are noted in *ÍF* VIII; cf. *ÓT* I, 394–95):

> Eitt sinn var þat, at konungr spurði, hvar Hallfreðr væri. Kálfr segir: 'Hann mun enn hafa vanða sinn, at blóta á laun, ok hefir hann líkneski Þórs í pungi sínum af tǫnn gǫrt, ok ertu of mjǫk dulinn at honum, herra, ok fær hann eigi sannreyndan.' Konungr bað Hallfreð þangat kalla ok svara fyrir sik. Hallfreðr kemr þar. Konungr mælti: 'Ertu sannr at því, er þér er kennt, at þú (hafir líkneski Þórs í pungi þínum ok) blótir?' 'Eigi er þat satt, herra,' segir Hallfreðr; 'skal nú rannsaka pung minn; hefi ek hér ekki undanbragð mátt hafa, þó at ek vilda (því at mik varði eigi þessa áburðar).' Nú fannsk engi sá hlutr í hans valdi, er til þess væri (líkligr, sem Kálfr hafði sagt á hann).

> It happened on one occasion that the king asked where Hallfreðr was. Kálfr says: 'He is probably still following his old habit of secret heathen worship and he carries an image Þórr made of walrus ivory (*líkneski Þórs af tǫnn gǫrt*) in his pouch. You're too much taken in by him, my lord, and you've not fully put him to the test.' The king called for Hallfreðr to answer for himself and he came. The king said: 'Is it true, as is alleged of you, that you (carry an image of Þórr in your pouch and) indulge in heathen worship?' 'That is not true, my lord,' says Hallfreðr. 'Have my pouch searched. Even if I'd wanted to, I could have had no shift in this affair (as I've had no forewarning of this accusation).' No object was found in Hallfreðr's possession that made it (likely that what Kálfr had said about him was true).

Later in the same chapter, Hallfreðr gets his revenge for the slander by blinding Kálfr in one eye.

While the object referred to by Kálfr, an image of Þórr made of walrus ivory, turns out to be a malicious invention, there can be little doubt that such objects did actually exist in pagan Scandinavia. Indeed, such an object, it has been argued, is still actually preserved. This was found in Lund (Skåne) and is now kept in the museum Kulturen in that same city (KM 38.252; see Illustration 1; *VH* 387 and references; = LI). This is a small image of a man made of walrus ivory and about 4.6 cm high. The figure has large, staring eyes and an open mouth, is holding his long beard with both hands and is seated on what appears to be a so-called log-chair. It is true that not all scholars have agreed that this object was intended to represent Þórr. Some have interpreted it as a playing-piece. But I can only agree with Ivar Lindquist (1963) in his arguments that we have here an image of the god. It is possible that the ring-and-dot ornament on LI's reverse side may be intended to represent Þórr's hammer. Large staring eyes appear to have been part of the iconography of Þórr. Þórr was conventionally represented as seated (cf. Adam of Bremen's account of his image in the Uppsala temple). And he was clearly often represented as bearded. In LI, then, we have, it seems certain, a representation of Þórr. Now in this context we must also consider four other figures who clutch their beards (none of them, it is true, made of walrus ivory), at least three of which have also, by others than myself, been interpreted as representations of Þórr.

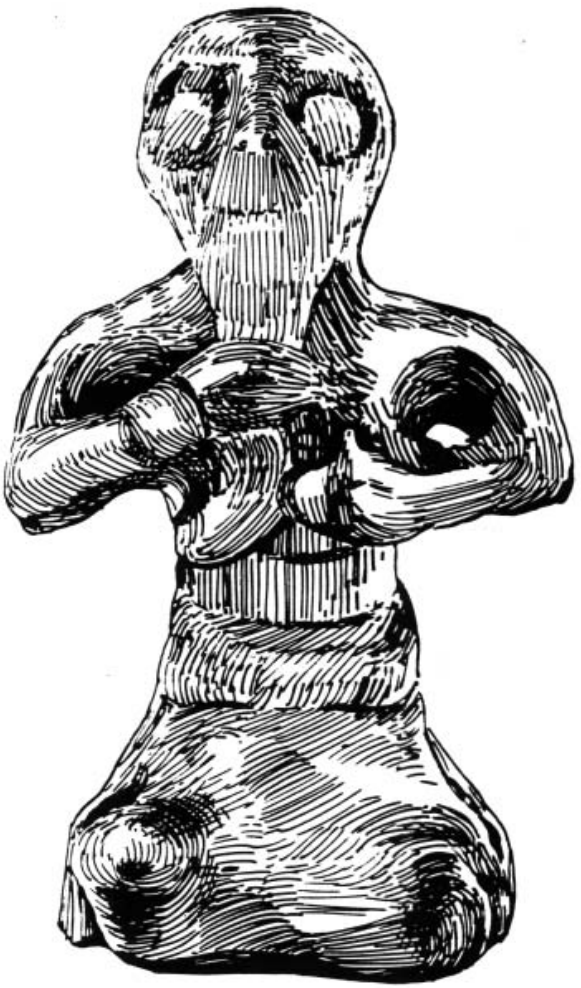
(1) The well-known bronze figurine, often referred to as the Eyrarland image and now in Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (no. 10880). (A suggestion that this is not Þórr, but a playing piece, should be categorically dismissed; cf. Perkins 1994.) See Illustration 2.

(2) A whale-bone figure also in Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (no. 6) found

Illus. 1: Walrus-ivory figure from Lund, Sweden (= LI; height 4.6 cm.).
(By courtesy of Kulturen, Lund)

Illus. 2: Bronze figure from Eyrarland, Iceland (height 6.7 cm.) (Photo: Gísli Gestsson; by permission of Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, Reykjavík).

Illus. 3: Amber figure from Feddet, Sjælland (height 4.7 cm.). (By permission of Werner Forman Archive/Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen).



Illus. 4: Bronze figure from Chernigov, Ukraine (height 4.6 cm.).
(By kind permission of the artist, Elena Kruchina).

at Baldursheimur, near Lake Myvatn in northern Iceland. Cf. Graham-Campbell 1980, 25, 214 and references; *VH* 246.

(3) A half-length amber figure, about 4.7 cm high, found near the shores of Præstø Fjord (Feddet) in Sjælland and now in Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen (no. C24292). Cf. *VH* 247, 203. See Illustration 3.

(4) A bronze figurine found in the burial mound Chernaia Mogila, Chernigov in the Ukraine and now in Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Muzei, Moscow (no. 76990, 1539/77). Cf. *VH* 308. See Illustration 4. One of the reasons for interpreting this figure as Þórr is the broad belt around the waist, seen as the god's *megingjarðar* (so Pushkina 1984).

While scholars have been inclined to interpret LI and the four other figures just mentioned as Þórr, none of them has offered any explanation as to why the god should be clutching his beard. My explanation would be this: The wind was, of course, of first importance to sailors, not least the medieval Norse, whose vessels were relatively dependent on a following wind. A favourable wind could confer huge advantages, a contrary wind or no wind many disadvantages, delay, shipwreck and drowning. And when they needed the right wind, the Norse were prepared to invoke the supernatural, magic and their deities (cf. *KL*, s. v. *Vindmagi*). They were also prepared to employ wind-amulets; a typical one of these in Scandinavia was the so-called 'wind-knot', a series of three knots tied on a rope supposed to ensure a favourable wind. Another typical form of amulet is one which represents a god or other revered figure. I suggest, then, that the five figures in question represent Þórr in the process of *at þeyta skeggraustina*, producing a wind which can be used for sailing or other purposes. That they represent the thunder-god in miniaturised form does not matter. After all, Þórr's hammer could be miniaturised (*SnE* 124) as could the ship Skíðblaðnir which had a fair wind as soon as its sails were hoisted but could also be kept in a pouch (*SnE* 123). To be efficacious and to 'come alive', the object in question would probably have to be 'charmed' in some way, endowed with some special mana-like power or what in Old Norse might be called *megin.* The Old Norse verb was *at magna* and this is the verb used in *RR* of the process by which Rauðr's idol of Þórr is brought alive (*ÓT* I, 320/12); cf. *ÍF* VII, 249–51; IX, 112, 225–26, for parallels. It is also possible that LI was given its special powers by the ring-and-dot ornament on its reverse side, which might represent not only Þórr's hammer (see above) but also his megin*gjarðar.* Representations of religious figures are often believed to come alive; madonnas sometimes weep. As recently as 1995, images of the elephant-headed

Hindu god Ganesha were reported to have started drinking milk in many places around the world. We note also the miniaturised image (*hlutr*) of Freyr in the first chapters of *Vatnsdœla saga* (*ÍF* VIII, 26–42; cf. *ÍF* I, 217–19), normally kept in a pouch, but sometimes very much alive. When the five beard-clutching figures under discussion were used as wind-amulets, this was, I would tentatively suggest, often to the accompaniment of an oral spell (cf. Máni skáld's verse in *Sverris saga* 1920, 90), perhaps appealing for a wind of a particular strength from a particular direction. It may reasonably be assumed that the amulets would have been manipulated from the stern of a vessel, i. e. behind the sail. As some sort of parallel to what I consider to be the function of these wind-amulets, attention may be drawn to the 'statue' which a Lithuanian fisherman is reported by Matthäus Praetorius (d. 1707) as having at the stern of his ship (cf. Pierson 1871, 27–28): this was an effigy of a 'god' the fisherman called *Vėjopatis*, 'Lord of the Wind'. While there is no mention of a beard, this figure had two faces with open mouths, one apparently for blowing a *ventus secundus*, the other a *ventus adversus*. It is not impossible that Vėjopatis had some connection with the Old Lithuanian god Perkūnas, who in turn may have connections with Þórr (cf. for example *WM* 447, 431–34).

I conclude this section with a tentative and speculative suggestion about LI, the figurine found in Lund, which may now be interpreted as a representation of Þórr and as a wind-amulet. We note that it is in Trondheim that Hallfreðr is accused by Kálfr of possessing an image of Þórr made of walrus ivory and LI is made of that same material. The greatest supply of walrus ivory probably came from northern Norway as well as Greenland. And Trondheim seems to have been something of a centre for work and trade in walrus ivory in the medieval period; see *VH* 202–05, 390–91. Now in *VH* (390), Claes Wahlöö remarks that while there are a few signs of walrus ivory being worked in Lund, a fragmentary walrus-ivory gaming-piece found there is perhaps more likely to have come from a Norwegian workshop. One wonders, then, if LI itself may not have been carved in Norway, and then possibly in Trondheim. If it was, and if it was also (as I suggest) a wind-amulet, then one might like to fantasise that it was at some time employed by its owner in the hope of getting a fair wind in Trøndelag and if so perhaps precisely at Agdenes.[2]

[2] On walrus ivory and work in that material in Trondheim, cf. also Roesdahl 1995. Note also, for example, the two walrus tusks (both with inscriptions, at

Sneglu-Halli at Agdenes

A second passage connected with Agdenes is in the first chapters of *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* (= *Snegl*). This *þáttr* is preserved in five significant manuscripts, Flateyjarbók, AM 593 b, 4to, Morkinskinna, Hulda and Hrokkinskinna. The first two of these represent a redaction considerably longer than the other three and it is normally assumed that shortening (rather than lengthening) has taken place, quite possibly because of the obscene content of the original *þáttr*. However this may be, the present discussion will be concerned almost entirely with the longer version as represented by Flateyjarbók, obscenity and indelicacy notwithstanding. *Snegl* is probably to be dated to about 1230 at the latest and may well have been written a few decades earlier (*ÍF* IX, cxiii–cxiv). The version in Flateyjarbók begins (*ÍF* IX, 263–66) by describing King Haraldr Sigurðarson. Of him, it says:

> Hann var skáld gott. Jafnan kastaði hann háðyrðum at þeim mǫnnum, er honum sýndisk; þolði hann ok allra manna bezt, þótt at honum væri kastat klámyrðum, þá er honum var gott í skapi.
>
> He was a good poet and always abused whomsoever he wished with scornful words. And when he was in a good mood, he showed great forbearance, even when assailed with obscenities.

It then tells the following story: Sneglu-Halli takes ship at Gásir in northern Iceland with a captain called Bárðr, described as *hirðmaðr Haralds konungs*. They put out to sea,

> ok hǫfðu langa útivist, tóku Nóreg um haustit norðr við Þrándheim við eyjar þær, er Hítrar heita, ok sigldu síðan inn til Agðaness ok lágu þar um nótt. En um morgininn sigldu þeir inn eptir firðinum lítinn byr, ok er þeir kómu inn um Rein [on the northern side of the fjord], sá þeir, at langskip þrjú reru innan eptir firðinum. Dreki var it þriðja skipit. Ok er skipin reru hjá kaupskipinu, þá gekk maðr fram ór lyptingunni á drekanum í rauðum

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least one of which is a mark of ownership) found at Rømmen, about 25 km from Agdenes, 'i en kystbygd litt nord for innløpet til Trondheimsfjorden' (see Map 1), and now in Vitenskapsmuseet in Trondheim (T2383a+b; cf. *VH* 385). These tusks have been seen as belonging to a storage depot for goods to be transferred later to other places, including Trondheim. Such a storage place for walrus ivory could well have existed at Agdenes. Ohthere, informant of King Alfred of England, must have passed at least the mouth of Trondheimsfjorden as he carried walrus ivory from his home in northern Norway to England (and doubtless also to Denmark where the walrus-ivory LI was found in Lund); his narrative implies that he might often have had to wait for favourable winds as he travelled the Norwegian coast (cf. *The Old English Orosius* 1980, 13–16).

skarlatsklæðum ok hafði gullhlað um enni, bæði mikill ok tigurligr. Þessi maðr tók til orða: 'Hverr stýrir skipinu, eða hvar váru þér [í vetr], eða hvar tóku þér fyrst land, eða hvar lágu þér í nótt?' Þeim varð næsta orðfall kaupmǫnnum, er svá var margs spurt senn. Halli svarar þá: 'Vér várum í vetr á Íslandi, en ýttum af Gásum, en Bárðr heitir stýrimaðr, en tókum land við Hítrar, en lágum í nótt við Agðanes.' Þessi maðr spurði, er reyndar var Haraldr konungr Sigurðarson: 'Sarð hann yðr eigi Agði?' 'Eigi enna,' segir Halli. Konungrinn brosti at ok mælti: 'Er nǫkkurr til ráðs um, at hann muni enn síðar meir veita yðr þessa þjónustu?' 'Ekki,' sagði hann Halli, 'ok bar þó einn hlutr þar mest til þess, er vér fórum enga skǫmm af honum.' 'Hvat var þat?' segir konungr. Halli vissi gǫrla, við hvern hann talaði. 'Þat, herra,' segir hann, 'ef yðr forvitnar at vita, at hann Agði beið at þessu oss tignari manna ok vætti yðvar þangat í kveld, ok mun hann þá gjalda af hǫndum þessa skuld ótæpt.' 'Þú munt vera orðhákr mikill,' segir konungr. Eigi er getit orða þeira fleiri at sinni. Sigldu þeir kaupmenninir til Kaupangs ok skipuðu þar upp ok leigðu sér hús í bœnum. Fám nóttum síðar kom konungr inn aptr til bœjar, ok hafði farit í eyjar út at skemmta sér.

and had a long voyage, making land in the autumn northerly in Norway, off Trøndelag by the island(s) called Hitra. They then sailed in to Agdenes and spent a night there. In the morning they sailed in along Trondheimsfjorden with a light breeze. And as they passed Rein, they saw three longships rowing out along the fjord, the third a dragon-ship. And as these vessels passed the merchant-ship, a man in scarlet clothes with a gold band around his head went forward from the poop of the dragon-ship. He was tall and of noble appearance. This man began: 'Who is in command of your ship? And where did you spend last winter? And where did you first make land? And where did you spend last night?' The merchants were rather at a loss to find answers to so many questions asked all at once, but Halli replied: 'We were in Iceland last winter, sailed from Gásir, the captain is called Bárðr, made land at Hitra and spent last night at Agdenes.' The man, who was in fact King Haraldr Sigurðarson, then asked: 'Hasn't Agði fucked you?' 'Not so far,' answered Halli. The king smiled at this and said: 'Is there any chance that he'll do you that favour at some time in the future?' 'No,' said Halli, 'and there was one particular circumstance which accounts for our suffering no disgrace at his hands.' 'What was that?' asked the king. Halli knew very well who he was talking to and said: 'Sire, if you really wish to know, it was that Agði was awaiting men of higher rank than us for that purpose: he expects you there this evening and will then discharge that office very thoroughly.' 'You are clearly a very abusive person,' said the king. No further exchange between them on this occasion is reported. The merchants sailed on to Trondheim, unloaded their cargo and rented quarters in the town. A few nights later, the king returned. He had been out to the islands amusing himself.

Later, Halli and Bárðr go to meet the king in Trondheim. When asked, Halli admits to being the man the king spoke with out on the fjord. The

king agrees to his staying at the court but says that they may not always get on well together.

We focus mainly on the exchange between Haraldr and Halli on the fjord and its background. This begins with the king putting a startling number of questions to the Icelanders. Halli, however, is not at a loss for prompt answers and responds by stating that they have come from Gásir in Iceland, that their captain is called Bárðr, that they first made land at Hitra and that they spent the previous night at Agdenes. Although Bárðr has earlier been described as one of Haraldr's followers (*hirðmenn*), the king makes no reference to him. At Halli's mention of Agdenes, on the other hand, the king immediately asks the less than delicate question: 'Hasn't Agði fucked you?' Here, then, we have the introduction of the figure of Agði to which attention may be given.

Commenting on this passage in his edition of *Snegl*, Jónas Kristjánsson (*ÍF* IX, 265, n. 1) writes: 'Agði þessi er vafalaust búinn til eftir nafni nessins, virðist eiga að vera einhvers konar landvættur eða goðvera. Í Flateyjarb. [= *Flat*] I, 23, er nefndur Agði Þrymsson (kenndur við Agðir) og Agði jarl í Þorst[eins] þ[áttr] bæjarmagns; báðir eru fornaldarsagnapersónur.' Now there can be little doubt that Agði's name is secondary to the place-name Agðanes.[3] The first element of this probably has the same origin as the place-name Agder, which could well go back to 'eit opphavleg **ǫgd* til indoeur[opeisk] *ak- "vera skarp". Namnet [i. e. *Agder*] kan da tyde "landet som stikk ut (i havet)" eller "landet med framstikkande punkt"' (*NS* 53). Certainly Agdenes projects up northwards to command the entrance to Trondheimsfjorden (cf. p. 179 above). And when Jónas characterises Agði as 'einhvers konar landvættur' he is doubtless also on the right track. It is often difficult to distinguish between the various minor deities and other supernatural beings who were part of Norse belief, but the *landvættir* appear to have been thought of as the guardian-spirits of particular areas or localities. As such they defended their territory against hostile forces and controlled the welfare of its inhabitants and those who travelled through it (Briem 1945, 71–90; *NG* 334–588; *AR* I, 260–61; *KL* s. v. *Landvette*; *MRN* 230–35). Their domain was often by the sea or other waterways. We know, for example, of Bárð(u)r Snæfellsáss from western Iceland (see *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* in *ÍF* XIII; *NG* 462–63; Briem 1945, 81–83).

[3] Other examples of the names of supernatural beings in Scandinavian folklore secondary to the first elements of place-names are (from Sweden) *Omma* from *Omberg*, *Ålle* from *Ålleberg* (*NG* 448); (from Denmark) *Grön* from *Grönsund*, *Fane* (Grön's wife) from *Fanefjord* (*NG* 508).

Another local deity also known from medieval sources is the female Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr associated with the island of Sula (Møre og Romsdal) and probably originally a figure in the primitive beliefs of the fishermen and seamen of the area (*NG* 458–62; *AR* II, 340–42; *KL* XX, cols 382–84 and refs). And in later times and further south, we hear, for example, of Kullamannen of Kullaberg (Skåne), Ellekongen of Stevns Klint (Sjælland) and Klintekongen of Møns Klint (Møn), these last two sometimes regarded as one and the same. Near the southern tip of Gotland we find Hoburgsgubben, perhaps rather more good-natured than various other figures of this type. Agði, then, must belong to the band of supernatural beings who dwelt along the coasts of Scandinavia controlling local conditions. There can be little doubt that there was genuine belief in *landvættir* in Norway at the time *Snegl* was written. This we may safely infer from King Magnús Hákonarson's Christian Law Section for Gulaþing ('Nyere Gulatings kristenrett') of the late 1260s which prescribes measures to combat belief in *landvættir*, which were seen as dwelling in groves, mounds (*haugar*) or waterfalls (*NGL* II, 307–08):

> þa a konongr ok biskup . . . at ranzsakca at menn fare æigi med ofmikcilli (v. l. opinberre) villu ok hæidenvm atrvnade. En þæsser luttir høyra till villu ok hæidins atrvnaddar . . . at trva a landvættir at se j lvndum æda havgum æda forsom.
>
> then the king and the bishop have to make investigations to ensure that men do not indulge excessively (v. l. manifestly) in superstitious practices and heathen beliefs. And these things may be considered as superstitious practice and heathen belief . . . believing in *landvættir*, that they dwell in groves or mounds or waterfalls.

Indeed, as will be seen below, belief in the sort of supernatural beings with which we are here concerned probably survived at least in some places in Scandinavia down to the nineteenth century or even the twentieth. We may also consider the location of Agði on Agdenes in more detail. As already suggested, Agdenes had particular strategic importance, not least for the defence of Trondheim and Trøndelag, and *landvættir* and similar figures were regarded as defenders of their particular territories. Thus in the story of the wizard sent by Haraldr Gormsson to Iceland in *Heimskringla* (which contains, it is true, various literary and Christian elements), the four parts of the country are defended by different *landvættir* (*ÍF* XXVI, 271; cf. *MRN* 232–33). And in Danish folklore Ellekongen of Stevns was thought of as preventing a British force of 1807 from invading his territory at Tryggevælde Å in Sjælland (*NG* 394–95, 452).

Agdenes was a point one had to pass, like it or not, to get to Trondheim by sea. We often find figures like Agði at such points (*NG* 443–45). For example, Kullamannen lived on Kullaberg keeping guard over the entrance to Øresund and the Baltic; supernatural beings on Blå Jungfrun in Kalmarsund were thought of as controlling shipping along the east coast of Sweden; and Dovre of Dovrefjell watched over the main land-route between Gudbrandsdalen and Trøndelag.

Agði is located on a promontory and for various reasons supernatural figures (e. g. Barð(u)r Snæfellsáss, Kullamannen, Hoburgsgubben) were often thought of as living in such places. Agdenes rises to a height of some 165 metres and hills, mountains, cliffs and other eminences (whether near the sea or inland) were frequently the haunts of supernatural beings, for example, Bárð(u)r Snæfellsáss (Snæfellsnes), Ålle (Ålleberg, Västergötland), Klintekongen (Møns Klint) (cf. *NG* 249–51, 443–85; also 437–42).

Promontories are, of course, close to the sea or lakes and from them supernatural beings were thought of as controlling the fates and fortunes of those travelling on the nearby waters (*NG* 429–42). Thus they could, for example, confer success in fishing on local favourites (cf. for example *NG* 449); or they could, like Klintekongen of Møns Klint, destroy whole fleets of hostile ships (*NG* 467). Particularly in the age of oar and sail, mariners had considerable apprehensions about doubling headlands and often took laborious measures to avoid doing so. Rounding promontories often meant encountering new currents and changed wind-conditions. As already suggested, entering Trondheimsfjorden had its difficulties and shipwreck and other hazards were not uncommon here (cf. *Morkinskinna* 1932, 384; *KS* III, 90). It would not be surprising then to find a figure like Agði on Agdenes controlling wind and weather at the entrance to the fjord.

There is a further reason why we should find a supernatural figure like Agði inhabiting a promontory. We know from both literary and archaeological sources that funeral mounds and cairns were frequently located in such places. One reason for this is clearly suggested by lines 2802–08 of *Beowulf* (1950, 105; cf. 221): to be a memorial of the dead person to passing seafarers (cf. *Hávamál* 1986, stanza 72). And *landvættir* and figures like Agði were frequently thought of as inhabiting grave-mounds (cf. *NG* 500–12, 242–49). This is more or less directly implied by the passage from King Magnús Hákonarson's Christian Law Section for Gulaþing quoted above (p. 197). It is therefore interesting that there are a number of grave-mounds and the like on Agdenes with which

Agði might have been associated. Here attention might be particularly focused, for example, on the mound called Agdeneshaugen in Agdenesbukta itself (its purpose somewhat uncertain; cf. *SBA*); or on the mounds in the vicinity of Værnestangen, Rishaug and Laukhaug;[4] or on a large cairn ('røys') at Raudstein. These features are all more or less on the shore of the seaway in past Agdenes (Trondheimsleia) and visible from it. They are also close to the places on the western side of Agdenes where harbourage was to be found (*NtT* 38, 84–87, 116 *et passim*; see p. 179 above).

The king asks Halli if Agði has not sexually used him and his companions; from the subsequent exchange between the two we may infer that Agði had a fairly voracious sexual appetite, prepared to bugger Icelanders and Norwegian kings alike.[5] As also noted, Agði had control of the mouth of Trondheimsfjorden just as Kullamannen presided over the entrance to Øresund and supernatural powers in Blå Jungfrun over Kalmarsund.[6] Now figures like Agði were often capricious,

[4] In *GtN* 530, I tentatively suggest that the Old Norse first element of the still extant place-name *Rishaug* on Agdenes, i. e. (*h*)*rís*, 'brushwood', might by folk-etymology perhaps have been associated with Old Norse *risi* (cf. Norwegian *rise*, 'giant'; see *NtT* 16). Certainly the word *bergrisi* is used of a *landvættr* (*ÍF* XXVI, 271). Bárðr Snæfellsáss was of *risakyn* (*ÍF* XIII, 101–02). Ross (1895, 605) notes that the Norwegian word *rise* is used not only of a 'Jætte', but also 'om Gravsted fra Oldtiden' (in Jæren), and also mentions the word *reesegrav* (from Jæren). Blom (1896, 137–38) mentions a *Rishaug* (possibly also called *Tussehaug*; cf. *NG* 244) at Viken in Setersdal where, as late as the eighteenth century, cocks were sacrificed to the spirits ('vetter') thought to dwell in the mound.

[5] Perhaps only the Grettir of *Grettisfærsla* could compete; cf. MS 18 and refs.

[6] The expression 'Nordens Gibraltar' for Agdenes, used during the Second World War and alluded to by Merete Moe Henriksen (*NtT* 122), is thought-provoking. We may recall the episode in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga* (*ÍF* XXVII, 25) in which Óláfr is waiting for a fair wind (*at bíða byrjar*) at Karlsár (Cadiz?) to take him through the Strait of Gibraltar (Nǫrvasund) on his way to the Holy Land (cf. The Legendary Saga of St Óláfr, ch. 17 (*KS* I, 232); *Fagrskinna*, ch. 27 (*ÍF* XXIX, 169–70)). A strange man of fearsome aspect (Hercules? Cf. *Monumenta* 164) appears to Óláfr in a dream and tells him to return to Norway where he will become king. Is this man a figure who holds sway over Nǫrvasund just as Agði controls the entrance to Trondheimsfjorden and Kullamannen the entrance to Øresund? Apparently the man in Óláfr's dream can see into the future like Agði and Kullamannen (and like this last can predict the destiny of kings). May we assume that it is he who controls the winds at Nǫrvasund just as Agði seems to at Agdenes? At all events, in both The Legendary Saga and *Fagrskinna*, Óláfr gets no wind to continue his journey into the Mediterranean.

sometimes benign, sometimes malevolent. They had to be treated with great respect and caution and ordinary mortals often sought to win their favour. They were often appeased with offerings or accorded other marks of respect. For example, until quite recent times first-time travellers or novice seamen (Norwegian 'skårunger') along the west coast of Norway were often prevailed upon (frequently by way of a trick) to doff their hats or caps in respect when the supposed haunts of such figures were passed. Or they might be called upon to treat the others in the vessel or pay a fee. Concrete offerings might take the form of bread, tobacco, measures of liquor or coins. In Møn, for example, farmers put aside the last sheaf of oats for Klintekongen's horse. But there was another way of currying favour with such figures, particularly those regarded as females. This was by symbolic sexual intercourse (Danish 'symbolsk samleje'; cf. *NG* 343). Here the figure in question was represented by a stone into which a stick might be thrust in imitation of the sexual act. Seamen along the Norwegian coast paid their respects to objects and localities representing sexual organs and the like (cf. for example the female *Kontevika*, 'Cunt Bay', and *Hondsfittå*, 'Bitch's Cunt'; the male *Eistene*, 'The Testicles'; *NvF* 147–49). And when we turn from mainland Scandinavian folklore to the Old Icelandic sagas, we find a figure who seems to resemble Agði in a relevant way. The scene in ch. 123 of *Brennu-Njáls saga* (*ÍF* XII, 311–15) where Skarpheðinn presents Flosi with a pair of dark blue (*blár*) knickers is well known.[7] By this act, Skarpheðinn upsets the delicately arranged settlement after the killing of Hǫskuldr Hvítanessgoði. The passage has recently been the subject of informed discussion in MS (9–13 *et passim*). Of interest are Skarpheðinn's words when Flosi asks why he should have need for the knickers: *Því þá—ef þú ert brúðr Svínfellsáss* [v. l. *Snæfellsáss*], *sem sagt er, hverja ina níundu nótt ok geri hann þik at konu.* The slur here clearly suggests that Flosi had some sort of erotic relationship, albeit of course a symbolic one, with the Svínfellsáss. The latter would have been the active party, Flosi the passive. It is presumably implied that Flosi submitted himself to the Svínfellsáss in this way in order to ingratiate himself. It seems, then, that Agði (and other *landvættir* like him) had very much the same sexual proclivities as the Svínfellsáss. And Haraldr could well be implying that Halli and his companions allowed themselves to be used by Agði in order to win the latter's favour.

[7] Dark blue (*blár*) garments seem to have been favoured by sodomites (cf. the *hǫttr blár* of ch. 17 of *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* (*ÍF* III, 154)).

Skarpheðinn, then, accuses Flosi of serving the Svínfellsáss sexually; and King Haraldr by his questions to Halli and his companions raises the possibility that they have been used in like manner by Agði. It will now be clear why people should allow themselves to be sexually exploited, albeit symbolically, by such supernatural figures. *Landvættir* like Agði and the Svínfellsáss had, as we have seen, authority over specific areas. Their powers were localised and they controlled the general welfare of their domains in matters, for example, of climate, crops, success in husbandry (*MRN* 232–33). Moreover, Agði on his promontory had control over the entrance to Trondheimsfjorden. The *landvættir* had their favourites; and as we have seen, one way of currying favour with them was through sexual liaisons with them. Skarpheðinn's slur on Flosi could well imply that he acted as woman for the Svínfellsáss in order to secure the advantages this latter might confer locally at Svínafell. If Agði had control of the waters around Agdenes, he could probably grant safe passage into the fjord and to Trondheim and away to other places south, west and north from Agdenes (cf. pp. 182–83 above). One may assume, then, that Agði demanded sexual services from those passing through his territory as (to borrow an expression from Øresund) some form of 'sound-dues' (Danish 'sundtold'). It was quite possibly the granting of this privilege that the king implies that Halli and his companions might be prepared to prostitute themselves to Agði to secure (*at láta serðask til*; cf. p. 209 below). But it might not be reading too much into the text to go a step further. In sailing *lítinn byr* along the fjord (cf. p. 194, line 26 above), Halli and his companions—unlike Haraldr, whose men have to row—have at least something of a following wind, i. e. from a northerly to westerly direction; in reality, sailors rounding Agdenes on their way into the fjord perhaps more often have to contend with winds from the east or south-east (*NtT* 13; cf. p. 179 above). Might not Haraldr be implying that the fair wind driving Bárðr's ship was sent by Agði because its crew and passengers had allowed themselves to be sexually used by him? Halli, it is true, denies that he and his companions were so used, and the reasons for his denial will be evident from what follows below. We may here note, however, in support of the suggestion just made, that it appears from the quotation from Theodóra Thoroddsen referred to above (p. 186) that a figure similar to Agði, Bárð(u)r Snæfellsáss, was able to produce breezes (from his *skeggbroddar*). As the scribal slip reflected in certain manuscripts of *Njáls saga* reveals, the Snæfellsáss and the Svínfellsáss must have been thought of as very

similar figures (cf. p. 200, line 28 above; *ÍF* XII, 314, n. 3; Briem 1945, 81). Certainly other supernatural beings (and not least Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr of Sula) were thought of as having control over wind and weather or even as being personifications of these phenomena (cf. for example *NG* 429, 446, 450, 458–62).

We move on to Halli's final repartee of the exchange, the insinuation, however deferentially and euphemistically couched, that Agði is waiting for Haraldr at Agdenes and will thoroughly bugger him when he arrives there that very evening. From Halli's remark, we see that he regards Agði as prescient. If Halli is right, then prescience is a gift that Agði shares with other similar figures. For example, Kullamannen of Kullaberg had the gift of prophecy and rightly predicted that Valdemar II's three sons would all be king after him (*NG* 449). Halli also implies that Haraldr will suffer rough treatment at the hands of Agði. This is probably precisely because Haraldr is a nobler (*tignari*) man than Halli and his companions rather than despite the fact. While figures like Agði were prepared to defend their territories against foreign powers, they would not tolerate the presence there of any other king, not even the king of the realm himself. We may note here, for example, a legend about the Danish Christoffer III's death in 1448. Christoffer was warned not to visit Skælskør (Sjælland) as there was an elfin king ('ellekonge') there who would brook no other king's presence. Christoffer answered that he was a Christian and unafraid of the troll. But next day, as he rode away from Skælskør, he was struck between the shoulders so hard that he almost fell dead from his horse and no one saw who hit him. He had himself carried to Helsingborg where he died (see *NG* 452 for this and other pertinent examples). In *Snegl*, then, Halli implies that Agði will have little respect for Haraldr's status and indeed will be more likely to sodomise Haraldr than himself and his companions. Haraldr seems somewhat deflated by all this and can only conclude the exchange with the rather lame remark that Halli was clearly *orðhákr mikill.*

We now consider Agði's later history. In the notes to his translation of *Snegl* (Flateyjarbók-version), Finnur Magnússon (Magnusen 1820, 34) refers to Agði as 'en Höjboer, Trold eller Jætte, af hvem Næsset mentes at have sit Navn'. This confident statement makes one almost wonder if Finnur knew sources about Agði quite independent of the medieval Icelandic *Snegl,* conceivably Norwegian oral traditions of his own time. In fact, it is rather doubtful that he did. Even so, and in view of what has already been said, it seems far from impossible that traditions about some supernatural being or beings residing on Agdenes

were still alive in Norwegian folklore of more recent centuries. For example, when Gerhard Schøning visited Agdenes in the 1770s he noted the strong belief there in the giants of former times and was told that a certain cairn there owed its origin to the activities of such beings (Schøning 1910, I 80–81).[8] And Merete Moe Henriksen (*NtT* 16) seems to presuppose the survival of similar superstitions down to fairly recent times. She states that as late as the end of the nineteenth century it was not uncommon practice to row with muffled oars around Agdenes in order not to disturb the troll residing there ('så sent som på slutten av 1800-tallet var det ikke uvanlig å linne tøy på årene når man rodde forbi Agdeneset for ikke å forstyrre trollet').[9] There is perhaps need for further investigation here. Moving to the twentieth century, we find that Agði has a female descendant. In Chapter IX of his *Nemningsfordomar ved fiske* (*NvF* 116–75), Solheim gives attention to the various features along the Norwegian coast, for instance dangerous skerries and rocks, which were personified as supernatural beings. These were represented sometimes as males (e. g. *Vågakallen*, Andøya, Nordland; *NvF* 155, 157) but probably more often as females. There are, for example, several instances of *Finnkjerringa* (*NvF* 142, 151). The element *kjerring* (lit. 'old woman') was common in the names of such beings (cf. Hovda 1941). They were seen as potentially harmful, to be humoured, as we have seen, by offerings or marks of respect. As we have also seen, novice sailors were frequently prevailed upon (by tricks) to pay their respects by doffing their hats. In this way knowledge of the seaways and their hazards would be thoroughly implanted in the young men's minds. Here a passage in Solheim's book (*NvF* 149) has special interest for Trondheimsfjorden. An informant from Leksvik tells how, when a young man passed by boat for the first time what is probably the promontory of Amborneset (on the north side of the fjord, about 15 km across from Trondheim; cf. Map 1), it was a common prank to try to get

[8] Schøning here makes, admittedly without much conviction, an identification between the Thialfahellir said in Theodoricus's History of the kings of Norway (*Monumenta* 14, 17) to lie on Agdenes (cf. *KS* I, 60) and a small cave just to the east of Valset (itself less than 4 km to the west of Agdenesbukta). There was a mythical figure called Þjálfi (cf. *AR* II, 129–30) and such beings were sometimes apparently thought of, like Surtr, as residing in caves (cf. Briem 1945, 79–81).

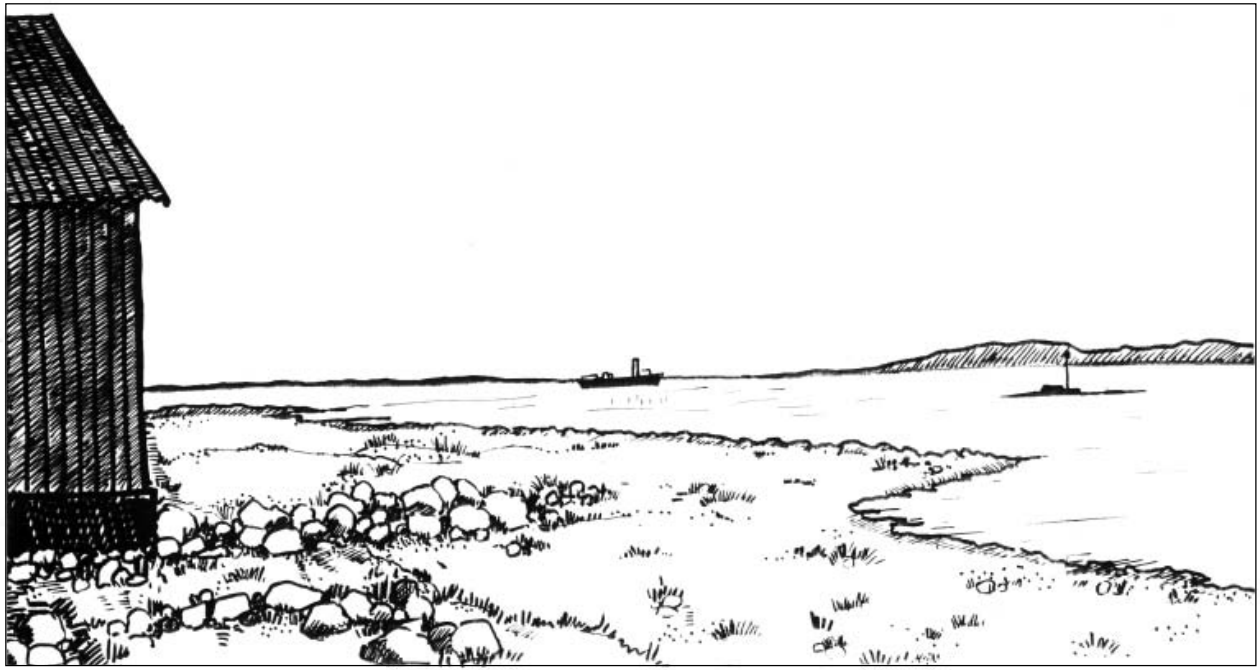
[9] Merete Moe Henriksen (personal communication) informs me of the source for this statement. It is somewhat popular, but appears to be backed up by oral testimony and is not to be lightly dismissed.

him to salute Urskjerringa by ordering him to take his hat off. If he complied, his action was met by hearty laughter from the others on board.

> I Leksvik narra dei ungdomane til å helsa på *Urskjerringa.* Om dette skriv ein korrespondent: 'Omtrent i skillet mellem Leksvik og Leksvikstranda sogner er det en bergodde ved sjøstranden som stikker noe mer frem end de andre. Denne odde er fra så langt tilbake man vet kaldt Urskjærinna. Den ligger i nærheten av Ursbekken. Når en ungdom første gang var med båt forbi Urskjærinna, så var det et almindeligt narrestrek å få ham til å hilse på Urskjærinna. – "Nu må du ta hatten av," sa en av de gamle, da de kom til stedet, og hvis han efterkom påbudet blev det en oplivende latter ombord.' Og i leia ved mynnet av Trondheimsfjorden galdt føregjerda eit viktig punkt for navigasjonen. 'Å narra dei yngre ombord til å helse på skjer og holmar, seglmerke o. l. er i bruk den dag i dag. Fyrste gongen eg fór forbi Agdenes på veg til Trondheim, narra skipperen meg til å helse på *Agdenes-kjerringa*, ei jernstøtte på ei flu ved Agdenes,' fortel ein heimelsmann frå Heim. Karakteristisk er det at det i nyare tid er sett opp ei jarnstytte på denne kjerringa for å markera leia.

It is noteworthy that, as at Agdenes, prehistoric remains (grave-mounds and cairns) are to be found on Amborneset; cf. pp. 198–99 above. Solheim cites a second informant, Johan Hellandsjø from Heim in Sør-Trøndelag well to the south-west of Agdenes (*NvF* 181; cf. Map 1). Hellandsjø tells how, when he travelled for the first time past Agdenes in to Trondheim, the skipper of the boat fooled him into paying his respects to Agdenes-kjerringa, represented, it seems, by an iron perch set up on a skerry. In the 1990s, Agdenes-kjerringa is still to be seen as Solheim's informant described it, not far from the shore at Agdenesbukta (the skerry covered at high tide); cf. Illustration 5. It is marked simply as 'Kjerringa' on Chart 39 and is still known locally as such. In Solheim's second informant, then, we have a twentieth-century Norwegian who, however perfunctorily, has on his first trip past Agdenes paid obeisance to some supernatural being.[10]

[10] When this contribution was at proof stage, Merete Moe Henriksen kindly drew my attention to Einar Jakobsen's book *Festningen ved havet* of 1997. Jakobsen makes a number of references to the presence at Agdenes of 'Agdenestrollet', traditions about whom seem to have been current amongst Norwegian servicemen stationed at Agdenes Festning in the years around the beginning of the Second World War (cf. Jakobsen 1997, 13–17 *et passim*; there is a picture of a carving of 'Agdenestrollet' on p. 15). Agdenestrollet seems to have been thought of as having some control over the wind in the locality and also seems to show scant respect for a modern Scandinavian monarch (cf. Jakobsen 1997, 106). But how far such traditions could go back to written



Illus. 5: Agdenesbukta at low tide. The skerry Kjerringa with its perch to the right. (Drawing by Ece Turaman)

We turn from Johan Hellandsjø back to the Sneglu-Halli of the *þáttr*. It is highly unlikely that a historical figure called Sneglu-Halli as portrayed in *Snegl* actually experienced events described in the *þáttr* (or even existed at all). There was never, in all probability, any meeting between such a figure and the Norwegian King Haraldr Sigurðarson on Trondheimsfjorden. On the other hand, there are doubtless various realities behind the literary episode. As an Icelander, Halli could expect to be subjected to a certain amount of teasing and even bullying (cf. Mundal 1997, 487–88). *Mǫrlandi* is an insult, albeit a mild one, he might well have heard used of himself and his companions. As a young man sailing into Trondheim for the first time (we may suppose), he was, to use the Norwegian word of more recent times noted above, something of a *skårunge*, a youngster on his first trip to sea, the potential butt of jokes and potential victim of pranks (cf. pp. 203–04 above; *NvF* 9, 11, 153–62). Having circumnavigated Agdenes, Halli and his companions sail in past Rein, where they meet three longships rowing in the opposite direction, the commander of which fires a barrage of questions at them. It is not impossible that vessels seeking access to Trondheim by sea were subjected to some official control at Agdenes or on the fjord (cf. *NtT* 120–31); and the first four questions asked by Haraldr contain perhaps reminiscences of the sort of interrogation the captains of visiting ships actually underwent. With his initial questions promptly answered, Halli's interlocutor, now revealed as King Haraldr Sigurðarson, turns to raillery. The king's reputation as a poet with a taste for banter already mentioned in the *þáttr* could well have some basis in fact (cf. p. 194 above). 'Hasn't Agði fucked you?' he asks, and it is noteworthy that neither the author of *Snegl* nor the redactor of its shorter version accord Agði any introduction. It seems quite probable that Agði was not only familiar to the Halli of the *þáttr* (who was certainly in the know) but also to its audience in Iceland and to the townsfolk of Trondheim of the thirteenth century. He was, I would suggest, a stock figure. Moreover, Haraldr's question is, of course, a *níð*, an insinuation that Halli and his companions had been passive partners in some act of sexual perversity. The delivery of such insults was specifically forbidden in the medieval laws of Iceland and Norway (i. e. the Law of Gulaþing and the Law of Frostaþing; cf. Almqvist 1965, 38–88; MS 14–32). There were, for example, laws against declaring that a man had

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sources (perhaps even to *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* itself) may be regarded as a matter of uncertainty.

borne children or that he had been a woman every ninth night (cf. p. 200 above). More relevantly to our discussion, heavy penalties were laid down for describing a man with the participial adjectives *sannsorðinn*, 'demonstrably sodomised by another man' (in the Norwegian laws) or simply *sorðinn*, 'sodomised by another man' (in *Grágás*; both words related to the verb *serða* which Haraldr uses). But how far such laws were actually enforced is a matter of debate and one which cannot be discussed here. In reality it seems very probable that insinuations like these, in all their lewdness and crudity, were part of everday life in the Norway of the thirteenth century and went largely unpunished. We may note here, for example, a runic inscription from Oslo (possibly to be dated to *c.*1200) in which a certain Óli is referred to as *stroðinn í rassinn* (cf. Knirk 1991, 18–19). Óli was doubtless a historical person (indeed possibly identifiable) but there is no reason to think that the carver of the runes or anyone else suffered any legal consequences for the inscription. Nor is it likely that Óli was actually subjected to buggery. Here, as frequently in the literary sources, the sexual imputations are used figuratively (cf. MS, *passim*).[11] Thus when Skarpheðinn threw his taunt of sexual perversity at Flosi in ch. 123 of *Brennu-Njáls saga* he can, as noted, hardly have expected to be taken seriously in a literal sense. What Haraldr is asking Halli and his companions (I would argue) is some such question as whether they have paid their respects (in however demeaning a manner) to an object representing Agði at Agdenes; or whether they have made an offering to him there; or simply whether they have rounded Agdenes under his supposed aegis;[12]

[11] I am grateful to Jonna Louis-Jensen and James Knirk for pointing out to me that Fr. Macody Lund's interpretation (1934–1936) of a Latin inscription on an exterior part of Trondheim cathedral according to which the Icelander Laurentius Kálfsson (1267–1331; Bishop of Hólar from 1324) is defamed as 'Peter's anus' is far from certain.

[12] Agdenes as a promontory might have been interpreted as some sort of phallic object, capable of both sodomy and heterosexual intercourse. As the etymology of its name implies, it is something which projects (cf. p. 196 above); moreover it is directed, as it were, at Stjørnfjorden to its north-east and Stjørnfjorden might in turn have been seen as representing an anus or vagina. Now it might be argued that features like these are unlikely to have been seen in the somewhat cartographical way needed to suggest such comparisons. However, as noted above (p. 200), the name *Kontevika* was used of a bay on the Norwegian coast. Furthermore, in ch. 4 of *Qlkofra þáttr* (*ÍF* XI, 94), Broddi Bjarnason likens the cleft between Guðmundr Eyjólfsson's buttocks to *Ljósavatnsskarð* (cf. MS 34–39, 103). Rounding Agdenes by boat might then

or perhaps even whether they have paid a fee at Agdenes before proceeding into the fjord.[13] To admit to having been used by Agði was, then, probably not as discreditable as it might seem and there were perhaps many Icelanders and medieval inhabitants of Trondheim who could claim the distinction. I would argue, therefore, that Haraldr is indulging in a stock joke about a stock figure, one well known to all familiar with Trondheimsfjorden. To his question *sarð hann yðr eigi Agði?* Haraldr is, doubtless, expecting an affirmative answer from Halli and to be able to make merry over this. In discussing the practice of fooling young seamen into saluting features representing local spirits along the Norwegian coast, Solheim stresses the element of jest involved. We have learnt from Solheim's informant from Leksvik in Trøndelag how prevailing on a youngster to doff his hat to Urskjerringa produced a peal of laughter from his older companions on board (cf. p. 204 above). Solheim (*NvF* 148–49) gives other specific examples from other informants of the mirth produced by similar tricks elsewhere. Further, on p. 153 of *NvF*, he shows how strong the link between the custom in question and the consequent mirth must have been and argues that it goes far back in time:

> Det er eitt drag i skikken [i. e. that of hoodwinking young men into paying their respects to supernatural figures] som går att i alle oppteikningane frå dei seinaste år: skjemten. Det vart alltid moro av det når nokon, d. v. s. av dei unge og urøynde, vart narra til å helsa. Ein kan av tradisjonen få den tokken at det var moroa som var sjølve motivet til skikken. Men det tilfanget vi til dessar har gått gjennom, er nok til å visa at skjemtmotivet på ingen måte kan gjeva fullnøyande forklaring på skikken, og eit nærare studium syner då også at opphavet til slike føregjerder har vori heilt andre ting enn berre trongen til moro og høvet til å stetta den. Utan tvil er skjemtdraget gamalt og opphavleg i samanheng med skikken. Sjølve situasjonen under ei slik 'helsing' eller 'narring' gjer det naturleg. Men det er sikkert i nyare tid, etter at det eigenlege grunnlaget for skikken hadde teki til å kverva bort, at dette draget har vorti det dominerande.

Customs like those described by Solheim were not confined in Scandi-

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have been interpreted figuratively as accommodating Agði's organ. Another possibility is that the expression 'to be used by Agði' meant the reverse, to be delayed by wind and weather at Agdenes; but much of what has been said above runs counter to such an interpretation.

[13] In *SBA* 23 it is suggested that a demand for dues from sea-traffic entering or leaving Trondheimsfjorden may possibly have been made at the harbour in Agdenesbukta.

navia to Norway; Nordlander (1926–1927, 66–70) describes an example of the practice from Sweden. Just how far back in time such customs go is demonstrated by the episode in *Snegl.* Jokes of this sort along the coasts of Norway must be at least as old as the thirteenth century, perhaps older than Solheim thought. In the fictional world of the *þáttr* the king is expecting to satisfy the same sort of need to tease as that reported by Solheim's modern informants. Halli's quick wit deprives him of the pleasure. The king seems to take it all in good part and even produces a smile. But the joke is at the expense of the illustrious Haraldr harðráði and not the Icelandic new boy he thought to ridicule. And all this merriment apart, there was probably a very real respect for the genius of Agdenes amongst many of those who actually sailed Trondheimsfjorden.

The episode in ch. 2 of *Snegl* we have been discussing has something of a parallel later in the *þáttr* (ch. 10; *ÍF* IX, 293–94) in the following incident not found in the shorter version. One day Halli is with King Haraldr who is carrying an elaborately decorated axe. The king notices that Halli cannot keep his eyes off the weapon and the following dialogue ensues. The king asks:

> 'Hefir þú sét betri øxi?' 'Eigi ætla ek,' segir Halli. 'Villtu láta serðask til øxarinnar?' segir konungr. 'Eigi,' segir Halli, 'en várkunn þykki mér yðr, at þér vilið svá selja sem þér keyptuð.' 'Svá skal vera, Halli,' segir konungr, 'tak með, ok njót manna bezt, gefin var mér, enda skal svá selja.'
>
> 'Have you seen any better axe?' 'I don't think so,' says Halli. 'Would you let yourself be buggered to get (*láta serðask til*) it?' asks the king. 'No,' says Halli, 'but you could be forgiven for letting it go at the same price as you paid for it.' 'So it shall be, Halli,' says the king. 'Take it now and may you have the greatest joy from it; it was given to me and on the same terms I shall pass it on.'

In MS 27, Haraldr's second question here is rendered: 'Will you agree to be *sorðinn* (*serðask*—used sexually by another man . . .) for the sake of getting the axe?' Meulengracht Sørensen goes on to remark of the whole passage, 'The insinuation is, of course, that if the king insisted on his condition, it could be suspected that he had obtained the axe in a similar way.' In ch. 2 and ch. 10, then, Haraldr, by his questions makes the suggestion that Sneglu-Halli is prepared to allow himself to be *sorðinn*; in both episodes Halli answers the questions in the negative and skilfully turns the slur back on the king. The episode shows again that the king is able to take as good as he gives. It is not impossible that the episode in ch. 10 is based on some hackneyed joke or cliché rather

than being the author's own. But in either event, it is secondary to the episode in ch. 2. It was presumably written later than that episode which, in turn, is based on various traditional elements. The absence of the episode in ch. 10 in the version of *Snegl* represented by Morkinskinna, Hulda and Hrokkinskinna is, as suggested above (p. 194), in all likelihood the result of a shortening process; the redactor of that version omitted it because of its repetitiousness and its obscenity. He has also abbreviated his version to exclude other indecent material.

As in the previous section, I conclude in speculative vein. It has been suggested above that 'to be *sorðinn* by Agði' could mean something like 'to pay one's respects to Agði' or 'to make an offering to Agði'. If this is right, one might well wonder precisely to what object, if any, such tokens of deference were directed. It has been noted above (pp. 198–99) that there are various grave-mounds or cairns on Agdenes with which Agði might have been associated. But there are other possibilities. In view of his apparent reputation for sexual activity, it seems possible that he might have been represented by some object symbolising a phallus and then perhaps most aptly a standing stone. We certainly read of a phallus-cult on a promontory somewhere in Norway in *Vǫlsa þáttr* (*Flat* II, 331–36; cf. *KL* s. v. *Falloskult*). We have already seen how Norwegian seamen of recent times paid their repects to certain features, visible from the sea, which symbolised sexual organs, although perhaps mainly female sexual organs. (Here we may also note a stone named *Jøgelkunta*, 'Giantess's Cunt', near Lillehammer, admittedly far from the sea, to which young boys were encouraged to pay their respects; cf. Lie 1939.) There was, of course, widespread veneration of stones of various sorts in the folk-belief of Scandinavia and they could have importance in many respects (cf. *NG* 219–29, 339–58). As a random example, we may instance a stone on a point in Lake Anten (Västergötland), 'hr. Gunnars sten', which must be saluted by those desiring success in fishing on the lake (*NG* 350). Here we think of the so-called *bautasteiner*, which Norwegian word (a revival of Old Norse *bautasteinar*) is used in modern Scandinavian archaeological terminology for a stone, without inscription, set up on end in the earth in prehistoric times (cf. *KL* s. v. *Bautastein*; *Hávamál* 1986, 108). Such stones, common not least in Norway, may have a height of up to five metres. They appear singly or in groups, often in combination with grave-mounds or cairns, and like them sometimes on promontories (cf. the place-name *Bauteneset* (Voksa, Møre og Romsdal); *KL* I, col. 393). Also like grave-mounds, *bautasteiner* can be found near well-trafficked

routes (cf. p. 199 above; *Hávamál*, strophe 72). According to Skjelsvik (*KL* I, col. 393), they were often named after persons and there was one in western Norway called simply *Mannen.* For various reasons, not least etymological, *bautasteiner* have been interpreted as phallic symbols. In Öland, for example, women sought relief from infertility by stroking certain *bautasteiner* (*Rs* 42; cf. *NG* 348). Here we note that there is at least one *bautastein* on Agdenes, in the vicinity of Værnestangen–Rishaug–Laukhaug (cf. *NtT* 44–46; cf. p. 199 above and note 4). Agði might, then, have been represented by a *bautastein.* But there is another possibility. We have noted the large cairn near to the shore at Raudstein about 6 km west of the tip of Agdenes (cf. *NtT* 90–93, 117). The word *Raudstein* has a parallel in Östergötland (Grebo parish, near Linköping) in Sweden in the name of a still existing farm, *Rödsten.* On the land of this farm we find a composition of three painted stones in the form of a distinct phallus (described by Cnattingius in *Rs*). The main, upright stone is painted red, a flat stone on top of it is white and the third stone, uppermost, is black. The whole, sometimes personified as 'Rödstensgubben', has its place in the middle of a burial cairn. By tradition the symbol has importance for the farm's well-being and, even in the present century, has been regularly painted for superstitious reasons, to prevent misfortune visiting the farm. The custom can be shown to go back at least as far as the medieval period and quite possibly to the Iron Age. In his discussion, Cnattingius adduces parallels from northern Cameroon where such fetishes had connections with fertility rites and were reddened with the blood of sacrificial animals. There is, of course, no such phallic stone at Raudstein on Agdenes now. And there may be various other explanations for the name (e. g. it might well refer to a stone naturally coloured red). But there was certainly a custom in Norway up to quite recent times of painting venerated stones white (*NG* 221; *KL* I, col. 393). The sacrifices described by Dudo for a favourable wind, etc. (cf. pp. 183–84) involved the smearing of blood of human sacrifices. Some sort of phallic object might have apotropaic power protecting the entrance to the fjord against hostile forces, supernatural or otherwise (cf. *AR* I, 288–90). At the same time, such an object may have acted as some sort of marker or navigational aid (cf. Kjerringa in Agdenesbukta). It is not, therefore, inconceivable that a red stone at Raudstein might have symbolised Agði. But it should be stressed again that we are here very much in the realms of speculation and conjecture.

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CHRISTINE ELIZABETH FELL

Christine Fell, Emeritus Professor of Early English Studies in the University of Nottingham and past President of the Viking Society, died on 2 July 1998. Her final illness was quick and sudden, although she had suffered poor health for some years.

Christine Fell was born in Louth, Lincolnshire, in 1938. Appropriately for a future scholar of Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, she had family connections on both sides of the Humber, and on her early retirement in 1997 she went to live in her beloved Slingsby in North Yorkshire. Fell took a B.A. in English at Royal Holloway College, London, in 1959, followed by an M.A. at University College, London, in 1961, supervised by Peter Foote. Her dissertation was an edition of *Dunstanus saga* (published in 1963), and part of her training was to spend a year in Copenhagen working on the relevant manuscripts. From then on her career was marked by a strong interest in the cultural interactions of the English and Scandinavian worlds, and by close contacts with Scandinavian scholars. Fell embarked on her academic career at Ripon Training College in 1961, moving on to the English Language Department in Aberdeen in 1963, and to the English Department at Leeds in 1965. She came to Nottingham in 1971, and remained here for the rest of her career, progressing to Reader in 1976, and to Professor of Early English Studies in 1981.

In the Department of English Studies Fell was concerned to preserve the range of teaching in Old and Middle English, Old Norse, history of the English language and place-name studies. Securing a 'New Blood' lectureship in Viking Studies in 1985 was only one of her many coups. During her headship of the department (1990–93) she also developed Nottingham as one of the few British universities practising both teaching and research in runology, and in 1992 she initiated a five-year Leverhulme-funded research project on the language of English place-names, which continues and is now funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board. Her views on the value of studying Old Norse-Icelandic in departments of English, alongside the culture of the Anglo-Saxons, were expressed in her usual trenchant and witty style in her paper 'Norse studies: then, now and hereafter' to the Viking Society Centenary Symposium in 1992 (published in *Viking Revaluations*, ed. Anthony Faulkes and Richard Perkins, 1993, pp. 85–99).

Fell's publications reflect her personality: scholarly, enthusiastic, witty, challenging, occasionally barbed, succinct and highly influential. Her early work was varied, though with a strong emphasis on Anglo-

Scandinavian contacts, summed up in the title of her contribution to the *Proceedings of the Eighth Viking Congress* (1981), 'Anglo-Saxon saints in Norse sources and vice versa'. Gradually, her interest in words began to dominate, and she carved out a niche in what she called 'historical semantics', teasing out the meanings of words, with an emphasis on context rather than etymology, and using the latest available research tools to investigate the full range of occurrences. She was a great user of the Toronto Microfiche Concordance of Old English, and supporter of the Dictionary of Old English, and often said that similar work would not be possible for Old Norse until it too had such tools. She used this method on a number of subjects close to her heart, as in her classic article on 'Old English *beor*' in *Leeds Studies in English* (1975), and her definitive statements on the meanings of both the Old English word *wicing* (the Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture for the British Academy, 1986), and 'Modern English *viking*' in the *Festschrift* for Kenneth Cameron (*Leeds Studies in English*, 1987). Although her interests were increasingly Anglo-Saxon, Fell never lost sight of the value of studying Old English and Old Norse side by side, as in her Presidential Address to the Society on the word *unfrið*, published in *Saga-Book* XXI:1–2 (1982–3), 85–100. Fell had both the talent and the inclination to make her erudition available to a wider community and her translation of *Egils saga* (1975) is probably the best of a number of competing translations of that work, for students and the general public alike. She was associated with the Jorvik Viking Centre in York, for which she provided a soundtrack in both Old English and Old Norse, and wrote the best-selling booklets *Jorvikinga saga* and *Toki in Jorvik!*

Fell also had a notable career in administration, both within the university and nationally, for she believed strongly that academics should become involved in the making of decisions that affected them. She did this with her usual energy and enthusiasm, disregarding the undoubted detrimental effects on her health. Christine Fell's achievement was recognised in her lifetime when she was made Knight of the Order of the Falcon in 1991, and appointed O.B.E. for her contribution to Early English Studies in 1997. But it is her silver-haired humanity that sticks in the mind, for Chris was the kindest and wisest of friends:

Þat telk fyrst
es flestr of veit
ok alþjóð
eyru sœkir,

hvé mildgeð
mǫnnum þótti,
kvinna vísust
ok víðfrægust.

Þar stóð mér
mǫrgum betri
hoddfíǫndum
á hlið aðra
tryggr vinr minn,
sás trúa knáttak,
heiðþróuð
hverju ráði.

J. J.

LOTTE MOTZ

Lotte Motz, *née* Edlis, was born on 16 August 1922 in Vienna, where she also attended school, but at the time of the Nazi takeover she was forced to leave the Gymnasium along with other Jewish students. The death of her father at that time also affected her deeply. Finally, in 1941, with her mother and two younger brothers, Stefan and Herbert, Lotte was able to escape to America. She adapted quickly to her new circumstances and new country, and always considered herself American, even though she was to spend long periods of time away from the United States. While completing High School and attending College at night she worked at various odd jobs. She eventually became a full-time student at Hunter College, City University of New York, where in 1949 she graduated with Honours and a B.A. in German. She also wrote short stories and poetry which appeared in the College's literary publication. She then did a year of graduate work at Stanford University and completed her graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin, where she obtained a Ph.D. in German and philology in 1955. Her years in Madison were happy, and it was there that she met and married another graduate student in the German Department, Eugene Norwood, though the marriage was short-lived. Several years later she married Hans Motz, an eminent physicist at Oxford University who was also originally from Vienna. She moved to Oxford in 1969, and while she found the city beautiful, her desire to teach became increasingly frustrated there, and she disliked the role of faculty wife. It was then that her scholarly career began.

In 1971 she returned to America with Anna, her daughter by her second marriage, and obtained an academic position in the German Department at Brooklyn College. Later she taught German at Hunter College. When in 1984 she became ill with a lung condition she had to give up her cherished teaching. This was one of the major disappointments of her life. Lotte returned in the same year to Oxford, where Anna was now a first-year undergraduate, and although she did not teach again she continued with her scholarly activities.

Lotte Motz's field was Old Norse and Germanic mythology and religion, but in her later years her research increasingly spanned an even vaster field, covering most of Indo-European religion. In her four books and some seventy papers she concentrated more and more on the role of female mythological figures, and nobody has written more fully and inspiringly on Germanic giantesses. Two of her books, namely *The*

Beauty and the Hag (Vienna, 1993) and her most ambitious work, *The Faces of the Goddess* (Oxford, 1997), were devoted to the female in mythology, in its Germanic context in the former work, and in various archaic cultures in the latter; in both she challenged the notion of a unitary mother-goddess archetype. Her second strong interest was in the relationship between gods—or families of gods—in Germanic religion, and in that of their functions and cults to the strata of society, and she was probably the first scholar in our field to take a serious step beyond the Three-Function theory developed by Georges Dumézil nearly four decades ago. These views were developed in her fourth book, *The King, the Champion and the Sorcerer* (Vienna, 1996) and in her article 'The Germanic Thunderweapon', *Saga-Book* XXIV:5 (1997), 329–50. Her research in this direction was sadly interrupted by her death, and it is left to others to take up the often provocative thoughts with which she has presented us.

Lotte's productivity was all the more impressive in that her scholarly career began relatively late in her life. She was a genuine scholar, with a strong desire to find the truth. She was rich in creative insights and was also a gifted writer. An exceedingly kind and generous person, she had a great capacity for friendship and loyalty. She also had a strong sense of justice and the courage to follow her convictions (though this sometimes cost her dearly), and she was liberal and tolerant in her views.

To those who knew her only in the years after her illness, it may come as a surprise to learn that Lotte had a passionate love of nature. In her younger years she had been physically active and strong, especially enjoying skiing, hiking, swimming and even climbing. Her illness was therefore especially difficult for her, but she accepted it with grace and courage, and went on with her life as best she could, maintaining her social life right up to the evening before her death. In the early hours of December 24, 1997, after meeting with many of her friends and family, including her granddaughter Hannah, she died unexpectedly and peacefully in her sleep.

Lotte herself said that she wanted the words of Chaucer describing the Clerk of Oxenford to be on her gravestone:

> And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

HERBERT EDLIS, ANNA MOTZ, RUDOLF SIMEK

REVIEWS

THE POETIC EDDA: VOLUME 2: MYTHOLOGICAL POEMS. Edited with Translation, Introduction and Commentary by URSULA DRONKE. *Clarendon Press.* Oxford, 1997. xiv + 443 pp.

For lovers of the Poetic *Edda*, this volume will be a prized possession, enabling scholars and amateur enthusiasts alike to enter with ease into the daunting world of Eddic mythological poems. Its treatment of each poem is as follows. First, to satisfy the scholar, it makes available the best original (semi-diplomatic) text: clarified where muddled, repaired when damaged, marked off when hopeless. Then there is the translation: clear and poetic in its own way, yet Fritzner-tested and alert to Icelandic idiom. Afterwards, the introduction: synopsis, analogues and palaeographical support, all written engagingly and flexibly, with a structure tailored to the needs of each poem. Lastly, the commentary: a line-by-line discussion and detailed vindication of all that has been said. This is the second volume in the Oxford edition of the Poetic *Edda* (the first, *Heroic Poems*, appeared in 1969). Two volumes remain in the series: Vol. III, in which Mrs Dronke, with the help of Professor Ingeborg Glier, will edit the Sigurðr poems of the Codex Regius (R) in relation to the German Siegfried tradition; and Vol. IV, in which the remaining mythological poems will be co-edited with Dr Clive Tolley (midwife to the present edition). The present volume consists of five mythological poems from the Poetic *Edda* in the following order: *Vǫluspá* (with also a text and brief commentary of *Baldrs draumar* appended), *Rígsþula*, *Vǫlundarkviða*, *Lokasenna* and *Skírnismál*. All poems are drawn from R (AM 2365 4to, *c.*1270–80), with the exception of *Rígsþula* (to be discussed below), and also of *Baldrs draumar*, which is preserved only in AM 748 I 4to (A) (*c.*1300–25), along with six other Eddic poems including the first few lines of the prose prologue of *Vǫlundarkviða* and stanzas 1–27 of *Skírnismál*.

Mrs Dronke includes the five main works in her edition because they 'are among the greatest of Norse poems' and 'all relate in some way to the period from the ninth to the eleventh century, when Norsemen were in most familiar contact with the Irish and the Anglo-Saxons' (Preface, p. vii). Both this western European perspective and the German vantage-point necessary for the forthcoming third volume reveal the tendency of Mrs Dronke's editions of Eddic poems. It is clearly her choice neither to judge the poems primarily in their manuscript circumstances, nor to start here by finding reasons for the copying of four of them in R in late thirteenth-century Iceland, but rather to explore through textual criteria whatever preliterate origin each poem may have had. The subjective order of poems in this series is in keeping with these wider aims.

In *Vǫluspá* ('The Sibyl's Prophecy'), the stylisation of a *séance*, a sibyl reveals to us from her own and other spirits' knowledge the origins and future course of the world. Through a rolling landscape of visionary tableaux, we see the Norse divine society grow by trial and error, until, apparently in an echo of the fall of the year, Loki causes Hǫðr to shoot Baldr and the world crashes to its end in *Ragnarǫk*, a peculiarly Icelandic combination of Armageddon, volcanic

action, meteor-strikes and the Great Flood. Yet this is a heathen poem: a new world is reborn pristine from the sea and Baldr returns to make up with Hǫðr, not long after which the seeress leaves us. Mrs Dronke's text of this poem follows the order of stanzas in R and prints the likely interpolations in smaller type (stanzas (st.) 5/5–10, 10–16 (two catalogues of dwarfs' names) and 30/9–12). Her translation here, as elsewhere in this edition, adheres deftly to the rich texture of the original, often with an alliteration of its own; the pace of the original is preserved, here as elsewhere, by the setting of the translation in parallel half-lines; and the effect is to echo the sublimity of the poet's imagination through the otherwise less charged words of Modern English. For example, 'There stood full-grown, / higher than the plains, / slender and most fair, / the mistletoe. / There formed from that stem, / which was slender-seeming, / a shaft of anguish, perilous: / Hǫðr started shooting' (st. 31/5–8 and 32/1–4).

The homework behind this bright display begins with Mrs Dronke's introduction, which loses no time in facing up to a fundamental problem. Three separate versions of *Vǫluspá* survive: 62 stanzas in R; a shorter version in two leaves within *Hauksbók* (H; AM 544 4to, fols. 20–21, *c.*1330–50); and Snorri's quotation of 28 stanzas and his *précis* of others in parts of *Gylfaginning* (written *c.*1220–30). There is no basis for determining the best text of *Vǫluspá* without achieving an understanding of its structure. At the same time, no conception of the structure is possible without first evaluating the texts. Mrs Dronke therefore follows common sense in stating that 'the two studies, poetical and textual, must develop alongside each other' (p. 25). Some scholars may not be able to accept this twin-track approach, but it works, to the extent that there would never be certainty even if the manuscripts could be judged purely on their own criteria before the edition entered its semantic stage. Mrs Dronke lays out her interpretation of *Vǫluspá* in three sections (with excursus): structure; sequence of ideas; manuscripts. The structure of this poem, firstly, she defines in keeping with the text in R: with a 'grand architecture' of opening and closing sections treating respectively the creation (st. 1–20) and gathering destruction (st. 43–62) of the world; and with a central third (st. 21–42), which appears to be jumbled in the H text, and which Mrs Dronke defines as a progress to Ragnarǫk through allusions to three carefully chosen myths (the Æsir–Vanir cult-war, the giant-builder, and the death and post-mortem of Baldr). There is also the potentially confusing matter of sibylline voices in this poem. In Mrs Dronke's reading, the first speaker (with *ek*, the 'I'-pronoun) teaches us the occult knowledge of past and present, yet reports the news of, and even acts as a channel for, a second voice (with *hón*, the 'she'-pronoun, that of a spirit sibyl from another time) in order to deliver the second sibyl's present and previously experienced visions of the future; both sibyls appear to speak as one (with *ek*) when they announce the fate of Baldr (st. 31/1–4); yet in a striking reversal of roles towards the end of the poem (st. 55/5–6), the first sibyl claims to see further than the second, continuing nonetheless to report the second sibyl's visions of the reborn world beyond Ragnarǫk. A third sibyl, Heiðr, is remembered by the second as being involved in the Æsir–Vanir cult-war (st. 22), but

has no voice in the poem (unless she be identified with the second). A scheme of this kind might strike us as a hopeless muddle. Snorri, who levels the sibylline pronouns into *ek* and their verbal tenses into a standard present, probably thought so. Yet the poem claims to render a *séance*, not the minutes of a committee. We might be surprised by the otherwise different H version of this poem, which, wherever it runs parallel with R, matches its complex alternation of *ek* and *hón* pronouns point for point. Mrs Dronke believes that the poet got to know the topos of mediumistic practice from other Norse sibylline poets. In Section II of the introduction, on the poet's sequence of ideas, Mrs Dronke illuminates the meaning of the poem through four subsections: the sibyl's prologue (st. 1–2); the establishment of the Norse cosmos (st. 3–20, with titans, gods, gold and industry, dwarfs and men, man's relation to the World Tree and his subjection to the decrees of three Norns); the progress towards dissolution and the full impact of Ragnarǫk (st. 21–53; see above); finally, the world's rebirth from the sea followed by a dazzling vision of a heathen heaven and hell (st. 54–62). Section III provides the palaeographical arguments on which most of this reading of *Vǫluspá* relies. First, there is an itemisation and dating of manuscripts. Second, there follows an outline summary of Mrs Dronke's view of this poem's textual history: the oral *Vǫluspá c.*1000; first written text, *R I, *c.*1200; thence *R II, a copy with interpolations (consisting mainly of dwarf-catalogues); thence two separate copies,*H I, *c.*1225 and R, *c.*1270; from *H I, a new copy *H II; thence the H text, *c.*1340. The third part of Section III contains the exposition and analysis of six carefully defined textual problems (I–VI), of which Problem VI, on *Hauksbók*'s effective re-arrangement of R *Vǫluspá* 21–43 with omission of st. 28–33 (the deaths of Baldr and Hǫðr), argues well that the author of *H II was, in Mrs Dronke's words, 'in the unenviable position of having to reconstruct a text of the poem from no more than its beginning and end sequences and a box of unnumbered and incomplete slips for its centre' (p. 83). The fourth and fifth parts of Section III are to do with corrections to the R text and variants for the dwarf-names in *Vǫluspá* 10–16. Section IV is an excursus on the Christian context of *Vǫluspá*, including an invaluable comparison of this work with the Sibylline Oracles of late antique Greek and Latin poetry. Here Mrs Dronke postulates Irish and Anglo-Saxon connections whereby the Icelandic poet, still a heathen, could have known of Christian sibylline literature, and whereby he could have used sermons and apocryphal Christian stories to turn Loki into the Judas of Baldr's sacrifice, and so convert the Norse cosmic cycle into an eschatology more closely resembling that of the Christian Apocalypse.

Rígsþula ('The Rigmarole of Rígr'), the next poem in this edition, survives in effectively 49 stanzas on the two sides of a vellum leaf enclosed by blank paper leaves in Codex Wormianus (*c.*1350), which also contains a text of Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* (a cataloguing text which Mrs Dronke takes to have been the magnet for this poem). The wording of *Rígsþula* is clear, but some of its lines have been confused with others by earlier scribes, and the ending (conjectured here to be 12 stanzas) has plainly disappeared with one or more missing vellum leaves. Mrs Dronke's text, repaired on aesthetic criteria, well

conveys the vigour and social optimism of the original. Rígr, a unique blend of the gods Heimdallr and Óðinn, sets out along the shore, staying three nights in each of three abodes named 'house', 'hall' and 'manor' which belong respectively to Ái and Edda ('Great-grandfather' and 'Great-grandmother'), to Afi and Amma ('Grandfather' and 'Grandmother') and to Faðer and Móðer. In the marital bed between each set of hosts Rígr fathers a son: dark Þræll in the first generation, ruddy Karl in the second, blond Jarl in the third. Not conservative reaction but social (one must avoid the word 'racial') improvement is the corollary of this otherwise conventional ascending scale. Each boy, whether Thrall, Carl or Earl, is born with a physical delineation suggesting his identity with the class which, having married a girl of his own background, he then goes on to engender. Mrs Dronke's translation is effective in bringing out the earthy names of the lowlier children: 'Bawler and Byreboy, / Clump and Clegg' (st. 12), for example, for Þræll's offspring; or 'Husbandman and Householder, / Steepbeard and Squire' (st. 24) for Karl's. Jarl is taught runes by Rígr, who gives the boy his name; in time, Jarl's youngest offspring Konr Ungr ('Young Noblekin', i. e. *konungr* 'king') teaches himself runes, overtakes his father in them and himself receives the name *Rígr* (based on the Irish for 'king'). The poem runs out just as Konr Ungr, now at a loose end and taking shots at birds in a wood, is told by a crow that the Vikings Danr and Danpr have 'more excellent patrimony' (*æðra óðal*) than he does. Is there more social advancement to come? Mrs Dronke speculates that Konr Ungr would renounce the crow's implied incitement to conquer and would go for a royal daughter Jǫrð ('Earth') instead; but there is no way of knowing. The text and translation of *Rígsþula* is followed by an introduction which, in its first section, draws attention to the complexity of this unusual genealogical poem. Three themes are isolated and discussed: the progress of man; the peripatetic guest, as both king and god; the widepread topos of three estates. The long-lasting popularity of *Rígsþula* is shown through the boisterous domestic comedy (its strongest suit), which attests to the loving maintenance of this work over centuries. Mrs Dronke, before analysing the text and metre in the second section, appears to place the refinement of this originally Irish-Norse confection of ancient myths and up-to-date social observation in Anglo-Scandinavian Yorkshire in the early eleventh century (pp. 202–08).

Vǫlundarkviða ('Wayland's Poem'), the third poem in this edition, is a battered but passionate piece of work. Vǫlundr and his two brothers, apparently Lappish huntsmen, chance one day on three swan maidens, marry them and live in ignorant contentment for nine years, until their wives, drawn back to flight by their destiny as migratory birds, fly off without a word. Unlike his brothers, Vǫlundr stays defiantly behind and becomes a craftsman fashioning rings in a lonely bid to lure back his beloved. Into this desolation sneaks the greedy Níðuðr, king of the region, whose warriors follow his commands in chaining Vǫlundr and those of their queen in hamstringing this strangely supernatural figure; all so as to provide the court with treasures. In a remote island smithy, scene of his ensuing labours, Vǫlundr takes revenge for his captivity, first by beheading the king's sons and sending pieces of them, now worked up as

trinkets, back to their parents; then by seducing Bǫðvildr, the king's daughter. At the same time Vǫlundr's recovery of a ring from this girl enables him to fly like a shaman through the air—and out of range of Níðuðr's bowmen once he reveals the truth of his actions to the bereaved but newly encumbered king. The poem ends with a heart-to-heart between father and daughter. As Mrs Dronke points out in Section I of her introduction, the two narratives, swan-maiden and Bǫðvildr-stories, 'confront each other like mirrors'; it may be the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða* who has joined them together. In her text Mrs Dronke sorts out much scribal confusion in nomenclature, while paring her alliterative translation down so as to render the original's succinctness ('Sat on the bear-skin, / counted rings' st. 11), though not in American English ('Let's go and see the rings', for example, for *Gǫngom baug siá*, st. 23). Having swept us through the story in Section I of her introduction, Mrs Dronke discusses in Section II no fewer than nine analogues of this tale, including the swan-maiden's marriage, the smith's captivity and revenge, the smith's escape-flight and the magical ring. Section III gives us a brilliantly written account of the traces and versions of the main Vǫlundr-story, what forms this legend takes and what relationship may be surmised between *Vǫlundarkviða* and the Old English *Deor* (that both derive from the same source, an Anglo-Saxon poem; pp. 276–80). Less convincing, perhaps, in 'Weland as Christian *figura*', is Mrs Dronke's view of the Christian allegorical uses to which Weland could have been put, or of the use by Alfred of his name to render that of 'Fabricius', an ancient paragon of virtue, in the West Saxon translation of Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* (surely Alfred mistook *Fabricius* for 'craftsman' after Latin *faber*?). Yet Mrs Dronke is probably right to see the Weland-story as spreading out from Germany. However, not everyone will agree with her (pp. 287–89) that it was Ohthere, the Norwegian skipper who called on Alfred in the 880s, who brought the Weland-poem from Wessex to Haraldr Finehair's court in Norway, whence it came to Þjóðólfr of Hvinir, who could not otherwise have alluded to Níðuðr in his *Haustlǫng* (*c.*900). Or that it was Ohthere who took Weland to Hálogaland, his home, where a local poet, adding the Lappish colouring, used it as a basis for *Vǫlundarkviða.* These theories are however boldly delineated. Section IV contains Mrs Dronke's reconstruction of this poem's impaired text and anomalous metre; and an excursus traces the surprising influence of *Vǫlundarkviða* through Gräter's 1812 German translation, in Hoffmann's ensuing tale of Cardillac, a Paris goldsmith and nocturnal murderer (*Das Fräulein von Scuderi*), and in Hindemith's later use of this figure in his opera.

Lokasenna, in contrast to *Vǫlundarkviða*, survives in such good shape that its almost bell-like clarity might be used in an argument for dating this poem well inside the Christian period. In her introduction, however, Mrs Dronke avoids the issue, probably on grounds of space, and refers us instead (p. 355, n. 14) to her discussion on the date of *Lokasenna* in her essay 'The Scope of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*' (*Úr Dölum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon Centenary Essays*, ed. Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn, *Leeds Texts and Monographs* n. s. 11, 1989, 93–112). Her alliterative translation of *Lokasenna* manages to keep the colloquialism of the original, varying the registers in such a way as to

convey not only the *chutzpah* of Loki, whose role in this poem is to crash Ægir's party and then insult one god after the other ('Still you intend, Frigg, / I should itemize more / of my malignancies?', st. 28); but also the decorum of Iðunn ('Against Loki I shall not utter / words of opprobrium / inside Ægir's hall', st. 18); Freyja's wry pointedness ('Treacherous is your tongue! / I think for you too in time / it will chant mischance!', st. 31); and Njǫrðr's patrician sense of order ('But this is an outrage, that an emasculate god / has got entry here, / and this fellow's borne babies!', st. 33), a tone which Loki mockingly echoes ('Stop now, Njǫrðr, / keep your proper sense of proportion!', st. 36). Mrs Dronke's introduction, in three brief sections, first presents two analogues from Indian mythology (after Georges Dumézil); then expertly delivers not a *précis* of the poem, as elsewhere, but an explanation of the social need for satire, giving the lie to the post-Christian idea that laughing at one's gods is incompatible with worshipping them ('When Loki mocks the gods, he does not mock their divinity, he mocks the human characteristics they have acquired through the millennia of being handled by human hands', p. 350); and finally, Mrs Dronke cites two instances of popular satire, one the *Passatella* of latterday peasant Lucania, the other the notorious *Syrpuþing* from early eleventh-century Krossavík in Iceland, in order to show the facility of unlearned minds to construct mocking repartee without the help of Latin literature (inevitably, classical models have been suggested for *Lokasenna*). Mrs Dronke's suggestion at least, if not her argument in this volume, is that Loki's verbal sword-play reflects the ribald atmosphere of festivals in late heathen or early Christian Iceland—probably the latter; Loki, before Þórr arrives to eject him, does a good impersonation of a confessor ('such a matter must be mentioned by us / if we are completely / to count our blemishes', st. 52).

Without doubt *Skírnismál* ('Skírnir's Lay') is the most mysterious work to be handled in this edition. In editing the poem at last, Mrs Dronke has deepened her Magnus Olsen-inspired view as published in the J. R. R. Tolkien *Festschrift* of nearly forty years ago ('Art and Tradition in *Skírnismál*', ed. N. Davis and C. L. Wrenn, 1962). When the temperamental god Freyr spies Gerðr, a giantess, in another world, he falls into a passion for her. Freyr then sends Skírnir, an old servant (surely a Leporello to his Don Giovanni), to arrange a meeting, after a conversation which Mrs Dronke counts as 'the subtlest dialogue sequence in Norse comedy' (p. 387). Armed with Freyr's lethal sword and riding the god's horse, Skírnir jumps a ring of fire and presents his errand, including a number of gifts, in order to achieve Gerðr's consent 'that you may say for your part / Freyr is not the most loathsome man living' (st. 19). The girl rejects the offer, but Skírnir threatens her with a runic curse (st. 26–36), one which, should he ever invoke it, would turn her into a sickly but sexually insatiable madwoman, trapped forever as a freak in a three-headed ogre's underground fun-house. Gerðr is persuaded and Skírnir delivers her instructions for a time and place back to Freyr, whose angry complaint in the last stanza about Gerðr's only condition, a nine-day period of abstinence, reverberates beyond the end of the poem. What kind of work do we have here? Given that *Skírnismál* is composed entirely in direct speech, Mrs Dronke must be right to open her introductory

synopsis in Section I with the boldness of a theatre brochure: 'Programme notes and stage directions' (p. 386). *Skírnismál* is effectively a play for the stage, as both Bertha Phillpotts and Terry Gunnell recognised (the latter in a book published unfortunately too late to be fully discussed in this one). Spoilt rage for Freyr, fatalism for Skírnir, spirited defiance from Gerðr: these and other traits of the *dramatis personae* are not the editor's fanciful imaginings, but actors' attitudes invited by the subtleties of *Skírnismál*'s dialogue, all of which Mrs Dronke elucidates in her commentary. Four analogues of the plot are laid out in section II of the introduction. From Norse mythology, there is the mating of sky and earth (new here, and rather hard for me to accept, is the representation of Gerðr as a sea-giantess who 'refuses to rise from the depths' for Freyr; p. 391). Then the Old English *Charm for Unfruitful Land* illustrates a blight on the fields and its remedy. There is the love-spell, from the Bergen runestaves and from other European sources, and fourthly the role of Skírnir ('the sun's ray personified', p. 399). Section III concerns the vexed question of *Skírnismál*'s date, in which Mrs Dronke suggests that it is drama-stimulated 'popular demand that has kept the "old sacred marriage" myth extant for us in mythological, not allegorical, terms' (p. 401). In Mrs Dronke's concluding view, this poem would be of the late tenth century, a work composed orally in heathen Norway, fostered in Iceland and first transcribed along with most other Eddic poems in the twelfth or thirteenth century. Gro Steinsland's theory, that *Skírnismál* was composed to reflect rites of Norwegian kingship in the twelfth century, is thus rejected (Where is the king in this poem? Cf. Steinsland's *Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi*, Oslo, 1991; reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXIV:1 (1994), 27–30); as is, by implication, the recent *Schluss* of Klaus von See, whose committee of editors in Frankfurt have assigned this work to the twelfth or thirteenth century on the somewhat narrow basis of vocabulary statistics (*Skírnismál. Modell eines Edda-Kommentars*, ed. von See, B. La Farge, E. Picard and M.-C. Hess, Heidelberg, 1993; see now the still more recent commentary by von See and others on this and other Eddic poems, reviewed by Peter Orton in the present number of *Saga-Book*). In Section IV, finally, the differences between the R and A texts of *Skírnismál* are properly shown, to the advantage of R, even while Mrs Dronke acknowledges that 'we are perhaps fortunate in having two scribes of such different temperaments to sharpen our approach to the text' (p. 403).

In all, this is an edition of great power and potential influence. There are a few misprints, but although the work will doubtless be judged adversely by some, and is expensive, from now on it is likely that most English-speaking readers of the Poetic *Edda* will wish to take *Edda II* for their authoritative text of *Vǫluspá* and the other poems. For most of us, interpreting the Poetic *Edda* is not an exact science. For Mrs Dronke, who has never claimed to offer more than a guide to the original, the aim in this edition is clearly to honour *Vǫluspá* and other Eddic poems as antique works of art, not to dismiss their meaning as irretrievable or to treat the Poetic *Edda* as a branch of saga-studies. If, as a result, Mrs Dronke's edition is regarded as old-fashioned, a product of the humanism so mistrusted by today's research teams, perhaps it is worth remembering

that her readings are supported by detailed arguments themselves based on an astonishing range of evidence to which she has been led by an instinct sharpened through nearly half a century of study. Given the length and breadth of this experience, there is modesty in the rubric 'A Reading of the Poem in the R Text' with which Mrs Dronke starts off the central section of her introduction to *Vǫluspá*, the greatest and most difficult of these poems (p. 30). Given the great learning of this book, it is unlikely that her achievement will be equalled for some time.

RICHARD NORTH

KOMMENTAR ZU DEN LIEDERN DER EDDA, BD. 2: GÖTTERLIEDER (*Skírnismál*, *Hárbarðsljóð*, *Hymiskviða*, *Lokasenna*, *Þrymskviða*). By KLAUS VON SEE, BEATRICE LA FARGE, EVE PICARD, ILONA PRIEBE and KATJA SCHULZ. *Universitätsverlag C. Winter*. Heidelberg, 1997. 575 pp.

A new commentary on the poetic Edda, of which this is the second volume, has been in progress since 1992 under the sponsorship of the University of Frankfurt. The first volume, *Skírnismál. Modell eines Edda-Kommentars* (1993; reviewed in *Saga-Book*, XXIV:4 (1996), 265–68) contained an experimental commentary on a single text, *Skírnismál*, now superseded by the commentary on that poem in the present volume; but the authors' statement of general aims and methods is not repeated here, so Volume 1 remains indispensable.

As volume succeeds volume, it is to be expected that the authors' accumulating knowledge of the corpus, and the publication of new secondary literature, will manifest themselves in a broadening appreciation of the network of connections among the different poems. Evidence of this can already be seen when we compare this volume's commentary on *Skírnismál* with that of the preceding volume; there are many differences and expansions, for example in §9 of the preliminary commentary (*Einleitungskommentar*), p. 63, where a new section on parallels between *Skírnismál* and *Hyndlolióð* appears.

The Edda poems are linked together by a huge number of such parallels of theme, motif, (named) character and incident, so that the corpus constitutes a commentary on itself, especially when taken with Snorri Sturluson's incorporation, systematisation and clarification of much of its content in his prose Edda. There are, however, some inconsistencies, as well as offshoots into the unknown, which baffle the reader. The instincts of the authors of this commentary are plainly to tie up such loose ends. Their paragraph on the notorious problem in *Skírnismál* represented by Gerðr's reference to her *bróðurbani* (16.6, pp. 94–95)—an anonymous and otherwise completely obscure figure—considers first the suggestion that the term effectively identifies the shepherd whom Skírnir encounters on the border of Giantland as Gerðr's brother and implies that Skírnir has killed him (or is thought to have done so by Gerðr). This interpretation, which depends upon a great deal that is unstated, does not offer strong competition to the alternative view, which the authors seem to prefer, that *bróðurbani* is a much more general term than its first element might imply,

meaning not 'brother's slayer' but 'mortal enemy' (*Todfeind*), or 'arch enemy' (*Erzfeind*). What one misses from the discussion here is the kind of information the reader needs to form an opinion of the merits of this interpretation; space should, I think, have been found to quote and discuss unambiguous examples from elsewhere of the use of *bróðurbani* in this generalised sense. A question of principle is involved here: a commentary should, I believe, aim to offer immediate and substantial assistance to the reader, if possible in the shape of hard facts, or alternatively in the form of an argued case.

There are other places where we find the same inappropriate reticence in presenting specific linguistic information, for example in the commentary (p. 548) on the seeming contradiction in *Þrymskviða*, 15.3–4, where the god Heimdallr is apparently described as one of the Vanir (*vissi hann vel fram, sem vanir aðrir*, possibly 'He could see into the future, like the other Vanir') immediately after he has been called one of the Æsir (15.1–2 *Heimdallr, hvítastr ása*). The problem is well known; it is even identified and discussed (though not at all helpfully) in a note in E. V. Gordon's edition of the poem in *An Introduction to Old Norse*, 2nd rev. ed. by Arnold Taylor (Oxford, 1957), p. 242, where the suggested translation is 'He could see into the future, even as could the Vanir'. The commentary under review agrees with this interpretation, but is not much more informative than Gordon–Taylor on the linguistic basis of the interpretation of *annarr* that is being put forward here; we are told that there are 'other examples of such constructions' which indicate that *sem . . . aðrir* is to be understood in the sense of 'as otherwise the . . .' ('wie sonst die . . .'); but the reader is left to chase up illustrations of this usage in a number of commentaries and glossaries (Gering–Sijmons, Wisén, Kuhn, Fritzner). While one appreciates that questions raised by the texts cannot always be answered in commentary as fully as one might wish, the discussion here does not inspire confidence, not because the case is inherently weak, but because in the absence of actual quotations from other Old Norse texts in support of the suggested interpretation, the reader is forced, unnecessarily, to trust the judgement of the authors.

The discussion and evaluation of the various parallels between the different poems of the poetic Edda calls not only for good judgement but also for a sense of proportion. Most medievalists have at some time faced the problem of deciding whether a parallel is specific enough and sufficiently closely defined to form the basis for conclusions about the literary history of the texts in question. Where do the authors of this commentary draw the line? In the case of *Skírnismál*, §9 of the preliminary commentary, dealing with the position of the poem in literary history (pp. 61–64), identifies *Lokasenna*, *Helgakviða Hiǫrvarðssonar* and *Hyndlolióð* as showing (in their different ways) notable similarities to this poem; and for *Þrymskviða*, §9 (pp. 523–26), *Hymiskviða* and *Rígsþula* are identified as close analogues. No significant parallels between *Skírnismál* and *Þrymskviða* are identified in either section; and yet it is easy to write a joint summary of the two poems which makes it look as though they had a great deal in common. Both deal with an encounter between gods and giants; in both a weapon vital to the gods (Freyr's sword; Þórr's hammer) plays an important part in the story; in both, the god is assisted by a servant acting as

a go-between (Skírnir; Loki) who travels to Giantland after borrowing a magical conveyance from one of the Vanir (Freyr's horse; Freyja's feather coat); both servants encounter a 'gatekeeper' figure sitting on a mound (*Sk.* 11.2 *hirðir, er þú á haugi sitr*; *Þrk.* 6.1 *Þrymr sat á haugi*) on the margins of Iǫtunheimr; and in both poems a marriage deal is struck. The fact that these parallels are not brought out here reveals something about the emphasis of this commentary which is partly a reflection of a special feature of the Edda corpus: persons and places are almost always given names in these poems, and it is these names, with the identities and locations to which they are attached, which inevitably suggest themselves as the skeleton of any Edda commentary. An encyclopedic, content-based perspective on the material becomes almost inevitable, pushing structural and thematic parallels of the kind I have mentioned out of the frame; but this tendency is reinforced by the authors' determination, expressed rather forcefully in Volume 1 (p. 10), to place the extant poems in the times and places that produced them, and to eschew structuralist or other methods of reconstructing whatever archaic versions may lie behind them.

There are other more obvious drawbacks to this general neglect of the Edda poems' past. One is that the commentary will probably find no room for purely thematic or stylistic parallels with other corpora of Old Germanic poetry which might have important literary-historical implications. For example, I notice what might be called a 'jewel in the crown' motif in both *Þrymskviða* and the Old English poem *The Husband's Message* (see G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, eds, *The Exeter Book*, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, III (New York and London, 1936), 227). In st. 23 of the Norse poem, Þrymr surveys his agricultural and material wealth with a complacent eye: his gold-horned cows, black oxen and an abundance of jewels (*meiðma*) and other precious trinkets (*menia*); the only thing he feels he lacks is Freyja's company (*einnar mér Freyio / ávant þikkir*). Compare this with *The Husband's Message* 44–47, in which an Anglo-Saxon nobleman, having achieved prosperity in exile, now needs only the company of his wife—possibly fiancée—to complete his happiness: *nis him wilna gad, / ne meara ne maðma ne meododreama, / ænges ofer eorþan earlgestreona, / þeodnes dohtor, gif he þin beneah*, 'He is not lacking in pleasures, nor in horses nor treasures nor festive joys, nor in any of the noble treasures on earth, prince's daughter, if he possess you.' It would be interesting to see an assessment of the significance of such parallels between the two corpora, especially in view of the evidence presented here of loanwords from Old English used by the Edda poets (see, for example, §8(c), p. 59).

It would, of course, be possible to find criticisms of any work of this scope and ambition. This is a stimulating book, and the learning, energy, thoroughness and good sense of the authors is apparent on every page. The editing and production of this volume matches the high standard set in the first. I noticed some overlap between the coverage of the General Bibliography at the front of the book and the various §1(b) entries (works on particular poems); for example, A. G. Van Hamel's 1932 *Neophilologus* article and Stephen A. Mitchell's 1983 *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* article appear not only in the General Bibliography (pp. 25, 33) but also in the §1(b) bibliography of works devoted to

Skírnismál (p. 46). This causes no one any inconvenience, but is presumably an oversight. Finally I, for one, would be grateful if the authors of subsequent volumes reverted to the practice, established in Volume 1 but here abandoned, of italicising the abbreviated titles of individual Edda poems, so that cross-references between texts are more conspicuous on the page.

PETER ORTON

DIALOGUES WITH THE VIKING AGE: NARRATION AND REPRESENTATION IN THE SAGAS OF THE ICELANDERS. By VÉSTEINN ÓLASON. Translated by ANDREW WAWN. *Heimskringla, Mál og Menning Academic Division.* Reykjavík, 1998. 297 pp.

An analysis of the *Íslendingasögur* that focuses squarely on the literary accomplishments of the saga authors, and one that is also offered in the English language, has not been widely available since Peter Hallberg's *The Icelandic Saga* of 1962. In this sense, and even in this case, there is little with which to compare Vésteinn Ólason's *Dialogues with the Viking Age.* Unlike Theodore Andersson's *The Icelandic Family Saga* (1967) or Jesse Byock's *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (1982), *Dialogues* is less concerned with finding the structural heart of the *Íslendingasögur* and more with demonstrating the vast range of narrative possibilities that the genre accommodates. Multiformity in uniformity is, in a key sense, Vésteinn's chief finding and in the process of revealing this we are introduced, perhaps for the first time for many English readers, to a great many sagas that are often neglected, or set on the periphery of the well-worked canon. Few, one might reasonably suspect, will had have the opportunity of reading an analysis of, for example, *Valla-Ljóts saga* or *Ljósvetninga saga* presented in terms of regional politics, narrative style and abiding saga themes, and juxtaposed with analyses of the better known classics. *Dialogues* not only provides this instructive balancing of critical attention, but does so with a keenly informed sense of medieval Icelandic history and of contemporary critical debate.

The central proposition behind *Dialogues with the Viking Age* is, as the book's English title suggests, that our readings of the sagas are filtered through a sequence of dialogues. Broadly speaking, these are between the modern age and the thirteenth century, and the thirteenth century and the tenth. As such, the way in which we derive meanings and satisfaction from the *Íslendingasögur* is predicated on an imaginative reconstruction of a dialogue one step removed from us—a reconstruction which is always going to be partial. Motivating the thirteenth-century recovery or reinvention of the *söguöld* is, says Vésteinn, a sense of loss. This loss, he says, encompasses the loss of a whole world and is central to the saga author's anxious awareness of a threatened or vanished independence. The aim of *Dialogues* is to reveal the many ways that this grief can be expressed in the transformations of a widespread cultural anxiety into literary art.

The book divides into four parts. Part 1, Introduction, surveys the historical and cultural background to medieval Icelandic literary production. Although

this chapter is expressly aimed at those relatively new to the sagas, many experienced scholars will find it a useful guide, not least for its measured and sensible approach to complex areas. The essence of Vésteinn's argument begins to emerge in Part 2, Narrative and Narrative Art. Through a lengthy analysis of saga scenes and plots, the diversity of forms among the *Íslendingasögur* is revealed both in terms of the individual artistry of saga authors and their common currency of narrative formulae and established traditions. It is thus that the authorial voice is located as one that is discreetly deployed in the unfolding of the saga narrative, invariably characterised by 'laconic coolness' but also precociously suggestive of much later novelistic tendencies toward omniscience and audience manipulation. This latter tendency is regarded as a marker of a developing literary maturity among saga authors, reaching a high point as the thirteenth century closes but, with the exception of *Grettis saga*, beginning to lose its anthropocentric focus as the more freely imaginative products of the fourteenth century become characteristic.

This classificatory strand to Vésteinn's argument is further developed in Part 3, Saga Worlds. With the collapse of the Commonwealth, the saga author becomes increasingly concerned to analyse the repositioning of Icelandic society and the new ethical demands it brings to bear upon the individual. As equally preoccupied with honour as the sagas of the Commonwealth era, the post-independence saga seeks to question this traditional value in terms of Christian morality and the secular pursuits and operations of power and social control. Illustrating this gradual shift in perspective is the mid thirteenth-century *Egils saga*, which 'valorises the free farmer-chieftain', and the post-independence *Njáls saga*, which exhibits a 'nostalgia' for the past but simultaneously looks for an accommodation of heroic values in the present.

Part 4, The Sagas in the World, draws together these insights against the broad background of saga reception and criticism. Vésteinn's clear point here is that though the sagas may resemble other genres, both of the medieval and the modern worlds, they are in fact *sui generis*. Those who seek to find a key to understanding them in terms of modern prescriptions will have short-lived success, and those who give priority to literary archetypes, moralities, allegories or other hidden codes will undervalue the human dramas and the crux of the matter of saga narrative.

This is a valuable contribution to saga scholarship and is bound to become a key text in the evaluation of the merits of the *Íslendingasögur*, not least for its clarity of expression, the impressive range of material covered and the helpful and thoroughly informed endnotes drawing attention to the weft and warp of scholarly debate. The clean prose of Andrew Wawn's English translation is a fitting adjunct to Vésteinn's understated erudition and mature judgement as a literary critic.

MARTIN ARNOLD

GUÐAMJÖÐUR OG ARNARLEIR: SAFN RITGERÐA UM EDDULIST. Edited by SVERRIR TÓMASSON. *Háskólaútgáfan.* Reykjavík, 1996. xii + 348 pp.

This enterprising collection of essays charts the post-medieval reception of Eddic prose and poetry in Iceland. The origins of the collection can be traced to an international collaborative project, initiated by Lars Lonnröth in 1989, which sought to investigate responses to Eddic poetry and prose in post-medieval Scandinavia. The geographical scope of this investigation was later extended to include France, Germany and Britain, and essays relating to those and other countries appeared in another volume arising from the same project: Andrew Wawn (ed.), *The Post-Medieval Reception of Edda and Saga* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, 1994), reviewed by Robert Kellogg in *Saga-Book* XXIV:5 (1997) 376–79. (The papers in Else Roesdahl and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (eds), *The Waking of Angantýr: The Scandinavian Past in Norse Culture* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1996), offer interesting perspectives on the same subject area.) Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Norse Muse in Britain 1750–1820* (Trieste: Edizioni Parnaso, 1998) is the most recent volume whose origins can be traced to the Lönnroth project.

The present volume serves not only to survey the Icelandic territory bordering on that investigated by Anthony Faulkes in his study of Magnús Ólafsson's *Laufás Edda* in *Two Versions of Snorra Edda from the 17th Century* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit 13–14, 2 vols, 1977–79), and in *Magnúsarkver: The Writings of Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit 40, 1993), but also to examine Enlightenment- and Romantic-Age responses. Seven of the nine papers concentrate on the period 1600–1900, and are prefaced by the editor's discussion of reception of *Snorra Edda* from the oldest extant fourteenth-century manuscripts down to the *Laufás Edda.* A brief endnote points to the continuity of Icelandic poetic engagement with Eddic prosodic traditions in the twentieth century. The volume concludes with short (and in some cases rather rough-hewn) English summaries of the articles.

Sverrir Tómasson concludes his discussion of the *Laufás Edda* as a pioneering handbook for poets in Iceland by reflecting on the work's international reception. Responding to foreign interest in Eddic lore and learning, Magnús translated his *Edda* into Latin and Danish whilst neverthleless asserting its untranslatability. Sverrir wryly notes (pp. 86–87) the continuing force of this paradox in modern Iceland, amongst those who believe that foreign readers should familiarise themselves with traditional Icelandic poetic art, but who also claim that such knowledge is ultimately beyond the grasp of all but native initiates. In 'Eddulist og barokk í íslenskum kveðskap á 17. öld', Margrét Eggertsdóttir reveals how traditions of Eddic prosody and diction nourished seventeenth-century Icelandic poets as they developed a distinctively Icelandic baroque style in sacred and secular verse. Bergljót Kristjánsdóttir shows how the poet Steinunn Finnsdóttir (*c.*1640–1710) responded to native medieval poetic tradition every bit as imaginatively and resourcefully as her male counterparts. Steinunn was one of just fifteen 'menntakonur' listed by Jón Grunnvíkingur in his early eighteenth-century survey of Icelandic literary

history alongside three hundred scholarly men. Steinunn's *rímur*, which give expression to her vision of a society more attentive to the role of women, draw on both oral and written Eddic tradition. Viðar Hreinsson's 'Tvær heimsmyndir á 17. öld. Snorra Edda í túlkun Jóns Guðmundssonar lærða (1574–1658)' draws attention to a singular *Snorra Edda* scholar whose insights are far removed from the traditions of forensic and systematic investigation encouraged in seventeenth-century European academies. Outlawed early in his life for witchcraft, opposed in a University of Copenhagen appeal case by the learned Ole Worm, Jón lærði Guðmundsson made the *Edda* his own, locating its figures and features within his own world-view. This sought to reconcile the old northern gods with biblical history, Icelandic geography and local folklore. Like some fleet-footed Swedenborgian allegorist he finds parallels between moral decay in pre-Ragnarök Ásgarðr and post-Reformation Iceland. With the publication of Einar G. Pétursson's *Eddurit Jóns Guðmundssonar lærða* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Rit 46, 2 vols 1998), the time has surely come for Icelanders and foreign scholars alike to learn more about the scholarship of Jón lærði. In a crisply written essay 'Varðhaldsenglar Eddu: Eddufræði í skáldskap og bókmenntaumræðu á upplýsingaröld', Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir considers the ways in which late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Icelandic poets, increasingly influenced by Herderian and Ossianic romanticism, responded to Eddic tradition, in preface and poem alike, in the light of the dizzying variety of intellectual currents swirling around them: academic and folkloristic, written and oral, native and foreign, conservative and revolutionary, nationalist and internationalist, Graeco-Roman and Old Northern. Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson's two essays, on the Fjölnismenn and on Benedikt Sveinbjarnarson Gröndal, develop this theme illuminatingly. We are shown how Eddic tradition helped to tune the voices of nineteenth-century Icelandic poets of nature and nationalism. The initation ceremony for new students at the Bessastaðaskóli in 1828 concluded when, amidst the flickering candles and oil lamps, a senior student broke the portentous silence to pronounce the fateful words 'Óðinn sé með yður'. The Eddic enthusiasms of teachers such as Sveinbjörn Egilsson helped to ensure that the northern divinities were indeed constant reference points for Jónas Hallgrímsson, Tómas Sæmundsson, Konráð Gíslason and their fellows for the rest of their literary lives, albeit that *Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða* steadily assumed more importance than that of Snorri.

Unlike European intellectuals in post-medieval times, for whom the Eddas offered exciting access into a seductively unfamiliar world, Icelanders living at the same time were able to engage with a well-cultivated native tradition. In a moment of sublime self-deception, the seventeenth-century poet Kolbeinn Grímsson claimed that 'Edda hefur mér aldrei kennt / orða snilld né kvæða mennt' (286). The essays assembled in this handsomely produced paperback volume show how few post-medieval Icelandic writers and scholars could put their hands on their hearts and make such a claim.

ANDREW WAWN

THE NORN LANGUAGE OF ORKNEY AND SHETLAND. By MICHAEL P. BARNES. *The Shetland Times Press.* Lerwick, 1998. xiii + 58 pp.

One would expect a book on Norn by Michael Barnes to be authoritative and interesting, and this volume is both. Though the term 'Norn' is sometimes taken in a broad sense, covering any form of speech of Scandinavian origin spoken anywhere in the north of Scotland, including the Western Isles and Caithness, it is here defined (as the title makes clear and as is indeed more usual) more narrowly, being restricted to the form that the Norse language took in the Northern Isles.

The greater part of the book is devoted to the history of Norn. Our attention is very fairly drawn to the uncertainties that prevail both as to the precise period of its introduction to the Isles and as to the exact provenance of the earliest Scandinavian settlers. Barnes favours a date of around 800 AD for the arrival of the first of these and thinks that 'the safest, if most conservative, conclusion is that the vast majority of the settlers came from Western Norway', though he sees no good cause to be more specific than that. Even more obscure is the question of who the previous inhabitants of the islands were and what happened to them. Barnes accepts the view that they were probably Picts and cautiously concludes that, whatever the reasons, 'Scandinavian culture and language appear to have become totally dominant by the middle of the eleventh century'.

A section on 'The Decline of Norn' surveys the written remains, both runic inscriptions and documents in the roman alphabet, and evaluates their significance. In particular, to what extent is it likely (or possible) that the language thereof was subject to outside influences, perhaps attributable in some cases to islanders who had had their scribal training in Norway, or even to Norwegians? The possibility of some (albeit slight) Scots influence cannot be entirely excluded either.

Such knowledge as we have of spoken Norn also depends (inevitably, in the circumstances) on written sources, in the shape of two versions of the Lord's Prayer, one ballad (the so-called *Hildina* ballad, after the name of its principal character), a word-list of thirty items, and a few 'isolated snatches' that were still remembered at a time when the language as such was no longer spoken. The interpretation of these texts bristles with problems, not the least of which is the fact that the bulk of this evidence derives from one far from ideal source, having been collected by one man, George Low, who knew neither Norn nor any other Scandinavian language, on the occasion of his brief visit in 1774 to Foula, the westernmost and most remote of the Shetland Isles. However, the other extant fragments of Norn have a particular evidential value in that, being of non-Foula provenance, they provide 'a corrective to the impression given by Low's material from Foula'. Further evidence can, of course, be extracted from place-names and surviving Norn lexical elements in the Scots dialects of Orkney and, even more so, Shetland.

While accepting that the 'ultimate cause' of the decline and demise of Norn was the immigration of large numbers of Scots speakers, Barnes is prudently sceptical about the views of those who, given the lack of evidence as to the

course of its decline, have tended to 'fill the vacuum of ignorance with educated guesswork'. An assessment of three rival interpretations of the death of Norn leads him to the view that some speakers of the language may well have survived until about 1750 in parts of Orkney and perhaps even as late as the end of the eighteenth century in Shetland.

The paucity of available linguistic material is such as to rule out any full treatment of the phonological or grammatical structure of Norn. However, indications as to some of its principal characteristics are incorporated here and there throughout the book.

A most useful feature of this volume is a selection of annotated texts (some of them illustrated by photographs). These include runic inscriptions, two Norwegian documents (of 1299 and 1369 respectively) and one in Danish (dated 1560), all of which exhibit some insular features, together with the Orkney version of the Lord's Prayer, extracts from the *Hildina* ballad, and a variety of conversational phrases and other fragments.

All in all, then, we have here a comprehensive, balanced and lucidly expressed survey of Norn and one which will be accessible to the general reader as well as to the scholar.

GLANVILLE PRICE

DUDO OF ST. QUENTIN: HISTORY OF THE NORMANS. Translated with Introduction and Notes by ERIC CHRISTIANSEN. *Boydell and Brewer*. Woodbridge, 1998. xxxvii + 260 pp.

Dudo's *History* is often described as the principal early source for the medieval duchy of Normandy. In one sense of course it is: begun allegedly at the request of Duke Richard I (died 996) and completed by *c.*1020, it purports to describe the origins of the Scandinavians who settled in Normandy in the early tenth century and the rule of the first three dukes. Yet what we have, in fact, is a piece of extremely learned, not to say remarkably pretentious, literary fiction. Most of what Dudo wrote was either his own invention or the product of skilful plagiarisation or reworking of other events. Thus almost all of the campaigns ascribed to Rollo, the alleged founder of Normandy, took place a generation before his arrival in Francia, and even the account of his marriage to a daughter of Charles the Simple was actually derived from that of another Viking, Godefrid, with a daughter of Lothar II in 882. The overall structure of the work is highly schematic, with the virtues of Rollo being contrasted with the misdeeds of his precursor Hasting, and the wisdom and good sense of Richard I, whose virtues are repeatedly praised in the most extravagant terms, with the naivety and misguided piety of his father (and Rollo's son) William Longsword—of which unworldliness we have, needless to say, no independent evidence. Dudo consistently exaggerated the significance and power of the tenth-century Normans, and above all the identity of Normandy as a unified political structure, whereas it is unlikely that either Rollo or William ever controlled much more than the Seine valley, and, in William's case, the Pays de Caux also.

Dudo's contention that Richard I was 'governing the realm of Normandy like a king, subject to none but God alone' (ch. 93) was very different from the perception of his Frankish contemporaries, to whom the Count of Rouen (the ducal title was an eleventh-century innovation) was neither a very important, nor necessarily an independent, player in the complicated politics of the late-Carolingian French kingdom.

Given the complexities of Dudo's Latin, and especially that of the numerous poems which decorate the work, as well as the rarity of Jules Lair's edition of 1865 (the only 'modern' one available), Eric Christiansen's translation is especially welcome. This is the more so because of his very full annotation, valuable not just for its examination of the historical background but also for its analysis of the sources used (or rather plagiarised) and the scansion of the poetry—to which medieval Latinists will be much indebted. But on the significance of the text itself as a source for the Scandinavian settlement of Francia, Christiansen is trenchant. While Steenstrup, Eleanor Searle and others have seen Dudo as drawing upon early Scandinavian oral material which prefigures the sagas, he brusquely dismisses the 'saga red herring'. If Dudo's work played a role in Scandinavian and Norman legend, it was as a source rather than a means of transmission (one may note ch. 97 for the origin of the 'feigned flight' motif later to be associated with the Battle of Hastings). Certainly very little of what he recounted of the early history of Normandy can be corroborated from other contemporary writers; all that Dudo tells us of Rollo that may be historical 'fact' is the grant of the Lower Seine area by Charles the Simple and his defeat near Chartres *c.*910, and his version of these events is so embroidered as to be largely fiction. Even what little we know of Ragnald (the form in which his name was there given) from Flodoard of Rheims, namely his attacks into the Vermandois in 923–25, is missing from Dudo's account.

The last, and longest, book of Dudo's *History*, dealing with the rule of Richard I, is more problematic, and some historians have claimed to uncover undercurrents of 'reality' amid Dudo's florid account of the tribulations of Normandy during Richard's youth and his disputes with the last Carolingian kings and Duke Hugh the Great. Can we, for example, identify from Dudo a second wave of Norse settlement in the 960's—marked by Richard's marriage to Gunnor, from whose children the later ducal kin and (if we believe the genealogies given in the twelfth century by Robert of Torigni) several of the most important aristocratic families in the duchy were descended? Was Scandinavian speech still the norm in Bayeux when the Norse inhabitants of Rouen had become sufficiently acculturised to be primarily French-speaking? Yet even with regard to this later part of the text we must be cautious. For example, place-name evidence suggests that the Bessin was very thinly settled by Scandinavians, which must make us sceptical about Dudo's claims for the Norse language at Bayeux. Although there was some historical basis for the events recounted in Book IV (thus the German invasion of 946 and the Scandinavian attacks on Spain in the 960's are independently attested), Christiansen's notes show very clearly how Dudo manipulated whatever truth there may have been in his account, both on the basis of his literary sources, notably the *Aeneid*, and

in the skilful reworking of other more contemporary history to embroider the Norman story. Christiansen remains resolutely sceptical as to the alleged Scandinavian survivals in Dudo's account and later tenth-century Normandy, pouring scorn, for example, on the idea that Dudo can be cited to show Duke Richard receiving a Norse funeral. His work, along with that of Leah Shopkow, provides a very convincing case for Dudo the literary inventor, not Dudo the historian. (Shopkow goes so far as to suggest that the 'Bernard the Dane' who plays such a prominent role under William Longsword and in the minority of Richard I never existed at all, and was purely a creation of the author.) Christiansen remains firmly in the critical tradition of Henri Prentout, and against those such as Steenstrup, and (more recently) Breese, Searle and (to some extent) van Houts who have sought to disentangle the Scandinavian origins of the later duchy from Dudo's account. (For references, see Christiansen, pp. 238–48.)

But dubious as Dudo may be as an historical source (in the strictest sense) for early tenth-century Normandy, his work is nonetheless very significant. Dudo himself was, it should be remembered, not a Norman but from the Vermandois; an outsider brought in to create a history for the early eleventh-century duchy, a history which did not really exist, and which thus needed to be invented—a 'charter myth' to legitimise a duchy which was in the process of developing, politically, economically and territorially, *after* 1000. Dudo did this within the intellectual parameters of the late Carolingian world. Christiansen's exhaustive study of his sources shows just how far he was indebted, not just to Vergil (the obvious classical model for a 'charter myth'), and to late-Antique theories of versification, but also to Carolingian hagiography, especially the Lives of Eligius of Noyon and Lambert of Liège, and the work of Heiric of Auxerre, as well as to Erigena and other ninth-century theologians. The significance of Dudo's *History* to the Scandinavian diaspora may thus be very limited, but its importance as a testimony to the intellectual tradition of early medieval Francia is manifest.

However, while Christiansen's scholarly apparatus puts us in his debt, some criticism of his publishers is in order. Reading this text is made infinitely more difficult by the lengthy footnotes being placed at the end of the book rather than at the foot of the page; a practice that is, given modern technology, surely no longer justifiable on grounds either of editorial convenience or of cost.

G. A. Loud

ENGLISH-NORWEGIAN–NORWEGIAN-ENGLISH DICTIONARY OF ARCHAEOLOGY. By Elizabeth S. Seeberg. *Department of Archaeology, Numismatics and History of Art, University of Oslo.* 2nd and revised edition. Oslo, 1993. 268 pp.

The first edition of this archaeological dictionary was published in 1988, and this revised edition includes 'certain changes, additions and corrections', of which Norwegian Stone-Age nomenclature and the revised subdivision of the Neolithic period are mentioned in particular. The purpose of the revised dictionary remains the same as its predecessor's, providing a guide to 'The archaeo-

logical terminology of Great Britain and the North up to and including the Anglo-Saxon period and the Viking Age', particularly for Scandinavian archaeologists writing in English. However, Seeberg has also included medieval church terminology, 'an extremely important aspect of Norwegian archaeology', and she also expresses the hope that 'English archaeologists reading Norwegian literature may find the book useful'.

The bulk of the book (pp. 7–212) is an alphabetical list of English archaeological terms, with their Norwegian equivalents, and a brief definition of the term (in English). To give a typical entry as an example:

E	pot boiler, cooking stone	A piece of stone or flint heated in the fire and
N	kokestein	dropped into the pot containing food to be cooked.

The rest of the book (pp. 213–68) is an alphabetical list of the Norwegian equivalents with page references back to the list of English definitions. As the Norwegian terms in this list of definitions are not arranged alphabetically, it can take a moment or two to find the relevant item, but the clear and well-spaced layout of the dictionary means that this is generally not a problem.

The order of the dictionary, with English terms first and Norwegian second, is perhaps rather surprising given the dictionary's apparent emphasis on Scandinavian archaeologists *writing* in English; the layout instead rather suggests an audience of Scandinavian archaeologists *reading* English. Indeed, given the fact that the language of the dictionary is English, it might have been more appropriate to aim the work at an audience of English archaeologists working on Scandinavian archaeology. In some places, the text appears to be clearly directed to an English audience. For example:

E	brooch	Of the two N terms given here, the less commonly used,
N	spenne, brosje	*brosje*, should perhaps be preferred to the more common *spenne*, which also means buckle.

Seeberg emphasises that the purpose of her dictionary is to provide brief definitions of terms to avoid the confusion caused by using ordinary dictionaries and also to assist the interested amateur, who may be bewildered by technical terms. In this aim, she is generally successful, writing clearly and concisely, and also pointing out common mistranslations and misuses of archaeological terms. In some places, particularly concerning English terms that have recently come into use, Norwegian equivalents are not supplied, as these have not yet been agreed upon by archaeologists. Seeberg is careful to emphasise that the 'purpose of a dictionary is to record and define correct terms, and to point out incorrect ones in use. The onus of arriving at sound translations of newly established terms must rest on the archaeologist.' However, the definitions supplied with the untranslated words assist the would-be translator. Seeberg's own background is in the translation of archaeological literature, and this dictionary will perhaps be most useful to people involved in similar work, but it also provides an extremely useful work of reference for archaeologists and for scholars from other disciplines reading archaeological literature.

KATHERINE HOLMAN

ICELAND. Revised Edition. FRANCIS R. MCBRIDE, compiler. *The World Bibliographical Series*, vol. 37. *Clio Press.* Oxford, Santa Barbara, Denver, 1996. xxvii + 345 pp.

As its title indicates, this is the revised edition of the 37th volume in an international series of bibliographies which, up to 1996, had reached 189 volumes, covering countries from Alaska to Zimbabwe and even cities like Berlin and London. The previous edition was prepared by John J. Horton and was published in 1983 (hereinafter 'Horton'). The present one contains 'something old and something new', a number of entries being transferred from the earlier edition to the new one. It is difficult to see the benefit of such a procedure as opposed to a straight supplement. Readers will still have to use the earlier edition and, on McBride's own admission, the omission of material to be found in Horton would have enabled him to add nearly 200 items to the present volume. Such a procedure could also raise awkward questions as to the criteria employed in making the selection of what material to retain. It is sad to see, for instance, that the Foote/Wilson classic *The Viking Achievement* was not selected for a repeat outing.

The present edition contains 970 entries (compared with 971 in Horton) covering all aspects of Icelandic life and culture, including arts, sciences, politics, education, food and drink, sport, the media. Each entry is accompanied by a short commentary—at times learned, at times witty, at times ironic—with useful references to other relevant material, which would bring the total number of items cited well into four figures. There are three indexes—by author, title and subject. This represents an improvement on Horton, who has but one index covering all three approaches. It is useful to have persons as authors and persons as subjects separated. Icelanders are, again, entered under patronymics. There is a map of Iceland at the end and a short, informative introduction on recent developments in the country.

As McBride remarks in his introduction the 'aim of this bibliography is to provide guidance . . . to the English-speaking reader who has a serious interest in Iceland but who is not seeking specialized highly technical information'. This, of course, to some extent limits the usefulness of the bibliography to many of the readers of *Saga-Book.* For the enquiring lay reader the most useful sections would, I imagine, be 'Literature, Old Icelandic', items nos 648–724; 'History'—General, nos 225–32, and Medieval, nos 233–62 (subdivided into the periods 800–1100 and 870–1262); 'Language'—Old Norse, nos 343–49, and Dictionaries, nos 375–82 (though most of the latter are Modern Icelandic); 'Archaeology', nos 213–24; 'Religion, pre-Christian', nos 383–95 (with some material in the later period, nos 396–409). The old laws are dealt with in nos 471–74 (these were subsumed under more general headings in Horton). Readers could extend their searches, for example, to 'Museum and Library Services', nos 907–15, for material on special collections, and 'Catalogues and Bibliographies', nos 954–70. These remarks presuppose that Viking Society members are primarily interested in medieval Iceland, but there is, as I have hinted, much more information contained in this work for those wishing to learn about the modern land and its people. The list of travel accounts is

particularly interesting, including one, in the modern section, by an Amerindian (no. 172), though most of the material in the early section can be found in Horton. It might be of value to note that William Morris's *Journals of Travels in Iceland* (no. 152) has recently (1996) been reprinted by Mare's Nest, of London, with an introduction by Magnus Magnusson.

McBride states, in his introduction, that he hopes that 'other beneficiaries' would be librarians. Unluckily, they would not be helped by the statement that *Saga-Book* is a quarterly journal, when it is truly an annual (save for a brief period between 1987 and 1995 when two parts were issued for each year). To be fair, he has been misled (like many a librarian) by *Saga-Book*'s quirky habit of breaking its volumes down into parts (usually four). At least he has removed the misleading reference to the International Saga Conference from the entry in Horton.

It is good to see that sport, as I mentioned above, has not been ignored in these bibliographies. In fact, the section has now grown from 13 items to 22 (nos 876–97). One item which could be added to future editions is *Iceland*, compiled and produced by Alexander D. I. Graham, in the *European League and Club Histories* series, distributed by Soccer Books Ltd, of Cleethorpes. The present writer's copy covers 1912–94, but it has now been updated to 1998, according to the latest catalogue.

Now for the bad news. I do not think that Magnus Magnusson, as a 'transplanted Icelander' (see no. 863), ever uses the accents in his name. In fairness to McBride, this is a hangover from Horton, as is 'Eiríkur [for Eiríkr] Magnússon'. Item no. 424, however, is wrongly indexed under Magnus Magnusson; the author is Magnús S. Magnússon. Harald Sigurðsson and Haraldur Sigurðsson, in the author index, are the same person and should be indexed under the latter form. Sólrún B. Jensdóttir Harðarson and Sólrún B. Jensdóttir are identical too. She seems to use the latter form of her name now. (The forename Sólrún has lost its accent on the vowel of the final syllable in no. 279.) *Landnámabók* appears as *Landnamábók* in no. 686 and *Riddarasögur* as *Riddarsögur* in both no. 706 and in the subject index, but is given in its correct form in no. 962. Three remarks on McBride's commentaries: in no. 386 he seems to be under the impression that Snorri wrote the Eddic poems; 'Barðar's settling' in no. 677 appears to contain a double genitive (the eponymous hero's name is Bárðr); in no. 147 'exchange' is misprinted as 'exhange'. Another hangover from Horton is the loss of the pun in the title of Mary McCririck's book on Iceland (no. 18), which should read 'The Icelanders and their *Ísland*' (not 'island' as in the text).

There are a number of misfilings in the various indexes. This is understandable and by no means disastrous. Where indexes are arranged in columns, the reader's eye, as it goes down, will probably still catch the required items. It would be invidious to list all such misfilings, but they include Éilís Ní Dhuibhne-Almqvist cited in the garbled form 'Duhibhne-Almqvist, Ellis Ní'. She ought, in any case, to be indexed under Ní, which is the female form of Ó/Mac. The entry under 'Prince of Wales (HRH)' (no. 217) should, I think, be expanded to 'Charles, Prince of Wales (HRH)' to distinguish him from other past (and future) Princes of Wales. Ásta Sigurðardóttir's forename is misprinted as

'Astu'. In the title index, Thorstein Mansion-Might appears as 'Thortein Mansion Might'; *Tölfræði handbók* should be one word; and *The Waking of Angantýr* has the wrong accent on the vowel of the final syllable. Finally, in the subject index, 'Banking' has been repeated. The first entry is the rogue one as it contains one (wrong) entry only. There is one entry only under 'Bibliography', though the relevant section for 'Catalogues and Bibliographies' will reveal a number more. The entry, in any case, seems somewhat redundant, as there is a section devoted to the subject, where readers can look without using a separate index. Under 'Edda', nos 666 and 681 belong more properly to the subheading 'Poetic Edda'. Louis MacNeice appears as 'MacNiece' in the subject index, but is correctly spelt in the author index and in no. 166.

In this review I have tried to concentrate on the material which I feel would be most relevant to readers of this journal. There is, however, as I have indicated, a great deal more to the bibliography than this, including much material on modern Icelandic literature, not least children's books; also art, architecture and music; women (in both medieval and modern times); politics; and a wide coverage of the sciences. Within its limits, and notwithstanding assorted blips of various kinds, I would say that it provides, along with the earlier Horton volume, a very useful and comprehensive guide to Iceland for the general reader. It is a pity that it was not published as a supplement to Horton, rather than as a 'new edition'. This would have allowed of a much more comprehensive coverage.

J. A. B. Townsend

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DRENGS AND THEGNS AGAIN

By MARTIN SYRETT

IT HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNISED that Anglo-Danish relations played a significant role in the development of various administrative institutions in both England and Denmark during the second half of the Viking Age (*c*.900–1050). That the Scandinavian settlers in the Danelaw brought with them their own customs and exerted a major influence on local administrative units is clear from vocabulary alone. The judicial unit known as the 'wapentake' (Old English *wæpengetæc*) derives its name from Old Norse *vápnatak*, probably referring to the flourishing of weapons as part of the proceedings of the Scandinavian 'thing' assemblies. Scandinavian influence has also been mooted in the case of the 'soke', although here less of a consensus has been reached since the Scandinavian evidence for the existence of the defined *sókn* unit is unclear (Jørgensen 1980, 33–34). Nevertheless, the scale of the Norse settlement in England clearly had huge ramifications for the development of legal and administrative institutions in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Any influence working in the opposite direction from England to Scandinavia is less easy to define before the end of the tenth century. It is natural to imagine that there must have been some flow of ideas east across the North Sea, but most of the indicators left to us point to the introduction of religious rather than secular impulses (Abrams 1995). Not until the first half of the eleventh century, and especially the reign of Cnut (1016–35), do we find the clearest evidence of English secular institutions making an impact on Scandinavian society. However, while it would be possible to argue that Cnut's joint reign over both England and Denmark gave rise to the most obvious mechanisms whereby organs of royal government could have been transplanted into Scandinavia, there are factors which argue against this notion.

Firstly, it is only really in the realms of coinage and the church that serious innovations derived from English models can be picked out in Cnut's Denmark (Lund 1994), although it seems likely that English culture was borrowed in epistolary usage as well (Harmer 1946–53). Secondly, it is probable that other aspects of institutional loans from England entered Scandinavia not through Denmark but by different routes. Of all the

Scandinavian countries English missionary work and ecclesiastical influence were strongest in Norway, and the loanword *hirð* 'king's retinue', (later) 'royal court' from Old English *hired* is earliest and most convincingly attested in Norwegian contexts (Lindow 1976, 63–69). The preference of the mediaeval western Norse lawcodes for antecedent clauses in *ef* 'if' has also been ascribed to English legal usage, albeit not wholly convincingly (Ståhle 1958, 148–68, but cf. Norseng 1991). However, most aspects of royal government, administrative divisions and institutional proceedings in late Viking-Age Scandinavia remain obscure due to the relative lack of primary documentary sources to tell us about them. To return to Denmark, it is for example possible that the division into the units known as the *herreder*, probably military in origin to judge from the etymology of the term, may have been complete in some parts of the kingdom at least already by the tenth century, but their existence cannot be directly demonstrated before the appearance of the cadastres and diplomas of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (cf. Christensen 1969, 69–90).

There is, however, one body of native evidence from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries which can be investigated to shed light on Danish society and institutions: the corpus of runic inscriptions found for the most part, in this period at least, on runestones raised as memorials to the dead. Although these objects and texts have always been the subject of intense interest, it is only recently that work has begun to make full use of the range of information they carry for the social history of Scandinavia in the later Viking Age. Such approaches, relying on the analysis of the body of runestones as a totality and using above all sponsorship patterns to illuminate matters such as inheritance laws or the position of women, are largely tied to the name of Birgit Sawyer, who has undertaken groundbreaking work in a series of articles (B. Sawyer 1991; cf. Page 1993). In this paper, however, I intend to bring this epigraphic material to bear on an older chestnut: the status and position of the drengs (Old Norse *drengr*) and thegns (Old Norse *þegn*) who appear in these inscriptions, the possible influence of Anglo-Saxon terminology and institutions which may manifest itself in the semantic range of these terms, and the question of the development of the Danish state with accompanying aristocracy and royal officers.

There are various ways to approach the concept of 'state' within the context of later Viking-Age Scandinavia. According to Löfving ,'a necessary qualification for a state society is, at least theoretically, a monopoly on violence in order to exercise justice', while 'state formation . . . requires a homogeneous ideology of society, and the rulers must have sufficient

knowledge and resources in order to exercise government' (1991, 149). Alternatively, we might follow the economic approach taken by Randsborg of a 'large, stable political unit with a high level of production' (1980, 7). While it is clear that state-formation in late Viking-Age Scandinavia went hand in hand with the development of the notion of kingship, it is less obvious exactly what rights and privileges were enjoyed by Scandinavian kings in this period. The question of their role in legislation is still a vexed one, and the clearest manifestations of royal power are possibly to be found rather in military affairs. For a state to function the centralisation of authority is also a prerequisite, with the development of a network of administrators directly under the king's jurisdiction scattered throughout the kingdom in towns and royal estates. In this context it is now widely, if not generally, accepted that the foundations of the mediaeval state of Denmark were laid in the later tenth and early eleventh centuries, a key period which saw the official acceptance of Christianity and the first serious moves towards the development of politically unified kingdoms across much of Scandinavia.

However, documentary sources charting the progress of this centralised web of Danish royal officers are naturally hard to come by, and Svend Aakjær was the first to combine evidence from the runic inscriptions and from England to try to establish a picture of this development in late Viking-Age Denmark (1927–28). Aakjær argued that the terms 'thegn' and 'dreng' used in the Danish runic inscriptions did not simply carry the general sense of '(worthy) free man' as assumed by most previous commentators, but rather that they represented a social class holding a particular rank as the king's men, whose role developed from that of military service as members of the king's household (Old Norse *hirð*) to that of landowners functioning as royal agents. Although Aakjær did not specifically invoke the idea of English linguistic or institutional influence upon Scandinavia, he was nevertheless forced to rely heavily on the analogy of the English terms *þegn* and *dreng*, the latter itself a Scandinavian loanword, since there was little cogent contemporary Scandinavian evidence for such a focused interpretation (Aakjær 1927–28, 20–28). Nevertheless, in the light of the close connections between Denmark and England during the early eleventh century in particular, Aakjær's arguments have won a fair amount of acceptance, even if there have been some dissenting voices raising reservations. Christensen (1969, 218–22), for example, concludes that the terms 'thegn' and 'dreng' are best seen as indicators of rank, referring to members of prominent families who were also often active in Viking activities abroad.

Even from the English viewpoint, it is difficult to swallow fully Aakjær's assumptions concerning the status of thegns and drengs in late Anglo-Saxon England. The loanword *dreng* is very rare in pre-Conquest English sources given that its earliest occurrence is in the poem composed on the battle of Maldon of 991 (Scragg 1981, lines 149–51):

> Forlet þa drenga sum daroð of handa,
> fleogan of folman, þæt se to forð gewat
> þurh ðone æþelan Æþelredes þegen.
>
> Then a certain dreng released a spear from his hand
> flying from his palm, so that it shot forward too far
> through the noble thegn of Ethelred.

Here the reference is clearly to a Scandinavian, but the sense seems to be nothing more than that of 'warrior, man'. Like the majority of Scandinavian loanwords into English, *dreng* is better attested in documents of the Anglo-Norman period, but it does also occur in the north-western charter of Gospatrick, the original of which probably dates from the middle of the eleventh century (Harmer 1952, 423, 532; cf. Phythian-Adams 1996, 174–81). In the protocol Gospatrick addresses the text to his *ðrenge* and 'free men', and Harmer notes that 'the *dreng* held his land by military and other services'. Certainly, by the Anglo-Norman period the term *dreng* seems to have taken on a semantic life of its own in the northern counties of England, where both drengs and thegns are attested as minor landowners 'with a strange mixture of knightly and servile services' (Poole 1955, 38). However, this position was not only fairly restricted in terms of its geographical spread, but also seems to have been a fairly minor rank heavily involved with the administration of estates (Stenton 1961, 146–49). It seems largely out of key with the sense discernible in Scandinavian sources, and it cannot be concluded that the term when first borrowed already implied an individual holding lands as a vassal from the king.

For Old English *þegn* there is more plentiful contemporary evidence from late Anglo-Saxon England, but here Aakjær's case rests to a large extent on the faulty assumption that *þegn* was generally a term for a vassal specifically of the king (cf. Lund 1986, 111, n. 30). However, the term carried a far wider semantic range than this, even if in prose at least it did contain an overriding connotation of 'service'. According to the *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum*, regarded as dating from the middle of the eleventh century, thegns were obliged to perform three services in respect of their land, military service (*expeditio*) and work on bridges and fortifications (Liebermann 1960, I, 444; EHD II, 875–89). These three duties

comprised the classic *trimoda necessitas* (Loyn 1984, 32–34), and it would be tempting, if undemonstrable, to assume that landowners in eleventh-century Denmark might have been under a similar range of burdens. However, the rank of thegn in Anglo-Saxon England was not a closely bounded one, and to a certain extent can be classified only with respect to the wergild it carried rather than any level of opulence or social status. According to Wulfstan's *Compilation on Status* from the beginning of the eleventh century, a *ceorl* 'free man' could rise to the rank of thegn if he prospered sufficiently (Liebermann 1960, I, 456 under *Geþyncðo*; EHD I, 468–69). It is also observed that a king's thegn (*cyninges þegn*) could have other thegns under him, and diplomatic evidence makes it clear that this was the case for other leading secular and ecclesiastical figures. Of some incidental interest also is the fact that the Northumbrian code known as the *Norðleoda Laga* gives the thegn a wergild only half as high as that of the *hold*, with the latter equated to the (king's) high reeve (Liebermann 1960, I, 460; EHD I, 469). It is clear that in these areas of significant Scandinavian influence the imported position of the *hǫlðr* was held to be far more significant than the relatively lowly thegn. On the whole, Barlow's summary is apt (1988, 6): 'Among the thegns, at one end of the scale, were men who possessed estates in many shires acquired through generations of royal service, and, at the other, were men indistinguishable from land-holding freemen except by their rank.'

However suggestive the English evidence might be, only a study of the Norse usage of *drengr* and *þegn* can confirm (or deny) any putative semantic influence east across the North Sea. However, in the Scandinavian languages our understanding of these terms is to a large extent coloured by mediaeval usage in the manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it is not always easy to establish which semantic overtones would have been present in the tenth and eleventh. Fritzner gives several definitions of the range of meanings carried by Old Norse *drengr*, the most basic of which is 'a man who is as he should be' (Fritzner 1883–96, I, 264). However, the most explicit formulation comes from the *Skáldskaparmál* section of Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* (Finnur Jónsson 1931, 186–87):

> Drengir heita ungir menn búlausir, meðan þeir afla sér fjár eða orðstír, þeir fardrengir, er milli landa fara, þeir konungs drengir, er hǫfðingjum þjóna, þeir ok drengir, er þjóna ríkum mǫnnum eða bóndum; drengir heita vaskir menn ok batnandi.
>
> Young men without their own farms are called drengs while they are acquiring wealth or fame for themselves; those who travel between lands are called drengs on the move (*fardrengir*), those in the service of chieftains are called

> king's drengs (*konungs drengir*), and they are also called drengs who serve powerful men or landowners; men who are manly and promising are called drengs.

Here we find the classic statement of the position of a dreng: a young, often unmarried, man without a permanent residence of his own who makes his way in the world by serving social superiors. The youth of the dreng is confirmed by other evidence, such as the use of the word to gloss Latin *tiro* and the distinction drawn in law between the unmarried *drengmaðr* and the settled *bóndi*. However, being in the service of the king is just one of the options open to the plucky dreng, and when talking about the retinues of great men Snorri also notes (Finnur Jónsson 1931, 162) that *konungar ok jarlar hafa til fylgðar með sér þá menn, er hirðmenn heita ok húskarlar* 'kings and earls have in their retinue those men who are called *hirðmenn* and *húskarlar*', with more specific terms applied to the king's retainers. Nielsen's conclusion that there is no clear West Norse evidence for a specific sense of *drengr* as 'armed retainer' remains reasonable (1945, 111–12), and elsewhere in Scandinavia the term 'dreng' is also used with a wide semantic range. In the Swedish kings' list appended to the *Äldre Västgötalagen*, for example, it is said of King Ingi the Younger that *han styrdhi Sweriki með drænsskap*, while the second King Sverkir is described as a *sniællær mann oc goðþær ðrængær* (Noreen 1962, 15).

Unlike *drengr*, which is a specifically Scandinavian form, the term *þegn* has cognates in the other Germanic languages which can be used for comparative purposes. Unfortunately, the question is complicated by the fact that both English and German vocabulary seem to have exerted influence upon the Old Norse lexicon before the period of our earliest texts. A basic definition of *þegn* seems to be 'free man (especially those entitled to attend assemblies)', and it is equated by Fritzner with other similar terms such as *sveinn* or *karl* (1883–96, III, 1012). It is in this context that we must view the frequent alliterative couplet *þegn ok þræll* found in the Scandinavian lawcodes in which *þegn* and *þræll* are contrasted, and in a similar vein Snorri notes in *Skáldskaparmál* (Finnur Jónsson 1931, 187) that *þegnar ok hǫlðar, svá eru bændr kallaðir* 'thegns and *hǫlðar*, landowners are called so'. However, there is also evidence that a thegn could be expected to occupy a position of service under a king. This sense is implied in a passage from *Óláfs saga helga* in which Olaf's emissary tells the Icelanders that *hann vill vera yðarr dróttinn, ef þér vilið vera hans þegnar* 'he [the king] will be your lord, if you will be his thegns' (Johnsen and Helgason 1941, 327). It is interesting that MS AM 75a fol. has *þjónar* 'servants' for *þegnar*, probably more because the two terms were felt to be

synonymous in this context than because the notion of 'liegeman' needed to be brought out more clearly. The implicit notion of 'fealty to the king' also appears in the concept *þegngildi* (Old Danish *thægnægiæld*), whereby a fine was owed to the king for the slaying of one of his thegns (Aakjær 1927–28, 11–12). However, without wishing to indulge in romantic speculation concerning the independent status of the late Viking-Age freeman, it does seem plausible that this usage of *þegn* could stem from the conditions of the mediaeval Scandinavian states with an ever greater centralisation of royal authority. While Fritzner's sense of *þegn* as 'servant' is very convincingly attested by the use of the word to gloss terms such as *servus*, this is very possibly a semantic development introduced by foreign missionaries. Certainly such influence can be detected in related verb-formations such as *þéna* 'to serve' alongside *þjóna*, where the rare by-form *þegna* recorded in *Stjórn* (Unger 1862, 560 line 5) seems either to point to Old English *þegnian* or to be a newly coined denominative formation from *þegn*.

Aakjær's interpretation of the status of these thegns and drengs has prompted several more recent studies which have sought to develop further an understanding of their role in the formation of the Danish state and growth of royal authority. While Birgit Sawyer (1991) has concentrated on the distribution of late Viking-Age runestones, Randsborg (1980) and Christophersen (1981–82) have made use of a combination of archaeological and documentary material to stress the proto-feudal aspect of Scandinavia, especially Denmark, in this period. Central to much of this work is the notion that even as early as the later Viking Age kings were binding their vassals to them by the granting of land in return for various, especially military, services, and that these land-grants are reflected in the inscriptions on the runestones which were erected in Denmark in large numbers in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.

In general, it is notable that while historians have tended to favour such approaches, those scholars undertaking semantic and philological studies have preferred to point out the lack of reliable indicators in the documentary sources for the vassalage interpretation. The reasons for this disparity are easy to understand; from a historical viewpoint it is necessary to posit some mechanisms for explaining the apparent growth of the Danish state in the late tenth century and the temptation to link these developments with the scattered remnants of archaeological and documentary material is inevitably strong. Linguistic arguments, with a more concentrated scope, equally inevitably bring a micro- as opposed to macroscopic slant to the subject, and reveal the limitations both of the evidence and what may be

inferred from it. However, this does not mean that any such objections can be dismissed out of hand as missing the wood for the trees. Many of the points raised by Nielsen (1945) in the first serious opposition to Aakjær remain unanswered, and the problems and ambiguities inherent in the written evidence are confirmed in later surveys such as those by Ruprecht (1958, especially 62–67), Düwel (1975), Strid (1987), and particularly Lindow (1976, especially 106–12). According to Christophersen (1981–82, 130) it is the growing realisation that Viking-Age society contained 'aristocratic and anti-democratic institutions' that has led to Aakjær's views being favoured over Nielsen's, but such an approach does not negate Nielsen's semantic conclusions based on the available written evidence, a body of material which has not significantly increased in the fifty years since his article was published.

Since the runic evidence has played the major role in the debate it is necessary to dip into this body of material more deeply. There are some twenty runestones from within the bounds of mediaeval Denmark which mention drengs, and a further seventeen that refer to thegns (see DR 643 under **drængʀ**, 730–31 under **þægn**); the most recent example to be discovered, from Borup in north Jutland, is presented by Stoklund (1996, 6–8). A few of the attestations are not wholly secure given the fragmentary nature of the preserved texts, but on the whole these stones fall into a moderately well defined group. The majority are of the Jelling or post-Jelling types, generally dated to the second half of the tenth and the early eleventh centuries, with a good proportion of the exceptions coming from the island of Bornholm and datable to the early mediaeval period. On the whole, the inscriptions seem to support the long-cherished view that there was a contrast between the drengs, who were younger men often without wives or permanent estates of their own, and the older more settled thegns. Of the stones commemorating the former, around half seem to have been raised by individuals who we can posit were roughly equal in age and/or status to the person commemorated, either by one or more comrades or partners (Old Norse *félagi*), as in DR 1, 68, 127, 262, 339 and probably 330, or by brothers (Old Norse *bróðir*), as in DR 77, 268, 276 and 288. There are also a few examples where the father stood as sponsor, such as DR 78, 94 and 380. In addition, drengs appear as the sponsors in DR 295, which reads:

> **askil sati stin þansi ift tuka kurms sun saʀ hulan trutin saʀ flu aiki at ub salum satu trikaʀ iftiʀ sin bruþr stin o biarki stuþan runum þiʀ kurms tuka kiku nist**

> Áskell set this stone in memory of his gracious lord Tóki Gormsson, who did not flee at Uppsala. The drengs set the stone standing firm with runes on the mound in memory of their 'brother'; they walked nearest to Gormr's Tóki.

This above all suggests that *bróðir* could take the sense 'comrade, fellow' rather than blood-relation, although it is of course possible that Tóki Gormsson had numerous brothers who happened also to be drengs. Many of the other inscriptions raised by 'brothers' could also reflect this usage, where the dreng was commemorated not by his kin but by fellow members of a group or business partnership, as presumably often in the case of *félagi*.

On the other hand, the general trend seems to indicate that thegns were somewhat older and more settled, since a higher proportion of their inscriptions were sponsored either by their spouses or by a younger generation. Six examples reveal sons standing as sponsors, in DR 123, 130, 213, 294, 343 and the Borup stone, while a further four were raised by the wives of the deceased thegn, in DR 98, 99, 277 and 293. DR 209 was sponsored by both the wife and the sons, while DR 143, raised after a *mágr* 'kinsman (by marriage)', seems from the context also to refer to a parental commemoration. However, there are only a few possible examples of a stone raised for a thegn by a brother, such as DR 86, 121 and 278, and no certain instance of a father standing sponsor. This picture corresponds nicely with that gained from later Old Norse literary material, and is also confirmed by the runic inscriptions from Sweden. Of the thirty-plus Swedish dreng-stones the majority were raised by brothers or parents as against only one (U 289) where a younger generation stood sponsor. For thegns, on the other hand, there are over fifteen examples of sons standing sponsor and a handful of others where either wives or brothers were responsible for the stone's erection, but there are no instances of fathers, although VG 158 was set up by an uncle. The inscription VG 157 appears to sum the distribution up, in which one Þórðr raised a stone over his father Fundinn, a thegn, and his brother Ásbjǫrn, a dreng.

As might be expected from this, the inscriptions also show drengs as more active in military and trading activities than thegns. For example, DR 68 was raised by three sponsors in memory of their *félagi* Ǫzurr who had owned a part share in a ship, while DR 330 tells of drengs away *í víkingu* 'on a Viking expedition'. Such aspects of drengly activity are more fully attested in Sweden, where there can be found numerous inscriptions referring to drengs belonging to a *lið* 'warband', including armies of the Danish kings. Strid's conclusion that the word **drængr** 'could be used to denote a member of an army unit, a fighting ship or a merchant fraternity'

(1987, 308) seems to hold good for both the Danish and Swedish material. On the other hand, there is generally less information given in the inscriptions about the thegns' exploits, perhaps because they were less spectacular. A tentative hint as to their status may be discerned in examples like DR 143:

> **tuki raisþi stini þoisi auk karþi kubl þausi aft aba mak sin þaikn kuþan auk tufu muþur sino þau lika baþi i þaum hauki abi uni tuka fiaʀ sins aft sik**
>
> Tóki raised this stone and made these monuments in memory of his kinsman Abbi, a good thegn, and of Tófa his mother; they both lie in this mound. Abbi left his property to Tóki after him.

While this inscription may confirm the idea that thegns held landed property it tells us nothing about how such wealth was accrued, if it was not simply inherited, and perhaps contrasts with Swedish inscriptions such as U 792 relating how individuals made their money in the lucrative east, journeys more suggestive of the activities of drengs than thegns.

The most revealing single document is the Glavendrup stone (DR 209), raised in memory of one Alli by his wife and sons. Although the exact interpretation of sections of this inscription has often been debated, the description of the deceased as both *goði* 'priest' and thegn indicates that he held both religious and secular positions, a distribution of responsibility which seems perfectly reasonable given the status of the *goðar* in Viking-Age Iceland where they are best attested. Alli's implied position as the head of a large household is also suggested by the fact that the Sóti who was responsible for carving the runes called him his *dróttinn* 'lord'. However, while the Glavendrup inscription has played a major role in the arguments concerning the status and role of thegns, it is not a justified conclusion that Alli owed his position to royal sanction or functioned as any form of royal official on Fyn (cf. Randsborg 1980, 31; Christophersen 1981–82, 129–30). Rather, it may well be a rare (and welcome) example of a ninth- or early tenth-century leader of a private *lið*, corresponding to those known from eleventh-century Swedish inscriptions. While the arguments raised by Nielsen (1945, 113–15) may well rely too heavily on possibly outdated notions of a free independent class of farmer-chieftains, he is nevertheless right to observe that no connection with the royal *hirð* can be inferred from this inscription. In addition, this early runestone is both temporally and distributionally distinct from the other dreng- and thegn-stones, which tend to cluster in north Jutland and Skåne and date from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Since the latter clearly seem to form

a homogeneous and well-defined group, it is more logical to analyse them as a bounded phenomenon with which the Glavendrup stone has no intimate connection.

Even in this later group there is no clear consensus that the drengs and thegns commemorated had any particularly close relationship to the king or served in a royal *lið* or *hirð*. To be sure, there are examples where drengs can be linked explicitly to a royal retinue. One of the stones from Skåne (DR 345) appears to mention a dreng of Cnut, if this plausible interpretation of the sequence **triks knus** is accepted, but inscriptions referring to the conquest of England are better attested in Sweden, such as ÖG 111, SÖ 14, U 194 and U 344. Although naturally different conditions may have prevailed in Denmark and Sweden, U 344 is still particularly interesting in revealing that the Úlfr commemorated had participated in three different attacks on England led by three different men. This confirms what we know from other documentary sources, that the raids of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries were largely organised privately rather than nationally, and that great men other than the king could raise warbands in which drengs could, and did, serve. While it is possible that this relative lack of Danish Cnut-stones is due to the chronological disparity between the Danish and Swedish runestone traditions, the uncertain example of DR 345 nevertheless provides the only Danish inscription referring to a dreng directly serving a king. If, however, we look for a term which implies membership of a magnate's household, then the word most clearly employed is not *drengr* or *þegn* but *heimþegi* 'member of a household'. This form occurs in two inscriptions from Hedeby connected (most plausibly) to King Sveinn Forkbeard, and moreover in contexts which suggest that the *heimþegi* too had active military duties. DR 3 notes that:

> **suin kunukʀ sati stin uftiʀ skarþa sin himþiga ias uas farin uestr ion nu uarþ tauþr at hiþa bu**
>
> King Sveinn set the stone in memory of Skarði his *heimþegi*, who had gone west and now died at Hedeby.

Even more suggestive is DR 1:

> **þurlf risþi stin þonsi himþigi suins eftiʀ erik filaga sin ias uarþ tauþr þo trekiaʀ satu um haiþa bu ian han uas sturi matr tregʀ harþa kuþr**
>
> Þórólfr, Sveinn's *heimþegi*, raised this stone in memory of his *félagi* Erik, who died when drengs besieged Hedeby, and he was the ship's pilot, a very good dreng.

It has proved difficult to pin down exactly which military action gave rise to these deaths and runestones, even assuming they are both from the

same one. However, the fact that the *heimþegi* Þórólfr regarded the *drengr* and *stýrimaðr* Erik as his *félagi* may indicate that they were on the same social level, and it would be plausible to assume that Þórólfr too would have been considered a dreng.

Further light is provided by the three runestones from Hällestad in Skåne, all of which refer to retainers of the magnate Tóki Gormsson. DR 295 was raised by one Áskell to his *hollr dróttinn* Tóki, and a number of drengs also participated in memory of their *bróðir*. Both DR 296 and 297 also mention a *heimþegi* of Tóki, although neither of them receives any other title. The term *heimþegi* also occurs in DR 154 and 155; the first example is particularly interesting in that, although Skonvig's text there is partially corrupt, it suggests that the *heimþegi* was also described as 'good', and it is such terminology rather than direct evidence that has been taken as the clearest sign that *drengr* and *þegn* had a particularly specific sense in the inscriptions.

It has long been recognised that the runestones commemorating drengs and thegns show a marked preference for a particular formula within their inscriptions whereby the deceased is described as 'good'. This frequently involves simply the description *góðr*, but can have variations upon the theme with *mjǫk góðr*, *algóðr* and particularly commonly *harða góðr* also appearing (B. Sawyer 1994). While this formula appears on a high proportion of such stones, it is far less frequent in inscriptions commemorating individuals other than thegns or drengs, although there are scattered examples (such as DR 298 and 338). This distribution certainly appears to imply that there was something particular to drengs and thegns which marked them out as 'good', but exactly what it was, and exactly how to interpret the laconic adjective, has proved a matter of much debate. While earlier commentators tended to assume that the formula referred only to the personal character or qualities of the individual involved (Aakjær 1927–28, 4), others have read a more precise sense such as 'of noble birth' (DR 655; B. Sawyer 1991, 110). Certainly in mediaeval Old Norse prose the collocation *góðir menn* 'good men' had come to take on a specialised sense of the king's closest advisers, but it might be questioned whether such usage could be applied to the runic inscriptions of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Examples such as DR 1, where Erik, the *stýrimaðr* in King Sveinn's fleet, is described as a *drengr harða góðr*, may well suggest that a translation 'a very good man' is too imprecise and woolly. On the other hand, there are texts which apply other terms of approbation to the deceased which cannot reasonably be interpreted as anything other than statements of respect

for the individual's posthumous reputation (cf. Stoklund 1991, 295–96). On one occasion we are told that a good dreng died *manna mest óníðingr* with effective use of litotes (DR 68). Significantly, there are also examples which use the superlative form of the adjective, such as DR 277 where one Sveinn is described as *þegn fyrstr*, or the Borup stone which calls one Þorgotr *beztan þegn*. In DR 133 the deceased is praised as the *landmanna beztr í Danmǫrku ok fyrstr* with the tricky term *landmaðr* (see Düwel 1975, 195–99). If it is assumed, plausibly but uncertainly, that *góðr* and *beztr* are used here with the same semantic implications, then it is difficult to see how *(harða) góðr* can be translated as 'of noble birth' with a technical social implication, since superlatives make little sense in such a context. This impression is strengthened by a consideration of the Swedish material, even if we have to reckon with the possibility that it might represent a different picture from the Danish. As has long been recognised, the inscriptions of Västergötland in particular show a marked similarity to those of Denmark in many respects, including the formulaic appearance of good drengs and thegns. However, the greater body of evidence shows that 'good' was a term which could be applied to a *bóndi* 'landowner' or related family member quite freely, especially in central Sweden, and other terms of approbation such as *nýtr*, *hæfr* and *frækn* also appear; cf. ÖG 81, U 166, U 289. Södermanland in particular shows a taste for individual formulae, with drengs described three times as *snjallr* (SÖ 155, 163 and 320) and thegns seven times with a dependent genitive *þróttar* (SÖ 90, 112, 151, 158, 170, 367 and Jansson 1948, 295).

The idea cannot be ruled out that these formulaic distributions observable in Viking-Age runic inscriptions depended more upon local epigraphic traditions and (mostly irrecoverable) semantic pecularities of individual dialects than on the status of those commemorated. The importance of regional variation has been stressed by various commentators (Nielsen 1945, 120; Stoklund 1991; Palm 1992), but raises difficult questions of methodology in its application since it inevitably tends to lead to circular argumentation. Nevertheless, this approach can also be applied to the other aspect of the case that the drengs and thegns of Danish runic inscriptions represent a specific class of men who had given oaths of fealty to the king, or who in a more explicit sense might have functioned as royal officials. This depends upon the distribution of the runestones, since the vast majority of the Danish dreng- and thegn-stones occur in two geographical clusters, around northern Jutland and in Skåne, and date from the second half of the tenth to early eleventh centuries. From northern Jutland, with a particularly heavy concentration around Randers, DR

68, 77, 78, 94, 127 and 150 commemorate drengs while thegns are represented in DR 86, 98, 99, 106, 115, 121, 123, 130, 143 and the Borup stone. In Skåne dreng-stones are widely distributed, as in DR 262, 268, 276, 288, 289, 295, 330, 339 and 345, while thegn-stones are more limited to the southern coast, i. e. DR 277, 293, 294 and 343. The most notable chronological exceptions are the early Glavendrup stone on Fyn (DR 209) and a few mediaeval examples from Bornholm, but DR 213 from Lolland-Falster and the two Hedeby-stones DR 1 and 2 are the only runestones from outside these two areas which are contemporary with the main group. However, this distribution to a large extent merely corresponds with the general spread of runestones in Viking-Age Denmark (Palm 1992, 84–88) and so in that respect reveals nothing particularly significant about the role of these thegns and drengs.

This curious distribution has nevertheless proved the keystone for interesting theories about the motives behind the development of the runestone tradition. Sawyer has put forward the theory that runestones were erected as 'crisis symptoms' in a period of encroaching royal authority over the traditional landed classes (B. Sawyer 1991). According to Randsborg's interpretation the runestones reflect the establishment of royal power by virtue of land-grants in return for military service (Randsborg 1980, especially 25–44). Although these theories pose interesting questions, they have not gone without criticism, and with some justification Stoklund (1991, 295–96) finds them too narrow in their approach. Whether we view the runestones (especially those raised in honour of thegns and drengs) as either statements of independence in the face of the expansion of royal authority, or statements of that authority in the form of royal officials and liegemen, their curious distribution remains awkward. Birgit Sawyer has suggested (1991, 106–07) 'that the reason south Jutland and Fyn have very few inscriptions is because they were already under royal control', whereas 'mid- and northern Jutland, Själland and Skåne, where most Danish inscriptions are to be found, were the areas that were most affected by the extension of direct royal authority'. However, there are few other reasons for assuming that the tenth- and eleventh-century kings of the Jelling dynasty had greater authority in south Jutland than elsewhere in the peninsula, and the argument suffers from circularity. In addition, it is misleading to include Sjælland with northern Jutland and Skåne as a region heavily represented by runestones; there are only a scattered handful from the island from the later Viking Age, and none involving thegns or drengs. Randsborg's laudable attempt to make use of the distribution of the runestones within individual provinces is also flawed by some

dubious conclusions from distribution maps with only a few tokens on them (Christophersen 1981–82, 131).

On the whole, it seems reasonable to assume that the distribution pattern of the Danish runestones must to some extent reflect the original state of affairs, even if some stones were moved and re-used for secondary purposes, such as building churches. The clustering then seems to point more to local fashions and customs within a couple of generations than to royal policies of national significance. If the latter view were correct, we would expect to find the runestones in newly conquered territories, and quite probably around the forts constructed by Harald Bluetooth. In such a context, the scarcity of runestones from Sjælland would be particularly surprising. However, when developing the notion of a vassal aristocracy in late Viking-Age Denmark, Randsborg proposes that 'in the tenth century the system of vassalage was expanding, as is shown by the runestones, which demonstrated publicly the new rights of land' (1980, 168), and links this view to two main groups of archaeological evidence. Firstly, there is the large number of prestigious graves in tenth-century Denmark, as attested above all by the male equestrian and weapon-graves and the female waggon-graves, which seem to reflect the growth of new burial customs (Randsborg 1980, 121–35; Näsman 1991). Secondly, there are the excavated farm-sites such as Vorbasse in Jutland, which seem to reveal a development of large fenced-off 'magnate farms' in the later Viking Age (Hvass 1979).

To a certain degree the distribution of the rich graves does agree with that of the runestones with a slight concentration in northern Jutland, while the relative paucity of equestrian graves in Skåne is probably due to chronological factors (see the maps in Näsman 1991, 166–67). It is also certainly tempting to link these burials to a rising local aristocracy, and Näsman notes of the individual in the rich Mammen grave, for example, that there is scarcely any doubt that he was the king's man (1991, 172). On the other hand, Roesdahl has argued that the change in burial customs reflects religious as much as social developments (1983; Nielsen 1991), and even if they were status markers they tell us nothing more than that there may have been a growing self-awareness among the Danish upper classes in this period. In addition, the runestones commemorating thegns and drengs are generally not notably larger or more elaborate than others from the same period. Those from Jutland in particular show a tendency to average out at about one and a half metres high, and although there are some whose size stands out, others such as DR 115 are relatively small. There are admittedly none so tiny as DR 155 raised over a *heimþegi*, but

this must be seen as a rare and isolated case; on the whole the dreng- and thegn-stones do not diverge from the runestone tradition but fit neatly within it. Although it may be reasonable to follow Lund when he notes that the English campaigns of conquest conducted by Sveinn Forkbeard and his son Cnut demand that we recognize 'some form of public obligation to serve the state' at the beginning of the eleventh century (1986, 106), the arguments in favour of analysing these runestones and graves as markers of a new vassal class, however appealing, remain fairly circumstantial.

Similar arguments concerning the formulae and distribution of the runestone inscriptions also inform Löfving's essay on the relations between Denmark and south-western Sweden towards the end of the Viking Age (1991). While I have no quarrel with Löfving's contention that due to the demographics of late Viking-Age Sweden any political influence upon the provinces of Bohuslän and Västergötland is more likely to have roots in Denmark than Svealand, his case seems to depend upon equally tenuous connections drawn between points on distribution maps. Two main points are raised: the similarity between the runic inscriptions of Denmark (specifically Jutland) and Västergötland on the one hand, and on the other the appearance of several place-names in *Tegneby* 'the *by* of the thegns' along the coastline bordering the Kattegat and Skagerrak to the east. From this he contends 'that Danish kings living in the tenth century, perhaps Gorm or Harald Bluetooth, tried to maintain their influence in overseas regions by royal representatives, living in settlements named Tegneby' (1991, 153). In this context, then, the thegns are to be interpreted as the Danish king's men looking after his interests in newly-conquered or hostile territory, which fits well with the analysis proposed by Randsborg. However, it is unclear exactly when these thegns may have adopted these duties, and Löfving also appears to be proposing English influence when suggesting that 'because Cnut was king of both Denmark and England the term thegn of the Danish stones and of the English documents seems to denote the same dependent relationship' (1991, 154), a dependent relationship which is then extended to the thegns of Västergötland on the basis of the similarity between the Danish and south-west Swedish runic inscriptions.

Such a chronological ambiguity is prompted in the first instance by the recognition that the runic traditions of Jutland and Västergötland seem to a certain degree not to be exactly contemporaneous but rather separated by a generation or two. As a result it may be questioned whether it is reasonable to assume that similarity of formulae and execution demand a corresponding similarity in semantic content or social function. A more

serious objection to Löfving's case is perhaps that the distribution maps do not match up; there are no thegn-stones in Bohuslän and the Tegneby-names are under-represented in Västergötland. As regards the first point, I have noted already that thegns appear in Swedish runestones outside Västergötland and in some cases, such as in Södermanland, in an equally formulaic manner although with different precise wording. Although it might be possible to argue that these men had also served Danish kings in some capacity, particularly as hired troops, it cannot be deduced that those kings also exercised any degree of political authority throughout Sweden. While Cnut certainly seems to have titled himself *rex partis Suanorum* (Liebermann 1960, I, 276; EHD I, 476), his supposed coins minted at Sigtuna with the legend CNVT REX SW can no longer be reliably considered as genuine, as they derive from only one die, and his claims might well have extended no further than the coastal regions such as Blekinge which were subsequently part of the mediaeval Danish kingdom (see Jonsson 1994, 228–29).

Secondly, place-names in *Tegneby* are not restricted to Bohuslän or other provinces near to Denmark, even if there is a relatively high number of examples there. There are about a dozen such Swedish names, scattered for the most part throughout southern Sweden (Strid 1987, 303–06); that they do not appear in Uppland tallies well with the fact that the term *þegn* is recorded in Upplandic runic inscriptions only as a personal name. It is interesting, however, that the regions of central Sweden reveal a cluster of place-names in *Rinkaby* containing the Old Swedish form of *rekkr* rather than *þegn*, and that it has been argued that these and the *Tegneby* names reflect kings, this time of the Svear, sending out their agents to govern for them. This is an intriguing speculation which would correspond well with Löfving's arguments, but it can only be verified with reference to the semantic content of names such as *Tegneby* (Old Norse *Þegnabýr* 'the *by* of the thegns'), and this sense has proved elusive. Strid makes a valid point when observing that the appearance of *þegn* in the genitive plural is striking enough to cast doubt on the interpretation of the term as simply denoting a farmer or landowner, but the same point could equally be raised in opposition to viewing the thegn as a royal official appointed to oversee a settlement or village and the surrounding agrarian district.

To determine the semantics of forms such as *Þegnabýr*, in the hope of thereby getting to grips with the function of the settlements they named, it seems a fruitful approach to link them with a class of place-names which all contain first elements indicating social rank or class followed by the generic *-by*. There are scattered examples of this group throughout Sweden,

such as *Karlaby* (with *karl*) and *Svenaby* (with *sveinn*) alongside *Thægnaby* and *Rinkaby*, all of which contain a genitive plural form as their first element (Hellquist 1918, 72–82). Similar formations are also attested from Denmark itself, although apparently not with *þegn* as the first element (Hald 1965, 107). Although it is difficult to pin down exactly what such formations might indicate, it is equally difficult not to have sympathy with Hellquist's observation that they might well reflect some form of co-operative settlement by various social classes (1918, 77, 80). On this basis, a natural interpretation would be that *þegn* means 'free man', much as *karl* does in *Karlaby*, although if it referred to an upper class of free man, we might expect the sites accordingly to have some form of elevated status within the district.

Aside from runic inscriptions, the other main area of contemporary Scandinavian evidence which can be tapped for an insight into the semantics of the terms thegn and dreng is the body of skaldic verse from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. On the one hand, we are fortunate that from this exact period a relatively large amount of such verse has come down to us composed in honour of various kings and war-leaders. On the other hand, however, there are numerous, often insurmountable, problems of interpretation which confront us and render much of the corpus rather less useful for historical work than might be hoped. There is the nature of the poetry itself: highly formulaic and stereotypical, and frequently composed in metres so complicated that the actual freedom left to the poet for semantic precision must have been curtailed. To what extent many of the verses ascribed to the tenth- and eleventh-century poets actually reflect genuine compositions of the era is also difficult to evaluate. However, on this point at least there seems to be a consensus that the corpus of longer lays or *drápur* in honour of princes and kings (as defined in Fidjestøl 1982) is more likely to have been transmitted accurately, and less likely to originate from the hands of mediaeval antiquaries, than the single stanzas or *lausavísur* which punctuate the Icelandic saga-material.

Both *drengr* and *þegn* are frequently used in skaldic verse with a general sense of 'man', especially in martial contexts as 'warrior', where they fit in to a wide range of fairly colourless terms with much the same meaning used to construct kennings or participate in the intricate patterns of rhyme and alliteration typical of complex metres such as *dróttkvætt*. In an attempt to draw out finer shades of meaning Hans Kuhn (1944) picked out and analysed examples of the usage of such terms with a governing genitive referring to a king or other (usually military) leader. Such cases, where the construction implied that the individual referred to by the word *drengr* or

other such term was in a subordinate position to a social superior, Kuhn classed as *Rangbezeichnungen*, and here above all it might be possible to find support for the notion that drengs or thegns held rank or office in a hierarchical system.

The use of *drengr* as just such a designation of rank is well attested from the late tenth century onwards. In Einarr skálaglamm's *Vellekla* we find drengs linked to Earl Hákon of Hlaðir, where it is noted that *glaðar þengill her drengja* 'the lord gladdens the army of drengs' (Skj, BI, 123, st. 33:2). Halldórr ókristni's *Eiríksdrápa* (Skj, BI, 194, st. 7:7), composed around 1010, refers to Hákon's successor Earl Erik as the *drengja stjóri* 'the ruler of drengs', and further examples throughout the eleventh century crop up from the circles of the Norwegian kings, as in Sigvatr's *Austrfararvísur* (Skj, BI, 224, st. 18:7) or Arnórr's *Magnússdrápa* (Skj, BI, 312, st. 7:3). Such expressions seem exactly analogous to individual Danish runic inscriptions of the same period, and confirm the notion that the title of dreng could be applied to one serving in the armed forces of the king or some other magnate. Although some such drengs were surely mercenaries, it is equally likely that others held some form of personal contract or bond with their patron. However, the verse left to us provides few opportunities for investigating these relationships more closely, and the emphasis on drengs in martial contexts does not allow for a secure identification of their social position or their functions and duties outside the sphere of military service.

The sense of the title *þegn* is more elusive, but at the same time probably more significant for a study of royal officers. As noted by Kuhn (1944), there are early examples of *þegn* apparently used as a designation of rank in the context of the pagan religion, but in a secular sense such a development cannot be identified before the early eleventh century. The single stanza preserved of Egill Skallagrímsson's *Berudrápa* (Skj, BI, 42) gives a possible example, but unfortunately the text is hideously corrupt as it stands in the only manuscript which contains it. The first *helmingr* reads (Skj, AI, 48):

> Heyri feyrs aforsa
> fallhaddz vinar stalla
> hyggi þegn til þagnar
> þinn eiðr konungr minna.

Finnur Jónsson emended to *Heyri fúss á forsa fallhadds vinar stalla, hyggi, þegn, til þagnar þinn lýðr, konungs, mína* 'Let the eager king's thegn hear my waterfalls of the long-haired friend of altars [i. e. poem]; may your people think of silence'. In this interpretation *þegn konungs* is the

vocative object of the appeal for attention for the verse's recital. However, this involves several fairly radical steps, most notably *fúss* for *feyrs* and *lýðr* for *eiðr* alongside the suggested genitive singular *konungs* for *konungr*. Kock (NN §1043) also noted that taking *heyri þegn konungs* as a single clause gave a very awkward syntactic division, although controversy still reigns over the extent to which such sentence patterns were possible, or preferred, in *dróttkvætt* verses (Gade 1995, 12–17). Kock's own reading is not without its own difficulties (see also NN §2729), but it might be equally plausible to identify a collocation *þegn þinn* referring to the *konungr*, which would again provide an example of a designation of rank. However, on the whole the corruption of this stanza renders its interpretation very dubious, and it is also worth noting that in the context of the saga the verse refers to a shield given to Egill in Iceland by a Norwegian magnate, where a reference to a king is wholly out of place (Nordal 1933, 275). Since the verse is only preserved in a single manuscript it seems likely that it has been placed in the wrong literary context, and Kuhn was surely right to omit this from his examples of *þegn* used with a governing genitive.

A further example which purports to be from the tenth century is found in a *lausavísa* attributed to King Olaf Tryggvason (Skj, BI, 144–45), but this verse is scarcely likely to be genuine. The most significant evidence for the semantic range and development of the term *þegn* is to be found in verse of the early eleventh century, in particular that composed for Saint Olaf Haraldsson. In his *Hǫfuðlausn*, composed for Olaf, Óttarr svarti observed that *eru þér at þegnum Hjaltlendingar kendir* 'the Shetlanders are recognised as your thegns', and this has frequently been interpreted as the earliest clear example of *þegn* with the sense of 'vassal, servant' (Skj, BI, 272, st. 19:1–4; cf. Malmros 1985, 122–23). However, while this is a plausible contextual reading, it might be suggested that the choice of *þegn* may have been conditioned not simply by its semantic content but also by the necessity of finding a term to alliterate with *þér*. It is tempting to suggest that had the verse been composed in either the first or third person rather than the second, then phrases such as **mér at mǫnnum* or **honum at hǫlðum* might have been equally acceptable with an equivalent semantic force; both *maðr* and *hǫlðr* are attested as designations of rank from much the same period.

The large body of verse by Sigvatr Þórðarson provides some particularly interesting evidence for the question of the appropriate terminology for the king's retainers or officers. In his *Austrfararvísur* (Skj, BI, 220–25), composed early in Olaf's reign concerning an arduous diplomatic mission to Västergötland, the emissaries are described both as the king's 'men' (st.

3:8 *konungs mǫnnum*) and as 'drengs' (st. 14:1 *drengjum*, st. 18:7 *þinna drengja*). Little can be read into these descriptions, but if the absence of *þegn* is not simply coincidental it may imply that the term was not particularly suited to the situation at hand, which would fit in with the notion that being a thegn referred primarily to the sedentary holding of land. It is however interesting that Earl Rǫgnvaldr is called Olaf's *heiðmaðr*, apparently denoting his position as a vassal of the Norwegian king (st. 17:8), while the earl's men are referred to as *hvern húskarl* (st. 18:3–4); these are exactly the sort of contexts in which it would have been useful to find the term *þegn*.

The relationship between the king and his subjects is also the subject of the most revealing composition of Sigvatr's, his sequence of stanzas addressed to Olaf's son Magnus known as the *Bersǫglisvísur* (Skj, BI, 234–39), in which the poet admonished the young king for his overbearing behaviour. In the verses ascribed to this poem *þegn* is used on several occasions where a translation 'vassal' might be appropriate. The statement that *nú eru þegnar frið fegnir* 'now thegns are glad of peace' (st. 2:3) might be taken simply to indicate that the thegns were relieved at the political stability after the strife of Olaf's reign, but a more pregnant interpretation is suggested by the lines (st. 5:1–4):

> Rétt hykk kjósa knǫttu
> karlfolk ok svá jarla
> af þvít eignum lofða
> Álafar frið gǫfu.
>
> I think both the free and leading men
> knew rightly how to choose,
> given that the Olafs gave security
> to men's possessions.

Here we see the poet not only differentiating the ranks of Norwegian society into two classes, the commonalty (*karlfolk*) and the aristocracy (*jarla*), but also observing that the two Olafs gave *friðr* 'peace' to, i. e. 'had respect for', the possessions of their subjects (Page 1995, 163). The rights of freemen to their land in the face of royal aggression is taken up again later, when Sigvatr notes that *minn dróttinn leggr sína eign á óðal þegna* 'my lord claims the thegns' ancestral lands as his property' (st. 14:2–3). There are two further examples where thegns are referred to in similar contexts, when Sigvatr asks *hverr eggjar þik hǫggva, hjaldrgegnir, bú þegna* 'who urges you, warrior, to slay thegns' livestock' (st. 11:1–2), and then observes that *slegit hefr þǫgn á þegna* 'silence has fallen upon

the thegns' (st. 12:7). None of these attestations necessarily gives any indication of a thegn's separate social status from the common free landowner, the *bóndi*, although it is made clear that thegns were considered entitled to inalienable *óðal*-land and the distinction drawn between the thegns and the *þingmenn* might possibly suggest that the former group held a more personal relationship with the king than the latter (st. 12:5–8).

However, it is also notable that the examples of *þegn* are used in contexts where the form plays a role in the rhyming, and also sometimes the alliterative, structure of the stanza. In other metrical environments different terms are applied with, on the face of it, equivalent semantic overtones. For example, Sigvatr observes of the king's confiscation of estates and property that *rán hykk rekkum þínum leiðask* 'I think your men are tired of this theft' (st. 11:7–8), where *rekkr* is used as a designation of rank to fit the demands of the metre. The more colourless term *bóndi* also appears in the archaic plural *búendr* but again in contexts where such a disyllable with a short root was required to fit the metrical constraints of Craigie's law, according to which a long-rooted disyllable such as *þegnar* 'thegns' was not tolerated in the middle of certain types of even-numbered half-line (st. 4:7–8, 8:6). Finally, there is the striking reference to the *konungs greifum* (st. 14:8), where a loanword is used specifically to refer to the king's officers (cf. Hofmann 1955, 82). If thegns did hold an administrative role in Scandinavian society at this time it would be nice to find such an explicit reference using the term *þegn*, but the question is left open as to exactly who these *greifar* were and how their roles functioned.

While it might be possible to argue that words like *rekkr*, *þegn* and *bóndi* were to Sigvatr's mind largely interchangeable and could be selected at will to fit the current metrical requirements, this would be to deny the poet any expertise in his craft to an intolerable extent. The frequent appearance of *þegn* may well suggest that the term referred to a group or class of landowners whose rights were held to be at risk and who were particularly vociferous in voicing their disapproval, and although there is nothing specific linking the thegns to the king by any level of personal commitment beyond that vouchsafed by the population at large, it is plausible to analyse Sigvatr's verses as early expressions of the collocation *lǫnd ok þegna* 'lands and thegns' found in Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's *Sexstefja* and in later prose (Skj, BI, 341).

The evidence of skaldic verse, then, goes some way towards supporting the idea that by the early eleventh century, in some contexts at least, the term *þegn* had developed, in addition to the sense of 'free landholding man', the notion of holding those lands from a higher authority,

specifically the king. This can be tied in with the quasi-feudal notion of 'vassalage', but to judge from later Norse sources not bindingly so, since it seems clear that *þegn* could continue to be used in the more general sense. Assessing the importance of this evidence in terms of state formation is tricky in at least two respects: firstly, the identification of those instances where *þegn* is used to denote a legally and functionally defined social class, and secondly the chronological disparity between tenth-century Denmark and eleventh-century Norway. This danger of anachronism may simply be a reflection of the distribution of the evidence; runic inscriptions are notably scarce in Viking-Age Norway compared to its Scandinavian neighbours, while if praise-poetry was being composed in large quantities for kings Gormr, Harald and Sveinn, then only possible fragments have survived (e. g. Fidjestøl 1982, 96, 101–02). Notwithstanding this reservation, however, some qualms remain. The most likely period in which we might expect to identify serious English influence on Scandinavian institutional vocabulary is still the first decades of the eleventh century during the reigns of the Anglo-Danish kings, and perhaps of others such as Olaf Tryggvason of Norway who stood under English patronage (cf. Hofmann 1955, 77–78).

This impression is strengthened by considering the Old Norse loan *hirð* 'court, royal household' from Old English *hired*, a borrowing which quite probably brought with it the introduction of more sophisticated methods of royal administration. Already by the middle of the tenth century *hired* seems to have adopted the sense of 'royal household', although it could still be used as a term for any household, or even a religious community (Lindow 1976, 42–49). Old Norse *hirð* makes its first appearance in court poetry of the early eleventh century with reference to the personal retinues of great men, especially the kings of Norway. The earliest attestation appears to be in a verse of Gunnlaugr ormstunga, which refers to a *hirðmaðr* of Earl Erik of Hlaðir (Foote and Quirk 1957, 13). Although we might posit here a direct loan from Old English *hiredmann*, it does most reasonably presuppose that *hirð* (and any concomitant institutional reforms) were current at the time. However, the authenticity of this four-line stanza, as a *lausavísa*, must be open to some suspicion, especially as it has no importance to the plot and contains nothing linking it explicitly to Erik's court. In addition, it is easy to sympathise with suggestions that the use of the truncated rhyming *runhent*-metre fits better with the context of an English court than a Norwegian one (Hofmann 1955, 56–58).

However, *hirð* is convincingly attested in the following decades with reference to the courts of the Norwegian kings. In his *Nesjavísur* composed

around 1016 Sigvatr uses *hirð* twice (Skj, BI, 217–20, st. 2:3–4 and 14:1–2) referring to troops of Olaf Haraldsson, and throughout the rest of the eleventh century it is common in such contexts. On the other hand, even while Old Norse *hirð* betrays the influence of English vocabulary, it is difficult to establish how the *hirð* in the eleventh century may have differed in function and composition from the older *drótt* or *verðung*. It is generally accepted that membership of the *hirð*, as an inherited institution, involved a voluntary contract between the individual and the king (or other magnate), whereby protection, support, prestige and gifts were received in return for (particularly military) service. It seems likely that the *hirðmenn* were originally actual members of the king's personal household, which is supported also by the loan of the term *húskarl* into Old English, and in this context the term *heimþegi* recorded in Viking-Age runic inscriptions would fit admirably the sense of 'member of the (royal) household or *hirð*'. By the mediaeval period, at least, the *hirð* could also number among its members men who were not resident at the court but who had sworn themselves to the king's service on their own estates (Hamre 1961; Nielsen 1961). This shift in the composition and function of the *hirð* was quite probably a gradual process, but it may well be anachronistic to view the landowners, thegns and drengs attested on the runestones as the king's *hirðmenn* already functioning not as members of his household but as royal officers (DR 819 for *Hird*; Christophersen 1981–82, 129–33). This objection is confirmed by the fact that the terms *þegn* and *drengr* are nowhere linked explicitly to membership of the *hirð*. Although Norwegian lawcodes do contain the term *hirðdrengr*, Hødnebo (1972, 153) notes that this is a borrowing from Swedish. In the mediaeval Swedish by-laws the term *hirdhdrænger* is recorded with a fairly low status and seems to reflect the development of the sense 'servant' or even 'labourer' attested both for Old Swedish *drænger* and also particularly in compounds like *leghodrænger* (Söderwall 1884–1918, I, 202, 747, also supplement, 123).

The nature of the *hirð* of the early eleventh century is most accessible through the study of the Anglo-Danish kings, and in particular the activities of the retainers of Cnut. Of particular interest is the claim made in the *Vederlov* or *Lex castrensis* (from the late twelfth century), the code governing the duties and behaviour of the Danish kings' household, that its earliest form was put together by Cnut for his retinue in England, the *þingalið* (Kroman 1971, 2; Christiansen 1992, 32–33, 44). In his fundamental study Larson (1904, 152–71) suggested that Anglo-Saxon evidence could be used to demonstrate the existence of such a regulated military body in Cnut's reign, even to the extent of forming a specific guild, but Hooper

(1985) has argued convincingly that the case is too weak to support such a conclusion (Christiansen 1992, 7–12), and the assertion that the *Vederlov* as we know it corresponds to a code of Cnut the Great's must be considered uncertain. On the other hand, it is certainly conceivable that Cnut's standing military force may have had some form of body of law (or custom) regulating the status and duties of its members, and if so it is even possible that this may have been codified in England. However, there is little that we know from English sources that can be applied to Denmark without major reservations, and little that supports the identification of the Danish thegns and drengs as members of the royal *hirð*. That Cnut's charters and lawcodes refer to his *þegnas* must reflect more English than Norse vocabulary, and even here the use of *þegn* is often so general that it seems to refer to any freeman under the king rather than a royal servant in particular.

One of the most significant semantic collocations stems from the opening clause of the *Vederlov*, which notes *thet kunung oc andre hætwarthæ men, ther hird skulde hafwa skulde wæræ sina men hollæ oc blithæ oc rætta them rætheliga male therra* 'that the king, and other honourable men who might have a *hird*, should stand by their men and be kindly towards them and be prompt in giving them their pay' (Kroman 1971, 2; translation from Christiansen 1992, 44). The phrase *hætwarthæ men* seems to have a direct analogue in the description of Alli as a **haiþuiarþan þiakn** on the Glavendrup runestone (DR 209), which has led to interpretations that *heiðverðr* carried a technical sense relating to membership of the *hirð*. However, while the form *heiðverðr* is indeed extremely rare, it is a wholly transparent compound of *heiðr* 'honour, value' and *-verðr* 'worth' which could have been coined and re-coined at any time. It does not seem justified, therefore, to draw a link between two attestations separated by around three centuries and to posit any sense more explicit than 'honourable', referring, most probably, to simple qualities of prestige and social status.

Any links between thegns and drengs on the one hand and the *hirð* on the other are therefore fairly tenuous. Rather, the terms which can be reconstructed to denote members of the king's household or retinue contain more explicit semantic reference to this fact, as expressed in forms such as *heimþegi*, *húskarl* and the later *hirðmaðr*. While the evidence of the runic inscriptions and skaldic verse shows that both *drengr* and *þegn* were terms that *could* be applied to describe such men it seems equally clear that they carried a wider semantic range, and that these words reflected rather the social status of those involved.

Aakjær summed up his article with the conclusion that 'the Nordic thegns and drengs were once such royal servants [as in England], members of the king's attendant nobility and of his hird or bodyguard' (1927–28, 28). However, his further remark that 'in the 9th and 10th centuries, we find *konungs drengir ok þegnar* [king's drengs and thegns]' is scarcely justified for Scandinavia, and by contrast Nielsen (1945, 121) preferred the more traditional interpretation that the term *þegn* denoted the free landworking class but *drengr* their sons. While this latter view may seem slightly simplistic, an examination of the primary source materials reveals that it nevertheless has much to recommend it. That historical approaches have tended to link the thegns and drengs of the runic inscriptions with the growth of a royally sanctioned aristocracy derives largely from the necessity of positing *some* royal officers somewhere to account for the development of the Danish state in the tenth and eleventh centuries. As Peter Sawyer put it, 'kings must have had agents . . . not only to lead local defences but also to gather royal resources' (1991, 284). While these agents may well have been recruited from the upper landowning classes, the argument remains somewhat circumstantial, since the linguistic evidence provides little sign that the terms thegn and dreng were used specifically, or even particularly commonly, for these royal officials. The use of *drengr* seems likely only to refer to members of warbands or Viking expeditions without much regard for the status of their employers (if indeed there were any); it could even be suggested that the word would be the closest Old Norse approximation to English 'viking' in its more positive aspects. On the other hand, there is little sign that *þegn* meant anything more than 'free man, landowner' before the influence of English terminology in the eleventh century. The extent to which their lands and positions were held sub-feudally from the king in this period is open to debate, and it equally cannot be disproved that some form of *homagium* was involved, but at any rate there can be no talk of the thegns forming the backbone of the king's *hirð*. According to Birgit Sawyer, 'it can safely be assumed that the thegns and drengs named in Danish inscriptions were in the service of the Danish king and there are reasons to think that some of the thegns and drengs named in Swedish inscriptions also served a Danish king' (1994, 23). However, this must be too narrow an approach; some thegns may have been in the active service of Scandinavian kings but not necessarily all of them, and the 'rank' was probably far more general in application.

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BLEIKIR AKRAR—SNARES OF THE DEVIL? THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PALE CORNFIELDS IN *ALEXANDERS SAGA*

By DAVID ASHURST

ALEXANDERS SAGA IS CURRENTLY a very unfamiliar work in the English-speaking world, so that most people are likely to know its substance, if at all, chiefly through the discussion of it contained in Lars Lönnroth's book on that most popular of Icelandic writings, *Njáls saga*. According to Lönnroth (1976, 159), *Alexanders saga* quite possibly provides the overall framework for the story of Gunnarr Hámundarson, for the basic pattern is the same:

> A young hero gains honor as long as he follows the advice of his Wise Counselor (Njáll, Aristotle), but is beset by misfortune when he forgets the advice in his desire for the alluring beauties of this world.

At a crucial and defining moment in the career of both Gunnarr and Alexander, alluring beauty comes in the form of rural scenery by which both heroes are seduced and fall into error. Both men

> seem motivated by excessive pride and by a foolish desire for what they should not desire. Both of them trust their own fortune too much for their own good (Lönnroth 1976, 154).

Both sagas, it is argued, are the product, to a greater or lesser extent, of that ecclesiastically trained sensibility which Lönnroth calls the 'clerical mind', and it is in the light of this that we should interpret the episodes in which the heroes gaze upon attractive farmlands:

> To a clerical mind in the Middle Ages, the beautiful landscapes seen by Gunnarr and Alexander must have represented a dangerous worldly temptation, snares of the devil. Such an interpretation is clearly intended in *Alexanders saga*, and it also fits well in *Njála* (Lönnroth 1976, 154).

Peter Foote, reviewing Lönnroth's book, noted that in emphasising the clerical stamp of *Njáls saga* Lönnroth played down considerations such as the words which Gunnarr utters after his death when he appears to Skarpheðinn Njálsson and Hǫgni Gunnarsson, in which he declares that he would rather die than yield, and which suggest obedience to the dictates of simple honour in traditional terms rather than the overweening arrogance attributed to Alexander (Foote 1979, 57). There is room to doubt, Foote continued, whether the author of *Njáls saga* actually regarded

Gunnarr as the victim of his own arrogant folly rather than as a nonpareil, the victim of mankind's vicious pettiness. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1993, 306–08) has similarly criticised the attempt to align Gunnarr with specifically Christian clerical values drawn from *Alexanders saga*, on the grounds that *Njáls saga* itself presents Gunnarr's dilemma in terms of honour, and of war versus peace. My purpose in this article, by contrast, is to show that Lönnroth's interpretation of the episode in *Alexanders saga* is in any case quite wrong, and incidentally that the internal evidence of *Alexanders saga*, such as it is, stands against the likelihood of a direct and relevant literary borrowing. The landscape seen by the Macedonian king certainly does have a Christian significance, but one which is as far removed as possible from that of a dangerous worldly temptation.

Evidence of literary borrowing from Alexanders saga *to* Njáls saga

The possible point of contact between Alexander and Gunnarr, noted by Einar Ól. Sveinsson in his edition of *Brennu-Njáls saga* (1954, xxxvi), is in the passage where Alexander, newly arrived in Asia, climbs a hill from which he sees the continent's pale cornfields and the other features of its rich and beautiful land (*AS* 14^{26}–15^{2}):

> Þar mátti hann alla vega sjá frá sér fagra vǫllu, bleika akra, stóra skóga, blómgaða víngarða, sterkar borgir. Ok er konungr sér yfir þessa fegrð alla, þá mælir hann svá til vildarliðs síns: 'Þetta ríki, er nú lít ek yfir, ætla ek mér sjálfum. En Grikkland, fǫðurleifð mína, vil ek nú gefa yðr upp,' segir hann til hǫfðingjanna. Ok svá treystisk hann nú sinni gæfu, at honum þykkir sem þetta liggi laust fyrir.
>
> There he was able to see, in all directions from him, fair meadows, pale cornfields, great forests, blossom-covered vineyards, strong cities. And when the king surveys all this beauty, he says to his chosen men: 'This realm, which I now survey, I intend for myself. But Greece, my patrimony, will I now give up to you,' says he to the generals. And now he trusts to his luck so much that it seems to him as if this is easy to achieve.

The phrase 'pale cornfields', as the nominative *bleikir akrar*, also occurs in *Njáls saga* at the moment when Gunnarr decides not to go into exile but to turn back and face death, citing the beauty of the slope near his home as his reason for this (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, 182):

> Fǫgr er hlíðin, svá at mér hefir hon aldri jafnfǫgr sýnzk, bleikir akrar ok slegin tún, ok mun ek ríða heim aptr ok fara hvergi.

> Fair is the slope, so that it has never seemed to me so fair—pale cornfields and mown enclosures—and I will ride back home and go nowhere.

The occurrence in both texts of the phrase 'pale cornfields', which is not attested anywhere else in saga literature, is what prompts speculation that there might have been a direct and significant literary borrowing into *Njáls saga* from the older work, particularly since appreciative references to natural beauty, common enough in the romance genre, do not appear to be typical of the family sagas, the group to which *Njáls saga* belongs. In addition, Gunnarr's unexpected words have an enigmatic quality demanding explanation and suggesting that the original audiences responded to them on the basis of some ready knowledge which we now lack.

The sharing of a rarely recorded phrase by no means proves that there was a direct borrowing, or that the borrowing need have been significant if there was any. Lönnroth does not claim otherwise. He suggests it is conceivable, in fact, that the Icelandic translator of *Alexanders saga* took the phrase

> from his native 'language of tradition', perhaps even from an oral tale about Gunnarr's return to Hlíðarendi. But the absence of such descriptive phrases in earlier sagas speaks against this interpretation (1976, 154, note 69).

It appears more likely, he continues, that the translator of *Alexanders saga* invented the phrase himself in a successful attempt to make the poetic language of the Latin original more succinct and effective.

The likelihood that the phrase was merely standard, however, is greatly increased by analysis of the compositional technique of *Alexanders saga* as compared with its source, Walter of Châtillon's twelfth-century *Alexandreis*, a Latin epic whose quibbling and rhetorically packed hexameters present us with a much more solid and fixed literary artefact than is the case with the source of any other translated saga. As was to be expected, the translator very regularly deviates from the Latin wording if there is a native idiom to hand. This is his stock-in-trade and examples of it are legion: they permeate the linguistic texture of *Alexanders saga*, whether as substitutions or as outright additions, as single words, short phrases or entire sayings. Full analysis of these deviations from the source —their types, functions and consistent application—could form the topic of a long article revealing much about the saga-writer's literary-critical awareness, which is impressive; but here a few illustrations must suffice to indicate their range.

In the first place, and readiest to hand, are turns of phrase such as the fair/false dichotomy found in *Hávamál* (1986, stanza 45) as well as many

other works. It is used in Book X when Treason speaks of the general who is about to murder the king, and says (*AS* 148[11–14]):

> Minn fóstrson, er Antipater heitir, einn hǫfðingi í her Alexandri, sá er þat skaplyndi hefir er mér líkar, kann láta fagrt, þó at hann hyggi flátt, ætlar á fund hans.
>
> My foster-son, who is called Antipater, a general in Alexander's army, who has the disposition which I like, knowing how to act fair though he may think false, means to visit him.

This neatly replaces, with economy quite typical of the translation, the following sentence in the Latin source (Walter 1978, X 150–53):

> Nam meus Antipater, Macedum prefectus, ab ipsis
> Cunarum lacrimis pretendere doctus amorem
> Voce sed occultis odium celare medullis,
> Ad regem ire parat.
>
> For Antipater, Governor of Macedonia and my own favourite, who from the very tears of the cradle has shown skill in feigning love in speech whilst concealing hatred in the recesses of his heart, is even now preparing to come to the king (trans. Pritchard, Walter 1986, 222).

At the other extreme, the readiness to employ native idioms occasionally results in the addition of material not found in the Latin. The Scythian ambassador's speech, for example, contains a list of proverbs on the mutability of fortune which, in the saga, includes the remark: *Optliga veltir lítil þúfa miklu hlassi* (*AS* 126[28]), 'Often a little hillock overturns a great cartload.' This saying, which also occurs in *Sturlunga saga* (1906–11, I 394), has no correlative in the epic (see Walter 1978, VIII 391–403).

Examining those deviations from the Latin text which involve substitutions or additions provides a good way, in fact, of pinpointing sayings likely to have been current at the time but which are not attested elsewhere. An example of this can be found in Aristotle's warning against the promotion of low-class servants: *Þat er ok órunum næst, er veslu[m] batnar* (*AS* 4[25]), 'That which advances the poor is also next to madness.' Obscure and problematical though it is, this remark certainly looks like an adage. There is no parallel to it in any of the four Latin glosses reproduced in Colker's edition of the *Alexandreis* (Walter 1978, pp. 278, 307, 360 and 496), and it deviates markedly from the poem (Walter 1978, I 89–91):

> Sic partis opibus et honoris culmine seruus
> In dominum surgens, truculentior aspide surda,
> Obturat precibus aures, mansuescere nescit.

> Even so a servitor, gaining power and the height of honour and rising against his master more savagely than a deaf viper, shuts his ears to entreaties and knows not how to relent (trans. Pritchard, Walter 1986, 38).

It is possible, also, to detect Old Norse sayings behind some smaller changes to the text, as in the substitution of *konurnar* 'women' in place of *amor* 'love' when Aristotle inveighs against dangerous pleasures. In the Latin this reads (Walter 1978, I 165–66):

> nec fortia pectora frangat
> Mentis morbus amor.
>
> Nor let love, the mind's disease, break your stout heart (trans. Pritchard, Walter 1986, 40).

In the Old Norse text, the philosopher says *Lát ok eigi heimskliga konurnar hugsýkja eða vanmegna sterkan hug* (*AS* 7[5–6]), 'And do not stupidly allow women to distress or weaken your strong mind.' This change need not stem directly from a more virulent misogyny on the part of the translator, but could well come from the wish to make use of an aphorism of the type attested in *Vǫlsunga saga* (1965, 40):

> Lát eigi tæla þik fagrar konur, þótt þú sjáir at veizlum, svá at þat standi þér fyrir svefni eða þú fáir af því hugarekka.
>
> Do not let beautiful women ensnare you, though you see them at feasts, so that it obstructs your sleep or you get heartache from it.

See also *Sigrdrífumál* (*Edda* 1983, 195, stanza 28).

It is against the background of such deviations from the detail of its source that we must approach the passage in *Alexanders saga* where the Macedonian king surveys Asia from the hill-top. Here we find that the pale (ripe) cornfields do not correspond exactly to the (green) corn of the poem (Walter 1978, I 436–40):

> Hinc ubi uernantes Cereali gramine campos,
> Tot nemorum saltus, tot prata uirentibus herbis
> Lasciuire uidet tot cinctas menibus urbes,
> Tot Bachi frutices, tot nuptas uitibus ulmos,
> 'Iam satis est,' inquit.
>
> When he saw from here the plains growing green with the Cerean herb (i. e. corn), so many forest pastures, so many meadows luxuriant with verdant grasses, so many cities girt with walls, so many grape-vines and so many elms wedded to the vine, he shouted, 'It is now enough, my friends!' (trans. Pritchard, Walter 1986, 49, modified).

Clearly this is a vernal scene, as is implied by the word *uernantes* (although Pritchard's translation actually renders this as 'blooming'), which is

related to *ver*, 'spring', and to *vernus*, 'spring-like', and comes from *verno*, which Lewis and Short (1879) give as 'to appear like spring, to flourish, be verdant'. There are also connotations of spring in the word *uirentibus*, from *vireo*, which means 'to be green' and also 'to be fresh', according to Lewis and Short (1879).

Lönnroth's suggestion (1976, 154) that the translator of *Alexanders saga* himself invented the phrase *bleikir akrar* to make Walter's poetic language more succinct and effective is not compelling. Why should ripe corn be more succinct and effective than springing corn? Certainly the translator could have made up a phrase for the sake of fancy, but it is not clear why he should have transmuted into harvest time what is a vernal scene emphasising the potential of Alexander's new land. In the absence of a clear aesthetic motive for this change, the stronger possibility must be that the translator was merely following his frequent practice of substituting, perhaps automatically, an Old Norse phrase which was common property and ready to hand. The likelihood that a substitution of this kind was made is greatly strengthened, furthermore, by the fact that the translator, who is normally subtle in perceiving the drift of his source and careful in following his own literary objectives, has here made what could be a mistake: he has ripe corn side by side with *blómgaðir víngarðar*, 'blossom-covered vineyards'. The last phrase shows that he was well aware of the springtime setting of Walter's scene, and yet 'pale cornfields' came to his pen and slipped into the text.

The chances are, therefore, that the expression was pre-existent and familiar when *Alexanders saga* was being composed and that, consequently, it would have been available to the writer of *Njáls saga* independently of the translated work. This is entirely plausible since the phrase corresponds to an easily observed reality: fields of grain do turn very pale when the crop is ripe. The coupling of ideas, furthermore, is implicit in a text which must have been widely known in the thirteenth century, John 4: 35: *levate oculos vestros et videte regiones quia albae sunt iam ad messem* (*Biblia* 1969), 'Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.'[1] Here the word *albus* corresponds to *bleikr*; it signifies 'pale' or, more commonly, 'dead white' as opposed to *candidus*, 'dazzling white' (Lewis and Short 1879, under *albus*). We do not, then, have an expression which exactly parallels 'pale cornfields' but, as Peter Foote (1979, 56) points

[1] Biblical citations follow the modern division into chapter and verse, and English quotations are from the Authorised Version.

out, given the Gospel phrase it is hard to think that an association of 'white' and 'harvest fields' was a medieval rarity.

Suppose, however, that the writer of *Alexanders saga* did invent the term 'pale cornfields', and that the author of *Njáls saga* took it as a literary loan. The phrase is a pretty one which could easily have been borrowed for its own sake, and it by no means follows that its context was borrowed along with it. For the borrowing to be significant there must be clear parallels between the two contexts in which the phrase is used. It therefore matters a great deal, contrary to what Lönnroth (1976, 154) implies, that Alexander, who is young, vigorous and at the start of his career, claims the pale cornfields as part of his new realm, for the sake of which he gives away his own homeland, whereas Gunnarr, who is doom-laden and near the end of his life, cannot relinquish the pale cornfields and his home meadow. Set forth in this way, the situations correspond as opposites rather than parallels; but in reality all they have in common is that the two men, like any men in a position of ownership, see the pale cornfields as beautiful, as well as valuable, real estate.

Despite the above, Lönnroth (1976, 154) sees a parallel between the two episodes, on the basis that 'both their choices represent a clear violation of the advice given by their respective Wise Counselors (Aristotle and Njáll).' The first objection to this statement must be that the pairing together of Aristotle and Njáll in this way under the single appellation 'Wise Counselors' itself suggests a greater correspondence between the two figures than is actually the case. Whereas Njáll fulfils a complex role as friend, adviser and prophet throughout Gunnarr's career, Aristotle appears only as a bit-player in *Alexanders saga*, and only in the first of its ten books. We catch a glimpse of him as chief of Alexander's scribes at the king's coronation (*AS* $9^{18–20}$), and apart from this there is only the one scene ($3^{18}–8^{2}$) in which, as schoolmaster to the boy Alexander, he delivers platitudinous instruction in a long set speech ($4^{13}–7^{26}$).

But if the two counsellors do not really correspond, in what parallel ways do Gunnarr and Alexander fail to heed the advice which each has been given? Lönnroth (1976, 154) gives the explanation, quoted above, that both heroes seem motivated by excessive pride and by a foolish desire for what they should not desire, and both of them trust their own fortune too much for their own good. In other words, the question of parallels and borrowings comes down to the interpretation of the hill-top episode in *Alexanders saga*; and it is to this matter that I now turn.

The episode on the hill-top

There is little need to speculate about what the beautiful landscape in *Alexanders saga* might have represented to 'a clerical mind in the Middle Ages' as Lönnroth does (1976, 154), for the passage itself indicates what is going on in the hero's thoughts.

The loveliness of Asia is presented in terms of the land's rich resources: even more than in the Latin, in the Old Norse version, with its productive cornfields, great forests and blossom-covered vineyards which are to be guarded and enjoyed by strong cities, the usefulness and profitability of the land are integral parts of its aesthetic appeal. Alexander surveys all this beauty, claims everything for himself and offers to compensate his generals for his confiscation of the riches they would otherwise have won, by giving them his own lands in Greece (*AS* 14^{26}–15^{1}, quoted above).

His offer is no empty rhetoric, for Alexander proceeds to do exactly what he has said (*AS* $15^{3–4}$):

> En hann skiptir nú Grikklandi með þeim af stórmenninu er honum þóttu þess makligstir.
>
> But now he divides Greece between those men of the nobility who seemed to him the most deserving of it.

In the preceding two lines it is made clear that he is able to offer this astonishing gift because of his confidence that the Asian kingdom will fall to him ($15^{1–2}$):

> Ok svá treystisk hann nú sinni gæfu, at honum þykkir sem þetta liggi laust fyrir.
>
> And now he trusts to his luck so much that it seems to him as if this is easy to achieve.

On the basis of the same confidence he immediately sets about looking after his new realm as a good king should. The Latin text, in fact, makes this sense of responsibility the reason why he claimed everything for himself in the first place, since it remarks of the whole episode (Walter 1978, I 445–46):

> sic a populantibus agros
> Liberat et pecorum raptus auertit ab hoste.
>
> In this way he freed the fields from plunderers and saved the enemy from cattle-rustling by his men (trans. Pritchard, Walter 1986, 49).

The saga version somewhat blunts the logic here by suppressing the word *sic*, and consequently leaves Alexander slightly more exposed to possible accusations of greed (*AS* 15[4–7]):

> Hann bannaði nú ok sínum mǫnnum at taka þar strandhǫgg, eða gera annat óspakligt, jafnt sem hann ætti sjálfr hvatvetna þat er fyrir var.
>
> Now he also forbade his men to take plunder there, or do anything else unruly, just as if he owned everything which was there.

The more generalised reference to public order, on the other hand, emphasises his serious kingly intent.

Examination of Walter's own sources confirms that the passage has been assembled carefully to create this dramatic moment in the Latin epic. There is no corresponding episode in the major source, the *History of Alexander* by Quintus Curtius; if there ever was, then it would have been in the missing Book II which had been lost long before Walter's time. The hill-top panorama, in fact, is Walter's free fantasy on the basis of miscellaneous classical motifs (cf. Colker's *apparatus fontium* for Walter 1978, I 436–40); but Alexander's instruction to his men not to lay waste Asia comes from Justinus (1935, XI 6.1). The division of Greece between the worthiest generals, however, has been culled from Justinus XI 5.5, where it happens before the fleet leaves home. That would have been at least as rational a place for it, but its position here, at the moment when Alexander sees Asia for the first time and claims it as his own, clearly makes the episode much more striking, which is always a prime consideration for Walter. At the same time, and more important for the present discussion, the giving away of his patrimony absolves Alexander of unmitigated greed, underlines his confidence, and highlights the fact that there is good and sober statesmanship even in his apparent impetuosity. The last point is further emphasised by the ban on plundering.

The confidence underlying Alexander's actions in this episode is what Lönnroth construed as excessive pride, and also as a turning away from the lesson which Aristotle had taught in his role as the boy Alexander's schoolmaster (Lönnroth 1976, 154):

> Here Alexander is about to forget his tutor's good advice and become far too ambitious.

In fact, however, the statement that Alexander trusts his luck so much that the conquest of Asia seems easy to achieve, far from suggesting a rejection of Aristotle's advice, merely repeats what the immediate effects of that advice had originally been (*AS* 7[26]–8[5]):

> Þvílík ráð kenndi Aristotiles Alexandro sem nú er sagt, ok ǫll varðveitti hann þau virkuliga sér í brjósti. Nú girnisk hann engis annars en ryðja sér til ríkis með oddi ok eggju; ok þat gerir hann sér þegar í hug, at ekki vætta myndi við honum rǫnd reisa.
>
> Aristotle taught Alexander such counsels as have now been recounted, and he kept them all carefully in his heart. Now he wants nothing else but to clear his way to power with point and edge; and he imagines forthwith that no one would raise a shield against him.

Nor does the fact that Alexander must seize his new realm by bloody conquest go against Aristotle's advice in any way. The philosopher makes allowance for precisely this at the point where he warns his young charge to be especially generous towards his own men after they have taken enemy strongholds (*AS* $6^{11–15}$):

> Nú kemr þar at borgirnar gefask upp í þitt vald, eða þú hefir at jǫrðu lagt þá er eigi vildu sjálfkrafa upp gefask, þá skaltu upplúka féhirzlum þínum ok gefa á tvær hendr riddurunum ok smyrja svá sár þeirra með gjǫfunum.
>
> Now when it happens that the cities give themselves up to your power or you have brought down those which would not surrender voluntarily, you must open your treasury and give to the knights right and left, and thus anoint their wounds with gifts.

The immediate and explicit purpose of Aristotle's long speech (*AS* 4^{13}–7^{26}) is in fact to inform and direct, and not at all to stifle, the twelve-year-old Alexander's rage against Persian tyranny. Finding the boy visibly moved to anger, the philosopher begins his instruction by saying ($4^{13–15}$),

> Með því at þér sé stórt í hug, þá prýddu þik fyrst með ráðspekinni en tak síðan til vápna þinna eptir fýst þinni.
>
> Since you are great at heart, adorn yourself first with wisdom and then take up your weapons according to your wish.

The wish to take up weapons against Persia makes the young Alexander regret his inevitable weakness during childhood (*AS* $2^{16–17}$):

> 'Mikit mein er þat,' sagði hann, 'at maðrinn skal svá seint taka sitt afl.'
>
> 'It is a great pity,' said he, 'that a man must reach his full strength so slowly.'

His eagerness to be about the work of vengeance, for which merely defending the land against the Great King would not be sufficient, is stressed repeatedly in the early part of the saga (2^{16}–3^{17}, 3^{25}–4^{11} and $8^{15–19}$); and this culminates in a statement that Alexander never looked back when the time came for his army to embark against Asia. Since this has a bearing on what Alexander says on the hill-top, and since Gunnarr, for his part, does look

back when he is about to leave Iceland, the significance of this statement will now be looked at in some detail.

By the time the fleet sets out, Alexander's forces, collected throughout Greece as well as Macedonia, are inspired by love of their leader and by the prospect of improved status (*AS* 14[4–6]):

> Þeir Grikkirnir váru nú fúsir til at fylgja konungi ok berjask með honum sér til fjár ok metnaðar.
>
> Those Greeks were now eager to follow the king and fight alongside him for wealth and honour.

Even so, they feel a pang on leaving their homeland (14[6–8]):

> En allir af þeim í svá miklum her, nema einn, þá settu augu sín aptr um skut meðan þeir máttu nǫkkurn vita sjá til fóstrjarðar sinnar.
>
> But all of them in so great a host, except one, then fixed their eyes back across the stern while they could see any sign of their native land.

To be in line with Lönnroth's explanation of what lies behind Gunnarr's roughly similar backward glance, the 'clerical mind' should regard as morally suspect this attachment to so worldy an object as home; and suspicion of its ethical standing, in fact, is exactly what Walter (1978, I 365) does express:

> O patriae natalis amor, sic allicis omnes.
>
> O love of natal land, how you entice all men.

The word *allicis* (Classical spelling *adlicis*, literally 'you entice') here does not necessarily express censure, and the translation could have been rendered as 'how you draw all men to yourself'. But it is morally ambiguous, and its negative connotations are reinforced at I 371, where it is portrayed as something which interferes with the soldiers' *mentis acumen*, 'keenness of mind', towards their Persian enemies. The writer of *Alexanders saga*, however, makes less of the ethical ambiguities at this point and takes a more positive view of the army's backward glances, or at least a morally neutral one: *Þar mátti þá marka hversu mikit flestir unna sínu fóstrlandi* (*AS* 14[3–4]), 'There could it be observed, at that time, how greatly most men love their homeland.'

The ordinary soldiers feel this natural emotion despite their eagerness for battle and plunder. Alexander, on the other hand, is unmoved (*AS* 14[9–12]):

> Konungr sjálfr leit aldregi aptr til landsins. Svá var honum mikil fýst á at berjask við Darium konung at hann gleymdi þegar fóstrlandi sínu—ok var þar eptir móðir hans ok systr.

> The king himself never looked back to land. So keen was he to fight against King Darius that he immediately forgot his homeland—and his mother and sisters were staying behind there.

This should not be taken as a statement of Alexander's cold ruthlessness but as the sort of over-emphasis which seems unfortunate only to modern taste; it super-intensifies the point that Alexander was very keen to get on with the job.[2] The succession of ideas in this passage is that Alexander's troops were eager to fight the Persians despite feeling homesick, which shows just how eager they were, but Alexander was more eager still. In fact the saga has already laboured the message about what Alexander's feelings towards his homeland were (*AS* 4[5–8]):

> 'Þungt þykki mér þat at faðir minn elligamall skal lýðskyldr rangligum krǫfum Daríi konungs, ok þar með allt fóstrland mitt.' Ok þar mátti hann þá ekki fleira um tala, því at þessu næst kom grátr upp.
>
> 'It seems oppressive to me that my very aged father, with all my native land, must yield homage to the unjust demands of King Darius.' And then he could speak no more about it, because next moment he burst into tears.

And his motives for the Persian campaign have been stated in a passage freely composed by the translator and inserted into the narrative, in which Alexander begins to mobilise his forces as soon as he has taken over the reins of government (*AS* 8[16–19]):

> Því næst býr hann sik til hernaðar, eigi at eins sér til frægðar ok framkvæmdar, heldr ok til frelsis ǫllu fóstrlandi sínu því er áðr lá undir miklu áþjánaroki.
>
> Next he prepares himself for war, not only for his own fame and prowess but also for the freedom of his whole native country, which before lay under a great yoke of oppression.

Paradoxically, then, love for his homeland is depicted as one of the main reasons why he so single-mindedly turns away and sets his face towards the land of his enemies.

In this context there is, of course, what must strike the modern reader as a psychological improbability about the king's sudden giving-away of his own land in favour of what he sees from the hill-top; but the saga-writer in

[2] Compare this with the hyperbole expressing the effects of first love on Guiamar, the much-admired knight, in *Strengleikar* (1979, 24–25): *kænnir hann nu þat er hann kændi alldri fyrr. Allu hævir hann nu glœymt fostr/lande sinu fæðr ok frændom ok fostrbrœðrum. ok kænner hann allzængan verk sarssins*. 'He feels now what he never felt before. He has now forgotten his native country entirely, his father and his relatives and his foster-brothers, and he feels no pain at all from his wound.'

particular has tried to prepare for this through the hyperbolic statement that Alexander promptly forgot Greece because of his eagerness to fight Darius, whereas Walter (1978, I 375–76) attributes this emotional *volte-face* to the entire fleet. At the same time, and in contradiction to the literal meaning of the exaggeration, the saga affirms Alexander's continued sense of responsibility towards his patrimony by saying that he divided it between 'those men of the nobility who seemed to him the most deserving of it' (*AS* 15[3–4], quoted p. 279 above), a phrase which has no correlative in the Latin (cf. Walter 1978, I 442).

By this point it should have become clear that both Walter and his translator have tried quite hard to prepare for the moment on the hill-top when Alexander claims his new realm, and to present it in the best possible light. The passage as a whole has been constructed so as to stress his confidence in his destiny, his generous care for his new land and subjects, and his careful generosity towards his own men, whom he must not alienate. It is true that the Latin and Old Norse writers have not quite managed to eradicate all suspicion of greed and heartlessness, and they have not yet explained the basis of that confidence which Lönnroth (1976, 154) perceived as excessive pride, desire for what should not be desired and too much trust in good fortune. But it turns out that they have not yet finished with the matter.

The shining visitant

A few pages later, near the end of Book I, Alexander explains to his men why he is so confident of victory. In a story adapting one which descends from the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus (1926–65, XI 333–44), according to which God appears to Alexander in a dream and assures him of success in the conquest of Persia, the king is made to relate how in the period immediately after his accession he lay awake at night (*AS* 17[1–2]):

> Ok hugsaða ek með mér hvárt ek skylda at eins verja þat ríki er faðir minn hafði átt, eða afla mér meira.
>
> And I pondered whether I should only defend the realm which my father had possessed, or gain a bigger one for myself.

The last clause constitutes a significant change to the Latin Alexander's motivation, though one which accords well with what follows, since Walter (1978, I 509) has it that Alexander was merely *incertus sequererne hostes patriamne tuerer*, 'uncertain whether to pursue the enemy or guard the fatherland'. At this point, says Alexander, he witnessed an apparition (*AS* 17[4–6]):

> Kom mikit ok bjart ljós yfir mik. Því ljósi fylgði einn gǫfugligr maðr, ef lofat skal mann at kalla.
>
> A great and bright light passed over me. A noble-looking man accompanied that light, if it will be permitted to call him a man.

The Latin text (Walter 1978, I 517–20) scrupulously limits Alexander to describing the man as being strangely dressed in a way suggestive of a priest whereas the saga, less realistically, has Alexander speak with an understanding which he could hardly have acquired at this point in the story (*AS* 17[6–8]):

> Hann var harðla vel klæddr, ok því líkast sem biskupar þá er þeir eru skrýddir biskupsskrúði.
>
> He was dressed magnificently, and most like High Priests when they are arrayed in a High Priest's vestments.

The twelve gems sewn onto the man's breastpiece show for certain that he is not dressed as a Christian bishop but as the High Priest of the Jews.[3] In addition, the man has something mysterious written on his forehead; the Old Norse version interjects, in Latin/Greek, *scilicet tetragrammaton* (*AS* 17[10]), 'viz. the name of God', although Alexander hastens to add, in both the Latin and Old Norse versions, that he could not understand what was written because he did not know the language.

As Josephus tells the story, the visitor is explicitly said to be God; probably, in the Christian context of the saga and its source, we are to recognise this figure as Christ in his role as the Great High Priest, a characterisation of him which stems directly from the New Testament.[4] Certainly he speaks with God-like authority and in terms which go far beyond the Josephan promise of help against Persia (*AS* 17[17–18], corresponding to Walter 1978, I 532–33):

> Farðu á braut af fóstrlandi þínu, Alexander, því at ek mun allt folk undir þik leggja.

[3] See Exodus 28: 15–21. The word *biskup* is used without elaboration to signify the Jewish High Priest in *Gyðinga saga* (1995, 4, 14 and 19). Since Josephus' story was popular in European Alexander-literature, it is likely that most people listening to the saga would immediately understand *biskup* in this way; others would experience only a moment's confusion. For a discussion of whether *Gyðinga saga* is the work of the same translator as *Alexanders saga*, see Wolf 1988.

[4] See Hebrews 4: 14, and 5: 6 which is based on Psalm 110: 4. The Melchizedek referred to in these scriptures was the priest-king of Jerusalem in the days of Abraham (see Genesis 14: 18).

> Go forth from your native land, Alexander, because I will subject to you all people.

The first part of this is reminiscent of God's command to Abraham (Genesis 12: 1):

> Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I shall shew thee.

The remainder suggests, amongst various scriptures,[5] the account of the coming of the Son of Man in Daniel 7: 14:

> And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.

This last text comes between two biblical references to Alexander himself, in Daniel 7: 6 and Daniel 8: 5–8, the second of which is unmistakably alluded to in the *Alexandreis* (Walter 1978, VI 3) and less explicitly in the translation (*AS* 84[11–13]). It appears, then, that Alexander is being addressed here as a chosen one, a 'type' of Christ, a characterisation of him which can also be found, for example, in allegorical interpretations of stories from the *Gesta Romanorum*.[6] This idea is picked up again in the last book of the saga, and of the epic, where the Infernal Powers fear that he might, by force of arms, perform the role of Christ in a Harrowing of Hell; it is this possibility, in fact, which precipitates his death (cf. *Bearings*, pages 288–90 below). The implications of Alexander's role as a Christ-figure are complex, and it is not easy to see how far the messianic analogy can be pressed; but what is perfectly clear is that, in the episode of the shining visitant, Alexander is being given a divine promise and a mission.

There is a condition attached, one which is not overtly stated in the story as Josephus has it. Before vanishing into the air, the shining visitant adds (*AS* 17[18–20], corresponding to Walter 1978, I 534–35):

> Ok ef þú sér mik nǫkkut sinn þvílíkan sem nú sýnumsk ek þér, þá skaltu þyrma mínum mǫnnum fyrir mínar sakir.
>
> And if you see me at some time as I appear to you now, you must spare my people for my sake.

[5] For example Psalm 72: 11, which refers to Messiah: 'Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.'

[6] On the other hand, he also appears as a type of the devil. For a discussion of Alexander as Christ and devil in the *Gesta Romanorum*, see Cary 1956, 156 and 301–03, note 65. Stories in which Alexander features as Christ appear in Oesterley 1872, 589–90 and 610–11; neither of these anecdotes is in Dick 1890. Alexander appears as the devil in Oesterley 1872, 589, corresponding to Dick 1890, 46.

Alexander's speech ends, and the narrator, in both the Latin and the Old Norse versions, adds that the revelation was authenticated by subsequent events: *En þessi vitran fekk sína framkvæmd litlu síðar, ok sannaðisk* (*AS* 17[27–28], corresponding to Walter 1978, I 539), 'But this vision attained its fulfilment a little later, and proved true.' There is therefore no possibility of construing Alexander's story as fictional self-promotion. The proof, which is narrated immediately (*AS* 17[28]–18[21], corresponding to Walter 1978, I 539–54), comes in the form of a related anecdote also stemming from Josephus (1926–65, XI 329–39): after the sack of Tyre, Alexander with a large army approaches Jerusalem in anger, but he is met by the High Priest wearing full ceremonial robes; to everyone's surprise, the conqueror does homage to this man and shows favour to the Holy City.

After this story has been told it can be seen that the episode of the prophetic visitation fulfils a triple purpose in the narrative. In the first place it serves most immediately, as it does in Josephus, to explain Alexander's strange behaviour towards the High Priest, which was taken as historical by medieval writers. It was universally agreed that Alexander's successes were in some sense the will of God, but those Christian theologians who were hostile to him took the view that, as a pagan, he must have been the blind instrument of that will. The story of his obeisance to the High Priest therefore tended to be explained away, if it was included at all, by saying, for example, that God compelled Alexander to act this way as a sign of His own omnipotence, and that it was therefore no act of true reverence. In the writings of these theologians, the story of the dream in which God promises to help Alexander is usually ignored (cf. Cary 1956, 125–30). Walter and his translator, however, by using a version of the dream story to explain Alexander's homage as conscious obedience, were emphatically separating themselves from that theological tradition, even though they make it clear that the king remained pagan and in ignorance of God's name. By treating the material in this way they were aligning their works with popular Alexander literature, which took a much more positive view of its hero and in which the Jerusalem incident was a favourite episode.

Secondly, the fundamental moral validity of Alexander's programme of conquest is affirmed by the visitation story through the fact of the divine promise to subject all nations to Alexander, which is immediately authenticated by the meeting with the High Priest. The saga-writer indicates his understanding of this issue when, as noted above, he substitutes *afla mér meira*, 'gain a bigger one for myself', in place of *sequererne hostes*, 'pursue the enemy', as the alternative to merely defending the fatherland. This is not to say, despite the Messianic overtones, that the promise justifies

every (or indeed any) particular act on Alexander's part; but it validates the programme as something which goes beyond mere vengeance against the Persians and beyond the conquest of the Persian empire alone, which was the promise in the Josephan version.

Thirdly, and most important for this discussion, the episode of the shining visitant casts light back on Alexander's actions on the hill-top, and on the course which led him there. It serves to clarify his motivations and to overwhelm any lingering suspicions which we might have about Alexander's coldness of heart, over-confidence in his own good fortune, or greedy desire for what he should not desire. Each possible fault is made into a theological virtue. Now it can be seen that Alexander, alone of all the departing fleet, was able to avoid looking back because he alone had received God's command to go; his eagerness was joyful obedience. And the confidence of victory which allowed him to give away his father's realm now appears as an act of faith. As to the pale cornfields, they are not a temptation but a Promised Land; by claiming them Alexander is laying hold of the promise of God, with whatever new responsibilities that might entail.

A final point may be added here, although it belongs strictly to the realm of speculation. If the phrase *bleikir akrar* was in fact associated with John 4: 35, or if that scripture was in the mind of the translator of *Alexanders saga*, then it is easy to imagine how 'pale cornfields' slipped into the text, or why the translator perhaps chose to use the expression despite the awkward clash with 'blossom-covered vineyards'. The Gospel verse, as can now be seen, fits very well with the above interpretation of the passage in which Alexander claims the land which God has promised him, for in its context it is Christ's affirmation of the need to brook no delay but to see with the eyes of faith what God has given, to set immediately about God's work and to reap its reward (John 4: 34–36):

> My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages.

Bearings

Do these conclusions about *Alexanders saga* throw any light on the pale cornfields as they appear in *Njáls saga*? Obviously the answer is 'no'. There is no possible parallel in terms of Christian significance between Gunnarr's decision to risk death amongst the cornfields of his own homestead, and Alexander's act of laying claim to a fertile stretch of Asia Minor

as the first instalment of God's promise of world hegemony. All that the two episodes have in common for sure is an awareness that productive farmland is beautiful to its owners, expressed in a phrase which examination of *Alexanders saga* suggests was a standard figure of speech, and which may or may not have had religious overtones.

The scriptural connotations of *bleikir akrar*, if they exist, have an immediate relevance to the episode in *Alexanders saga* in which the phrase occurs, and they underline its meaning; but in the context of *Njáls saga* they bring little clarification to Gunnarr's use of the phrase or to his reasons for returning home to Hlíðarendi. If there is any kind of allusion to John 4: 35 in the *Njáls saga* passage, is it ironic, since it is Gunnarr himself who may be said to be ripe for harvest? Or does it imply that the pagan hero is somehow choosing the kingdom of God rather than long life in the world, exiled from Iceland? Or is the allusion merely prompted by the fact that Gunnarr looks up to the fields? At best these considerations serve only to increase the enigmatic quality of Gunnarr's unexpected words, which remain mysterious to the extent that they are not explained by their context as the thoughts of a man destabilised by depression, who one moment declares pettishly that he will never return to his home, and the next finds that he cannot bear to leave it. My own feeling is that there is something more than this behind the passage; but to find out what it may be, it is no use looking in *Alexanders saga*.

On the other hand, the significance of the pale cornfields in *Alexanders saga* turns out to be something well worth looking at for its own sake. In place of a cliché about greed and pride, we find something which will seem much more intriguing, not to say bizarre, to modern readers steeped in values which are predominantly democratic, anti-heroic, anti-militarist and secular. Alexander's response to the pale cornfields is not his first false step down the road which leads to tyranny punishable by death; it is his first giant leap in a career which, despite the moral failings for which Alexander is roundly criticised from time to time, ends in the fulfilment of God's promise to make him sole ruler of the whole world (*AS* 149^{32}–150^{15}, corresponding to Walter 1978, X 216–48). Alexander in turn promises to govern the world with mercy and mildness towards all who willingly serve (*AS* 150^{25}–151^{3}, corresponding to Walter 1978, X 282–98; and compare with the words of Jesus in Matt. 11: 29–30). Now at the apex of power, he declares that he would like to go raiding in the other world of the Antipodes (*AS* $151^{13–20}$, corresponding to Walter 1978, X 312–19, and recapitulating *AS* $144^{3–10}$, corresponding to Walter 1978, IX 563–70); and so, at this very late stage in his career, he does indeed desire what he should not desire. But he

does not live to commit the trespass. At this point he is cut down not by God but by the devil, who fears that Alexander might possibly besiege Hell and carry off the souls of the dead (*AS* 147[1–3] and 147[27]–148[5], corresponding to Walter 1978, X 98–100 and X 131–42). Putting it another way, Alexander is removed before his quasi-messianic role can prompt him to usurp that of the actual Christ. In this manner, Walter of Châtillon and his translator struggle with the question of how it could have come about that so much should be achieved by a man who was a pagan and certainly no saint. Their sense of wonder is palpable (*AS* 84[5–7]):

> Vildi guð at nú væri Frakkakonungr slíkr sem Alexander var. Þá mundi skjótt allr heimr þjóna réttri trú.
>
> Would God that there were now a French king such as Alexander was. Then all the world would soon serve the true faith.

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IN HONOUR OF ST ÓLÁFR: THE MIRACLE STORIES IN SNORRI STURLUSON'S *ÓLÁFS SAGA HELGA*

By CARL PHELPSTEAD

MIRACLES WERE REPORTED soon after King Óláfr Haraldsson was killed at the Battle of Stiklarstaðir on 29 July 1030. Óláfr had returned to Norway from exile in Russia in an attempt to regain his former kingdom. Control of Norway had passed to Denmark in 1029 when Knútr ríki of Denmark and England had taken advantage of an uprising against Óláfr to extend still further his North Sea empire (on Óláfr's life see Jones 1984, 374–86). After the failure of Óláfr's attempt to regain Norway he began to acquire a posthumous reputation for working miracles and became the first Scandinavian ruler to be considered a saint, a royal martyr. His relics were enshrined just over a year after his death, and disaffection with Danish rule fostered belief in his sanctity. Following Knútr's death in 1035 Óláfr's son Magnús was recalled from exile in Russia, and during his reign the cult of his father became firmly established in Norway. The cult drew on hagiographic and cultic traditions of Germanic royal sainthood originating in Merovingian Francia which came to Scandinavia from Anglo-Saxon England (see Hoffmann 1975, especially pp. 58–89). Veneration of St Óláfr spread rapidly throughout Scandinavia, the British Isles, and as far as Byzantium (Dickins 1937–45; Svahnström 1981). Icelanders (other than skalds) were initially unenthusiastic, probably because of their devotion to Óláfr Tryggvason, who had initiated the conversion of Iceland, and possibly because of anxieties about Norwegian claims to sovereignty over Iceland (Cormack 1994, 143). Eventually, however, Óláfr became one of the most popular saints in Iceland (on Óláfr's cult in Iceland see Cormack 1994, 138–44).

The Life of St Óláfr, *Óláfs saga helga*, by the great Icelandic scholar, poet and statesman, Snorri Sturluson (1178/79–1241), survives in two forms: as a *Separate Saga* (Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941) and as the central third of Snorri's *Heimskringla* (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51).[1] Snorri

[1] Although Snorri is not named as the author of either version in any vellum manuscript the evidence for his authorship is compelling: see Whaley 1991, 13–19, with references to earlier scholarship. There was considerable debate about whether the *Separate Saga* and *Heimskringla* versions were by the same author, and if so which was the earlier, until Sigurður Nordal's full discussion of the issue, in which he concludes that both works are by Snorri

probably completed the *Separate Saga* between 1220, when he returned from his first visit to Norway, and 1230, when Sturla Sigvatsson visited him and, according to *Íslendinga saga* (Jón Jóhannesson *et al.* 1946, I 342),

> lagði mikinn hug á at láta rita sögubækr eftir bókum þeim, er Snorri setti saman.
>
> took a great interest in having saga-books copied from those books which Snorri had compiled.

Snorri went on to compose a connected series of sixteen sagas covering Norwegian history from its mythical origins to the year 1177. A modified version of his saga of Óláfr Haraldsson forms the centrepiece of this work, known today from its opening words as *Heimskringla*. *Heimskringla* was probably completed around 1235, before Snorri's second visit to Norway in 1237. The number of manuscripts of the *Separate Saga of St Óláfr* and of *Heimskringla* indicates both the popularity of these works and, when compared to the numbers of manuscripts of earlier sagas of St Óláfr, the way in which Snorri's work superseded earlier versions.[2]

Although Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga* is certainly about a saint, commentators on it have emphasised the ways in which it differs from hagiography. The compilers of the Handlist of Old Norse Saints' Lives reflect this scholarly consensus when they write that the work is a 'profane saga' and therefore do not list it among 'proper' Saints' Lives (Widding *et al.* 1963, 328).[3] Both the authors of important recent books on *Heimskringla* agree with them: Diana Whaley's position will be discussed below; Sverre Bagge recognises a tension between religious and secular approaches in the text but believes that the secular is the more important (1990, 3; cf. Bagge 1991, 14–19). Such views reflect the fact that not every text about a saint can be called hagiographic: Delehaye, for example, writes that 'to be strictly hagiographical [a] document must be of a religious character and aim at edification' (1962, 3; other useful accounts of medieval hagiography include Aigrain 1953 and Heffernan 1988). 'Religious character' is rather vague, but this definition usefully highlights the importance of function:

and that the version in *Heimskringla* is a revision of the *Separate Saga* (Nordal 1914, 166–98).

[2] On the manuscripts of the *Separate Saga* and *Heimskringla* see Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941, 871–1131; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, III lxxxiii–cxii; Whaley 1991, 41–47. Some surviving texts of Snorri's *Óláfs saga* are hybrid versions containing elements of both the *Heimskringla* and *Separate Saga* texts.

[3] For fuller discussion of the problems of generic classification of the Icelandic sagas of royal saints see Phelpstead 1998, ch. 2.

hagiography encourages the veneration of a saint in order to promote amendment of life and the worship of God.

The orthodox view that this is not Snorri's concern in his saga of St Óláfr has, however, been challenged by Sverrir Tómasson, who does read Snorri's saga as hagiography (Sverrir Tómasson 1991 and 1994; Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir 1991 adopts a similar approach). Basing his argument primarily on the structure of the saga, Sverrir maintains that

> markmið Snorra er hið sama og allra helgisagnaritara; hann bendir á að Ólafur lifi þótt hann deyi (1991, lxix).
>
> Snorri's aim is the same as that of all hagiographers; he shows that Óláfr lives even though he be dead (cf. 1994, 70).[4]

Sverrir also claims that Snorri's work was read as hagiography by its medieval audience, adducing as evidence a fourteenth-century Icelandic *Legendarium* (MS AM 235 fol.) containing readings for the church year, which uses Snorri's version of the life of St Óláfr for its account of the martyr's passion (1991, lxx; cf. 1994, 71):

> Slíkar viðtökur sýna að *Ólafs saga helga* hefur verið skilin sem helgisaga, pínslarsaga konungs, og það er ekki fyrr en á 19. öld sem menn taka lesa sögu hans á annan hátt.
>
> Such a reception shows that *Óláfs saga helga* was understood as a Saint's Life, the *passio* of a king, and it was not until the nineteenth century that people began to read his saga in another way.

Sverrir Tómasson primarily discusses the *Separate Saga of St Óláfr*, but his comments apply equally to the substantially identical version incorporated in *Heimskringla* (indeed, the earlier of his two articles appears in the context of an edition of *Heimskringla*).

As I have argued elsewhere, my own view of Snorri's saga is that it is neither merely profane nor purely hagiographic, but that hagiographic and non-hagiographic genres are juxtaposed within the text so as to provoke reflection on the nature of Óláfr's sainthood (Phelpstead 1998, ch. 4). But given the critical consensus that Snorri's is a secular saga, it is necessary to demonstrate that the text can be read as hagiography before one can offer an analysis of the interaction between different genres which creates a portrait of the saint which in turn stimulates reflection on Óláfr's sanctity. I therefore aim in this article to show how consideration of some aspects of Snorri's treatment of the stories of Óláfr's miracles can support a reading of the saga as hagiography.

[4] It should be noted, however, that Sverrir also compares the structure of the work to that of the *Íslendingasǫgur* (1991, lxv).

The *Separate Saga of St Óláfr* begins, after a Prologue, with seventeen chapters briefly outlining the history of the kings of Norway from Haraldr hárfagri to St Óláfr's predecessor, Óláfr Tryggvason. The main central part of the saga (chs 18–251) is virtually identical with the saga of St Óláfr in *Heimskringla* (Whaley 1991, 53 lists the more substantial of the minor differences between the two versions). The *Separate Saga* ends with a relatively brief account (chs 252–78) of the reigns of Óláfr's successors down to Haraldr gilli: this final section serves as a framework within which to relate Óláfr's posthumous miracles. The miracle stories appear almost unchanged and in almost the same order when *Óláfs saga helga* is incorporated into *Heimskringla,* but there they are dispersed throughout the sagas of Óláfr's successors which comprise the final third of the work. Except where stated otherwise, the following discussion refers to the *Heimskringla* version of *Óláfs saga helga*; the differences between the texts are, however, rarely relevant to the points being made here.

Almost all the miracle stories in Snorri's work occur after Óláfr's death. They include more than a dozen healings, two occasions when Óláfr grants victory to a Christian army fighting heathens, a couple of miracles involving the setting free of an unjustly held captive, and a handful of more miscellaneous miracles. Because reference will be made below to some of the sources and analogues for Snorri's miracle stories it will be useful briefly to list his likely sources. (Whaley 1987, 326 provides a useful table of the principal miracles in *Heimskringla* with their sources and analogues; see further Whaley 1987, 327–32. On Snorri's sources elsewhere in *Heimskringla* see Whaley 1991, 63–82; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, especially I xxxi–liv; II xxi–lxxxvii; III v–lxxxiii. For a useful account of scholarship on the relations between different *konungasögur* see Andersson 1985.) We can identify three different but interrelated literary traditions which feed, directly or indirectly, into Snorri's narrative: skaldic verse; Latin hagiography and vernacular miracle collections; and sagas of St Óláfr which antedate Snorri's.

The earliest evidence for the veneration of St Óláfr is provided by skaldic poetry composed soon after his death. Þórarinn loftunga's 'Glælognskviða' (*c.*1032) and Sigvatr Þórðarson's 'Erfidrápa' (*c.*1043) are among the numerous skaldic poems which Snorri quotes in *Heimskringla.* An important later skaldic poem on St Óláfr, from which Snorri quotes a single stanza in *Magnússona saga* chapter 30, is Einarr Skúlason's 'Geisli', which was recited at the celebrations marking the establishment of the archiepiscopal see at Niðaróss in 1152/53.

The Latin account of Óláfr's life and miracles attributed to Eysteinn Erlendsson (Archbishop of Niðaróss 1161–88) survives in two versions: a widely disseminated shorter version called *Acta sancti Olavi regis et martyris* in the reconstructed edition by Gustav Storm (1880, 125–44), and a later expanded version known as the *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, which contains many more miracle stories, but is preserved in only one manuscript, originally from Fountains Abbey but now belonging to Corpus Christi College, Oxford (Metcalfe 1881). Snorri is unlikely to have known either version, but may have used a text close to the vernacular version of the miracle stories from the *Acta sancti Olavi regis et martyris* which appears with a homily on St Óláfr in the *Old Norwegian Homily Book* of *c.*1200 (ed. Indrebø 1931, 108–29).

For more concrete detail about names and places than was provided by poetry or hagiography, Snorri appears to have depended on a text like that preserved in fragmentary form as the first leaf of MS AM 325 IVα 4to. This leaf was once thought to belong to the so-called *Oldest Saga of St Óláfr,* but Jonna Louis-Jensen has shown that it probably comes from an otherwise now lost Legendary of St Óláfr (Storm 1893; Louis-Jensen 1970). The surviving fragment contains six miracle stories told in a terse saga-like manner.

The amount of material which Snorri shares with the so-called *Legendary Saga of St Óláfr* implies that he knew a similar, though not identical text (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, II ix; Jónas Kristjánsson 1976, 288). The *Legendary Saga* dates from *c.*1200 but survives in a single Norwegian manuscript of *c.*1250 (ed. Heinrichs *et al.* 1982). It seems to be an abbreviated version of the *Oldest Saga of St Óláfr* to which new material including stories of Óláfr's posthumous miracles has been added. For these miracle stories the *Legendary Saga* appears to draw both on the 'ecclesiastical' tradition of the *Passio et miracula beati Olavi* and *Old Norwegian Homily Book* and on the more saga-like tradition represented by the first fragment of AM 325 IVα 4to (Whaley 1987, 329).

It is likely that Snorri used the *Lífssaga Óláfs helga* written by his friend the Icelandic cleric Styrmir Kárason in the 1220s, but as it no longer survives in its original form it is impossible to be certain.[5]

[5] Excerpts (*articuli*) from Styrmir's Life are given in an appendix in *Flateyjarbók* (Vilhjálmur Bjarnar *et al*. 1944–45, IV 1–13); others are incorporated into Snorri's *Separate Saga* in *Flateyjarbók* and some other manuscripts (see Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941, 683–95). Sigurður Nordal attempted a reconstruction of the work (1914, 69–133).

As far as Óláfr's miracles are concerned, then, it seems that in addition to skaldic verse, Snorri knew a text close to the *Old Norwegian Homily Book* and/or the final section of the *Legendary Saga* (both of which draw ultimately on the Latin hagiographic tradition) plus a text with more concrete detail, like the Legendary attested to by the first fragment of AM 325 IVα 4to. He may alternatively have known a single text (perhaps Styrmir's saga) in which the ecclesiastical and saga-like traditions had already been combined (cf. Whaley 1987, 329).

Discussions of the miracles in *Heimskringla* or the *Separate Saga of St Óláfr* usually draw attention to Snorri's reduction of the number of miracle stories compared with his sources. This is then taken as evidence of Snorri's rationalism and even of his 'modernity'. The supernatural is certainly less prominent in Snorri's *Óláfs saga* than in many other accounts of the royal saint. All miracles relating to the early years of Óláfr's life have been either omitted or 'rationalised' by Snorri. So, for example, the birth narratives of the *Legendary Saga*, in which parallels are drawn between Óláfr's birth and that of Christ, are omitted by Snorri (Heinrichs *et al.* 1982, chs 1–3), as are the miracles associated with the young Óláfr's viking expeditions; unlike the hero of the *Legendary Saga*, Snorri's viking Óláfr is never saved by a band of angelic warriors and never encounters an exploding mermaid (cf. Heinrichs *et al.* 1982, chs 13, 15). Some other miracle stories are adapted rather than omitted by Snorri, so that the supernatural element is removed, although without necessarily making the story more plausible. The classic example of this is the account of Óláfr's escape from the Swedes at Lǫgrinn (Lake Mälaren): in the *Legendary Saga* Óláfr's prayers miraculously create a channel in the Agnafit isthmus through which his ships can sail to safety (Heinrichs *et al.* 1982, ch. 16), whereas in ch. 7 of Snorri's saga Óláfr's men dig the channel themselves, a superhuman feat arguably less credible than a miracle (on this episode in various Lives of Óláfr see Evans 1981, 96–104).

This episode is important because the fact that Snorri's supposed 'rationalisation' is no more believable than the miracle it replaces indicates that his changes cannot have been motivated by a belief that miracles are inherently implausible. Snorri often prefers to explain events in terms of purely human causation but, as the miracle stories later in the work show, this does not exclude the possibility of supernatural intervention in history: anachronistic attempts to recruit Snorri as an atheist or agnostic are therefore doomed to fail (cf. Bagge 1991, 224–25). Snorri's approach in fact differs less from that of his contemporaries than is sometimes maintained; in the twelfth century, as Bagge has pointed out, there is a tendency to separate the natural and the supernatural even in the work of clerical

historians (1991, 225). Snorri is exceptional only in the degree to which he moves in this direction.

Diana Whaley, in line with the view that Snorri's is a 'profane' saga, argues that Snorri's 'rationalising' is a reinterpretation of known facts which translates hagiography into secular narrative (1991, 120). In her earlier article Whaley details some stylistic changes Snorri makes to his sources, but also notes that some stories are virtually unchanged (1987, 329–32). She suggests that comparison with other sources shows that Snorri's approach is

> essentially secular. Even his lives of the two missionary kings, Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson, are very much kings' saga rather than hagiography, and his treatment of miracles illustrates this secular stance well (1991, 131).

The implication here that hagiography and Kings' Saga are mutually exclusive categories is significant: if one starts from this position it will never be possible to see Snorri's saga as hagiographic.

In arguing that Snorri's is an 'essentially secular' saga Whaley has, of course, to account for the fact that he does nevertheless recount a number of Óláfr's miracles. She suggests that

> Snorri realised the importance of the cult of Óláfr helgi in Norwegian history and perhaps also the value of the miracles as a yardstick against which the unhappy events of later reigns could be measured, and accordingly he retains the posthumous miracles recorded in the *Legendary Saga* (1991, 131; cf. 1987, 334–35).

This is not entirely convincing. Other contemporary histories of Norway, such as *Morkinskinna* (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1932) and *Fagrskinna* (ed. Bjarni Einarsson 1985), include far fewer of Óláfr's posthumous miracles than does Snorri; if Snorri's approach is 'essentially secular' it is hard to see why he feels the need to include more religious subject matter than the writers of these two texts. (I concede Bagge's point that the account in *Fagrskinna* is considerably shorter than *Óláfs saga helga*, so that Snorri places *relatively* less emphasis on the miracles associated with Óláfr (1991, 299 n. 32). Yet there still seem to be more miracle stories in Snorri's work than would be necessary if he were trying to include as few of them as possible.) Mere recognition of the importance of Óláfr's cult could be achieved by other means than the recounting of miracle stories and would certainly not oblige Snorri to record the number of miracles which he does, even if it is fewer than many of his predecessors had recorded.

The fact that Snorri makes a selection from the miracle stories available to him cannot be accepted as evidence of his secularity; the writer of St John's Gospel, after all, admits to the same practice (John 20: 30–31; 21: 25):

> Multa quidem et alia signa fecit Iesus in conspectu discipulorum suorum quae non sunt scripta in libro hoc. Haec autem scripta sunt ut credatis quia Iesus est Christus Filius Dei et ut credentes vitam habeatis in nomine eius . . . Sunt autem et alia multa quae fecit Iesus quae si scribantur per singula nec ipsum arbitror mundum capere eos qui scribendi sunt libros.
>
> Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in his name . . . But there are also many other things which Jesus did; which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written (Douai–Rheims translation).

The miracles of Óláfr embedded in the sagas of later kings in *Heimskringla* may well, as Whaley suggests, remind the reader of eternal values neglected by those rulers, but there is no *explicit* statement that the miracles should be seen as a judgement on the state of Norway. In any case, they could not have fulfilled that function in Snorri's original *Separate Saga of St Óláfr* with its 'appendix' of miracle stories: there the later history of Norway is recounted (briefly) only because it provides a framework for the miracle stories. To suggest that the miracle stories provide a commentary on the history is therefore to put the cart before the horse. Snorri may have found a new function for the miracle stories when he incorporated his *Óláfs saga* into the larger context of *Heimskringla*, but his original reason for recounting them must be sought elsewhere.

We need not, in fact, look very far, for Snorri himself provides an explanation. The end of ch. 246 of the *Heimskringla* version of *Óláfs saga helga* reads as follows (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, II 410):

> Nú er sagðr nǫkkur hlutr sǫgu Óláfs konungs, frá nǫkkurum tíðendum þeim er gerðusk, meðan hann réð Nóregi, ok svá frá falli hans ok því, er helgi hans kom upp. En nú skal þat eigi niðri liggja, er honum er þó mest vegsemð í, at segja frá jartegnagørð hans, þótt þat sé síðar ritit í þessari bók.
>
> Now a certain part of the saga of King Óláfr has been told, covering certain events which took place while he ruled Norway, and also about his death and how his sanctity became known. But that will not now be neglected in which is the most honour to him, namely, to tell of his performance of miracles, although that will be written later in this book.

Some of Óláfr's miracles have in fact already been recounted before this statement is made, and the remaining miracle stories in *Heimskringla*

appear not in *Óláfs saga helga* but dispersed throughout the remaining sagas of the work. In the *Separate Saga*, however, the miracles are collected together at the end of the work, and this passage leads into them by ending before the final clause (Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941, 610). One story not in the *Separate Saga* is added to *Heimskringla*, the account of the release of Haraldr Sigurðarson from prison in Constantinople (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* ch. 14).

Snorri's statement that the life and death of Óláfr are only a part of Óláfr's story, and that it is the posthumous miracles performed by Óláfr which reflect most gloriously on him, is of the kind one might expect in a hagiographic account intended to edify, and to encourage veneration of the saint in question. The passage quoted above also implies that even when the miracle stories are separated from *Óláfs saga* and dispersed throughout the following sagas in *Heimskringla* they remain in some sense part of the story of St Óláfr. One may usefully compare the passage with a not dissimilar statement introducing the miracle stories in the Latin *Passio et miracula beati Olavi* (Metcalfe 1881, 74):

> Opere precium est de multis miraculis, que ad commendanda merita gloriosi martiris olaui dominus operari dignatus est, pauca perstringere, quatinus in laudem et reuerentiam diuine pietatis audientem excitentur animi, et quantam gratiam et gloriam dominus sancto suo dederit fidelibus innotescat.
>
> It is fitting to make brief mention of the many miracles that the Lord has deigned to perform in order to make manifest the merits of the glorious martyr Óláfr, so that the souls of those who hear may be moved to praise and venerate the divine mercy, and that it may be revealed to the faithful what great grace and glory the Lord has bestowed upon his saint (trans. Kunin, forthcoming).

The passage from ch. 246 of *Óláfs saga* reveals a clear motive for Snorri's inclusion of miracle stories in its final sentence (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, II 410):

> En nú skal þat eigi niðri liggja, er honum er þó mest vegsemð í, at segja frá jartegnagørð hans.
>
> But now that will not be neglected in which is the most honour to him, namely, to tell of his performance of miracles.

The key term here is *vegsemð,* 'honour', this being what Peter Hallberg calls 'ethically the key concept in the world of the Icelandic saga' (1962, 99). Óláfr's miracles are worth recording, indeed should be recorded, because as signs of his sanctity they redound most to his honour.

Sverre Bagge has illuminated the nature of Óláfr's character and its development as these appear in *Óláfs saga helga* by suggesting that Snorri

belongs to what anthropologists call a 'shame culture' (1991, 170–71).[6] In such a culture one's highest good is the enjoyment of public esteem; a person is the sum of his or her deeds: 'a man is what he appears to other men', as Bagge puts it (1991, 189). In this context one is defined by one's public reputation: one *is* what one is said to be. There is consequently something like a moral imperative to make a person's merits known. When Snorri says he will recount Óláfr's miracles because they redound most to his honour, he is obeying exactly this imperative.

The anthropologist J. G. Peristiany writes that

> in all societies there is another ideal, that of saintliness, which transcends that of honour. . . The definition of saintliness might be that saintliness is above honour and that there is nothing above saintliness (1974, 17–18).

For Snorri, however, honour and saintliness are inextricably linked: the deeds which are most to Óláfr's honour *are* the proof of his sanctity. This inextricable link is reflected in the fact that the imperative to honour Óláfr which arises from the situation in which a man is what he is said to be is in complete harmony with the hagiographer's conviction, expressed in the above quotation from the *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*, that it is proper to make known a saint's miracles in order to edify the faithful.

Given Snorri's desire to make manifest those of Óláfr's deeds which are proof of his sanctity and most to his honour, what are the criteria which determine his selection from the miracle stories he knew? Snorri's critical attitude to his sources may have influenced his choice. He certainly goes to some lengths to make clear the trustworthiness of at least some of his accounts of Óláfr's miracles (although this is characteristic of Snorri's approach to historical writing, hagiographic texts also often demonstrate the trustworthiness of their accounts, often by invoking the authority of eye-witnesses). In ch. 245 Snorri quotes eight and a half strophes of Þórarinn loftunga's 'Glælognskviða', a work which bears witness to Óláfr's sanctity and which records some of his miracles. He then notes that

> Þórarinn loftunga var þá með Sveini konungi ok sá ok heyrði þessi stórmerki heilagleiks Óláfs konungs (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, II 409).
>
> Þórarinn loftunga was then with King Sveinn and saw and heard of these great wonders of the holiness of King Óláfr.

[6] For definitions of shame and guilt cultures see Benedict 1947, 222–25. On honour and shame see Peristiany 1974, 9–18, and Pitt-Rivers 1974, 21–39. Of course, the distinction between shame and guilt cultures is relative, and the transition between them is gradual; Snorri's culture is already on its way to becoming a guilt culture.

Snorri refers specifically to the miracles mentioned in Þórarinn's poem, for which he can therefore claim eye-witness support: the sound of bells ringing, candles lighting themselves on the altar, and healings of lame, blind and other sick people. The chapter ends with the statement that

> inar stœrstu jarteignir Óláfs konungs, þá eru þær mest ritaðar ok greindar, ok þær, er síðar hafa gǫrzk (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, II 409).
>
> the greatest miracles of King Óláfr, including those which happened later, are the ones that have most been written down and recorded.

(The whole of the section following the quotation from 'Glælognskviða' to the end of the chapter is lacking in the *Separate Saga.*) Here Snorri shows an awareness of unspecified written collections of miracle stories, implies that the existence of such records authenticates the stories and, like the author of St John's Gospel, acknowledges that the stories he tells are only a selection from those in existence.

Despite such attempts to demonstrate the reliability of the miracle stories, however, Snorri's work contains too many unsourced accounts of miracles which happen to unnamed people in unspecified places for his supposed critical attitude to his sources to be the overriding criterion of selection (see, for example, the miracles in *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* chs 56–57; *Hákonar saga herðibreiðs* chs 20–21). Conversely, miracles which are sourced and have named subjects and specified locations are sometimes omitted by Snorri. Bagge is undoubtedly right to point out that Snorri is highly unlikely to have made an independent assessment of the veracity of miracle stories accepted by the Church and people and associated with the most popular of Scandinavian saints (1991, 211).

Snorri's omission of miracles from Óláfr's youth has the effect of emphasising the way in which Óláfr becomes much more saint-like towards the end of his life in Snorri's version of his Life (on this aspect of Snorri's portrait see Bagge 1991, 181–90). Robert Folz's comparative study of medieval royal saints suggests that the miracle stories which Snorri selected were of the kinds usually associated with canonised kings. Folz's work indicates, for example, that it is common for a royal saint to have few miracles attributed to the period before his death (1984, 117–21), so Snorri's omission of the miracles of Óláfr's youth in no way makes him an unusual royal saint.

Folz also shows (1984, 128–30) that healings always comprise the majority of a royal saint's miracles, as they do in *Heimskringla*. Snorri seems to have chosen healing stories which involve a representative selection of different kinds of ailment, and the locations of the healing miracles are arranged so as to shadow the spread of Óláfr's cult abroad: Denmark,

England, France and then Byzantium (Bagge 1991, 212). In this way the miracles confirm that the dream that Óláfr had before his final battle prophesied the spread of his cult (cf. *Óláfs saga helga* in *Heimskringla*, ch. 202).

On two occasions in Snorri's work St Óláfr grants miraculous assistance in battle with the result that Christian forces are victorious against pagans (*Magnúss saga góða* chs 27–28; *Hákonar saga herðibreiðs* ch. 21). This kind of miracle is, like Óláfr's healings, typical of medieval royal saints. Two other Scandinavian aristocratic saints grant assistance in battle: St Magnús of Orkney, whom late medieval traditions credit with decisive interventions in the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 (Batho and Husbands 1936–41, II 277) and the Battle of Summerdale in 1529 (Cody and Murison 1888–95, II 218–19), and St Knútr lávarðr, who assists Valdimarr Knútsson of Denmark against the pagan Wends in a miracle modelled on Óláfr's assistance of Magnús góði at Hlýrskógsheiðr (*Knýtlinga saga*, in Bjarni Guðnason 1982, 292).

Having decided, whether he knew it or not, to follow St John in making a selection from the available sources, Snorri's decisions about which miracles to include seem to have been informed by the desire to mirror (and so draw attention to) the expansion of the king's cult, and by a feeling for the kinds of miracles (mainly healings) typically performed by royal saints, a feeling which he shares with medieval Europe in general.

Finally, it is worth considering Snorri's decision to disperse the miracle stories throughout the later sagas in *Heimskringla*. He could have chosen instead to retain them as an 'appendix' to his saga of St Óláfr, just as *Orkneyinga saga* gathers the miracles of St Magnús into a single chapter which is presented as a digression from its narrative of Orcadian history (Finnbogi Guðmundsson 1965, ch. 57 and the final words of ch. 56). Óláfr's miraculous assistance of his son Magnús in battle against the pagan Wends at Hlýrskógsheiðr (*Magnúss saga góða* chs 27–28) and his release of his half-brother Haraldr harðráði Sigurðarson from a Byzantine prison (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* ch. 14), for example, would need to be told in their historical contexts, but the various healings could easily have been collected together, and there is in fact little attempt to relate them to the surrounding narrative in the third part of *Heimskringla* (but see Whaley 1987, 337–40 on the appropriateness of some miracles to specific kings' reigns).

The dispersal of the miracles in the last third of *Heimskringla* maintains Óláfr's 'presence' in the work, thus mirroring prefigurings of Óláfr in the first third of the work such as Hálfdan svarti's dream in *Hálfdanar saga svarta* ch. 7 and the typological prefiguring of Óláfr's martyrdom in the sacrificial death of Dómaldi in *Ynglinga saga* ch. 15 (cf. Lönnroth 1986; on

Snorri's use of typology see Weber 1987). The maintenance of Óláfr's presence in *Heimskringla* may, as Whaley suggests, invite judgement to be passed on the deeds of Óláfr's successors. But it can also be seen as confirming a prophecy made to Óláfr before he became king of Norway. At the end of his youthful viking career Óláfr is deterred from continuing on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem by a dream of apparently divine origin (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, II 25):

> til hans kom merkligr maðr ok þekkligr ok þó ógurligr ok mælti við hann, bað hann hætta ætlan þeiri, at fara út í lǫnd—'far aptr til óðala þinna, því at þú munt vera konungr yfir Nóregi at eilífu'.
>
> A remarkable and handsome but nevertheless awe-inspiring man came to him and spoke to him. He told him to leave off his intention to journey to foreign lands: 'go back to your inheritance, for you shall be king over Norway for ever'.[7]

At the time Óláfr interprets this as meaning that he and his descendants will rule Norway for a long time, but after his martyrdom it comes to be seen in retrospect as prophesying that he will rule for ever as Norway's heavenly patron.[8] Óláfr's continuing miraculous interventions during the reigns of his successors in *Heimskringla* demonstrate that he is indeed now the eternal king of Norway and her heavenly patron; they confirm his sanctity and his abiding concern for his people.

I have argued that Snorri's 'rationalisation' of some miracle stories and his act of selection from the sources available to him cannot be taken as evidence of an 'essentially secular' approach. I would also suggest that no rationalising author trying to produce a 'profane saga' would be as concerned as Snorri appears to be to demonstrate the validity of a divine prophecy, to show that the martyred king now reigns in heaven. As a whole, the portrait of King Óláfr Haraldsson in *Óláfs saga helga* is very far from being entirely positive, but Snorri's handling of the miracle stories does suggest that among his objectives in composing the saga was the hagiographer's aim of recording a saint's miracles as evidence that he lives although he died. In so doing, Snorri recounts those stories in which there is the most honour to St Óláfr.

[7] Óláfr's title *rex perpetuus Norvegiae* ('perpetual king of Norway') first appears in *Historia Norvegiae* (Storm 1880, 109).

[8] The promise that Óláfr will rule forever may be compared with God's promise that King David's reign (or that of his descendants) will last for ever: cf. Ps. 88: 36–38 (89: 35–37); Ps. 109 (110): 4.

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GWYN JONES

Professor Gwyn Jones, scholar, critic, translator, novelist, short-story writer and man of literary affairs, died in Aberystwyth on 6 December 1999, aged 92. He was an Honorary Life Member of the Viking Society, and its President 1950–52. For his services to our subject he was appointed Knight of the Order of the Falcon in 1963, Commander in 1987, and he was made a CBE for his vigorous chairmanship of the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council from 1957 to 1967.

A native of Monmouthshire, son of a miner and a teacher who later became a midwife, Gwyn took the educational path to a better living than cutting coal. He graduated from Cardiff with a first-class degree in English, followed by an M.A. on an Icelandic topic in 1929. He was then a schoolmaster in Wigan and Manchester for six years. They were penurious years, but books were cheap in the second-hand places, and with the indulgent help of his first wife Alice, he laid the foundation of his collection of fine books (subsequently donated towards the end of his life to the National Library of Wales, as were also his Icelandic books). He returned to Cardiff as a lecturer in the College in 1935, then was successively Professor of English at Aberystwyth 1940–64 and at Cardiff 1964–75. After Alice's death in 1979, he married Mair, the widow of his former colleague and collaborator Thomas Jones, and they settled in Aberystwyth.

Gwyn's first article, 'The religious element in the Icelandic *hólmganga*', appeared in *Modern Language Review* in 1932, and in 1935 he published both his first novel and his first translation. *Richard Savage,* a fictional biography of the eighteenth-century minor poet, put the name of Gwyn Jones as a gifted writer in the genre firmly before the reading public, and was swiftly followed by three more novels of very different kinds. One may be mentioned here: *Times Like These,* a moving novel about life in South Wales during the Depression, a setting that was part of the fabric of his being. A novella and two other novels were to follow at intervals of about a decade, and in this period, alongside other major preoccupations, he also wrote more than a score of short stories, notable for their strong form and precision of language. The book of translations already mentioned, published by Princeton University Press for the American-Scandinavian Foundation and Oxford University Press, was *Four Icelandic Sagas* (namely *Hrafnkels saga*, *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, *Vápnfirðinga saga* and *Kjalnesinga saga*). Characteristically, the Introduction provided a warm appraisal of the

sagas and an exposition of the necessary background information, and the style of the translation was vigorous and vivid. This and his *Vatnsdalers' Saga* (1944, same publishers) were the forerunners of the many translations published by others from the late 1950s onwards, and Gwyn himself continued in this line with *Egil's Saga* (1960) and *Eirik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas* (1961). In *Egil's Saga* particularly, the compact and forcefully argued Introduction presented the current best opinion on the vexed questions associated with the saga, the translation of the prose skilfully matched the changes in the mode of the original, and the translation of the poems in the saga worthily met the challenge.

Translation also figured prominently in *The Norse Atlantic Saga* (O.U.P. 1964), the first of Gwyn's books as an historian of the North. Half of the book is a narrative and analysis of the westward sweep of Norse voyages of discovery and settlement to Iceland, Greenland and America, drawing on the latest discoveries on the ground as well as using the literature, and pleasingly written for all potential readers. The other half consists of translations of the sources, *Íslendingabók*, parts of *Landnámabók*, and the sagas. A second edition appeared in 1986, substantially expanded and revised to take account of the remarkable advances in the subject in the meanwhile.

This attractive book was followed by Gwyn's major achievement in Norse studies, *A History of the Vikings* (O.U.P. 1968), a comprehensive and exciting treatment of this huge subject. The book has been an immense success as a publishing venture, appearing in a revised edition in 1984, in Japanese translation in 1987, and as a Folio Society edition in 1997. Its base was a superb command of the great number and variety of the written sources and of the steadily increasing information available from other disciplines. Its aim was to please as well as to instruct, and to this end the author allowed himself to retell stories that he well knew to be legendary, not history but 'highly important to the history of northern history'. Readers needed to be mindful of his general critique in the Introduction and his many scattered observations on the acceptability of the sources dealt with in particular contexts. Then they could enjoy and learn from the authoritative synthesis, enthusiastically presented.

In addition to the works mentioned so far, Gwyn published some twenty lectures, papers in learned journals, chapters in reissues of others' books, and popular articles on Norse topics; a book of *Scandinavian Legends and Folktales* (O.U.P. 1956) dedicated *Til allra*

barna sem unna sögum; and also the book *Kings, Beasts and Heroes* described below. Yet his achievement in this field of study was only one strand in his life. Early on, in parallel with his own creative writing, he founded *The Welsh Review* (1939–48), providing a forum for the discussion of Welsh matters in English and publishing in it much good work by Anglo-Welsh writers, many then unknown. He edited several volumes of Welsh short stories and *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English*, and was tireless in advancing the standing of the twentieth-century English language literature of Wales by lectures, broadcasts and essays. But his greatest service to Wales must be his conception of a new translation of *The Mabinogion* and the triumphant realisation of it jointly with Thomas Jones, the foremost Welsh medievalist of his day. Their collaboration resulted in a classic, an elegant and definitive translation, worthy of the original medieval Welsh masterpiece. It was published in a handsome limited edition by the Golden Cockerel Press in 1948, then by Everyman in 1949, and there have been many reprints and republications in new formats. Besides *The Mabinogion*, Gwyn wrote, translated or edited seven other volumes for the Golden Cockerel Press, fine books all of them. Mention might also be made of his *Welsh Legends and Folk-tales* (O.U.P. 1955) and the evocative King Penguin *A Prospect of Wales* (1948).

As a university teacher Gwyn's particular commitment was to Old English, though he was at ease in all periods, and he combined this with his Welsh and Norse interests in *Kings, Beasts and Heroes* (O.U.P. 1972), a sustained analysis of the story-content and story-telling art of *Beowulf, Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Hrólfs saga kraka*. In this book his learning and critical power, his writer's art and his sheer enjoyment of literature came together with outstanding result. It brought him the Christian Gauss Award for the best work of literary criticism published in 1972.

Gwyn's life was driven by love of language and literature and a passion to communicate. He will be remembered by generations of students and countless other audiences for his handsome presence, his courteous firm manner, his rich voice, his superbly fashioned phrases, and his steadfast belief in the overwhelming worth of literature.

D. S.

NOTES

CURSING THE KING: AN IRISH CONVERSATION IN *JÓNS SAGA HELGA*

By ROSEMARY POWER

The Icelandic saga of Bishop Jón of Hólar, *Jóns saga helga*, originally composed in Latin, survives in different forms. One is a revised vernacular version preserved in Stock. perg. fol. nr. 5, written about 1360. It includes in its text passages thought to be derived from a lost saga of Gísl Illugason composed in the early thirteenth century, which concerns events said to have taken place over a hundred years previously.

Gísl was a poet in the service of the Norwegian king Magnús Óláfsson (1093–1103), known as Magnús Barelegs, who made two expeditions to western lands and met his death in Ireland. One passage in *Jóns saga* refers to the occasion in 1102 when Magnús made an alliance with the Munster king Muircheartach Ó Briain (1086–1119), who in the saga is named Mýrkjartan, a form possibly reflecting an Irish diminutive of the name otherwise found in Old Norse literature as *Mýr(k)jartak*. We are told that Gísl led a group of hostages sent by Magnús to Muircheartach's court. Among the hostages was a Norwegian, who claimed that he spoke Irish well and offered to greet the king (*Biskupa sögur* I, 227):

> Síðan mælti hann til konungs: 'Male diarik,' en þat er á vára tungu: 'Bölvaðr sér þú, konungr.'
>
> Þá svaraði einn konungsmaðr: 'Herra,' segir hann, 'þessi maðr mun vera þræll allra Norðmanna.'
>
> Konungr svarar: 'Olgeira ragall,' þat er á vára tungu: 'Ókunnug er myrk gata.' Konungr var vel við þá. Magnús konungr herjaði síðan á Írlandi . . .
>
> Then he said to the king: '*Male diarik*,' which is in our language: 'Cursed be you, king.'
>
> One of the courtiers responded: 'Lord,' he said, 'this man must be the slave of all the Norsemen.'
>
> The king replied: '*Olgeira ragall*,' which is in our language: 'Unknown is a dark road.' The king treated them well. King Magnús later raided in Ireland . . .

The references to Magnús's activities fit in well with what we know from Irish, Scottish, Welsh, English and Manx sources as well as from such Norse sources as Theodoricus's *Historia*, *Ágrip af Nóregs*

konungasǫgum, *Orkneyinga saga*, *Fagrskinna*, *Heimskringla* and *Morkinskinna*.

Magnús arrived in Dublin in 1102 and entered into the formal 'peace of a year' with Muircheartach, a process that normally involved the exchange of hostages.

Muircheartach was a more formidable ally than his portrayal in Norse sources might indicate. At this period he not only controlled his native Munster, but also Leinster and Dublin, had set up a friendly dynasty to rule Connacht, engaged with ecclesiastical and secular politics (including English affairs), and was, formally, 'high-king with opposition', the opposition being provided by his northern rival, Domnall Mac Lochlainn.

Muircheartach no doubt saw Magnús's seapower as a useful supplement to his weaponry against the north, and they engaged in joint ventures, the major one being an attack on Domnall and his army early in August 1103. This was unsuccessful, and Magnús was on his way back to Norway when he was killed, probably in the Downpatrick area (Power 1986, 1994).

The passage in *Jóns saga* is unique among the sources in that it goes on to imply that Magnús had broken his word and had actually fought against Muircheartach, leaving the hostages to their fate, a fate which Muircheartach chose not to enforce. In fact, the two kings remained allies until the death of Magnús. Gísl and his companions were freed and returned to Iceland, where he lived to a ripe age. His son was called Einarr, and much was told about his life.

Jóns saga must give one of the earliest examples of a linguistic trick still current today. A common wartime version is of the young English soldier posted to a Highland regiment, who is taught a phrase in Gaelic said to mean 'Good morning', and told to greet the sergeant-major with it. The actual meaning is far cruder than the variant in *Jóns saga*, but the sergeant-major realizes that the recruit has been set up and takes no action.

It may be wondered if the version we have here is based on an account passed down in Gísl's family.

The actual wording was first considered by William Craigie, who suggested that 'male diarik' was an attempt to render Irish *Mallacht duit, a rí* (Craigie 1897, 443). Carl Marstrander followed Craigie's interpretation, but changed the form to *a ríg* (Marstrander 1915, 69, note 2).

The usual expression is *Mallacht ort*, 'Curse on you'. There are, however, examples of medieval and more recent use of the preposi-

tional pronoun *duit*, 'to you'. A parallel, too, is the greeting *Dia duit*, 'God be with you'.

The vocative form is *rí*. Reidar Th. Christiansen suggested, probably because the Icelandic authors thought, incorrectly, that Muircheartach was king of Connacht, that the rendering *-rik* indicated a western Irish variant (Christiansen 1952, 12). It seems more likely, in the absence of any evidence of this western vocative, that it has been influenced by the root form, in Middle Irish *rígh*, which appears in the genitive and dative.

There remains the difficulty of why the first word should be given as *Male* rather than *Malekt*. Is it possible that the *k* has been transposed to the second word and the *t* lost in the process, just as *duit* has lost its final *t*?

An alternative possibility is that the phrase represents *Mallacht Dé*, or the later *Mallacht Dia*, 'the curse of God', but there are no other examples of this phrase.[1]

The second phrase, 'Olgeira ragall', presents more difficulties than the first, not least because the Icelandic account of what it means makes no sense in the context.

Craigie could make nothing of the king's reply other than that it appeared to begin with *Olc* (bad, evil), and end with *Gall* (Foreigner). Marstrander suggested *Olc aera(dh) ra Gall*, 'It is evil to be cursed by a Norseman' (Marstrander 1915, 69, note 2). Christiansen rendered the words as 'det er stygt å høre de fremmede si slikt' ('It is nasty to hear the foreigners say that'), while Helgi Guðmundsson (1967, 105) and Jonna Louis-Jensen (1977, 119) followed Marstrander. Louis-Jensen favoured the reading 'lagall' found in the two seventeenth-century manuscripts.

The current editor, Peter Foote, prefers another possible reading, noted by Louis-Jensen, found in the only surviving medieval manuscript: 'olgeira iagall'. From this we may surmise a form *Olc a rádh, a Ghaill*, 'evil (i.e. 'it is evil') its saying, O Foreigner'. This assumes that *c* has become *g*. While it is understandable that the *dh* of *rádh* and the *gh* of the vocative *Ghaill* (the same sound by the thirteenth century, a voiced velar fricative) have not been attempted by the Icelanders, it is more difficult to explain why the diphthong *ei* is used to replace *a*. (The form *Olc é a rádh, a Ghaill*, 'Evil to say that, Foreigner', would represent too late a stage in the development of Irish.)

[1] The paper manuscripts of *Jóns saga helga* give the words as 'melia denik', which no one has tried to interpret.

While it is difficult to deduce a form from ‘ragall’, we cannot dismiss out of hand the paper manuscript reading, ‘lagall’. From this we could surmise *Olc a rádh le Gall*, ‘Evil the saying of it by a Foreigner’.

The words could have been transmitted in the early thirteenth century, when communication with Gaelic-speaking Hebrideans in Norway was apparently far from unknown. There is, however, always the possibility that the words were retained in Icelandic oral tradition from the early twelfth century.

It is possible that the translation of ‘Olgeira ragall’ (or its alternatives) was lost during written transmission. The response ‘Unknown is a dark road’ has no reference to the conversation so far, nor does the variant in the paper manuscripts, ‘Ókunnug er myrk gáta’, ‘Unknown is a dark puzzle’. If, however, a couple of sentences have been omitted, it may be that the final phrase we have represents not an interpretation but a commentary on the episode. As such, could it be a corruption of and then an attempt to explain the Irish personal name recorded in Iceland as *Mýrkjartak* or *Mýrkjartan*?

My grateful thanks are due to Peter Foote, Kay Muhr and Erich Poppe.

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FYR KNÉ MEYIO: NOTES ON CHILDBIRTH IN MEDIEVAL ICELAND

By MARGARET CORMACK

Oddrúnargrátr is unique in medieval Scandinavian, if not in world, literature. The two speakers in the poem are, not a god and a giant, but a pregnant woman and a midwife. The poem is often quoted as evidence for practices associated with childbirth in the Middle Ages. It states that Oddrún, the midwife, seated herself 'before' or 'in front of' the knees of the pregnant Borgný: 'gekk mild fyr kné meyio at sitia' (stanza 7). The saga of King Sverrir (*Flateyjarbók* 1860–68, II 535) contains a similar example: when a woman is about to give birth, 'her servant sat in front of her knees to receive the child' ('þjónustukonan hennar sat fyrir knjám henni ok skyldi taka við barninu').

These passages have been taken as evidence that the pregnant woman was kneeling. To quote a recent work in English, 'The normal birth position was for the woman to kneel on the floor, with helpers ready at her knees or supporting her arms. As the birth progressed, she would shift to a knee-elbow position, and the child would be received from behind' (Jochens 1995, 80, and references there cited; Reichborn-Kjennerud 1923, 43; 1933, 60).

While nineteenth-century accounts provide evidence for a birth position on hands and knees (Weiser-Aall 1968, 112, 120), the phrases *fyr kné* and *fyrir knjám* are not evidence for its use in the Middle Ages. A survey of the occurrences of the words *fyr* or *fyrir* plus *kné* in the CD-ROM concordance to the sagas of the Icelanders produces examples which refer to people going 'fyr[ir] kné' with respect to individuals of higher social status, such as kings, or those from whom they hope to receive aid or reward. A well-known example is provided by Egill Skalla-Grímsson's *Arinbjarnarkviða*: ' . . . er mína bar höfuðlausn fyr hilmis kné' (*Íslendinga sögur og þættir* 1987, I 498. See also *Fóstbræðra saga*, verses 19 and 31, I 816, 841; *Brennu-Njáls saga*, chs 117, 140, I 263, 304). In these passages, it is natural to imagine that the owner of the knees is sitting. We should thus picture the pregnant woman seated on the edge of a bed or on someone's lap, as described by Reichborn-Kjennerud (1923, 60).

On the other hand, *Oddrúnargrátr* also states: 'hér *liggr* Borgný, of borin verkiom' (stanza 4). It is generally assumed that she is lying

down from exhaustion, but takes the appropriate position to give birth. It should not be forgotten, however, that the Modern Icelandic terms related to childbirth envisage the woman not as sitting or kneeling, but lying down. The woman herself is said to lie on the floor ('liggja á gólfi'), and the midwife or 'yfirsetukona' is said to sit over her ('sitja yfir'). The existence of these terms and meanings in the Middle Ages can be ascertained by a glance at dictionaries such as Cleasby–Vigfusson and Fritzner. In recent centuries, we know that a woman giving birth was made comfortable in a pile of straw on the floor, which would have the advantage of being easy to clean out after the birth (see Jónas Jónasson 1911).

As pointed out by Kreutzer (1987, 134), who provides the most detailed discussion of the issue, there are also numerous medieval references to child*bed*, with *sæng* as the term for 'bed', especially in Norwegian texts.

The variety of positions and places where a woman could give birth would thus seem to have been as numerous in the Middle Ages as they were in the nineteenth century; a position on hands and knees, however, is not attested in medieval sources.

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BARBARIAN ATROCITIES AND HAGIOGRAPHIC MOTIFS: A POSTSCRIPT TO SOME RECENT ARTICLES

By MARGARET CORMACK

As recent discussion in the pages of this journal (Bjarni Einarsson 1986, Bjarni Einarsson and Roberta Frank 1990) has shown, accounts of viking atrocity (specifically, the 'blood-eagle' as a means of disposing of defeated kings) are still capable of sparking scholarly controversy. In the last issue (1999), John Frankis has shown that fascination with ingenious methods of killing transcends literary genre. Frankis traces the 'fatal walk' of the viking Bróðir (fatal because his intestines were extracted in the process) to Geffrei Gaimar's *L'estoire des engleis* via the story of the martyrdom of St. Amphibalus, transmitted to Scandinavia by the monk Matthew Paris. This origin for the motif is more convincing than the more general similarities to the deaths of Judas or the heretic Arius adduced by Hill (1981).

Gaimar's composition dates from *c.*1140. The motif of evisceration by circumambulation is, however, recorded almost half a century earlier, when it is described in one version of the 1095 sermon of Pope Urban II which launched the First Crusade. In it the pope ascribes the following behaviour to the infidel:

> When they wish to torture people by a base death, they perforate their navels, and dragging forth the extremity of the intestines, bind it to a stake; then with flogging they lead the victim around until the viscera having gushed forth the victim falls prostrate upon the ground. Others they bind to a post and pierce with arrows. (From the version of the sermon according to Robert of Rheims in *Historia Hierosolymitana*, tr. D. C. Munro in Peters 1998, 27.)

It is interesting to note that the other form of slaughter mentioned in the passage was also known from both hagiographic and Icelandic sources, being the fate of St Stephen and St Edmund, whose iconography shows them tied to a stake and pierced by arrows. The martyrdom of St Edmund at the hands of Ívarr, son of Ragnarr loðbrók, marked the chronological opening of Icelandic history for the historian Ari fróði (*Íslendingabók*, ch. 1).

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REVIEWS

THE ORIGINS OF DRAMA IN SCANDINAVIA. By TERRY GUNNELL. *D. S. Brewer.* Cambridge, 1995. xxvi + 414 pp.

Despite its title, this book does not set out to provide an overall guide to early drama in Scandinavia, but revisits the argument of Bertha Phillpotts' *The Elder Edda and ancient Scandinavian drama* (1920) that many of the Eddic poems represent 'the actual shattered remains of ancient religious drama' (Phillpotts, p. 114). This prompted Andreas Heusler (*ANF* 1922, 347–53) to ask three sceptical questions:

(1) Is there evidence for ritual plays in pagan Scandinavia?

(2) Is it possible to say that the myths behind the poems about gods and heroes were based on such plays?

(3) Could such plays help to explain the artistic form of these poems?

He supplied answers in the negative to all three questions. Since then, most scholars have maintained a discreet silence on this basic question of the medium within which eddic poetry existed. It is certainly time that the problem was considered again.

Gunnell begins with a judicious survey of existing scholarly debate about how far the mythological poems in the *Poetic Edda* should be regarded as dramatic; but any further argument requires a clear understanding of what we mean by 'drama'. Gunnell's definition requires a performer but not necessarily an audience:

> In essence, the performer is engaged in the momentary living creation of an alternative world (or a section of it) *within* this one, to the extent that what he is acting is not himself but someone or something else that belongs to a different time and/or place. (p. 12)

But this might encompass not only role-playing, drama therapy and rehearsal, but even the deceits of a confidence trickster—it leads to the Platonic objection that the actor is a liar. I would suggest, rather, that drama is a collusion between performer(s) and audience (who may also be performers) to award a temporary status as 'truth' to an action which they would normally regard as a fiction (or as not the literal truth of the present time and place).

Such a definition might have been useful in Gunnell's attempt to untangle drama, myth and ritual. He makes it clear that myth can exist without ritual and vice versa, although this splits his inquiry into two separate questions:

(1) Do the Eddic poems provide evidence for dramatic or paradramatic pre-Christian rituals?

(2) Should they be seen as dramatic within the thirteenth-century context in which they survive?

He usefully directs our attention towards the second issue, but also re-states Heusler's three questions, which refer mainly to the first.

The shape of the book's five main chapters is determined by this argument. The first two consider archaeological evidence for pre-Christian ritual drama and whether it may have survived in folk tradition. The third concentrates on a group of eddic dialogue poems in *ljóðaháttr* which, Gunnell argues, must have been composed for

performance by more than one person. The fourth, on marginal speaker notation in the manuscripts, argues that this system is derived from a European manuscript tradition that was particular to drama. The fifth is mainly concerned with evidence for types of non-solo performance in Old Norse, and the book ends with a brief conclusion and a survey of the evidence for *leikarar* in early medieval Scandinavia, which is followed by a full bibliography.

The earliest iconographic evidence is inscrutable, and serious identification of ritual performance must begin with the Gallehus horns (*c.*400 AD). Gunnell also discusses the Oseberg Tapestry, helmet plates from Sutton Hoo, Torslunda, Valsgärde and Vendel, a fresco in the cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Kiev, accounts of the Christmas *Gothikon* dance ceremony of the Varangians in Constantinople, and two animal masks excavated from the tenth-century port at Hedeby, Denmark. In the horns, tapestry and helmet plates he convincingly identifies men with horned masks or helmets or in 'animal' disguises, apparently about to fight; but his other identifications seem more doubtful. These images do suggest ritual, though they need not be seen as actors presenting sacred drama; the existence, however, between the fifth and eleventh centuries, of a ritual dance representing a fight between masked, spear-carrying warriors and men dressed as animals must be accepted. What its meaning might have been, and whether it was ritual or fictive drama, remains mysterious.

The chapter on folkloristic evidence shows how some seasonal ceremonies (the *Luciafest* and the Summer Bride, the *Halm-Staffan* figures, and the *Julebukk*) probably conceal ancient native material within a Christian pretext. Gunnell suspects three ceremonies reported from aristocratic contexts (the Battle between Winter and Summer and the sword and hoop dances) of having been imported from western Europe, but there are parallels to the first two, in the Isle of Man, and Shetland and North-East England respectively, which may suggest older origins in Scandinavia itself.

He next tests the antiquity of rituals from continental Scandinavia against comparable material from areas of Viking-Age expansion. He gives little weight to survivals in England and Ireland, discussing sword dances, but not (disappointingly) the mumming plays of the 'Wooing Ceremony' type. In Iceland, the Christmas *vikivaki* dance games include several monster- or animal-disguises which resemble the *Julebukk*, though the *hestleikur* and *hjartarleikur* may also derive some features from the British Isles. Two rituals involving men dressed as grotesque females (*Háa-Þóra* and *kerlingarleikur*) may be related to the troll-like *Lussi* figure in the *Luciafest*, and to Grýla, the legendary troll-woman who was said to search out and disembowel bad children. It seems probable that at least some traditional folk rituals do have pre-Christian Scandinavian roots.

Gunnell's discussion of the eddic poems as oral poetry (pp. 182–83) might usefully have distinguished between orally-composed poetry and the possibly more relevant model of orally learned, edited and performed ballad (see David Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk* (1972), pp. 58–73). He rightly points out, however, that the forms in which the eddic poems now survive are those of the thirteenth century. He gives a useful survey of genres, which distinguishes between dialogues, monologues and narratives. The pure dialogue poems are characterised

chiefly by the use of *ljóðaháttr* and by mythological subject matter, and it is on their thirteenth-century performance that Gunnell proceeds to concentrate.

If they are to be regarded as 'drama', the narrative prose which is now scattered through them must be ignored. Gunnell concludes (I think rightly) that the prose represents editorial addition, based on surviving verses or designed to link the poems together, and occasionally (as in the earlier parts of the Sigurðr story) perhaps derived from existing prose accounts unconnected with the verse. He devotes particular attention to five poems in *ljóðaháttr* for which the Codex Regius manuscript indicates the names of speakers with initials and *q.* (for *qvað*) in the outer margins (*Vafþrúðnismál*, *Skírnismál*, *Hárbarðsljóð*, *Lokasenna* and *Fáfnismál*); the first three are also partially preserved (in reverse order) in MS AM 748 I a, 4to, where speaker initials are indicated within the body of the text until *Skírnismál* 10, but in outer margins for the rest of *Skírnismál* and the whole of *Vafþrúðnismál*. These poems may share a common manuscript history, although other poems might have shared this feature in lost source manuscripts, and had it removed from those that survive.

Gunnell then analyses each poem in this group to discover the problems involved in a solo performance of it, concluding that a solo performer would have faced serious difficulties in each case and therefore that they were probably performed by more than one actor. In the case of *Hárbarðsljóð*, it would have been difficult for a listening audience to work out who was speaking throughout the first eight stanzas—and this is not a familiar story which everyone could be expected to know beforehand. It is, however, recognisably akin to the social amusement of the *senna*, so it would not be surprising if it were performed by two men.

In *Fáfnismál*, the editor is particularly obtrusive; disparate stanzas in *ljóðaháttr* and *fornyrðislag* have been placed together, and the boundary between *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál* may be no more than an editorial chapter division. Furthermore, *all* the episodes of violent action in this segment of text are narrated only in prose. Gunnell nevertheless treats the *ljóðaháttr* stanzas in *Fáfnismál* as a separate poem, excluding those in *Reginsmál*, on grounds which, although carefully argued, seem slight; but in any case, the editor has probably excluded some stanzas describing action. These may all have been in *fornyrðislag*, but this cannot be assumed without circular argument. This text is therefore so problematic that it seems unsafe to analyse it as a possibly dramatic piece.

In the other three poems, Gunnell seems to me to exaggerate the difficulties for a solo performer, though real problems may remain at *Lokasenna* stt. 37 (where there must be a new speaker, but it is hard to see why it should be Týr) and 55 (where we might expect Sif to continue), and at *Skírnismál* 10, where Skírnir suddenly addresses the horse which Freyr has just given him. Gunnell concludes that solo performers of these poems would need a good array of acting techniques, and this is clearly true; but his further conclusion that they are elementary plays, involving more than one performer and employing movement, gesture and probably costume and masks, need not follow. They might have been performed in that way; but (except for *Hárbarðsljóð* and possibly *Lokasenna*) solo performance does not seem particularly unlikely. The same texts might have been performed by one performer or by more than one, depending on the available resources; and a

solo performance might fall well within an acceptable definition of drama if it included variations of voice and gesture.

In Chapter IV, Gunnell shows that the system of marginal speaker notation used for these poems in the Codex Regius is not found in other early dialogues in Old Norse, the only apparent exceptions, in a manuscript of *Konungs Skuggsjá* (see fig. 76), being no more than instructions from the scribe to the rubricator. Looking further afield, marginal speaker notation is noted as unusual in manuscripts of Terence's comedies—though Gunnell is forced to rely on a very old edition, and several northern European manuscripts do make speaker notations project into the left margin when a speech begins at the beginning of a verse line (e.g. Vatican 3868, s.ix, from Corbey; Oxford Bodley Auct. F. 2. 13, s.xii, probably from St Albans).

Marginal speaker notation is used in some manuscripts of secular dramatic texts and vernacular religious plays of the eleventh to fourteenth centuries from England and northern France (e. g. *Dame Sirith*, *Gilote et Johane*, *Babio*, *Le Mystère d'Adam*). Icelanders and Norwegians who studied in England or France would have had access to this tradition (though not always: a twelfth-century visitor to Fountains (p. 324) would encounter no drama if the monks there heeded their vicar-general, Ailred of Rievaulx—see K. Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (1933), I 548). Gunnell concludes that marginal speaker notation probably implies that the scribes of the Codex Regius and AM 748 I a thought of these poems as akin to the secular drama of other parts of northern Europe.

The illustrated Terence manuscripts, however, do not abbreviate speaker names to single letters, and those post-Terentian plays which do so may have derived the practice from gospel readings in altar missals, where the beginnings of speeches are often marked with interlinear initials. These are not indications of more than one 'actor' taking part, but signals to the single reader of where and how he should vary the pace or pitch of his delivery (Karl Young, *PMLA* 1910, especially 311–32). It is therefore not certain that the scribes of texts like *Babio* and *Dame Sirith* who abbreviated marginal speaker notations envisaged those texts as necessarily being performed by more than one actor—and the same must therefore apply to eddic scribes who derived this scribal practice from England and France. Both must, however, have envisaged performance of some kind, and to this extent, Gunnell's argument is fully vindicated.

Chapter V includes a good survey of the performance elements in *seiðr* (ritual magic), *senna/mannjafnaðr* (abuse- and boasting-contests) and *mansöngsvísur* (the exchange of erotic verses between a man and a woman in the course of a dance), and assessments of the evidence for *víxlkveðandi* (alternate speaking of verse for magic purposes) and stories in which malicious spirits *ljóða á* (lay a metrical curse which can only be averted by a witty impromptu response of the same metrical form and length). Examples of this can also be found from Scotland, Norway, Sweden and Finland; see F. J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882–98), I 20–22.

Except for the ritual songs in *seiðr*, these are all *impromptu* compositions, and so essentially different from the eddic dialogue poems, but they might still suggest the circumstances of their original performance. The convention of the *senna* or

mannjafnaðr was probably the assumed context of *Hárbarðsljóð* (and possibly *Lokasenna*). *Seiðr* and *mansöngsvísur* probably had less influence because both were illegal (though the allusions to *seiðr* in *Vǫluspá* may have lent a frisson of evil and mystery to the persona of its solo performer). Stories of evil spirits who *ljóða á* could be related to deadly wisdom- or riddle- contests like *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Alvíssmál* and *Gátur Gestumblinda*, which also have ballad parallels elsewhere (e. g. the English *Inter Diabolus et Virgo* in MS Bodley, Rawlinson D 328, *c.* 1450, see Child V, 283); but here there can have been no actual social context (since the agents who *ljóða á* are not human), and these folktales may present a descendant of the eddic genre rather than a social context for it.

Gunnell's conclusion suggests that *all* the eddic poems in *ljóðaháttr*, including monologues like *Grímnismál*, may have been performed in a dramatic way. This seems quite likely, but many poems in *fornyrðislag* are no less dramatic. *Helreið Brynhildar* and *Hyndluljóð* consist of dialogue between identified fictional characters; *Guðrúnarkviða II* is a monologue for a performer 'impersonating' Guðrún, within which speeches for four characters are recalled; *Baldrs draumar* is predominantly dialogue, with a brief narrative introduction—but this resembles some of the vernacular 'dramatic' works from which Gunnell derives the system of marginal speaker notation (e. g. *Dame Sirith*). When we turn to monologues, *Vǫluspá* has a well-defined fictive speaker, situation and addressee, and a performance of it could be enhanced with appropriate gesture and costume drawn from the traditions of *seiðr*; it seems no less dramatic than the poems which Gunnell regards as drama.

Gunnell establishes some parts of his argument beyond much doubt, and others with fair probability, but the links between these sections do not for this reviewer always carry conviction. Nonetheless, this is a valuable book, which argues its case with energy and presents a wide range of evidence in interesting and useful ways. Most eddic scholars have been too inclined to see these poems as texts to be pored over in the study, and this book does a valuable service in redirecting attention to them as publicly performed poems. It does not finally settle the question of *how* they were first performed, but it re-opens it in new and interesting ways, and this should lead to more progress in the future.

JOHN MCKINNELL

MAXIMS IN OLD ENGLISH POETRY. By PAUL CAVILL. *D. S. Brewer*. Cambridge, 1999. x + 205 pp.

This book begins with criticisms of scholarly work to date on gnomic literature in Old English. 'Traditional literary techniques' (p. 1) have failed as tools for its analysis, and broader anthropological approaches, as exemplified by Morton Bloomfield's and Charles Dunn's *The Role of the Poet in Early Societies*, are inclined to ignore 'cultural specificities' (p. 2). The present work attempts to estimate 'the value of maxims to Anglo-Saxon society' (p. 3); it will ask '*why* as well as *how* maxims are used' (p. 4).

Chapter 1 distinguishes the maxim, as a 'sententious generalization' (p. 9), from the gnome, which is a 'linkage of a thing and a characteristic', e. g. *winter byð*

cealdost, 'winter is coldest' (p. 11). Some gnomes are related to the exercise of specific roles in society (trade, profession, etc.). In verse, maxims often open or close either speeches or (as in the case of *The Wanderer*) whole texts. They categorise people and things, or (in narrative) reveal characters' motives, or mark 'emphatic and climactic junctures in the story' (p. 24).

Chapter 2 touches very lightly on the use of maxims in other early Germanic literature. Old Norse is represented only by the Eddaic poem *Hamðismál* and the prose *Hrafnkels saga*. Parallels with Old English reside mainly in the uses to which maxims are put, not in phraseology, and Cavill doubts if there are sufficient verbal parallels among the various corpora to support the idea of 'an Old Germanic gnomic tradition' (p. 25).

Chapter 3 reverts to problems of definition. A maxim or gnome (the distinction drawn between the two in Chapter 1 is not particularly regarded in the remainder of the book) has six defining features: it is (1) a sententious generalisation, which (2) links a thing with a defining characteristic in (3) a complete sentence with (4) the main verb in the present tense and (5) a subject which is not a specific person. The sentence must also (6) contain no deictic references to specify the situation of utterance (pp. 50–51). Cavill's application of Anita Riedinger's concept of the formulaic 'set' (p. 54) to Old English maxims leads to the conclusion that 'some maxims were of relatively fixed form and had closely definable functions' (p. 59).

Chapter 4 is chiefly taken up with the distinction between the maxim and the proverb. Proverbs are essentially metaphorical ('There's many a good tune played on an old fiddle' is, one imagines, rarely, if ever, applied to violins). With help from Alan Dundes's categorisations, Cavill defines proverbs as 'pre-formed sayings' (p. 80) that 'may be either literal or metaphorical or both, mapping one set of descriptive categories onto another in a paradigmatic relationship' (p. 74), though this 'paradigmatic transferability', which allows them to be used metaphorically, is not well attested in Old English. Maxims are not usually pre-formed but variable and flexible combinations of formulas; nor are they metaphorical.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the functions, contexts and sources of maxims that feature the words *wa*, *wel*, *eadig*, *earm*, *dol* and other headwords (e.g. *Beowulf* 183–88). Cavill concludes that these sets are not based on Latin models (p. 98).

Chapter 6 begins with the traditional view of the function of maxims: they are used to 'invoke a sense of order in a context where chaos threatens' (p. 107). Adapting Peter Seitel's model of proverb performance, Cavill suggests that maxims, like proverbs, 'exert control by asserting an ideal of the community against the pressures of the anxiety-creating situation' (p. 109). A crucial idea here is that maxims such as Byrhtwold's famous exhortation to the dwindling English forces in *The Battle of Maldon* 312–13 are placed in 'an analogical context of poetic performance which exists by virtue of the fact that the maxims occur in a literary work' (p. 111); the 'imaginary fictive world of the poem' is linked to the world of the audience by the maxim, so that 'by imaginatively . . . apprehending the terms of the maxim as relevant to themselves in an analogous real situation, the audience reaffirm the truth of those terms and reaffirm their social norms' (p. 112). Thus

maxims, when used in narrative at least, are more like proverbs than they might appear at first sight. The remainder of the chapter illustrates the relevance of this theory to five maxims in *The Battle of Maldon*. Two of these, 312–13 and 315b–16, both spoken by Byrhtwold, contain deictic terms (313 *ure*, 'our', 316 *nu*, 'now', and *þis*, 'this', governing *wigplegan*, 'battle-play'), which Cavill experimentally removes to reveal these passages as 'applied maxims'—an editorial manoeuvre that presumably implies that they are pre-formed (and so proverbial?) in the manner described in Chapter 4.

Chapter 7 rebuts arguments for the pagan origins of various Old English maxims. Biblical source-identifications are summarised and supplemented, and the case for continuity with pagan maxims is shown to be weak.

Chapter 8 gives a broad survey of critical estimates of the Old English maxims as literature and views as to their general purpose. The modern reader expects 'coherence' and 'beauty' in literature and finds neither in the maxim poems (p. 158); but unity is to be found in the repetitive style and in certain thematic preoccupations—moral and ethical issues, the wonders of the natural world, etc. (p. 159). They also show signs of being 'products of what Walter J. Ong calls "orally based thought and expression" ' (p. 168), encapsulate 'an Anglo-Saxon understanding of reality', and constitute 'a framework for understanding'. Each maxim is 'part of a much larger entity, the social stock of knowledge' (p. 183).

This is a much richer book, in terms of variety of approaches and range of reference, than I have room to convey here. Cavill has contributed generously to knowledge of a still rarely-visited corner of the Old English field. The questions his work raised in the mind of this reviewer were mainly about the earlier history and origins of maxims and related genres. What is implied by the rarity of metaphorically applied proverbs in Old English (Chapter 4)? Did the Anglo-Saxons tend to avoid figurative language? If, as Cavill shows convincingly, the Old English maxims owe much more to Biblical influences than they do to paganism (Chapter 7), how are we to interpret their 'orality' (Chapter 8) and the fact that (as Cavill puts it) 'there was nothing so useful as a general maxim' to the Old Germanic races generally (Chapter 2, p. 40)? A much fuller comparison than Cavill attempts here of the Old English maxims corpus with the other Germanic corpora (especially the Old Norse) could not fail to produce interesting results.

This is a very well-written book (it contains no jargon), clearly printed, and carefully edited. The only errors I noticed were p. 24, line 23: 'chpater' for 'chapter'; pp. 83–84, note 6 (p. 84): 'Compostion' for 'Composition'; and p. 124, line 5: '259–59' for '258–59'.

PETER ORTON

SELECTED PAPERS. By BJARNE FIDJESTØL. Edited by ODD EINAR HAUGEN and ELSE MUNDAL. Translated by PETER FOOTE. *The Viking Collection* 9. *Odense University Press.* Odense, 1997. 406 pp.

Bjarne Fidjestøl, Professor of Nordic Philology at the University of Bergen, died suddenly in 1994. His pre-eminence as a student of Old Norse poetry was firmly established by his challenging and indispensable treatment of skaldic praise-poetry,

Det norrøne fyrstediktet (1982), as well as by his sensitive and occasionally provocative monograph on *Sólarljóð* (*Sólarljóð: Tyding og tolkingsgrunnlag*, 1979); and he was working on a third book, on the dating of Eddic poetry, at the time of his death. Bjarne was also the author of some hundred articles and reviews concerning matters of linguistic, literary and historical interest, as well as translations from Old Icelandic, English (Oliver Roland's *The Dawn of African History*, 1965) and Russian (including the third volume of *War and Peace*, 1967).

Bjarne's colleagues, Odd Einar Haugen and Else Mundal, have assembled this collection of seventeen of his essays, dating from throughout his career and reflecting the breadth of his scholarly interests. The essays are divided into five groups, although there are inevitable overlaps between them. By far the longest section, the first (pp. 16–150), is devoted to five papers reflecting Bjarne's contribution to skaldic studies. The essays range from the ambitious and highly influential 'The kenning system. An attempt at a linguistic analysis' (1974, pp. 16–67), in which Fidjestøl employs the tools of structuralist analysis in an attempt to elucidate the distinction between linguistic and stylistic study, through critical studies of the work and backgrounds of individual skalds (Þjóðólfr of Kvin and Arnórr Þórðarson) to a fascinating and wide-ranging discussion of the financial affairs of court skalds and their patrons in '"Have you heard a poem worth more?" A note on the economic background of early skaldic praise-poetry' (1984, pp. 117–32), where the social realities lying behind the stock saga scene of the poet reciting an encomium for his lord and receiving a reward for it are explored. The final essay in this section, 'Skaldic poetry and the conversion' (first published in 1987), again appeals to semiological principles, coupled with sensitive readings of *Hákonarmál*, *Eiríksmál* and *Haraldskvæði*, to present a tentative argument in favour of Haraldr hárfagri's function in preparing the ground for the conversion of Norway. Haraldr's 'not heathen' status and his interest in political, as opposed to religious, power is contrasted with the heathenism of the Hlaðajarlar, which is revealed in the surviving skaldic encomia dedicated to them. Bjarne's findings are, of course, rather more tentatively expressed than I have suggested here, and the essay, indeed, bears testimony to one of the hallmarks of his scholarship, a sensible awareness of the possible limitations of his methodology.

This willingness to test the potentialities of literary theory, always aware of its possible inadequacy, is further evinced by the first essay in the second group ('Saga studies', pp. 151–227), 'Algirdas Julien Greimas and Hrafnkell Freysgoði. Semiological models applied to an Icelandic saga' (1977, pp. 151–67). Although the discussion does feel somewhat dated—even, perhaps, inconsequential—now, Fidjestøl's explanation of Greimas's 'actant' and 'logical rectangle' models is clear and precise, and his discussion of *Hrafnkatla* does much to highlight the shortcomings of less cogent criticism of this saga. Bjarne's justification of his approach on page 152, which warns against the use of technical terms to 'foster an illusion of mathematical precision' and reminds the critic that he is 'not absolved from personal engagement with the text', sounds a salutary note which many contemporary scholars would do well to heed. Elsewhere in this section, Bjarne's attention turns to Christian matters once more. In 'The legend of Þórir hundr' (1987, pp. 168–83), he takes as his starting-point the research of a Swedish art-

historian, Torkel Eriksson, concerning the iconographic parallels between representations of the passions of Christ and St Óláfr. In an exhilarating and closely-observed trawl of the various literary accounts of Óláfr's death, Fidjestøl traces a series of parallels between the Roman soldier Longinus—whose blindness was cured after Christ's blood ran down the spear Longinus used to pierce his side—and Þórir hundr, one of the slayers of King Óláfr. In 'European and native tradition in *Óláfs saga helga*' (1990, pp. 184–200), Bjarne puts an impressive breadth of learning to excellent use in demonstrating Snorri's manipulation of the European hagiographical and *rex justus* traditions in terms of the psychological realism characteristic of the sagas, and concludes that his ability to create 'a polyphonic work of surpassing literary quality' should be attributed not simply to Snorri's own gifts as a humanist and writer, but to the orally-fostered native tradition in which he worked.

In the third section of the book (pp. 228–302), the editors have collected four essays concerning the relationship between skaldic poetry and Old Norse prose literature. 'Icelandic sagas and poems on princes. Literature and society in archaic West Norse culture' (1990, pp. 228–54) explores the social functions of skaldic panegyric and the *Íslendingasögur* within the contexts of the 'thassalocracies' (*sic*) of the Viking world and the 'pioneer society' of saga-age Iceland. As a general introduction to both genres, this paper should be required undergraduate reading. In 'Skaldic stanzas in saga-prose. Observations on the relationship between prose and verse in Snorri's *Heimskringla*' (1993, pp. 255–76), Bjarne considers the influence of poetry in shaping saga narratives. He goes beyond asserting that scribes and, by implication, writers were able to rely on their audience's recollection of entire skaldic poems when prompted by opening lines or stanzas, suggesting, on the basis of echoes of *Bjarkamál* in various saga accounts of the battle of Stiklestad, that 'a text which is not quoted was capable of influencing the saga-prose' (p. 258). This is substantiated by close readings of several scenes in *Heimskringla*, highlighting the distinction between Snorri's use of skaldic verse as sources for reportage and as direct speech in 'scenes'. 'The tale of Haraldr harðráði and Þorgils the fisherman' (1971, pp. 277–93) is the earliest article in the collection. Fidjestøl considers the two extant versions of the *þáttr* of Haraldr and Þorgils, preserved, on the one hand, in *Codex Frisianus* and, on the other, in *Morkinskinna*, *Flateyjarbók*, *Hulda* and *Hrokkinskinna*. In an exhaustive and impressive analysis of the transmission of the two versions, and particularly of the skaldic stanzas that they share in part, he demonstrates that the *þáttr* 'offers a comparatively clear example of the way in which a piece of prose built round a number of skaldic strophes has developed in oral tradition' (p. 277). The last paper in this section, ' "See what happens, compose on it later." A footnote to a piece of historical criticism found in a prologue' (1980, pp. 294–302), concerns the authorship of a controversial passage in the *Flateyjarbók* version of the 'Great' Saga of St Óláfr, in which there are some important comments on the value of skaldic poetry as source-material for early Norse historians. Bjarne's clear-sighted textual analysis supports the conclusion that the passage post-dates Snorri's *Óláfs saga* and, in all likelihood, represents 'a post-classical stage' of Norse historical criticism.

The fourth section of the book is devoted to one of Bjarne's last published works, his contribution to a general history of Norwegian literature, 'Norse-Icelandic composition in the oral period' (1994, pp. 303–32). Once again, this essay, which contains admirably clear accounts of both eddic and skaldic metrics and the social context of Old Norse poetry, should be required undergraduate reading.

One of Bjarne Fidjestøl's rarest and most important gifts was his ability to communicate his enthusiasm for, and expertise in, Old Norse society and literature to non-specialist audiences. In him, the discipline has lost a remarkable ambassador. Although all of the essays in the book—notably that on 'Óláfr Tryggvason the missionary' (1993, pp. 201–27)—reveal this talent, the editors have chosen to showcase it by devoting the final section to three essays 'in lighter vein'. ' "Out they will look, the lovely ladies." Views of women in Norse literature' (1993, pp. 333–42) and 'Snorri Sturluson—European humanist and rhetorician' (1988, pp. 343–50) originated as periodical and newspaper articles, while 'Romantic reading at the court of Hákon Hákonarson' (pp. 351–65) is the published version of a radio talk Bjarne gave in his, and Hákon's, home town in 1989.

Odd Einar Haugen and Else Mundal deserve congratulation for this volume, which is a fitting tribute to the talent and diversity of a remarkable scholar. Peter Foote's translations are readable and fluent, and will do much to further the editors' aim of making this important and influential work accessible to the 'many people with interests in Old Norse-Icelandic studies, and some actively engaged in the field, who are not equally at ease when faced with a work in a modern Scandinavian language'. Given that this is the target readership, however, I do have a couple of criticisms regarding editorial policy. There are several places where, although the essay as a whole has been translated, extensive quotations from secondary sources have been left in the original languages, despite the fact that primary quotations are always rendered into English. Elsewhere, although Bjarne Fidjestøl's wry use of mainstream Norwegian cultural references to illuminate the past is one of the most delightful aspects of his pedagogical technique, these references are not always picked up by the non-Norwegian reader. The present reviewer would have welcomed brief footnotes, for example, about Petter Dass's consigning Þórir hundr to Hell (p. 168) and the contribution of Hans Nielsen Hauge to Norwegian Christianity (p. 201).

KATRINA ATTWOOD

THE COMPLETE SAGAS OF ICELANDERS INCLUDING 49 TALES. General editor, VIÐAR HREINSSON. Editorial team, ROBERT COOK, TERRY GUNNELL, KENEVA KUNZ, BERNARD SCUDDER. Introduction by ROBERT KELLOGG. 5 vols. *Leifur Eiríksson Publishing*. Reykjavík 1997. lv + 402; 466; 472; 448 pp.

One can only wonder at the organisation of this mighty project, translation of 40 sagas and 49 þættir; its five stout volumes seem to have crystallised in no time out of the electric air of e-mail communications between Viðar Hreinsson, sitting in his Icelandic command centre, and 30 native English-speaking saga scholars from all

over the globe and almost another 30 consultants (= *CSI*). The corpus translated is that of the most recent comprehensive edition for Icelandic readers, *Íslendinga sögur og þættir* published by Svart á hvítu in two (1985–86) or three (1987) volumes (= *ÍS*). Yet fewer than half the saga translations (19) are actually based on *ÍS*, while 16 are based on *Íslenzk fornrit* (= *ÍF*) and 5 on separate editions, and the variation of sources complicates working back and forth between the originals and the translations.

The translations strike me as generally excellent, and the editorial team and readers have done a fine job of harmonising styles. The resulting language is something of a mid-Atlantic compromise, suppressing most local peculiarities, but often British-tinged. The conventions adopted for place-names, personal names, and spelling inspired lively debates, and the results are compromises. I regret that a little more in the way of an Icelandic (even Old Icelandic) *Schriftbild* was not sought. This effort to systematise the language means that recurrent phrases are usually translated uniformly; but the editors provide two good statements of the limits of such standardisation (I xvii; xix). My reading impressed me principally with their success at striking a balance between individual formulations by the translators and a standardisation that really does reflect the uniformities of saga language. Another result of the effort at consistency is a useful glossary of repeated 'key terms and concepts'. The rest of the reference section in vol. V collects other information useful for the understanding of many of the texts: chronological lists of kings; some pages illustrating ships; the typical layout of a farm; diagrams of political and social structure; tables of place-name elements and time measurements; maps of the Icelandic action. A conspicuous omission is genealogy: the reader of *CSI* faces an ocean of names with no assistance of this kind.

The editors' single hardest task must have been to maintain consistency, and on the whole they succeeded. Typographical errors are relatively few, and the volumes are beautifully produced. Major aspects of the poetry are well rehearsed in the reference section and in Robert Kellogg's general Introduction; kennings are mostly retained and glossed in a uniform way, but the translators had 'a relatively free hand' in attempting 'to create an independent English-language poem', especially through rhythm and alliteration (I xix–xx). Their success varies, but to have this huge skaldic corpus in a uniform format is an unmixed blessing. *CSI* can teach much up-to-date literary history and criticism, first through Kellogg's fine essay, then through the 40 saga headnotes, the preface and apparatus. I found only a few points one might be inclined to quibble over. A unique feature of this collection is its analysis of the 89 texts into 14 subgenres determined by a combination of factors. The discussion explaining this arrangement (I xx–xxiv) and the schema itself are quite interesting; but despite the helpful repetition of a schematic overview at the beginning of each volume and traditional tables of contents at the end, this order is not the most *serviceable* possible. Yet the thematic arrangement of *CSI* may make for stimulating teaching and prove suggestive to many readers. More advanced users will wish it had been complemented by a simple alphabetical finding-list based on standard Icelandic titles.

CSI will be a valuable tool for neighbouring disciplines, but it should also prove ideal for literary students at all levels and for non-Icelandic saga scholars engaged

in broad approaches (e. g., thematic). Reading *CSI* gives an impressive sense of closely woven intertextuality within a single saga world—an impression supported by the extensive index of characters who appear in two or more stories. Yet reading through, one is also struck by the uniqueness of each text. The collection necessarily brings late and less classical sagas to greater prominence, so that it may be more difficult in future confidently to say what 'the' family saga actually is. Its pedagogical effectiveness is compromised by the price, which dictates that the text be consulted in a library; and the apparatus in vol. V restricts full usage to one student at a time. One might dream of a future paperback reprinting with, in a separate volume, reference section, full index of persons and places (*ÍS* also lacks an index), and perhaps a thematic index.

In view of the new tools available through the internet, the new electronic saga texts (the 40 sagas of *ÍS*) and concordance on CD-ROM, the efficient texts offered by *ÍS*, and now this handsome corpus of family sagas in English, the prospects for research and teaching in the saga literature have never been better. *CSI* opens, however, with a series of brief elegant tributes which emphasise rather that the family sagas, through this remarkable project, will speak clearly to the world at large of the breadth and depth of Icelandic humane letters—to which a reviewer humbled by the scope and quality of the enterprise can only add amen.

JOSEPH HARRIS

THE SAGA OF KING HROLF KRAKI. Translated with an introduction by JESSE L. BYOCK. *Penguin Books.* Harmondsworth, 1998. xxxvii + 99 pp.

There are now some half-dozen volumes in the Penguin Classics series that present Icelandic sagas in English translation with an introduction and apparatus. Most of the others are *Íslendingasögur*, but *Hrólfs saga kraka* is one of the *fornaldarsögur*, the sagas of ancient times. The connection of some of its major characters and stories with those of the English *Beowulf* has made it the most widely known of the genre, and its blending of traditional legendary history and folktale, its powerful exposition of heroic conduct and the excellence of its storytelling have made it highly esteemed. The new volume will not lack readers.

The Introduction begins by placing the saga in its Icelandic context, explaining the structure of the saga (in five parts instead of the usual six, as Professor Byock regards the Uppsala ride and the battle at Hleiðargarðr as one part rather than two), and briefly saying something about motivation and magic (on the latter the detailed Endnotes are most useful). It continues with brief sections on 'The Sagas of Ancient Times and Heroic Lays'; 'The Legendary Past'; 'Archaeology and the Legendary Hleidargard' (a welcome account of the results of 1986–88 excavations, even though the oldest of the halls discovered appears just a little too young to be identified with the Heorot of *Beowulf* or the Hleiðargarðr of *Hrólfs saga*); the relation of the saga and *Beowulf*; 'The Bear Warriors'; 'Berserkers'; 'Myth in the saga'; and 'Christian Influence'. It amounts to about twenty-three small pages of text, plus illustrations, which is not much for such an abundance of matter, and one

could wish some of the sections had been longer. There is unfortunately no guide to further reading. After the translation come seven pages of endnotes, some genealogical tables and a detailed glossary of proper names.

The goal throughout the translation 'has been to produce an accurate, readable translation'. Inevitably some closeness to the text has been lost for the gain of readability. In style, for instance, the dominant feature of the syntax of the original (a series of clauses linked by *og* or *en*) is much reduced. This may have to be accepted for the sake of readability, but it is the case that those subordinate clauses which do occur in the original are generally the latter part of a sentence and when in the translation, as often happens, the first of two or more parallel clauses has been made subordinate to what follows it, this may jar for those familiar with the style of the original. An illustration may be given from p. 1 of the translation. The text reads:

> Nu er ad seigia frá̈ þui ad Frodi kongur situr j rijki sijnu og o̧fundar hann fastliga brödur sinn Haldan kong ad hann skylldi stijra einn Danmo̧rk, en þotti sinn hluti ecki so gödur ordid hafa, og þui safnar hann samann mug og margmenni og helldur til Danmerkur og kiemur þar á̈ nättar þeli, brennir þar allt og brælir. (Ed. Arnam. 2:5–11)

This is one sentence, though the textual variants in the edition used by the translator show that there would be good manuscript support for beginning a new sentence with *þui* and omitting the *og* before it. The translation, however, does not do that, but nonetheless makes four sentences out of the passage, one of which begins with a subordinate clause and another (made prominent by paragraphing) begins with a participial phrase:

> Now it is told that King Frodi stayed home in his kingdom. He bitterly envied his brother, King Halfdan, because Halfdan alone ruled Denmark. As King Frodi felt that he had not fared as well, he assembled a large following of armed men and set out for Denmark.
>
> Arriving in the dead of night, Frodi burned and destroyed everything. (p. 1)

The choice of sometimes doing it this way can be defended of course, and even perhaps the frequency of it in the present translation, but it must also be said that at times main clauses that are statements of some importance to the saga lose impact in being reduced in status. Thus at the beginning of a passage of twelve lines extolling King Hrólfr for his achievements (Ed. Arnam. 50:7–18), the statements that he went raiding (a good thing in a leader of men) and that he assembled a large force, are of less significance in the translation:

> Because King Hrolf was out raiding, his encounter with King Adils was delayed. With the large force he had assembled, Hrolf *etc.* (p. 33)

And the reduction has surely gone too far in the following:

> Skilur hann nu ad eÿ mune þurfa ad dyliast vid leingur, ad öfridur sie fyrir ho̧ndum. Hann leitar til hallarinnar og þangad sem *etc.* (Ed. Arnam. 113:15–18)

> Realizing that battle was at hand, he made his way to the hall where *etc.* (p. 72).

More examples could be cited, but one must suffice:

> og er þetta hǫfud skǫmm þuilykur kappe sem þu ert, ad kongurinn skule leggia sig j haska fyrir oss, *etc.* (Ed. Arnam. 118:8–10)

The clause *ad – oss* explains *þetta*, but it has been detached from its antecedent and made to introduce the next sentence, with two undesirable consequences, that *þetta* acquires a new explanation in additional words and that another sentence beginning with a subordinate clause is created:

> There is dishonour in this conduct for such a champion as you. While the king endangers his life for us, *etc.* (p. 75)

(In the following main clause, *so* has in consequence to be omitted, but there is no good reason for omitting *mikla* in *þijnu mikla lofe.)*

Omission of single words and small phrases is not uncommon: *mikil þoka og hulda* (4:12–13), 'mist and secrecy' (p. 2); *kallinn Vijfill* (4:19), 'Vifil' (p. 3); *miklar fylgiur og mättugar* (4:21), 'powerful spirits' (p. 3); *Fer kongur nu heim vid so buid* (7:6–7), 'Then he sailed home' (p. 4); *helldur ödœlir* (7:19), 'troublesome' (p. 5); and so on. Most serious is the omission, surely accidental, of *Hann hefur mikid lid* (42:18, p. 29). There are also additions, presumably to enhance the readability of the translation, though one may question how necessary they are, and think that readers of the translation could have made the connection, e. g. *Kall suarar, þier eigid þad nu vndir ydur. Hafi þier þá helldur erindi ätt i eyna* (7:3–4), ' "That is now within your power," replied the freeman. "Should you so decide, then you will have accomplished something on the island" ' (p. 4). But no plea of readability can be allowed for some of the departures from the text, e. g. *og finnast þeir eÿ* (4:4), 'They (= the seeresses and soothsayers) found nothing' (p. 2), but *þeir* refers to the boys, they were not found.

In conclusion, the following are some passages deserving comment as they affect the reader's perception of details of the story:

Eggia skylldi þrisuar sinnum áá allre œfe sinni, og eij mätti bregda annad skeyd (68:16–18), 'Only three times in its owner's life could the weapon be urged to action. Thereafter it could never be drawn again by the same person' (p. 44). But the text means that the limit of three urgings applies to the life of the weapon, and there would be occasions when it could not be drawn and trying to force it would be to no avail. In the context of this saga no one but Bǫðvarr can be imagined to have owned and used the sword.

Elgfrödi stendur vpp, og bregdur skalminni, og skiellir sijdann vpp ad heptinu (69:9–11), 'Elk-Frodi stood up. Then drawing his short sword, he struck downward, burying the weapon up to the hilt' (p. 45). It is more likely that he drew the sword, either completely or partly, and then slammed it all the way back into its sheath.

Sest Suipdagur jnst, þáá Hiallti (94:13), 'Svipdag sat closest to the wall, next to Hjalti' (p. 60). But *jnst* means farthest from the door and nearest to the centre of one of the long walls of the hall. Hjalti went second and sat next to him.

In the fighting at Uppsala, Hrólfr's hawk came flying from the stronghold and settled on his shoulder *so lätandi sem hann eigi micklum sigri ad hrosa* (102:3–4),

'and from there, filled with pride, it acted as though assisting in a glorious victory' (p. 65). The hawk was behaving as though it already had a particular victory of its own to boast of, which indeed it had, namely the killing of all Aðils's hawks.

DESMOND SLAY

THE ICELANDIC LEGEND OF SAINT DOROTHY. Edited by KIRSTEN WOLF. *Studies and Texts* 130. *Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies*. Toronto 1997. vii + 132 pp.

This challenging and fascinating study represents the first edition of the *Dorotheu saga* since Unger's *Heilagra manna søgur* of 1877. The edition itself (pp. 87–103) comprises a diplomatic transcript of the unique manuscript, AM 429 12mo, fols. 49r–57r, with a facing-page Latin text, *De sancta Dorothea*, reprinted from the collection of 'legendae superadditae' appendixed to Graesse's *Legenda aurea* edition of 1890 (*BHL* 2324). Wolf's text is exemplary: it is careful to a fault, with brief but thorough documentation of the legend's manuscript preservation, and is at once more reliable and more user-friendly than Unger's version.

Perhaps more interesting than the Icelandic text itself, however, is Wolf's contextual introduction, a thorough analysis of the history and development of Dorothy's *vita*, from the earliest mention of her death in the fifth-century *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* to modern artistic and dramatic adaptations. Section 1.0 (pp. 1–19) considers the surviving Latin versions, paying particular attention to their complex relationship with the evolving *Legenda aurea* text, to which Dorothy's life seems to have been added during the later Middle Ages. Detailed comparisons with the lives of other virgin saints are used to demonstrate the often formulaic structure of Dorothy's legend. Two principal Latin versions of the legend are postulated (see p. 19), the longer and earlier text (*BHL* 2323) and a later, abridged version (*BHL* 2324). Wolf's painstaking attention to detail is much in evidence here, as throughout the book, and her footnotes, in particular, are a real joy, gently leading the reader into the mysteries of medieval theology and modern gender studies with, for example, an explanation of the Aristotelian origins of patristic theories of female corporeality (note 20, p. 11) and a spirited defence of the lives of virgin saints against accusations of pornography (note 27, pp. 16–17). Having established the Latin origins of the legend, Wolf turns her attention to vernacular versions in German, French and English. Section 1.1 (pp. 19–45) is an exhaustive catalogue of verse and prose accounts, interspersed with careful discussions of the inter-relationships between the texts and brief accounts of their literary qualities. Particular attention is paid to the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century versions in German and Middle English verse. Wolf's discussion indicates the divergences these texts share from their apparent source, the *Legenda aurea* version (*BHL* 2324), and highlights their similarities to the *BHL* 2325d recension, a representative text of which (from the mid fifteenth-century Bologna, Bibliotheca Universitaria Codex 2800) is edited in the appendix (pp. 104–07).

In section 2 (pp. 47–63), Wolf assembles the evidence for devotion to Saint Dorothy in Scandinavia, and advances the thesis that the cult most probably had

its origins in Dorothy's popular veneration in Germany. She supports her argument with an account of the historical and literary evidence for the cult, including a *knittel* mystery play *Dorothea Komedie*, translated in 1531 from a German Latin source by 'Christiernus Johannis', principal of Vor Frue Skole, Odense, probably for performance by his pupils (pp. 53–55), and the Danish ballad *Den hellige Dorothea*, which also appears to be translated from a German original (pp. 55–56). By contrast with the Danish and Swedish material, evidence for Dorothy's veneration in Iceland (discussed on pp. 58–63) is scanty and almost exclusively literary. In addition to the prose legend itself, three poetic versions are recorded. Wolf gives a full summary of the fourteenth- or fifteenth-century *Dorotheudiktur*, which is preserved alongside the prose legend in AM 429 12mo, and briefly discusses the relationship between two seventeenth-century *Dorotheukvæði*, loosely based on *Den hellige Dorothea*.

The final part of the introduction (pp. 64–86) is devoted to *Dorotheu saga* itself. The sole manuscript witness, the fifteenth-century anthology AM 429 12mo, is discussed at length, and Wolf speculates, on the basis of its contents, which relate exclusively to female saints, and of evidence of past ownership, that it may have been written for the Benedictine convent at Kirkjubær in Síða (pp. 64–65; see also pp. 59–60). There follows a detailed description of the palaeography and orthography of the legend (pp. 66–74), though the usefulness of this is perhaps somewhat restricted, since the edition contains no facsimile text page; and an extremely self-assured analysis of the literary features of the translation (pp. 76–86). The sources of the saga are discussed in section 3.2 (pp. 74–76), where Wolf takes issue with the standard view, expressed by Unger and adopted by all subsequent scholars, that it is based on the *Legenda aurea* version of the legend. She demonstrates that *Dorotheu saga* shares divergences from this version with the German and Middle English poetic versions and with the Latin recension represented by the Bologna Codex (*BHL* 2325d), and postulates a now-lost common source.

Kirsten Wolf has done Saint Dorothy proud with this extremely detailed, self-consciously scholarly monograph, which does much to illuminate the nature of late medieval devotion in Scandinavia and the complex and fascinating interplay between hagiographical texts in the German language area. My only concern is that Wolf's erudition might create something of a barrier for non-specialist readers; in addition to the diplomatic transcripts in Icelandic and Latin, the book quotes extensively from texts in several historical dialects of German, French, English and Danish without normalisation or paraphrase. While this does not present problems for most readers of *Saga-Book*, I fear that Saint Dorothy and her saga might not find the wider academic readership they so clearly deserve.

Katrina Attwood

ORDBOG OVER DET NORRØNE PROSASPROG. A DICTIONARY OF OLD NORSE PROSE. 1: A–BAM. Edited by HELLE DEGNBOL, BENT CHR. JACOBSEN, EVA RODE, CHRISTOPHER SANDERS, ÞORBJÖRG HELGADÓTTIR. *The Arnamagnæan Commission*. Copenhagen, 1995. 906 columns.
Accompanying volume: ONP 1: NØGLE//KEY. 122 pp.

This dictionary of Old Norse prose, published in 1995, is the first of eleven long-awaited volumes planned by the Arnamagnæan Commission. A volume of indices was published in 1989. The next volume (BAN–DAV) will be published in December and available in the New Year (2001), so it will almost certainly be a generation or two before the dictionary in its complete form will have been tried and tested by scholars and students alike. A dictionary is in many ways similar to a car, in that it has to be used for some time and in all sorts of conditions before you can really tell just how reliable it is. However, even the hastiest of perusals reveals what a treasure the *ONP* is and what we have to look forward to in the coming years.

The booklet which accompanies volume 1 (*ONP 1: Nøgle//Key*) comprises the following sections in Danish and English:

User's Guide
Sigla: corrigenda & addenda
Medieval Manuscripts: corrigenda
Bibliography
ONP 1: bibliography
ONP 1: corrigenda
Abbreviations & Symbols

The User's Guide is exhaustively detailed in its explanation of the editorial considerations and guidelines used by the compilers. The arrangement of the entries and their organisation is painstakingly presented over nineteen pages. All this information can be baffling at a first reading, but whilst it may be difficult to read as an introduction, it works very well as a reference tool used in conjunction with the dictionary, thanks to its detailed contents pages and the lists of abbreviations.

Entries in the dictionary have been normalised to represent the language of Norway and Iceland *c.*1200–1250, although if there are two deviating forms the more conservative (usually Icelandic) is used. The order of the alphabet differs from some dictionaries with accented and unaccented vowels being treated as the same letter, as are **d** and **ð**. Thus, *áfýsi* precedes *afþokka*, and *aðaltunglkváma* precedes *adamassteinn* in the dictionary. Another striking feature is the use of the graphemes **ǽ** and **ǿ** instead of **æ** and **œ** respectively. The compilers justify this deviation from normal practice by saying that it better reflects the spelling of the older manuscripts as well as being practically and pedagogically more sound. The treatment of **d** and **ð** as the same letter in the alphabetical sequence, however, is potentially confusing. Although the two graphemes are frequently used interchangeably in manuscripts, they are kept as separate letters in most other dictionaries' normalised forms. These deviations from traditional practice may initially cause the beginner some difficulties. The sequence at the end of the alphabet is **þ**, **ǽ**, **ø**/**ǿ**, **ǫ**.

As the name of the dictionary clearly indicates, it covers the prose corpus of Old Norse. Words from runic inscriptions as well as poetry are not included. The corpus includes every type of saga: *íslendingasögur*, *konungasögur*, *fornaldarsögur*, *byskupa- og samtíðarsögur*, *helgi- og postulasögur*. Scientific works, annals, theological treatises, law texts and charters are also used. Place-names and personal names are not included in the dictionary.

The dictionary's greatest strength lies not so much in a greatly expanded number of entries, but rather its fullness of description for each entry. Each entry is accompanied by grammatical information, definitions in Danish and English, supportive quotations (sometimes with their own translations), editorial comments, sigla and other references to glossaries and secondary literature. The dictionary will probably be of limited use to the absolute beginner, as the user must have a knowledge of Old Norse morphology and orthography, as well as the ability to recognise variants. The example below illustrates the format of the new dictionary and compares this to other dictionaries often used by students of Old Norse, viz. Cleasby–Vigfusson, Fritzner, Zoëga and Heggstad.

Degnbol *et al*., 1 col. 185

á·góði *sb. m.* [-a]
1) *udbytte // gain, profit:* sé ek ykkr engan ágóða, þótt þér reynið með yðr jafnbúnum *Kjaln 42[1];* Aldri gekk Lais svo á torg eðr kaupstaði, at eigi hefði hann helming ágóða. Varð hann nú svo auðigr ... *Mág[2] 113[14]*
2) *alt af værdi fra strandet hval som ikke bliver vejet (□: ben, indvolde, tran, etc., cf. Lúðvík Kristjánsson 1986 33–34) // everything of value that is not weighed from a stranded whale (□: bone, gut, oil, etc.): (Helgafellskirkja á)* fiordvng j ollvm hualreka oc fiordvng j ollvm agoda. ad afteknv þuerste oc beinvm med halfvm fiordvngi *DI III (*[1377–1378]>AM 263[x]) 327[23];* þriðivngr hvalreka ok halfr viðreki ok land halft. Ynder iðra felli þriði vngr hvalreka ok likt i agoda •*MáldReyk[4] 19[19];* fiordung j reka ollum bæde hualreka og vidreka. suo j renningum og agoda og flutningum a reykianese *DI III (*[1367]>JS 143[x]) 230[27]; item: DI II (*[1327]>apogr[x]) 620[10]; DI II (*1327>Bps A II 1[x]) 633[29]; DI II (*[1344]>Bps A II 1[x]) 785[21]; DI II (*[1344]>Bps A II 1[x]) 785[25]*
Gloss.: *ClV; Fr; LL; AJ; Fr4; NO; (Bl)*
Litt.: *Lúðvík Kristjánsson 1986 33–34*

Cleasby–Vigfusson, p. 40

á-góði, a, m. *gain, profit, benefit*, D. I. i. 476, Ísl. ii. 432 (freq.) COMPD: **ágóða-hlutr,** ar, m. *a profitable share*, Grág. ii. 359.

Fritzner, I 20

ágóði, *m.* Fordel, Udbytte af noget, = ávöxtr 4, góði 2. *Mag*. 113; *HE*. II, 120; *DI*. I, 476.

Zoëga, p. 32

á-góði *m. gain, profit, benefit.*

Heggstad, p. 9

á-góði *m.* bate, utvinning.

As well as offering much more background information than previous dictionaries, *ONP* often has revised definitions. For example, *askraki* is described as 'pelsværk (uvist af hvilken art) // fur (of unknown type)', whereas in other dictionaries 'marten' is usually suggested. Similarly, the editors did not hazard a definite definition of *bali* given as '?brink (ved havet) // ?(elevated sand-)bank (at the shore)'. The reader feels confident that definitions are reliable and supported by the evidence of the manuscripts. The editors' reluctance to suggest (what can often be dubious) etymologies for the entries is also to be admired.

The *ONP* is an excellent subject for the old adage, that we should never judge a book by its cover. The poor volume has the misfortune of being covered in what looks like beige hessian. Yet despite its grim appearance this dictionary is set to become the standard reference work for Old Norse Studies. It will be of most use to academics and scholars, whilst those tackling Old Norse for the first time may prefer to use a more manageable (and cheaper) alternative. However, if you have the spare cash and the patience to wait for the next ten volumes, this dictionary comes very highly recommended.

JON ADAMS

THE OXFORD ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE VIKINGS. Edited by PETER SAWYER. *Oxford University Press.* Oxford 1997. xvii + 298 pp.

Those who expect a history to present a sequential narrative will not find it here. This is, rather, a compilation of histories, collecting nine specialist essays on aspects of Viking history, flanked by introductory and concluding remarks by Peter Sawyer. Handsome illustrations and maps decorate almost every page, with captions in wide margins functioning as a parallel account rather than specific amplification of the text.

Superficially, the *leitmotif* is investigation of the questions posed on the dust-jacket: 'Were the Vikings . . . a "valiant, wrathful, foreign, purely pagan people" who swept in from the sea to plunder and slaughter? Or in the words of a Manx folksong, "war-wolves keen in hungry quest", who lived and died by the sea and the sword? Or were they unusually successful merchants, extortionists, and pioneer explorers?' The contributors engage variously with these questions, from Janet Nelson's assurance that the Northmen 'were not notorious rapists' (p. 47)

to Lars Lönnroth tracing, in his lively essay 'The Vikings in History and Legend', the descent from the genteel eighteenth-century myth of the Viking as a 'delightfully wild and romantic person' (p. 234) to the workaday modern scholarly characterisation of Vikings as 'competent but fairly unglamorous tradesmen, colonists, shipbuilders, craftsmen, mercenaries or (alas) plunderers' (p. 247). The strategy of this book, in assembling analyses of Viking activity in a variety of arenas, offers an effective range of perspectives on the question. A more fundamental uncertainty is whether to apply the term 'Viking' only to Scandinavians of a more outgoing persuasion; Peter Sawyer distinguishes between 'The Vikings' and 'traders, missionaries and royal envoys' (p. 257), and Thomas Noonan finds it best to discard the term altogether in his valuable account of 'Scandinavians in European Russia': 'the meaning of "Viking" has been shaped mainly by events in the west, so to avoid endless debates about what constitutes a "real" Viking it is preferable to use the term "Scandinavian" when discussing the east' (p. 134).

The book's organisation at first privileges an external, victims'-eye view. Janet Nelson's 'The Frankish Empire', Simon Keynes's 'Vikings in England *c.*790–1016', and Donnchadh Ó Corráin's 'Ireland, Wales, Man and the Hebrides' all document Scandinavian aggression. All are in many ways rehabilitatory, stressing that the warlike techniques of the Vikings were no more and no less savage than those of their Dark Age targets; that their objective was usually straightforward financial gain, rather than mindless violence or lust for power or land; and that their offences were inevitably magnified by the rhetoric of Christian reportage. Both Nelson and Ó Corráin choose to begin by deconstructing ecclesiastical interpretations of early Viking raids as fulfilments of biblical prophecy.

Later chapters progress to a more interior view of Nordic culture. Sveinbjörn Rafnsson's account of 'The Atlantic Islands' gives a contrasting picture of Viking enterprise unhampered by the competing claims of incumbent residents, detailing the political and cultural development of these colonies. Iceland in particular comes across in this comparative context as both a rich mine of natural resources and unexpectedly cosmopolitan: 'Thanks to the sea-routes the scattered societies of the islands were more accessible to the outside world than the traditional societies in Scandinavia, some of them far inland. This partly explains why the Icelanders accepted Christianity before some of the landlocked communities in Norway and Sweden' (p. 114). Niels Lund in 'The Danish Empire and the End of the Viking Age' discusses relationships between Viking ventures abroad and power politics back in Scandinavia, which were often disrupted by the return of successful and wealthy Vikings; raiding, as the sagas suggest, was a way of improving status at home. Jan Bill's 'Ships and Seamanship' is a detailed but not over-technical analysis of Viking ship-building. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen in 'Religions Old and New' offers an anthropological analysis not only of the pagan religion, emphasising the 'use of cosmic contrasts . . . fundamental to the Nordic world view' (p. 216), but of the long period of transition in which pagans in contact with and receptive to Christian culture borrowed and transmuted its themes and were themselves subjected to its interpretations.

There are inevitably repetitions. Stories such as that of the conversion of Harald Bluetooth are retold in different contexts—an ironical example, since it is used to illustrate the different perspectives of its two chroniclers, Widukind and Adam of Bremen. Despite apparent untidiness, the offering of different perspectives is usually constructive. What emerges most powerfully from the book is the contrast of the different contexts in which similar military operations—in some cases, such as those in England and among the Franks, in the hands of the same individuals—were carried out. In the comparative isolation of Britain, the defenders achieved a common front at times, prompting 'the emergence of a sense of common identity among the English peoples' (p. 62), whereas the situation of the Franks, compromised by the need to maintain relations with Danes on the Frisian border and Abodrites to the east, can be summed up by Nelson's section heading, 'Franks divided, Vikings ascendant'. In Ireland, still more isolated, 'the Vikings were enablers of communication' (p. 109), mediating contact with England and the continent and stimulating commercial and military developments.

Although the scholarly argument presented here is detailed and up to date, it is inevitably summary; earlier scholarship is paraphrased without specific reference. Bibliographical suggestions are given for each chapter but with varying degrees of annotation. The decision to render names in anglicised form is perhaps wise, eliminating some of the potential for blunders such as 'Olaf Trygvasson' (p. 78) or again, 'Tryggvasson' (p. 106); there are other typographical lapses, especially in the names, but they are few. Reasonably in a volume of this range and accessibility, texts are generally cited only in English translation; still, it is a pity that the exemption mysteriously granted to the chapter 'Ireland, Wales, Man and the Hebrides', which quotes extensively in Irish, did not extend to a few lines of Old Norse.

ALISON FINLAY

THE REWRITING OF NJÁLS SAGA: TRANSLATION, IDEOLOGY AND ICELANDIC SAGAS. By JÓN KARL HELGASON. *Topics in Translation* 16. *Multilingual Matters*. Clevedon 1999. vi + 175 pp.

The Rewriting of Njáls Saga brings together seven case studies dealing with the creation and development of the *Njáls saga* we have today in Icelandic; and the history of its translation, publishing and the significance of its reception in England, Germany, the United States, Denmark and Norway. Two chapters were published in English versions in 1994. Chapter 4, 'On Danish Borders: Rewriting and Censorship', first appeared as 'On Danish Borders: Icelandic Sagas in German Occupied Denmark' in *Contemporary Sagas*, Preprints for The Ninth International Saga Conference (Reykjavík: The Ninth International Saga Conference, pp. 408–22). Chapter 6, 'Icelandic Saga Laws: Patronage and Politics' first appeared as ' "We who cherish *Njáls saga*": The Alþingi as Literary Patron' in *Northern Antiquity: The Post-Medieval Reception of Edda and Saga* (ed. Andrew Wawn,

Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, pp. 143–61). This charts the debates and political machinations that lay behind the 1944 edition of *Njáls saga* sponsored by the Alþingi. On the one hand the saga is presented as an object of purity and value. Behind the scenes, however, was a concerted attempt to discredit Halldór Laxness's proposed edition (which appeared in 1945) as something profane, even bestial, because of his intention to modernise spelling and modify the text. This chapter is what Robert Kellogg describes as 'obligatory reading' about 'cultural warfare in the trenches' (review in *Saga-Book* XXIV: 5, 1997, 378). The final—and fascinating—chapter, 'Intersections: *Njáls Saga* and Urban Development', which charts the use of the names both of early settlers and of characters from *Njáls saga* in the naming of Reykjavík streets as the growing city spread to the east in the 1930s (Skeggjagata, Vífilsgata, Njálsgata, Gunnarsbraut, etc.) is drawn from the chapter 'Snorrabraut – Kjarvalsstaðir' in Jón Karl's own *Hetjan og höfundurinn: brot úr íslenskri menningsögu* (1998).

The book is number 16 in the Topics in Translation series. The only real criticism I have of the volume is that the essays it contains reflect upon so much more than translation, and that errors in presentation seem to be editorial, rather than authorial. One glaring slip is that the subtitle on the cover differs from that on the title page (on the cover we have *Translation, **Politics** and Icelandic Sagas*, on the title page *Translation, **Ideology** and Icelandic Sagas*). The introduction, perhaps inevitably, pays a rather perfunctory lip-service to recent translation theories. This strikes me as a bit of a red herring; although certain aspects of translation are touched upon the bulk of the quite wonderful exposition has much more to do with Jorge Luis Borges's metaphor of the forking path in the labyrinthine garden of Chinese author Ts'ui Pên. During the course of the seven chapters we watch *Njáls saga* as a text in motion, travelling through time and space. Motivations for translation and realities of reception are often social and political. For Victorian England it was a combination of the Viking fascination and an affirmation of Empire. For nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany it was an affirmation of the racial superiority of the Aryan. For Denmark during the Nazi occupation it was an affirmation of the Scandinavian (as distinct from the Germanic). For Norway, Sommerfelt's 1871translation as *Njaals Saga* was an attempt to reassert (or reinvent) a Norwegian language as distinct from Danish. In each case study, if the politics of the motivation for translation and publication is different, the result is another fork in the labyrinthine path of *Njáls saga*'s trajectory through time and history.

The differences in intention and effect are especially telling in the comparison of the English and United States reception of the saga. George Webbe Dasent is the first English translator (and introducer) both of the saga itself and Iceland in the late tenth century (the 1861 title in full is *The Story of Burnt Njal or Life in Iceland at the end of the Tenth Century*). Dasent's political agenda extended to demonstrate that the Vikings and the British Victorians were of the same cultural and racial origin. The scholarly and critical apparatus of *The Story of Burnt Njal* remains useful in its own right—as well as a fascinating example of mid nineteenth-century cultural transmission and reception. Allen French's efforts in the early twentieth-century United States can hardly be considered translation at all. His 1905 *Heroes of Iceland* is a rewriting and abridgement of Dasent's own introduction and trans-

lation. His 1908 *Grettir the Strong* is an abridgement of the translation by William Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon. French's aesthetic agenda was to introduce *Njáls saga* as 'great epic'. In his abridgements he stripped his sources of anything that might detract from continuity of narrative. 'Only so much of genealogy has been retained as is of direct interest. Irrelevant episodes . . . , as well as many minor incidents, have been omitted; many of the verses (mostly regarded as spurious) have been cut out; and little beside the main narrative has been retained. Most of the accounts of trials, and much of the legal phrasing in the great suit for the Burning, have also been omitted.' (French, 1905, p. xxxvi; Jón Karl Helgason, p. 68). This is not translation so much as directed simplification—perhaps an early example of the United States' 'dumbing down' that has become such a force for stupidity in recent decades.

The Rewriting of Njáls Saga is a most welcome set of contributions both to the study of *Njáls saga* itself, and to the field of reception studies. The seven chapters offer a wealth of information and insight that clearly demonstrate the many and various forkings of this seminal text through the labyrinths of time, place and media. At the end we are left with the image from Friðrik Þór Friðriksson's 1980 *Brennu Njáls saga* (filmstrip, 20 minutes). We see two hands turning the pages of Laxness's 1945 edition of *Njáls saga*. After about eight minutes, at the chapter concerning the burning of Bergþórshvoll, the music stops and the reader in the film strikes a match and sets the book alight. It burns for the following eight minutes accompanied by the sounds of drums and screams, with bells, finally, in the distance. For the last four minutes no more sound is heard and the burning book fades away.

JOE ALLARD

DENMARK. Compiled by LEEANN IOVANNI. *World Bibliographical Series* 83. *Clio Press.* Oxford, England; Santa Barbara, California; Denver, Colorado. Revised edition, 1999. xxxvii + 281pp.

It is twenty-five years since the first volume in the World Bibliographical Series was commissioned; it says much for the staying power of the series that it is still going strong. Its volumes now cover virtually every country in the world (including those countries created during that period) and many of them have been updated with second editions, as is now the case with this volume on Denmark, which is a solid and worthy representative of the series.

It is perhaps somewhat unfair to review in a specialised journal a volume which is generalist in intent and coverage; it is important to stress that this is not a work directed at the scholar-practitioner in mediaeval history or culture, nor indeed in any one area of Danish studies, but rather one which seeks to introduce the informed reader to sources of information on all major aspects of Denmark and its people from early times to the present day.

This bibliographical aid contains 682 main items, virtually all in the English language, consistently and substantially annotated, and is arranged in sections from prehistoric research to contemporary issues: geography, tourism, flora and

fauna, archaeology, history, biography, demography, religion, social services, women and gender issues, politics, government, law, foreign relations, economy, science and technology, employment, statistics, environment, education, language, literature, the arts, customs and folklore, cuisine, sport and recreation, mass media, etc. There are also sections on libraries and museums, reference works and directories, professional periodicals, and selected bibliographies. Cross-referencing between sections is helpful.

Subscribers to *Saga-Book* are unlikely to be introduced to any item unfamiliar to them in the historical sections—the period up to the eighteenth century includes around eighty items (fifteen standard items on the Viking age and a further ten on pre-Christian religion), and the literature section makes no pretensions to cover the early period; but for those wishing to follow through the potential influences on current Danish culture or society this volume is a good starting-point from a variety of angles.

The entries are commendably up to date, a high proportion of the sources treated, both books and periodical articles, bearing publication dates in the 1990s. Indeed, a comparison with the first edition of this volume (by a different compiler) which appeared in 1987, suggests that little more than ten per cent has been retained. The annotations, typically of around 150 words, are informative and objective. A combined alphabetical index of authors, titles and subjects allows for specific searching.

The compiler, a criminological researcher based in Denmark and affiliated to the University at Aalborg also contributes a digestible introductory historical essay of over twenty pages designed to contextualise for the general reader the numerous themes and topics covered in the volume. This might usefully have been supplemented by the sort of chronological table which is a feature of some other volumes in the series, and the appended map would benefit from rather more detail, perhaps indicating main lines of communication or other features linked to the text.

A brief section of fifteen items on the Faroe Islands is appended; Greenland is not treated, having been allotted its own volume (135, 1991) in the same series; the Danish period of rule in Iceland is covered in the Iceland volume (37, rev. ed. 1996).

Overall, therefore, the volume will not significantly enhance the historical or literary research activity of readers of this journal, but it will be genuinely helpful in guiding them towards recommended reading at a serious level on many other aspects of Denmark and its study which they may wish to pursue; furthermore, this reviewer in his professional capacity can testify to the considerable use made of volumes in this series by undergraduate and postgraduate students. In addition to being a significant work of reference this volume is also very browsable, clearly presented and easy to handle. At a price of £54 it is probably an institutional rather than individual purchase, but for anyone personally tempted it should prove a worth-while and trusty companion.

JOHN HORTON

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KRISTNI SAGA AND ITS SOURCES: SOME REVALUATIONS

By SIÂN DUKE

KRISTNI SAGA IS RATHER DIFFERENT from other accounts of Iceland's conversion to Christianity, and a study of its sources helps to illuminate why this is so. The dating of the saga to *c.*1250–84, according to Jón Jóhannesson's dating of *Sturlubók*, rather than to the beginning of the thirteenth century, suggests that it may have drawn on more sources than is usually thought, and that it comes not from the beginning, but from towards the end of a long tradition of writing about Iceland's conversion to Christianity (cf. Jón Jóhannesson 1941, 135–36). This tradition stretches from Ari's reliable history of the Icelandic state, through hagiographic works like Oddr and Gunnlaugr's sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason, to Family Sagas which could, with reservations, be described as historical fiction. In *Kristni saga*, I shall argue, material from these very different texts is selected according to what Björn M. Ólsen (1893, 332) calls *historiske principer* (historical principles), and reworked to form something like a national history of early Christianity in Iceland, in which the role of the Icelandic missionaries is emphasised. In order to give a historical and nationalistic perspective on the Conversion, the author (or perhaps editor) has used not only Ari and Gunnlaugr's works, as is generally accepted, but has also drawn on *Vatnsdœla saga*, *Laxdœla saga* and, perhaps most significantly, *Heimskringla*. The aim of this paper is to examine more closely the relationship between *Kristni saga* and these three sources, and to show how the author has used them to create a distinctive picture of Icelandic conversion history.

Whereas many accounts of Iceland's conversion to Christianity occur within the context of longer works, lives of Óláfr Tryggvason or Sagas of Icelanders, *Kristni saga* sets out to tell the history of Icelandic Christianity independently, as its opening sentence explicitly states: *Nú hefr þat, hversu kristni kom á Ísland* 'Now this is the beginning of how Christianity came to Iceland' (Kahle 1905, 1). It is the only work we have in Icelandic which is wholly devoted to this purpose. The saga also covers a longer time-span than other accounts of the Conversion, placing the story of the Icelandic missions together with that of the early Church in Iceland. It begins with Þorvaldr and Friðrekr's mission to Iceland in *c.*981, documents the lives of the two later missionaries, Stefnir and Þangbrandr, and ends its

first half with a depiction of the legal conversion at the General Assembly in the year 1000. At this point there is a gap of about fifty years, partly filled with an account of the deaths of Þorvaldr and Stefnir, before the saga recommences with portraits of Ísleifr and Gizurr, the first two native Icelandic bishops. Its last chapter describes the natural and legal disasters that followed Gizurr's death in 1118, in particular the conflict between the chieftains Þorgils and Hafliði. Altogether, then, the saga covers approximately 150 years of Icelandic history, which are divided into two by the Conversion itself; it has been described as 'et af de første oversigts- eller samlingsværker i den isl. litteratur' (one of the first overviews or compilations in Icelandic literature; Finnur Jónsson 1920–24, II 577).[1]

Kristni saga survives in only one medieval manuscript, *Hauksbók*, which was probably written in 1306–08. It follows immediately after Haukr Erlendsson's version of *Landnámabók*, and both are written in Haukr's own hand. Unfortunately only eighteen leaves of the two works are extant, as this section of the manuscript was divided up in the late seventeenth century and its leaves used as covers for small books (cf. *Hauksbók* 1960, xxviii–xxix). The beginning and end of *Kristni saga* are missing and must be supplied from a copy made by Jón Erlendsson in the mid-seventeenth century.

There has been little if any consensus on the date, authorship or sources of *Kristni saga*. The 1773 edition of the saga dated it to the early fourteenth century (*Kristni-saga* 1773, 'Ad lectorem'); Guðbrandur Vigfússon (*Biskupa sögur* 1858–78, I xxi–xxiii) thought it might be as early as the second half of the twelfth century, and Ólsen (1893, 347) placed it in the mid-thirteenth century on the basis of a reference to Bishop Bótólfr, who died in 1246. The 1773 edition asserted that the author was Haukr; Guðbrandur suggested either Oddr Snorrason or Styrmir Kárason; while Oskar Brenner (1878, 7–9) and Konrad Maurer (1891, 89–94) believed that the saga ultimately went back to the work of Ari. Ólsen and Finnur Jónsson (*Hauksbók* 1892–96, lxv) considered the saga an independent work, while Brenner and Maurer thought it was primarily an appendix to *Landnámabók*; Brenner thought that it had been interpolated by Sturla Þórðarson and Maurer by Haukr Erlendsson; and other points of contention include whether the saga has been interpolated, by whom, and at what stage in its history (cf.

[1] This concept of Icelandic history as divided in two by the Conversion corresponds with McCreesh's observations about the structure of certain Family Sagas (1978–79) and with Harris's discussion of bipartite structure in *þættir* and sagas (1986, 210–13).

Maurer 1891, 94–96; Kahle 1905, vi–ix). As for the saga's sources, these have been variously identified as Ari's older *Íslendingabók*, Ari's younger *Íslendingabók*, Gunnlaugr's lost *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, lost sources common to *Kristni saga* and the works just mentioned, and later sagas such as *Vatnsdœla saga* and *Laxdœla saga*. There is not even full agreement over the saga's subject-matter: many scholars have felt that the last chapter, the dispute between Þorgils and Hafliði, does not fit in with the whole, and Brenner (1878, 6–8, 14) argued that the inclusion of political events in the saga disqualified it as an ecclesiastical history. If the author had really been interested in church history, he asserts, he would have filled the fifty-year gap at the centre of the saga with accounts of the foreign bishops and clerics who came to Iceland during that time.

More recently, Jón Jóhannesson's work on the different versions of *Landnámabók* has brought some clarity to the situation (1941, 16–19, 69–72, 224–25). He suggests that, as well as following *Landnáma* in the manuscript *Hauksbók*, *Kristni saga* was an appendix to Sturla Þórðarson's version of *Landnáma* in a now lost manuscript known as *Resensbók*. In *Árni Magnússons Levned og Skrifter* (1930, II 19, 28, 75, 89, 90, 92), there are several references among Árni's writings to an 'appendix' to *Landnáma* which gives information on, among other things, the consecration of Ísleifr as bishop, Ari's age at Ísleifr's death, and Sæmundr's part in the establishment of the tithing laws; the first of these refers specifically to 'Appendix Landnamu in Bibliotheca Resenii' (an appendix to *Landnáma* in Resen's collection). Exactly the same information is given in the *Kristni saga* known to us from *Hauksbók* (cf. Kahle 1905, 46–48). Moreover, at the end of *Skarðsárbók* (1958, 193–95), a composite version of *Landnáma* compiled from Sturla and Haukr's versions, there is one particular addition which corresponds closely to chapter 18 of *Kristni saga* in *Hauksbók*, but which is fuller and, it seems, closer to the original. Jón Jóhannesson concludes that the addition must have been taken not from the *Kristni saga* in *Hauksbók*, but from the appendix to Sturla's *Landnáma*, and that this appendix must itself have been a *Kristni saga*, the one copied (and in parts summarised) by Haukr. This theory not only strengthens the links between *Kristni saga* and *Landnáma*, but also reinforces the impression that Sturla had a hand in joining the two together.[2]

[2] Jón Jóhannesson's theory has been questioned by Ólafur Halldórsson (1990, 461–66) in so far as it relates to the contents of *Resensbók*. He points out firstly that the references in *Árni Magnússons Levned og Skrifter* are only to material in the last chapters of *Kristni saga* and, secondly, that Árni Magnússon is unlikely to have referred to *Kristni saga* as 'appendix Landnamu', when

Scholars had previously assumed that either Sturla or Haukr appended a pre-existing *Kristni saga* to *Landnáma*, and interpolated chronological and genealogical details (cf. Finnur Jónsson 1920–24, II 571–72). Ólsen (1893, 347–48) even conjectured that the original *Kristni saga* must have begun with an account of the Christian settlers in Iceland, but that Haukr had omitted this because the material was already covered in *Landnáma*. Jón Jóhannesson (1941, 70) suggests instead that the saga never existed in independent form, but was put together by Sturla himself from a number of different sources in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, at any rate before his death in 1284. He argues that Sturla intended *Kristni saga* as one link in a chain of sagas documenting Icelandic history from its beginnings to his own day; these were perhaps the sagas associated with Sturla in the prologue to *Sturlunga saga* (1946, I 115), and called by its compiler *Íslendinga sǫgur*. The compilation was to have begun with *Landnámabók*, to which Sturla made a number of historical additions, and would have continued with *Kristni saga*, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, *Sturlu saga*, and finally the section of *Sturlunga saga* known as *Íslendinga saga*. *Kristni saga* should therefore be regarded as a transitional work leading from *Landnáma* to the contemporary sagas; hence the focus in its last chapter on the dispute between Þorgils and Hafliði.

Although it does not entirely exclude the possibility that Sturla used a pre-existing *Kristni saga*, this argument has the merit of fitting the facts exactly and of dispensing with the need to posit an independent or heavily revised saga for which there is no evidence. The saga's mixture of old and new, which has so baffled attempts to date it, can be explained by its composite nature, as can its general unevenness of style and the fifty-year gap which occurs in the middle. Its lack of a proper beginning and a conclusive end become understandable in the light of its place within the series *Landnáma–Kristni saga*–contemporary sagas. Finally, the interest in chronology and genealogy which characterises the saga-author fits in well with what we know of Sturla Þórðarson, whose work Ólafia Einarsdóttir (1964, 274–75) describes as 'en lærd kronologs systematiske arbejde' (the methodical work of a learned chronologist). With reservations as to the saga's prehistory, then, we can be reasonably sure that in its present form (perhaps its only form), it was put together in the second half of the thirteenth century by Sturla Þórðarson.

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elsewhere he always uses the titles *Kristni saga* or *Historia Christianæ Religionis in Islandiam introductæ*. Nevertheless, the connection between Sturla Þórðarson and *Kristni saga* has been widely accepted.

There has been no corresponding breakthrough with regard to the sources of *Kristni saga*, the identification of which remains a slippery business. Jón Jóhannesson (1941, 71) follows Ólsen (1893, 309–49) in identifying the source for chapters 1–13 (the story of the missions to Iceland) as Gunnlaugr's lost saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, and the source for chapters 14–17 (the history of the early Church) as Ari's younger *Íslendingabók*. He does not mention chapter 18 of the saga, which is usually dismissed as an interpolation based on chapter 8 of *Hungrvaka* and *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*. Jón Jóhannesson also numbers *Vatnsdœla saga*, *Laxdœla saga* and 'annals etc.' among the subsidiary sources of *Kristni saga*, but gives no evidence for their influence. Both *Laxdœla saga* and *Vatnsdœla saga* had previously been discussed by Ólsen (1893, 310–11, 343–44) and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1937, 121–23), who agreed that *Vatnsdœla saga* may have been a source, but rejected *Laxdœla saga* on the grounds that it was younger than *Kristni saga*. In *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur* (Simek and Hermann Pálsson 1987, 219), the sources of the saga are given as Gunnlaugr's *Óláfs saga*, Ari's *Íslendingabók* and *Laxdœla saga*. This is presumably intended as a summary of Jón Jóhannesson's research, but it is not entirely clear why *Vatnsdœla saga* has been left out and *Laxdœla saga* (which is a far less important source) placed on a level with Gunnlaugr and Ari's works.

If we can date *Kristni saga* to the third quarter of the thirteenth century rather than to the beginning, this will have profound implications for the identification of its sources, implications which Jón Jóhannesson does not follow up. Although the first half of the saga is probably based on Gunnlaugr's **Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, parts of which are preserved for comparison in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, it also has close connections with *Vatnsdœla saga*, *Laxdœla saga*, Snorri Sturluson's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla*, and perhaps even *Eyrbyggja saga*. Most scholars have argued either that *Kristni saga* serves as a source for the above sagas, or that it shares a common source with them; but the possibility now arises that these sagas are in fact sources for *Kristni saga*, especially since *Vatnsdœla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga* and parts of *Heimskringla* are all used by Sturla Þórðarson in his version of *Landnáma* (cf. Jón Jóhannesson 1941, 90–95, 109–10, 121–22). The second half of *Kristni saga* (chapters 14–18) is more obviously dependent on Ari's *Íslendingabók* and usually follows Ari's narrative word for word. There are, however, some additional comments in chapters 14–15, as well as in chapter 18, which are comparable with passages of *Hungrvaka*. Again, this has been put down to the use of a common source or, alternatively, to *Hungrvaka*'s

use of *Kristni saga*, while the direct loan from *Hungrvaka* in *Kristni saga* chapter 18 is usually explained away as the result of interpolation (cf. *Biskupa sögur* 1858–78, I xxii; Brenner 1878, 134–35, 142–43, 147–49; Kahle 1905, ix–x). But if the whole saga, including chapter 18, was composed in the second half of the thirteenth century, it makes far more sense to see *Hungrvaka* as the direct source for the additions in chapters 14 and 15 as well as for the beginning of chapter 18. Jón Jóhannesson's conclusions as to when the saga was composed clearly call for a new exploration of its sources.

In the rest of this paper, I shall look more closely at the first half of *Kristni saga* (chapters 1–13), and trace the possible influence there of *Vatnsdœla saga*, *Laxdœla saga* and Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla*. I shall then go on to discuss very briefly what the author's use of these sources tells us about his methods of working.

In chapter 2 of *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 6–10), we are told the story of Bishop Friðrekr's confrontation with two berserks at Haukagil in Vatnsdalr. The same story is also told in *Þorvalds þáttr ens víðfǫrla* (Kahle 1905, 69–71), where it is attributed to Gunnlaugr Leifsson, and in chapter 46 of *Vatnsdœla saga* (1939, 124–26). The account in *Kristni saga* occurs within a section of narrative based on Gunnlaugr's work which follows the order of events given in *Þorvalds þáttr*: the encounter with the berserks occurs after the conversion of Þorvaldr's father, Koðrán, and before the missionaries' unsuccessful journey to the Westfjords. The actual description of the event, however, has striking parallels with *Vatnsdœla saga*. Scholars have explained these in different ways: Brenner (1878, 35–37) thought that *Vatnsdœla saga* was partly based on a text like *Kristni saga*, while Ólsen (1893, 311) and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1937, 121–22) argued that *Kristni saga* had in all likelihood been influenced by an early version of *Vatnsdœla saga* or a related account. Yet a comparison between the three versions of the story suggests that the author of *Kristni saga* is most likely to have borrowed directly from *Vatnsdœla saga*.

In *Þorvalds þáttr*, which is probably closest to Gunnlaugr's work, the encounter with the berserks is set at Þorvaldr's marriage feast to Vígdís, the daughter of Óláfr of Haukagil. Present among the heathen guests are two berserks, both called Haukr, who challenge Friðrekr to compete with them at their sports: striding barefoot through fire and falling on their swords without hurting themselves. Trusting in God's mercy, he agrees and, in full vestments, consecrates the fire through which they are to stride. When the two berserks approach the fire, it burns so high that the two men die instantly and are taken up to Haukagil to be buried. When

Friðrekr walks through the fire, however, the flames part on either side, rather like the Red Sea, and not even the fringes on his garments are singed.[3] Many turn to God as a result of this miracle, and Óláfr of Haukagil builds a church on his farm. The scene as a whole can be read as a 'trial of strength' in which the representatives of heathenism are defeated through the power of the Christian God.

In *Kristni saga*, the whole set-up is rather different. The missionaries are not at Þorvaldr's wedding feast, but at a *haustboð* 'autumn feast' held by Óláfr of Haukagil; and among Óláfr's guests is Þorkell krafla, probably the historical husband of Vígdís (cf. *Landnámabók: Melabók* 1921, 97; *Hallfreðar saga* 1977, 95). The two berserks are not invited to this feast, but intrude upon it in the usual fashion, and Friðrekr is asked by the other men present to destroy them. Although he consecrates the fire before the berserks walk through it, this does not kill them, but burns them severely; they are then finished off by other guests at the feast. Þorkell krafla is prime-signed, and others baptised, but there is no mention of any church-building.

Apart from its place in the narrative and the actual confrontation, this account has little in common with that of the *þáttr*. When we turn to *Vatnsdœla saga*, on the other hand, we find a large number of similarities. In *Vatnsdœla saga* (1939, 124–25), the scene is set at an autumn feast at which the guest of honour is Þorkell krafla: *Um haustit at vetrnóttum bauð Óláfr til sín vinum sínum, einkum Þorkatli mági sínum. Þeir byskup ok Þorvaldr váru þar* 'In the autumn, at the winter nights, Óláfr invited his friends to his home, especially his son-in-law Þorkell. The bishop and Þorvaldr were there'. In *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 8), we are given the same information, but Þorvaldr and Friðrekr are, as we might expect, mentioned first: *Þeir biskup ok Þorvaldr váru at haustboði í Vatnsdal at Giljá með Óláfi; þar var þá kominn Þorkell krafla ok mart annara manna* 'The bishop and Þorvaldr were at an autumn feast at Giljá in Vatnsdalr with Óláfr; Þorkell krafla and a lot of other people had come there'. The two berserks, who have been introduced at an earlier point in *Vatnsdœla saga*, are not invited to this feast and, when their imminent arrival is reported, Þorkell goes to the bishop for advice: *Þorkell spurði byskup, ef hann vildi*

[3] There are many parallels between this scene and hagiographic works portraying the trials suffered by saints. In particular, the reference to Friðrekr's garments may come straight from the story in Book III of Gregory's *Dialogues* (1978, II 344) of the monk Benedict, who is thrown into a furnace, but whose clothes are untouched by the flames: *neque extrema ullu modo vestimenta cremarentur* 'not even the fringes of his garments were singed'.

ráð til leggja, at berserkir þessir fengi bana 'Þorkell asked the bishop whether he would give advice, so that these berserks might meet their death'. *Kristni saga* is less specific, but conveys roughly the same information: *Þá báðu menn biskup, at hann skyldi fyrirkoma þeim* 'Then people asked the bishop to destroy them'. In *Vatnsdœla saga*, Friðrekr agrees to this on the condition that Þorkell receive baptism if he is successful. He then orders three fires to be built, which he consecrates, and asks the strongest and most able men to move to the benches nearest the fires. When the berserks finally enter, they stride through the first two fires, are badly burnt, and head for the nearest bench, where they are beaten to death with cudgels.[4] *Kristni saga* gives us a condensed version of this: *Eptir þat vígði biskup eldinn, áðr þeir æði, ok brunnu þeir þá mjǫk; eptir þat gengu menn at þeim ok drápu þá* 'After that the bishop consecrated the fire, before they strode through, and they were badly burned; after that, people attacked and killed them'. In neither work does Friðrekr propose to stride through the fire himself. Both accounts tell us that several people are baptised, but in *Vatnsdœla saga*, Þorkell himself decides to delay his baptism until Christianity is legally accepted in Iceland.

Although the parallels in wording are rather few, it is clear that *Kristni saga* agrees with *Vatnsdœla saga* at many of the points where it differs from *Þorvalds þáttr*: the setting of the encounter at an autumn feast, the presence of Þorkell krafla, the intrusion of the berserks from the outside, the request for Friðrekr's help, and the killing of the berserks by the other men present, rather than by the fire. Perhaps more important is the absence in *Vatnsdœla saga* and *Kristni saga* of the religious motifs which characterise the scene in the *þáttr*: the militant heathenism of the berserks, their religious challenge to Friðrekr and his miraculous immunity from the fire. *Kristni saga* also agrees with *Vatnsdœla saga* indirectly in its omission of any reference to Óláfr's church-building; in *Vatnsdœla saga*, Óláfr dies shortly after his baptism. In all these cases, the influence of *Vatnsdœla*

[4] An interesting analogue to this scene occurs in *Brennu-Njáls saga* (1954, 267–69), where Þangbrandr also rids a feast of an unruly berserk, although to my knowledge no literary relationship between the two has been suggested. Like Friðrekr, Þangbrandr builds three fires before the berserk's arrival which are used to test the relative strengths of Christianity and paganism. One is consecrated by Þangbrandr, one by the heathens present, and one is left unconsecrated (cf. the 'trial of strength' set up by Elijah in 1 Kings 18: 16–40). The berserk is, of course, only afraid of the fire consecrated by Þangbrandr. In *Vatnsdœla saga*, it is not clear why three fires are built instead of the one mentioned in *Þorvalds þáttr*.

saga would explain the deviation in *Kristni saga* from Gunnlaugr's work. The only substantial differences between *Vatnsdœla saga* and *Kristni saga* are that *Kristni saga* omits the dialogue between Friðrekr and Þorkell prior to the berserks' arrival, and mentions that Þorkell was prime-signed after their deaths. The first of these can be put down to the author's summarising of his source and to the lesser significance of Þorkell in *Kristni saga*; it is the story of the mission, and not that of the potential convert, which is being told. The prime-signing is rather more difficult to explain. Some scholars have used it as evidence that the author of *Kristni saga* did not know *Vatnsdœla saga* (cf. Brenner 1878, 37), while others, for example Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1937, 122), have supposed that he knew a different version of *Vatnsdœla saga* or a different tradition about Þorkell. There may, however, be a simpler explanation. In *Vatnsdœla saga* (1939, 125–26), Þorkell, although rather nervous about the idea of being immersed in water, expresses a clear inclination towards the new faith: *Þat þótti Þorkatli mest af bregða, er í vatni skyldi þvásk, ok kvazk eigi nenna enn um sinn at hafa þessa breytni, en kvazk þó hyggja at sjá mundi góð* 'Þorkell thought that it differed most in that one had to be washed in water, and said he was not willing to accept this change for the moment, but he did say that he believed it to be good'. He declares that he will *enn bíða um tíma*, which could perhaps be translated 'wait until the time is right'. It may be Þorkell's obvious affinity with the new faith and resolve to convert at a later time that the author of *Kristni saga*, without space to explain fully, wishes to express through his prime-signing. He was perhaps also aware of the demands of his story as conversion narrative; some sort of response from Þorkell was required and, since he did not in fact convert for another eighteen years, prime-signing presented itself as a good compromise.

The author of *Kristni saga*, then, knew two versions of Friðrekr's encounter with the berserks, the one preserved in *Þorvalds þáttr* and the one in *Vatnsdœla saga*. He took the context of the anecdote from Gunnlaugr's work, and possibly some of the wording, but inserted into this a summary of the story told in *Vatnsdœla saga*. Why he gave precedence to the version in *Vatnsdœla saga* over that of the *þáttr* is an issue which I shall come back to later (see p. 364).

One of the most disputed scenes in *Kristni saga* with regard to sources is Kjartan's conversion to Christianity in chapter 11. This was obviously a well-known story, as it occurs in a large number of texts: the A and the S texts of Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 122–26), *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 328–30), an interpolation in the text of *Heimskringla* in *Frissbók* (*Codex Frisianus* 1871, 148–49), *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 32–

34), *Laxdœla saga* (1934, 115–23), and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (1958–61, I 358–67, 369–72). It was probably also a part of Gunnlaugr's lost *Óláfs saga*, but we cannot tell what form it took there, because the corresponding passage in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* is clearly not based on Gunnlaugr's work alone (cf. Ólsen 1893, 298). There have been many discussions of the relationship between these accounts, which is complicated of course by the fact that Gunnlaugr's is missing. Brenner (1878, 92–100), for example, thought that Oddr and *Kristni saga* used a common source, and that *Laxdœla saga* (which he dated to *c.*1200) might have been an additional influence on *Kristni saga*. Ólsen (1893, 339–45) assumed that Gunnlaugr's work was the basis of the account in *Kristni saga*, but claimed that *Laxdœla saga* drew on independent sources. He explained the similarities between the two by advancing the theory that a copyist who knew *Laxdœla saga* had altered the text of *Kristni saga*. He also pointed out that there were a number of parallels between *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga*, and put this down to the faithful use by both of Gunnlaugr's work. Finnur Jónsson (1920–24, II 576), on the other hand, asserted that all the accounts were independent and based on oral tradition. Finally, Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1937, 123, 130–32) suggested that the parallels between *Laxdœla saga* and *Kristni saga* on the one hand, and *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* on the other, were due to the faithful use of Gunnlaugr's work in all these texts, but without excluding the possibility that *Kristni saga* had been altered by a copyist familiar with *Laxdœla saga* or that it was a direct source of *Heimskringla*.

Clearly all the accounts of Kjartan's conversion are closely related, and Gunnlaugr's version must have been known, if not used, by later authors. We can also be fairly sure that Oddr's work was one of the sources for *Laxdœla saga* and *Heimskringla*, and possibly for the author of *Kristni saga* (cf. *Laxdœla saga* 1934, xlii; *Heimskringla* 1941–51, I cxvi). Yet Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's theory that *Laxdœla saga*, *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* are all faithful renderings of Gunnlaugr's work is simply untenable in the light of the marked differences between *Laxdœla saga* and *Heimskringla*; nor is the copyist theory valid if *Kristni saga* was composed in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, when the author himself could easily have known *Laxdœla saga*. It is worth asking instead whether *Laxdœla saga* is not a direct source for the account of Kjartan's conversion in *Kristni saga*.

The similarities between the two sagas are actually rather unimpressive, especially when one considers the attention *Laxdœla saga* has been given as a possible source in *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur*. Both tell the

story of how Kjartan comes to Norway and is converted by Óláfr Tryggvason, but they have little else in common, and even this story is not told in the same way in both. According to *Laxdœla saga*, Kjartan arrives in Norway during the summer of 997 along with his foster-brother, Bolli, and Kálfr Ásgeirsson. Already present there are three Icelandic ships owned by Brandr inn ǫrvi, Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld and the sons of Breiðárskeggi, Bjarni and Þórhallr. We are told that these Icelanders had attempted to leave Norway before Kjartan's arrival, but that King Óláfr had forbidden this. One fine day, when men from the town are competing at swimming near the ships, Kjartan notices that one is far superior to the others. He tries to provoke Bolli into competing with this man and, when Bolli refuses, takes up the challenge himself. To his humiliation, the stranger proves to be the stronger and, after three underwater struggles, Kjartan is forced to admit defeat. On shore, the man reveals that he is King Óláfr Tryggvason, and gives Kjartan his cloak as a gift. After putting up a somewhat ineffectual resistance to Óláfr, Kjartan finally converts to Christianity at Christmas. The next year (998), Þangbrandr is sent to Iceland.

In *Kristni saga*, on the other hand, the scene is set in the autumn of 999, three years after Þangbrandr is sent to Iceland and just before his return. As in *Laxdœla saga*, we are told that there are three Icelandic ships at Niðaróss, but their owners do not correspond; the first ship belongs to Kjartan, Bolli and Kálfr (who are treated separately in *Laxdœla saga*), the second to Halldórr Guðmundarson, Kolbeinn Þórðarson and Svertingr Rúnólfsson (the men who are later taken hostage by King Óláfr), and the third to Hallfreðr and Þórarinn Nefjólfsson. The Icelanders attempt to leave Niðaróss before the king's arrival, but are not able to because the wind is against them. The swimming competition follows roughly the same order as in *Laxdœla saga*, but the roles of Kjartan and Bolli have been reversed; Bolli urges Kjartan to compete with Óláfr, and Kjartan at first refuses. Only when Bolli prepares to compete himself does Kjartan change his mind. After his defeat, Kjartan exchanges words with Óláfr Tryggvason, but Óláfr does not reveal his identity directly. Instead, he allows Kjartan to become aware of it through his expensive gift: *Kjartan varð víss, at þessi maðr var Óláfr konungr* 'Kjartan became aware that this man was King Óláfr' (Kahle 1905, 34). At Michaelmas Kjartan is summoned by the king and asked to accept baptism, which he agrees to do in return for honourable treatment. Immediately after Kjartan's baptism, Þangbrandr returns from Iceland.

The main evidence for the influence of *Laxdœla saga* here is the presence of Kálfr Ásgeirsson on Kjartan's ship; he is not mentioned in any version

of the story other than these two. The dialogue between Kjartan and Bolli prior to the swimming competition is probably also modelled on *Laxdœla saga*, despite the fact that their roles have been reversed; Bolli is mentioned in the S-text of Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 122), but plays no part in what is narrated, and in the A-text, the dialogue takes place between Kjartan and Hallfreðr.[5] Hallfreðr is also Kjartan's interlocutor in the interpolation in *Fríssbók*, which comes from a lost manuscript of Oddr's saga, possibly the same one from which the two remaining leaves of the U-text originate. In both cases, it makes more sense to assume that the new characters were borrowed from *Laxdœla saga* by *Kristni saga* than vice versa; Kálfr and Bolli play important roles in the plot of *Laxdœla saga*, but do not appear outside this chapter in *Kristni saga*. Perhaps the author of *Kristni saga* was relying on his memory of the swimming competition in *Laxdœla saga* and accidentally reversed the roles of Kjartan and Bolli, or perhaps he wished to portray Kjartan more sympathetically; the impression of his arrogance is certainly lessened by Bolli's initiation of the competition with Óláfr.

There are, moreover, a small number of verbal echoes in *Kristni saga* which suggest that the influence of *Laxdœla saga* may run deeper than the provision of Bolli and Kálfr. Among the most significant is the introduction to the swimming competition in the two works:

Laxdœla saga (1934, 118)	*Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 33)
Þat var um haustit einn góðan veðrdag, at menn fóru ór bœnum til sunds.	Þat var ein góðan veðrdag, at menn fóru á sund ór bœnum.
One fine day in the autumn, people went from the town to go swimming.	One fine day, people went swimming from the town.

These almost identical statements can be contrasted with the wording in the A-text of Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* at this point (1932, 122): *Þeir sa einn dag er veðr var gott, at menn foru asund. at skemta ser* 'They saw one day, when the weather was good, that people went swimming to entertain themselves'. Likewise, when Óláfr reveals his identity, *Kristni*

[5] The content of Hallfreðr and Kjartan's dialogue in the A-text of Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 122–23) provides strong evidence that it represents the original version of this scene, since Hallfreðr's reluctance to compete with Óláfr is clearly due to an anticipation of the difficult relationship he will later have with the king. Bolli and Kjartan, on the other hand, have no such reason for refusing the challenge. I am grateful to Ursula Dronke for pointing this out to me.

saga provides a shorter and reported version of the direct speech in *Laxdœla saga*:

Laxdœla saga (1934, 118)	*Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 34)
'Bæði er, at þú ert gørviligr maðr, enda lætr þú allstórliga; en eigi því síðr skaltu vita nafn mitt, eða við hvern þú hefir sundit þreytt.'	Hann gaf Kjartan skarlatsskikkju ok kvað hann þá vita mundu, við hvern hann hafði þreytt sundit.
'You are not only an accomplished man, but also act very arrogantly; but you shall nonetheless know my name, and with whom you have competed at swimming.'	He gave Kjartan a scarlet cloak and said that he would then know with whom he had competed at swimming.

In Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 124), on the other hand, there is the simple declaration: *Við konungiɴ hefir þu reynt sundit* 'It is with the king that you have competed at swimming'. Finally, in *Laxdœla saga*, we are told that Kjartan showed the king's cloak to his men, but that *ekki létu hans menn vel yfir þessu* 'his men were not pleased about this'; *Kristni saga* tells us that *heiðnir menn létu illa yfir því, er Kjartan hafði gjafir þegit af konungi* 'the heathens were displeased that Kjartan had received gifts from the king'. Oddr, it is true, also comments that *þeim licar þetta stor illa* 'they dislike this very much', but connects the Icelanders' displeasure with the competition as a whole rather than with the gift-giving in particular. What emerges from this brief comparison is that all three texts are very similar, but that there are a few similarities between *Laxdœla saga* and *Kristni saga* which cannot be traced back to Oddr, and which may therefore be due to the influence of *Laxdœla saga* on *Kristni saga*. The verbal parallels are, however, slight, and only the presence of Kálfr and Bolli in *Kristni saga* can really be considered conclusive. In view of this, one might wish to question the singling out of *Laxdœla saga* as a source for *Kristni saga* in Jón Jóhannesson's work and in *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur*.

As I noted earlier, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla* also contains an account of Kjartan's conversion to Christianity, although in this version there is no swimming competition between Kjartan and Óláfr. Scholars have been reluctant to consider the possibility of direct influence from *Heimskringla*, mainly because in chapter 6 of *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 16), the author refers to an *Óláfs saga* which is clearly not Snorri's; it is mentioned in confirmation of Óláfr's journey from Russia to Norway to become king, whereas in *Heimskringla* Óláfr travels to Norway from Ireland.

Ólsen (1893, 340) argues that the author would not have used more than one saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, and that he would have used Snorri's in chapter 6 if he had known it. Yet Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* does not mention the main event of chapter 6, Stefnir's mission to Iceland, and so the author's apparent non-use of *Heimskringla* at this point does not necessarily rule out influence from it elsewhere. Nor is there any justification for Ólsen's assumption that the author could not have used more than one saga of Óláfr Tryggvason; he may well have used both Oddr's and Gunnlaugr's. Since *Heimskringla* tells us most about the Icelandic missions in its depiction of Kjartan's conversion and Þangbrandr's return from Iceland, it is above all in these scenes that we might expect to see the influence of Snorri's work.

As far as Kjartan's encounter with Óláfr is concerned, there are certainly extensive parallels between *Kristni saga* and *Heimskringla*. In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 324–28), Kjartan's arrival in Norway is preceded by an account in chapters 77–80 of King Óláfr's mission in Hálogaland, which ends with his return to Niðaróss in the autumn. The opening sentence of the chapter in *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 32) looks very much like a summary of these movements: *Óláfr konungr hafði kristnat Hálogaland ok kom hann til Niðaróss um haustit* 'King Óláfr had converted Hálogaland and arrived in Niðaróss in the autumn'. Although the same mission is described in Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 140–42), it is placed after Kjartan's conversion rather than directly before his arrival. In *Heimskringla*, Snorri goes on to tell us that among the Icelanders staying at Niðaróss that autumn were Halldórr Guðmundarson, Kolbeinn Þórðarson and Svertingr Rúnólfsson. These are the very men that *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 32–33) mentions at this point among the ship-owners. Both *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* tell us that all the Icelanders were heathen and that they were unable to leave Niðaróss before Óláfr's arrival because of bad weather. Whereas Oddr gives them three unsuccessful attempts to depart, *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* mention only one. *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 329) adds that when Óláfr heard of the Icelanders, he placed a ban on their departure, and knowledge of this ban may be implied in *Kristni saga* by the information that *Þessir . . . ætluðu suðr fyrir land; en þeim gaf eigi, áðr konungr kom norðan* 'These men . . . intended to go south along the coast, but did not get a wind before the king arrived from the north' (Kahle 1905, 33). There is an implication in this that the Icelanders were prevented from leaving by other means after the king's arrival.

The similarities are yet more pronounced when we come to Kjartan's actual conversion. In Oddr's saga and *Laxdœla saga*, as we have seen, this takes place at Christmas but in *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* Kjartan converts at Michaelmas. The alteration is usually put down to the influence of Gunnlaugr, who, so the argument goes, was especially devoted to the Archangel Michael, and changed the time of Kjartan's conversion in order to reflect this devotion (cf. Ólsen 1893, 342–43); Hallr of Síða's conversion, for example, also takes place at Michaelmas. Although this may be correct, there is another possibility: that Snorri made the alteration as part of his general 'tidying up' of Oddr's rather haphazard chronology (cf. Andersson 1977). In Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 126–27), the arrival of Þangbrandr from Iceland is closely connected to the story of Kjartan; chapter 40 of the A-text ends with his conversion, and chapter 41 continues with the words *Oc iþenna tima com Þangbrandr af Islandi* 'And at this time, Þangbrandr arrived from Iceland'. In the S-text, there is not even a chapter division between the two events, and this may have been been created by the compiler of the A-text in order to allow the addition of extra information about Þangbrandr's mission. Yet if Kjartan was converted at Christmas, Þangbrandr could not possibly have arrived in Norway for at least another five or six months (in June or July); for Oddr, the connection between the events was probably primarily thematic, part of his linking together of events concerning Icelanders in what the A-text of his *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 122) calls an *Islendinga þotr* (*Íslendinga þáttr*). In *Laxdœla saga*, the author renders the chronological problem insignificant by splitting up the two events: Kjartan is baptised in 997 at Christmas, Þangbrandr goes to Iceland in 998 and returns in the summer of 999. In *Heimskringla*, however, Snorri preserves Oddr's connection by a small chronological alteration: Kjartan converts at Michaelmas, and Þangbrandr returns immediately afterwards. The author of *Kristni saga* adopts the same solution as Snorri, although in his case, this involves keeping Þangbrandr at sea for several months; he leaves Iceland before the General Assembly in June, and arrives in Norway at the end of September.

All four texts tell us that Kjartan and the other Icelanders go to church to hear the divine services, either at Christmas or at Michaelmas. After returning to their lodgings, they discuss the experience, and in *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* Kjartan expresses his approval of Christian worship:

Heimskringla (1941–51, I 329–30)	*Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 34)
En er þeir kómu til skipa sinna, sagði hverr þeira, hvernug líkat hafði atferð kristinna manna. Kjartan lét vel yfir, en flestir aðrir lǫstuðu.	Ok er þeir kómu aptr, rœddu þeir um með sér, hvern veg þeim hafði virzt þeira athœfi; Kjartan lét vel yfir, en fáir aðrir.
And when they got to their ships, each of them said how they had liked the proceedings of Christians. Kjartan approved of them, but most of the others found fault.	And when they got back, they discussed amongst themselves how their practices had seemed to them; Kjartan approved of them, but few others did.

In Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Laxdœla saga*, on the other hand, it is Kjartan's opinion of the king which is asked, and the king of whom he speaks so highly. In *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga*, Kjartan is then summoned by Óláfr, whose spies have been vigilant, and is offered baptism. In both cases, he lays down one condition: in *Heimskringla*, he asks for the king's friendship and in *Kristni saga*, to be shown the honour he would expect in Iceland. Again, this can be contrasted with the account of Oddr, where Kjartan converts without bargaining after hearing Óláfr preach the faith. The chapter in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 330) ends with a description of how the new converts are treated: *Var Kjartan ok Bolli í boði konungs, meðan þeir váru í hvítaváðum* 'Kjartan and Bolli were entertained at the king's table while they were in white robes'. The ending in *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 34) is almost identical: *Kjartan var þá skírðr ok var í boði konungs meðan hann var í hvítaváðum* 'Kjartan was then baptised, and was entertained at the king's table while he was in white robes'. The close similarities in wording between the two texts together with their agreement against Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Laxdœla saga* suggest strongly that the main source of *Kristni saga* for this scene was Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla*. Only for the swimming competition, which is not depicted there, does the author look to other sources.

The parallels between *Kristni saga* and *Heimskringla* are not restricted to this scene, but continue into the second half of the chapter, which describes Þangbrandr's return from Iceland. This passage is usually thought to be derived from Gunnlaugr's saga, and possibly also Oddr's, but there are echoes of Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* at a number of points. When Gizurr and Hjalti speak up in defence of their fellow Icelanders, for example, they use exactly the same argument in *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga*:

Heimskringla (1941–51, I 332)	*Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 34–35)
Eigi muntu, konungr, vilja ganga á bak orðum þínum, því at þú mælir svá, at engi maðr skal svá mikit hafa gǫrt til reiði þinnar, at eigi viltu þat upp gefa þeim er skírask vilja ok láta af heiðni.	Þeir Hjalti ok Gizurr báðu þá fyrir mǫnnum, sagði at konungr hafði þat mælt, at menn skyldu ekki þat hafa til gǫrt áðr, ef þeir vildi skíraz láta, at eigi skyldi frið hafa.
You will surely not go against your own words, king, because you say yourself that no man shall have done so much to anger you, that you will not forgive those who wish to be baptised and to abandon heathenism.	Hjalti and Gizurr then spoke up on behalf of people, said that the king had declared that people would not have done anything previously, if they wished to be baptised, that there would not be pardon for.

In Oddr's saga, there is no mention of this particular promise on the king's part. In *Heimskringla*, Hjalti and Gizurr go on to assure Óláfr that Christianity will eventually catch on in Iceland: *En vér munum finna bragð þat til, er kristni mun við gangask á Íslandi* 'But we will think of a plan, so that Christianity will be accepted in Iceland'. As we have come to expect, *Kristni saga* reports this in indirect speech: *Gizurr sagði at honum þótti ván, at kristni mundi við gangaz á Íslandi, ef ráðum væri at farit* 'Gizurr said that he thought it likely Christianity would be accepted in Iceland if they proceeded sensibly'. Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 127), however, uses a slightly different expression: *Oc sogþu at menn myndu við taca cristni a Islandi æf raðum veri at farit* 'And they said that people would accept Christianity in Iceland if they proceeded sensibly'. The speech ends in both *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* with a criticism of Þangbrandr. In *Heimskringla*, Gizurr and Hjalti object to his methods of evangelism: *En Þangbrandr fór þar, sem hér með yðr, við ofstopa ok manndráp, ok þolðu menn honum þar ekki slíkt* 'But Þangbrandr behaved there in the same way as he did here with you, with arrogance and killing, and people would not tolerate such things from him there'. *Kristni saga* borrows this idea, but develops it to bring in Þangbrandr's nationality: *En Þangbrandr fór þar, sem hér, heldr óspakliga, drap hann þar menn nǫkkura, ok þótti mǫnnum hart at taka þat af útlendum manni* 'But Þangbrandr behaved in the same way there as he did here, rather badly; he killed several people there, and people thought it hard to take that from a foreigner'. In Oddr, in comparison, it is rather understated: *En quaþu Þangbrand við fa menn vingaz hava a Islandi* 'But they said that Þangbrandr had not made many friends in Iceland'. The last part of the chapter in *Kristni saga*, which tells of Hjalti's magnanimity towards his enemy's son, Svertingr Rúnólfsson, can be compared with chapter 218 of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (1958–61, II 163–66) and probably does derive

from Gunnlaugr's work. But the account of the collective baptism of the Icelanders, with which the scene ends, goes back to *Heimskringla*; in all other versions of the story, the heathen Icelanders are baptised before Þangbrandr's return from Iceland. Although the second half of this chapter in *Kristni saga* draws on a number of different sources, the most important of these is, again, *Heimskringla*.

There are several shorter sections of *Kristni saga* which may also show the influence of *Heimskringla* (cf. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1937, 128–29). In chapter 7, for example, we are told of Óláfr's decision to send Þangbrandr to Iceland (Kahle 1905, 19):

> Þá er Óláfr konungr spurði óspekðir þær, er Þangbrandr gerði, stefndi hann honum til sín ok [bar sak]ir [á] hann ok kvað hann ekki skyldu vera í sinni þjónostu, er hann var ránsmaðr. Þ[angbrandr bað konung le]ggja á hendr sér nǫkkura torvelda sendiferð. Konungr mælti: 'Sáttir skulu vit, ef þú ferr til Íslands ok fær kristnat landit.'
>
> When King Óláfr heard about the unruly things which Þangbrandr had done, he summoned him and accused him, and said that he could no longer be in his service, when he was a thief. Þangbrandr asked the king to send him on some difficult errand. The king said: 'We shall be reconciled if you go to Iceland and manage to convert the country.'

It is usually assumed that this is based on Gunnlaugr's work as preserved independently in chapter 189 of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (1958–61, II 64–66), but at least some of the phrasing recalls the treatment of the same scene in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 319): *En fyrir sakir óspekðar hans þá vildi konungr eigi hann með sér hafa, ok fekk honum sendiferð þá, at hann skyldi fara til Íslands ok kristna landit* 'And because of his unruliness, the king did not want to have him with him any longer, and gave him the task of going to Iceland and converting the country'. Right at the end of chapter 11 of *Kristni saga*, there is a brief account of Hallfreðr's baptism: *Óláfr konungr veitti Hallfrøði guðsifjar, því hann vildi eigi láta skíraz ella; þá kallaðiz konungr hann vandræðaskáld ok gaf honum sverð at nafnfesti* 'King Óláfr stood sponsor to Hallfreðr, because he refused to be baptised otherwise; then the king called him "the troublesome poet" and gave him a sword as a naming gift' (Kahle 1905, 35). Why the author places this so late, among the forced baptisms, is not clear; perhaps he found that he could not mention it earlier without breaking the flow of the narrative. In any case, the source of the reference is probably chapter 83 of Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 330–32), which is the only account of Hallfreðr's baptism to mention the king's sponsorship, Hallfreðr's nickname and the gift of the sword all in quick succession. Finally, Ólafur Halldórsson (1978, 383–87) has shown that the reference to

Leifr's mission to Greenland at the beginning of chapter 12 of *Kristni saga* is probably based on the wording of chapter 196 of Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, while the account of Óláfr's preparations to go south relates to the contents of chapter 195. Only in *Heimskringla* and in *Kristni saga* are these two events made the context for Gizurr and Hjalti's mission to Iceland.

Heimskringla, then, is by far the most important of the three sources I have discussed here. It not only forms the basis for *Kristni saga*'s account of Kjartan's conversion and Þangbrandr's return from Iceland, but has also influenced several other scenes: the commissioning of Þangbrandr, the baptism of Hallfreðr and the preparations for Gizurr and Hjalti's mission. Within these particular sections, it has motivated the author's chronological ordering of events, although elsewhere the chronological influence is limited because *Heimskringla* does not refer to the missions of Þorvaldr and Stefnir, or describe Þangbrandr's in any detail. All the evidence shows that the author of *Kristni saga* used the account of *Heimskringla* whenever possible, preferring it in such cases to that of Oddr or Gunnlaugr, and even to that of *Laxdœla saga*. Where *Heimskringla* is lacking, however, he fills in the story from other sources, as in the case of the swimming competition.

What does this tell us about the author of *Kristni saga* and his approach to his source-material? He was clearly well read, and put his saga together from a large number of sources, combining and reworking these to fit them to their new context (cf. Jón Jóhannesson 1941, 131). His dependence on Gunnlaugr's **Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* has perhaps been overemphasised, for in several places he chooses alternative accounts in preference to those of Gunnlaugr and, elsewhere, there is evidence that Gunnlaugr's work has been heavily revised (Ólsen 1893, 309–33).[6] The combination of different sources suggests that the author was a historically-minded man, who aimed to give the most reliable picture he could of early Christianity in Iceland. This does not necessarily mean, as is sometimes

[6] The whole issue of *Kristni saga*'s relationship to Gunnlaugr's lost saga of Óláfr Tryggvason is extremely complicated. Ólsen (1893, 332) argued that Gunnlaugr's work was preserved fairly accurately in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, but that it had been reworked in *Kristni saga* according to the author's historical principles. The first of these points, however, depends upon an assumption that the compiler of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* followed his texts closely, and this is clearly not always the case (cf. Knirk 1981, 186–99; *Hallfreðar saga* 1977, cxxviii–cxxxi). It is therefore possible that *Kristni saga* is sometimes closer to Gunnlaugr's work, at least stylistically, than *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* is.

thought, that he used what we would consider the most reliable sources. His aim, perhaps, was to give an impression of historicity which was better achieved by works like *Heimskringla* and certain Family Sagas than by earlier hagiographic works like Oddr and Gunnlaugr's sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason. This is certainly the case with the scene from *Vatnsdœla saga*, where the emphasis has been shifted away from the miraculous intervention of the Christian God towards Friðrekr's bargaining techniques and use of his wits. Whereas the scene in *Þorvalds þáttr* is alive with religious and symbolic meaning, the scene in *Vatnsdœla saga* presents itself as history. It is the historical depiction which the author of *Kristni saga* chooses. Since the second half of the saga is based firmly on Ari's historical depiction of the early Church, it is quite possible that the combination and revision of sources in the first half of the saga is aimed at levelling the stylistic and generic differences between Gunnlaugr's work and Ari's, and at bringing the hagiographic accounts of the early missionaries into the same sphere as Ari's ecclesiastical history.

Finnur Jónsson (1920–24, II 577) describes *Kristni saga* as 'et rent kompilationsarbejde uden egenligt forfattersærpræg' (a work of pure compilation without any really distinctive mark of authorship), and to call it a compilation is certainly near to the truth. Yet the author's handling of the three sources discussed here hardly justifies the assertion that the saga has no distinctive mark of authorship. As I have noted above, the author's approach to his sources is characterised by a historical and rationalistic way of thinking which is not always inherent in the source-material itself. The depiction of Kjartan's conversion reveals something more of the author's concerns and biases. Although this part of the saga draws on both *Laxdœla saga* and *Heimskringla*, it is not identical with either source; there is far less emphasis on Kjartan's opposition to Christianity prior to his conversion, and the reversal of roles in the dialogue between Kjartan and Bolli is certainly in Kjartan's favour. Particularly evocative is Kjartan's reply when Óláfr asks him to receive baptism: *At þér fáið mér eigi minna sóma hér, en ek á ván á Íslandi, þó at ek koma þar eigi* 'That you show me no less honour here, than I may expect in Iceland, even though I may not go back there' (Kahle 1905, 34). In *Heimskringla*, he simply asks for the king's friendship. The condition for his baptism draws attention to the strained relationship between Icelanders and Norwegian kings, and typifies the Icelandic refusal to be forced into anything, least of all conversion; this is a common motif in the Family Sagas (cf. Schach 1982). The latent tension comes to the fore again in Óláfr's threat when he hears of Þangbrandr's failure in Iceland: *sagði konungr, at hann skyldi þá*

gjalda þeim þat, hversu óvirðiliga feðr þeira tóku á Íslandi hans erendum 'the king said that he would repay them for how disrespectfully their fathers in Iceland had received his communications' (Kahle 1905, 34). Kjartan demands honour in Norway; Óláfr demands recognition in Iceland. This is ultimately a political and not a religious issue. Finally, when Gizurr and Hjalti tell Óláfr of Þangbrandr's misdemeanours in Iceland, they add, *þótti mǫnnum hart at taka þat af útlendum manni* 'people thought it hard to take that from a foreigner' (Kahle 1905, 35). *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 333) has only *þolðu menn honum þar ekki slíkt* 'people would not tolerate such things from him there'. In *Kristni saga*, the phrasing implies that it was not so much Þangbrandr's behaviour as his nationality which people found objectionable. If Iceland is to be converted, it will be through its own people and not through a foreign priest, even if he is an emissary of the Norwegian king. One might want to compare the evident nationalism here with that inherent in the second half of the saga, Ari's account of the Icelandic national church; for the author of *Kristni saga*, it is the continuity of Icelandic efforts, both before and after the Conversion, that has led to the establishment of Christianity in Iceland. This is perhaps the reason why he has separated the missions to Iceland from the life of Óláfr Tryggvason and chosen to begin his work not with the Norwegian king, but with the Icelander Þorvaldr Koðránsson: *Nú hefr þat, hversu kristni kom á Ísland, at maðr hét Þorvaldr Koðránsson* 'Now this is the beginning of how Christianity came to Iceland, that there was a man called Þorvaldr Koðránsson' (Kahle 1905, 1). And if Sturla is the author of *Kristni saga* rather than just one of its redactors, then we come to see the saga as part of a grand history of the Icelandic nation, following on from the settlement, and leading to the history of contemporary struggles for power, struggles which will end with Iceland's subjugation to Norway.[7]

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SNORRI STURLUSON AND THE CREATION OF A NORSE CULTURAL IDEOLOGY

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This paper is a summary in English translation of the content and conclusions of five essays published in the volume Europa und der Norden im Mittelalter *(Europe and the North in the Middle Ages) (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter 1999, pp. 275–412). The page numbers in brackets refer to the more detailed argumentation in the book and the literature cited there. The English translation is by Bill McCann.*

IN EARLIER SCHOLARSHIP there was a tendency, particularly in the German-speaking countries, to Germanicise Old Norse literature in a somewhat biased fashion, because its texts were believed to preserve the heritage of Germanic antiquity in its purest form. More recently the tendency, in a way that seems to me to be equally biased, has been to theologise it. Walter Baetke, himself originally a theologian, was the first to do so, when he attempted to demonstrate in 1952 that Snorri Sturluson was seeking in his *Edda* to present his Götterlehre ('mythology') in terms of a particular Christian theological theory: that is, as the religion of a 'natural sense of the divine' which was held to be present in the human race after the Flood. This first step of Baetke's became the foundation for what followed: Anne Holtsmark, among others, cited him when she proposed the theory that Snorri was using Augustinian demonology to present Norse mythology as 'djevelsk vranglære', 'devilish heresy' in 1964 (275–76).

A new direction in scholarship followed from this hypothesis, as can be seen in the simple fact that since the 1970s a number of works devoted specifically to the *Prologue* of *Snorra Edda* have appeared. This text had previously been dismissed as a tissue of pseudo-historical pseudo-theology: it was simply omitted from Gustav Neckel's 1925 German translation of *Snorra Edda*, and Andreas Heusler prided himself on having freed Snorri from the stigma of being its author. However, since Baetke and Holtsmark it has been the common currency of scholarship that the *Prologue* was written by Snorri himself, and indeed that it actually provided the key to the interpretation of the whole work, including both *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*. It was in these terms that Margaret Clunies Ross first attempted in 1987 to prove that Snorri's work was based on a conceptual framework that was valid for all

three parts: what the *Prologue* presents in the form of a theological tract, the theory of the 'natural sense of the divine' of the pre-Christian pagans, is what is narrated in *Gylfaginning* in mythical form and what then appears in *Skáldskaparmál* as the skaldic linguistic system of the kenning (275–77).

Against this, I would argue that it is only the *Prologue* of *Snorra Edda* that adopts a specifically theological position, and it is therefore unlikely to have been written by Snorri, because *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, as well as *Heimskringla*, are written with a completely different aim in view: they attempt to integrate genuine pagan tradition into the high-medieval world picture in as unprovocative a way as possible, and to exploit it in terms of a specifically 'Norse' cultural ideology. This aim can be explained by the particular conditions of Norse history, briefly, by the fact that the North in the Viking era, thus in the very final phase of paganism, was at the high point of its cultural development; that it was immediately afterwards converted to Christianity; and that this very culture was immediately threatened with condemnation, since it was, after all, pagan. Such a condemnation, because the conversion to Christianity occurred so unusually late, would mean an almost total amputation of the North's own history, and an almost total loss of identity.

In the light of the high cultural level of the late pagan Viking era, many of the continuities between the pagan era and the Christian era in the North are hardly surprising. In 1316, for example, a Norwegian *réttarbót* ('amendment to the law') could still demand that a plaintiff should prove his paternal descent *till haughs ok till heidni* ('to howe and heathendom'), i.e. back to the time of the pagan mound burials (308–09). However, it is not these continuities, which can be explained by the situation I have described, that are the really striking phenomenon in Norse history, but rather the attempts, starting at the beginning of the thirteenth century, to revitalise pagan traditions that were already becoming weaker, and so consciously to reactivate the continuities, in order to counteract the flood of cultural imports from southern and western Europe with a genuinely Norse cultural ideology. Euhemerised pagan gods thus became specifically Norse 'cultural heroes', the founding ancestors of the Norse dynasties, and founders of the social order; skaldic poetry, as Óðinn's invention, became the typically Norse form of historical tradition, and pagan mythology became the epitome of a peculiarly Norse culture.

Moreover this is, *mutatis mutandis*, a phenomenon which is not without parallels outside Scandinavia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a period in which the consciousness of national individuality is on the increase everywhere. Of course, Christianity does offer a number of theories of history,

but its universalism is incapable of fully satisfying the need for individual ethnic or national traditions. Thus Cosmas, dean of Prague cathedral, makes the chronologically fixed history of Bohemia begin with the baptism of the first Christian ruler, Bořivoj, but sets its origins and foundations in the pagan, and thus specifically Bohemian, period that precedes it. Of the three granddaughters of the founding ancestor Čech-Bohemus, it is the youngest, Libussa, 'prophetess and judge of the people', who, together with her consort Přemysl, is seen as the founder of the Bohemian dynasty which is still reigning, and also as the promulgator of all their laws, which are still in operation, in Cosmas's own time. The restriction of a specifically national tradition to the pagan era, that is, the time before the conversion to Christianity, in the Finnish *Kalevala*-epic, appears to be no less deliberate. As Hans Fromm says, 'the nation reached a new level of consciousness as a result of the evidence that there was a tradition that reached beyond the Christian-Swedish Middle Ages' (353–56).

The attempts to lay the historical foundations of a specifically Norse culture are most clearly apparent in Snorri's writings: in *Heimskringla*, which propagates a specifically Norse ideal of rulership and law (330–37, 358–67); in the so-called *Snorra Edda*, which probably provided the first impetus for the collection of the mythological Eddic poems (309); and also, as I believe, in the *Hávamál* compilation in which the god Óðinn, as a genuinely Norse teacher of wisdom and morality, is placed on a par with the Biblical Solomon and Cato the Roman (390–96); further in *Rígsþula*, which makes a fictitious Norse god the founder of the medieval class structure (408–12); and finally in *Vǫlsunga ok Ragnars saga*, which, with the aim of glorifying the Norwegian royal house, though probably not at royal instigation, constructs a genealogy reaching far back into the pagan era via Sigurðr and Sigmundr, the greatest heroes *í norðrhálfu heimsins* ('in the northern part of the world') and *í fornum sið* ('in pagan times'), to Óðinn, who becomes the founding ancestor and first helper of the royal line (397–408).

Before discussing these texts, it is necessary to deal with the *Prologue* of *Snorra Edda*, which has become, as mentioned above, the key document for the 'theologising' tendency in scholarship. The degree to which the ruling axiom that Snorri is the author of the *Prologue* has forced many scholars to propose absurd interpretations can be seen in the mere idea that Snorri, according to the theological principles of the *Prologue*, was attempting in his *Gylfaginning* to present Old Norse mythology as an expression of 'natural religion', and then chose as his framework a narrative in which the acquisition of this mythology occurs in a way which is precisely not that of

'natural religion'; for in *Gylfaginning* the Swedish king Gylfi hears the myth of the *Æsir* in the form of instruction, staged as a *ginning* ('delusion'), deception by means of magic, and is thereby brought to believe in the *Æsir*, while the characters in the *Prologue* reach their 'natural knowledge of God' through a long-drawn-out process of cognition and entirely on the basis of their own innate abilities. These two conceptions cannot be reconciled, because an essential element of the theological construct 'natural religion' is precisely the way in which belief is achieved, and this comes about through the use of the five senses in a way which is acceptable to God, and in no way through deception (278–79).

Lars Lönnroth, however, believes that he can maintain the conceptual unity of the *Prologue* and *Gylfaginning* by explaining that I had failed to see that we are dealing here with 'two different but successive stages in the history of paganism' (285–86). It does not take a theological training to recognise that this 'two-stages' theory is false for a number of reasons. Firstly, we see that the action of the *Prologue* is not continued in the frame-narrative of *Gylfaginning*, but goes far beyond the period of time in which *Gylfaginning* is set: Óðinn establishes his rule in *Sigtún*, the Swedish town of Sigtuna, then conquers Norway and hands it over to his son Sæmingr, while he bequeaths Sweden to his son Yngvi. The opening scene of *Gylfaginning* is not related to this at all; here Gylfi goes to *Ásgarðr*, thus to a place that does not even exist in the *Prologue*. Moreover, the logical structure of the frame-narrative of *Gylfaginning* is such that the *Æsir* need not appear as persons with names, since they only adopt the names which are familiar to us from mythology after their conversation with Gylfi. What the names of the *Æsir* had been before this in the fictional universe of *Gylfaginning* is obviously a question we cannot ask. However, the narrative presupposes that when Gylfi visits *Ásgarðr*, in what is obviously his first encounter with the *Æsir*, he does not know their names. This cannot be reconciled with the *Prologue*, where the *Æsir*, Óðinn, Baldr, Fróði etc., are mentioned by name from the very beginning. If the *Prologue* were really meant to form a conceptual unity with *Gylfaginning*, why in the world did the author burden the narrative transition with such avoidable incongruities?

Objections can also be made to the 'two-stages' theory from a theological point of view. The *theologia naturalis sive rationalis*, which was supposed to be accessible to pre-Christian pagans, is a retrospective construction from the standpoint of Christianity; its only raison-d'être is that it represents an incomplete anticipation of *theologia revelata*, 'revealed' religion. In other words, 'natural religion' can only be succeeded by Christianity, and not by any polytheistic religion, which would be a system of belief of much less

value in theological terms (287–88). Another aspect that has been ignored is that 'natural religion' and polytheistic myth, *theologia naturalis* and *theologia fabulosa*, as Augustine would call the *Gylfaginning* myth, are mutually exclusive. This is because the God of 'natural religion', which the pagans deduce from the order of creation by the use of their five senses, can only be a non-mythological individual god, since he is none other than the Christian God: *deus Platonis qui etiam noster est*, as Augustine expresses it (289–92).

Moreover, it is striking that there is no mention of skaldic poetry in the *Prologue*, apart from a single passing reference to *Háleygjatal* in connection with genealogies. This is somewhat strange, if one follows the general opinion that Snorri himself composed this text as a prologue to his presentation of the skaldic language of kennings. There is also another piece of evidence that unambiguously contradicts the view that the *Prologue* is conceived as the introduction to a poetic theory or to a theological exegesis of Old Norse skaldic poetry: namely, that while Snorri's historical perspective is restricted to *Norðrlǫnd*, the countries that make up the present-day North, the *Prologue* also includes *Saxland*, the north-German land of the 'Saxons', in the linguistic area connected with the Æsir. Accordingly, the *Prologue* describes the wanderings of the Æsir differently from Snorri in *Heimskringla*. In the conclusion to the *Prologue* it is quite decidedly stated that *þeir æsir hafa haft tunguna norðr hingat í heim, í Nóreg ok í Sviþjóð, í Danmǫrk ok í Saxland* ('the Æsir brought the language north to this part of the world, that is to Norway and to Sweden, to Denmark and to Saxland') (349–50). It is theoretically possible that the idea of including *Saxland* in the Æsir–Norse linguistic area derives not just from the influence of *Skjǫldunga saga*, but was also inspired by the change in the political and cultural course of events that was effected by the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson in the years after 1240. At the expense of the traditional orientation towards the West, he intensified relations with the north German cities. The Hansa was able to settle permanently in Bergen from this point onwards, and in the 1250s *Þiðreks saga* was produced in Hanseatic Bergen, a text in which it is expressly stated that its narrative had been known *um allt Saxland* ('over all Saxland') (285, 351). No less striking is a further deviation from Snorri's texts, which may also have been influenced by contemporary developments: in 1247 the Norwegian monarchy had experienced an increase in its prestige as a result of King Hákon's coronation, which might explain why the *Prologue* attempts to depict the Norwegian monarchy as being not now simply a collateral branch of the Swedish Yngling dynasty, as it had still been in Snorri's *Ynglinga saga*, but uses Óðinn's son Sæmingr as the first Norwegian

king to raise the Norwegian royal house to the same rank as the other two Scandinavian monarchies (285).

How well-founded is the supposed existence of the numerous traces of 'natural religion' that the majority of 'modern scholars' claim to find in *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, following what they presume to be the programme of the *Prologue*? Lars Lönnroth thinks that Gylfi appears in *Gylfaginning* as a proponent of 'natural religion', but the text provides no foundation for this statement. In fact Gylfi goes to the Æsir because he wishes to know whether the Æsir owe their great success to their own power or whether it is due to the gods to whom they sacrifice. Thus Gylfi here shows himself without question to be a perfectly normal pagan, to whom polytheism and the *do-ut-des* principle of pagan sacrificial cult are completely self-evident. Nor does Gylfi come to understand the myths as an expression of 'natural religion' in the course of this instruction; on the contrary, he feels confirmed in his paganism by the myths that are narrated to him (293).

Lönnroth further claims that Gylfi's question in *Gylfaginning* ch. 5, namely whether Ymir is a god, makes it clear that Gylfi, just like the pagans of the *Prologue*, believes the earth to be a living being. However, the Æsir only tell him about the dismemberment of Ymir and the creation of the world from the various parts of his body later, in ch. 8, long after Gylfi has asked this question. Gylfi's question cannot therefore be based on the conception of the earth as a living being, quite apart from the fact that the *Prologue* nowhere says that the pagans regarded the earth as a giant or a god (293). What the *Prologue* in fact says is that the pagans had discovered analogies between the earth and human beings, (four-legged) animals and birds: *jǫrðin ok dýrin ok fuglarnir* have similar organs and are subject to the same laws of continual renewal and decay. It then specifically says of the earth that the pagans had compared 'rocks and stones with the teeth and bones of living beings' (*tǫnnum ok beinum kvikenda*). Thus the comparison is not confined simply to human beings and the earth alone, but rather to all living things, a comparison that leads to a belief that the earth itself is 'alive': *Af þessu skildu þeir svá, at jǫrðin væri kvik.* And since the pagans, by means of these analogies, reached the conclusion that the earth shares in the law of eternal flux and decay and absorbs into itself everything that dies, they further believed that they were born of the earth: *Þeir [. . .] tǫlðu ætt sína til hennar*. That is, the *Prologue* does not present the creation of the earth out of a giant in human form, as *Gylfaginning* does; on the contrary, it presents the creation of man out of the earth (295).

A proper understanding of the *Prologue* is further complicated by the fact that some interpreters also regard the 'earth' of the *Prologue* as an

anthropomorphic living being, though not — in the manner of Lönnroth — as a dismembered giant, but rather as a 'Mother Earth'. Both interpretations are equally incorrect, since the *Prologue* nowhere speaks of the earth as a goddess. When it says that 'this same earth and the sun and the stars', *en sama jǫrð ok sól ok himintungl*, had existed for many hundred years, the earth is in no way given precedence over the sun and the stars. And when it is subsequently said of the one who regulates the movements of the heavenly bodies that he 'rules over the elements' (*réði fyrir hǫfuðskepnunum)*, earth is just one of the four elements together with fire, air and water. Therefore it is incomprehensible that Siegfried Beyschlag can claim that the 'natural religion' of the *Prologue* refers to two divinities, the God of heaven and Mother Earth; incomprehensible, because 'natural religion' would not permit bitheism and the belief in a 'Mother Earth'. Moreover, it is a characteristic of 'natural religion' that the God who directs all things is invisible**,** so that his actions can only be deduced from the workings of nature. Even if one could, taking it in isolation, apply the phrase *tǫlðu ætt sína til hennar* to a birth-giving 'Primal Mother', the context contradicts this decisively, since the phrase *hon eignaðisk alt þat, er dó* ('she took possession of everything that died') can only refer to the earth, which takes all dead beings to itself and absorbs them as they rot. Such statements are obviously an echo of God's words in Genesis 3: 19: '[. . .] till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return' (296–97). Throughout the Middle Ages it was generally believed that Adam, the first man, was γηγενής, *terrigenus*, 'earth-born', though in this case one should note that the earth was not thought of as giving birth to him, but merely as the material from which he was made: the bones from stone, the flesh from earth, the blood from water.

Even if some connections of a purely external kind can be discerned between the *Prologue* and *Gylfaginning*, above all in the fact that Gylfi is mentioned, all attempts to make *Skáldskaparmál* subject to the *Prologue*'s theological model are doomed to failure from the outset. Quite clearly the frame-narrative, the Ægir scene — Ægir's visit to Ásgarðr, the illusions, the conversation with Bragi — is not inspired by *Lokasenna*, as is generally assumed, but rather by the Gylfi scene at the beginning of *Gylfaginning*, even down to exact verbal parallels (Gylf.: *Hann byrjaði ferð sína til Ásgarðz* / Skskm.: *Hann gerði ferð sína til Ásgarðz*; Gylf.: *en æsir [. . .] sá [. . .] ferð hans, fyrr en hann kom* / Skskm.: *en æsir vissu fyrir ferð hans*). In both cases the Æsir receive their guest with *sjónhverfingar*, and on both occasions they sit *í hásæti* ('in high seats') (302). A commentary directly connected with the Ægir scene is included in *Skáldskaparmál*, and this makes direct reference

to the Gylfi scene in *Gylfaginning*: Christians should believe in the myths only 'in the way in which it is found at the beginning of the book'. *Uphaf bókar* obviously does not mean the *Prologue*, as is generally thought, since it does not mention myths at all, but rather the 'illusion scene' at the beginning of *Gylfaginning*, since it is only here that the reader discovers how he is to understand the myths, i.e. as a tradition which is admittedly to be respected, and which aids in the creation of identity, but is nonetheless fictional (303).

The only sentence in the *Prologue* which could refer to *Skáldskaparmál* is the statement about post-diluvian humanity, which gave names to all things on earth and in the heavens: *þá gáfu þeir nǫfn með sjálfum sér ǫllum hlutum.* According to the prevailing opinion of scholars, it is this naming material which is presented in *Skáldskaparmál* as an expression of 'natural religion'. The text itself, however, explicitly excludes such a possibility, since in his conversation with Ægir, Bragi explains that there are 'three kinds of poetic language'. The definitions given later show that the second and third types, *fornǫfn* and *kenningar*, can both be taken as meaning *kend heiti*, 'marked', allusive modes of description with more than one element, while the first, the *ókend heiti* or *ókend nǫfn*, obviously mean 'unmarked' modes of expression. In Bragi's speech Snorri calls this mode *at nefna hvern hlut sem heitir* ('to name everything by its name'), a formulation which makes it clear that Snorri wishes to distinguish between ordinary 'prosaic' language and language that rises to the creative level of the skalds. If the attempt were made, therefore, to construct a link between *Skáldskaparmál* and the *Prologue*, all that it would imply would be that the names given to all things by post-diluvian humanity represented nothing more than 'unmarked', inartistic language. In other words, the language of 'natural religion' would definitely not be the skaldic language, but rather ordinary, plain language (304).

There is also no evidence elsewhere in *Skáldskaparmál* that its presentation is based on that of the *Prologue*. The word *kenning* can hardly mean 'sensory perception', as M. Clunies Ross, with the concept of 'natural religion' in mind, seems to suggest, since its root-word *kenna* is attested both within and outside the realm of poetry with a meaning that tends not towards sensory perception but very precisely towards a perception which is more abstract and intellectual: *kenna við* 'characterise by means of (some particular features)' (304). The organisation of material in *Skáldskaparmál* lends itself equally little to the hypothesis that there is a theologically oriented 'structure of meaning' inherent in the composition of this text. G. W. Weber is of the opinion that, after the naming of Christ in ch. 53, almost 'exclusive [use is made of] "historical heroic sagas", in the strictest sense of the word' rather than of the 'old myths of the gods'. However, since the

mention of Christ comes in the section on gold-kennings, and gold plays a much more important role in heroic sagas than in the myths, this consideration alone is enough to explain why there is a preponderance of heroic sagas. When, however, in chs 61–63 we come to the kennings connected with battle and weapons, kennings which are mainly formed using the names of gods and valkyries, there are once again a great many mythological references. The second reference to Christ in ch. 65 is entirely unremarkable. Ægir's question *Hvernig skal Krist kenna?* leads to a list of Christ-kennings, to which the kennings for kings and dignitaries are appended. Clunies Ross and Weber claim to discover a theological significance in this order of presentation: by presenting the designations for secular rulers after the designations for Christ in chs 65–66, Snorri is supposed to have been demonstrating the derivation of the designations for secular kings (*konungsnǫfn*) 'from those of the divine king, Christ'. This interpretation has, however, no basis in the text. On the contrary, we are once again surprised by Snorri's sober matter-of-factness, for he merely states that one can often only deduce from the context whether a given kenning contains a reference to Christ or to a secular king, and shortly thereafter follows the comment *Keisari er ætzr konunga* ('The Emperor is the greatest of kings'). Thus there is a more important title than that of the 'divine king, Christ'. Snorri could hardly make it plainer that he is not interested in the spiritual connotations of the title of king (317). The order of presentation in chs 65–66 can be explained simply by the fact that the kennings for kings and the holders of other kinds of political titles, among them the Christ-kennings, form a transition to the next major section, which deals with the *ókend setning skáldskapar,* the 'non-periphrastic mode of expression' (chs 67–83). It is only at the very end of *Skáldskaparmál* that simple, non-metaphorical descriptions of the type '*bróður Vílis = Óðinn*' appear (chs 84–88), and these hardly have the great significance in Snorri's scheme of ideas that Clunies Ross tries to attribute to them according to her theory. The above-mentioned term *fornafn* can be understood without recourse to the background of continental learning, since it surely refers to the formulation *láta ganga fyrir nǫfn,* which directly precedes that of naming. This formulation certainly does not mean 'to precede', which would be pointless in this context, but is rather to be understood as 'to stand for, to correspond to, to take the place of'. Snorri wishes to say that the *fornǫfn* are not metaphors, but only designations which 'take the place of a name', for example 'enemy of the Frisians' or 'generous one' (306).

M. Clunies Ross's attempt to support Snorri's postulated authorship of the *Prologue* by adducing supposedly parallel statements in the *Prologue*

and *Heimskringla* is ultimately unconvincing. Admittedly, both texts refer to English place-names, but in *Heimskringla (Hák. góð.* ch. 3) the purpose is quite different from that in the *Prologue*. In the *Prologue* these names are used as evidence that England does not belong to the linguistic territory of the Æsir, that is, the Scandinavian-Saxon linguistic area. In *Heimskringla*, on the other hand, it is a question not of old names that derive from a non-Scandinavian language and thus demonstrate an ancient language boundary, but of settlement names from a historical period, when the Vikings ruled the Western islands. And the conclusion is diametrically opposed to that of the *Prologue*, namely the assertion that there are place names of Scandinavian origin in England: *Mǫrg heiti landzins eru þar gefin á nórœna tungu, Grímsbœr ok Hauksfljót ok mǫrg ǫnnur.* The two passages thus have nothing to do with one another, and therefore the suggested parallel is actually evidence against, rather than for, common authorship (300).

Some other attempts to demonstrate that Old Norse literature is steeped in theological ideas can be briefly mentioned here. Thus G. W. Weber thinks that the Old Norse authors interpreted the phrase *ár ok friðr* ('good harvests and peace'), in so far as these were granted to pagans, as the work of the Devil in terms of Christian demonology. But this formula appears in Latin in the Bible and also, at precisely the time of the missionary effort in Scandinavia, in Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* ch. 26: *pax et prosperitas*. It is very likely that *ár ok friðr* actually derives from the language of the Christian missions and cannot therefore be used pejoratively by saga authors to refer to the 'work of the Devil' (340). It is just as unlikely that the formula *trúa á mátt sinn ok megin* can, as Weber suggests, refer to the 'noble pagan' as an adherent of 'natural religion' who has rejected the pagan sacrificial cult and instead 'trusts in his own power and strength'. Weber appeals to the evidence of the Bible, but in so doing fails to realise that the biblical *potestas* is simply a means to belief, whereas *máttr ok megin* are the objects of belief. It would be hard to find a formulation that more clearly expresses the primal sin of Christianity, *superbia*. Thus the formulation is in no way suitable as an expression denoting the positive characteristics of the 'noble pagan' in a theological sense (342). Weber's thesis that the Icelanders based their claim for political freedom on the assertion that the island was an ancient *terra christiana*, though one which had temporarily reverted to paganism, is also erroneous. This is because in canon law the relapsed believer does not become a pagan again, but rather an apostate, and thus falls into a state which deserves damnation. The Icelanders, therefore, would have been very careful to avoid claiming such a status (343). Finally, an equally erroneous view is Weber's theory that ducking in swimming contests is interpreted

in the sagas as a *praefiguratio* of Christian baptism. Here he fails to realise that in those days swimming contests were not a matter of speed alone, as they are almost exclusively today, but of stamina and mettle, and that reciprocal immersion was intended to test these qualities. This means that such ducking was in no way unusual, and so no Old Norse author or reader would have seen it as an 'obvious *praefiguratio*' of baptism (344).

Like G. W. Weber, Lars Lönnroth is of the opinion that it was Snorri's conscious intention to suggest to the readers of his *Ynglinga saga* that the gods of the pagan Swedes were in fact cunning, devilish magicians, 'posing as gods for their own private gain'. Weber's main evidence is the word *veraldargoð* ('world god') which the Swedes used for the dead Freyr; Weber calls it 'the most obvious designation of the Devil'. He is clearly thinking here of St Paul's phrase 'the god of this world': *deus huius saeculi*. But as the quotation shows, the phrase needs the demonstrative pronoun in order to refer to the Devil, defining the 'world' unambiguously as the terrestrial world (cf. *þessa heims hǫfðingi* in the Legendary saga of St Óláfr). Weber's equation is seen to be completely unlikely if we compare the use of the genitive *veraldar-* in other compounds: in *Fagrskinna*, *veraldarfriðr* means 'a comprehensive, lasting peace'. Thus *veraldargoð* can only mean that the Swedes regarded Freyr as their permanent chief god (322–23).

In contrast to these 'theologising' hypotheses, I am of the opinion that Snorri did not regard the religious attitudes of the pagans as reprehensible in principle. It probably seemed obvious to him that in pre-Christian times humans had adopted some kind of cult, and the pagans were only doing what was possible for them. This is an attitude which is not unknown elsewhere in the Middle Ages: *secundum gentis suae traditiones religiosus* ('religious in accord with the traditions of his people') is what Archbishop William of Tyre, Chancellor of the kingdom of Jerusalem, called a Muslim prince at the end of the twelfth century. Thus Snorri most certainly would have regarded it as the duty of a good king to ensure the harvests and the peace of his land by whatever means he felt to be appropriate, as long as he had not yet acquired the blessings of Christianity. Therefore what after conversion must necessarily be interpreted as the service of the Devil might well be regarded as a legitimate attempt to cope with the exigencies of life in pagan times (328).

Thus G. W. Weber's attempt to ascribe to a major part of saga literature, including *Heimskringla*, a perspective founded on salvation history is based upon an erroneous interpretation of the texts (315). In the postulated

perspective the *siðaskipti*, the 'change in religious belief', becomes the turning point in Norse history and the expression of its 'character as a predetermined process'. No such perspective is discernible in *Finnboga saga* or *Ǫrvar-Odds saga* (315–16), nor can it be seen in *Skáldskaparmál*. Using the text of *Heimskringla*, we can show that Snorri, given that his position is not 'theological', but rather 'ideological with respect to culture', makes the change from paganism to Christianity take place as unobtrusively as possible in gradual stages, and that he sets up an image of the ideal 'tolerant' prince, who is prepared to make religious compromises, an ideal which is embodied in Hákon góði and the jarls of Hlaðir and set in obvious contrast to the fanatical, violent missionary king (326–27). He avoids excessive offence to the Christian reader by allowing the idea that sacrificial cult and magic are characteristic of the Yngling line of kings to disappear progressively as the narrative leaves archaic times behind and moves towards the change in belief (329). Thus Hálfdan svarti is described as 'of all kings the most blessed with fruitful harvests' (*allra konunga ársælstr*); but no mention is made of pagan sacrificial cults, only of the fact that his body is divided into four parts, and the hope that the individual quarters will, in those parts of the land where they are buried in mounds, ensure good harvests. This is a concept which has no parallel in pagan religion, but may be found in the Christian reverence for relics: *Ubicumque hae reliquiae fuerint, illic pax et augmentum et levitas aeris semper erit* ('wherever these relics were, there will always be peace and increase and light winds') (329). With Haraldr hárfagri, Hálfdan's son, the first proponent of 'natural religion' appears in the dynasty. He swore 'by the God who created me and who rules over everything' (*til guðs, er mik skóp ok ǫllu ræðr*), and it is obviously meant to be significant when Snorri writes that, although Haraldr admittedly was buried in a mound (*heygðr*) according to pagan custom, this mound was in a place near where a church and graveyard were later situated, and the stones which were previously in the mound are now in the churchyard (330).

The reign of Hákon góði is yet another step closer to the *siðaskipti*. Snorri explicitly states that Hákon was a good Christian when he came over from England to Norway, but he also, in contradiction to the tradition, places the most prominent representative of the pagan party at his side as friend, adviser and mediator: Sigurðr Hlaðajarl, called *inn mesti blótmaðr* ('the most enthusiastic sacrificer'). This immediately shows that for Snorri it is not really a matter of paganism and Christianity, but rather of the ideal form of political rule. More precisely, it is through the way that Hákon attempts to master the religious situation with the help of Sigurðr that Snorri demonstrates

what proper political rule should look like. It should be based on respect for the demands and aspirations of the peasant community as members of the *þing* ('assembly'), that is, on mediation, negotiation and compromise (330–32). When the sons of Eiríkr and Gunnhildr attacked Norway and Sigurðr rushed to help the king, he had in his company precisely those peasants from Trøndelag 'who had pressed the king most severely in the winter to force him to perform the sacrifices'. Hence the king's policies, aiming at balance, were ultimately fruitful, as Snorri's narrative makes clear: they ensured internal peace and therefore also the country's external security (332).

Snorri even tries, as far as possible, to rehabilitate jarl Hákon, who is given an evil reputation in the clerically oriented literature (334–35); on the other hand, the Christian King Óláfr Tryggvason's efforts at conversion are bluntly described as a succession of brutal acts of violence. Unlike Hákon góði, Óláfr disregarded the will of the peasants as expressed at the *þing* meetings, took hostages, and had his opponents put in irons or tortured with bestial cruelty. Occasionally Snorri even contrasts Óláfr's unbridled religious fanaticism with the controlled 'tolerance' of the pagans in a very decided manner. When Óláfr was negotiating a marriage alliance with the Swedish Queen Sigríðr, she responded as follows to his demand that she be baptised: '"I will never abandon the belief which has been mine and that of my kin before me. But nor will I quarrel with you, if you believe in the God that pleases you." Then King Óláfr lost his temper and shouted angrily: "How could I marry you, you woman heathen as a dog (*þik hundheiðna*)," and he struck her in the face with his glove' (336). If there could be any doubt in the matter, certainly the end of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* makes it abundantly clear that Snorri is setting up in Óláfr an antitype to his ideal ruler, since its final chapter is reserved for Óláfr's opponents, the *Hlaðajarlar*, the jarls of Hlaðir, and after jarl Sigurðr and his son, jarl Hákon, the presentation turns to Hákon's sons Eirikr and Sveinn. They were the first Christians in the line of the jarls, but after conversion they behaved totally differently from Óláfr in the exercise of the new religion. Other historical sources also note this, but Snorri is the first to make religious 'tolerance', based on respect for ancient custom and the will of the peasants expressed in the *þing*, the expression of his ideal of a ruler. 'They allowed everyone to do what he wanted about practising the Christian religion. And they maintained the old laws and all the customs of the land and they were much loved and good rulers' (*létu þeir gera hvern, sem vildi, um kristnihaldit, en forn lǫg heldu þeir vel ok alla landzsiðu ok váru menn vinsœlir ok stjórnsamir*) (337).

When Snorri was writing his *Heimskringla*, the constitutional and social history of the Norse countries was in the last phase of a wearisome process

of upheaval. It was still typified by the peasant *þing*-communities, whose geographical scope was mainly dictated by the natural landscape, and which were *de facto* more or less dominated by local ruling families. At the same time, the monarchy, which had long since developed from small-scale local rule by Viking chieftains into a hegemonial kingship, ruled the *lǫnd*, the 'lands', as *ríki*, which at first betokened merely abstract power, and was thus only slowly able to enforce its power over the organs of peasant self-government. It did so at a local level with the aid of the stewards of the royal demesne, the *konungs brytiar* and *ármenn*, who gradually became officials in the local administration. It did so centrally by means of the royal retainers, the *hirð*, out of which developed the court offices and an aristocracy which was distributed over the whole kingdom and bound to the central monarchy by feudal ties. This process, the creation of a state apparatus which was based on the principle of office-holding, and thereby in keeping with the international norm, was in the last phase of its development during the reign of Hákon Hákonarson. *Heimskringla*'s ambition to remind its readers of genuine continuities and to create a Norse history based on its own origins and ancient legal traditions is therefore all the more remarkable.

It is obviously intentional when *Heimskringla* tells us several times how difficult it is for the Norse people to come to terms with the concept of royal office, that is, to recognise the individual administrator of the royal demesne as the representative of the 'power of the state'. Thus Erlingr Skjálgsson declares to King (Saint) Óláfr: 'I freely bend my neck to you, King Óláfr; but it seems to me a cruel imposition that I should have to bow down before Selþórir, who counts only thralls among his ancestors, even though he is now your steward' (*at lúta til Selþóris, er þrælborinn er í allar ættir, þótt hann sé nú ármaðr yðarr*). Chieftains like Erlingr are, or at least so they claim in Snorri's narrative, on the one hand 'destined by virtue of their birth to exercise power on the king's behalf' (*ættbornir til ríkis at hafa af konungum*), but on the other hand, in their own districts, by virtue of their birth, they are the representatives of the peasants in their dealings with the king. The most impressive of them is Einarr þambarskelfir, who defended the peasants at the *þing* 'when the king's men prosecuted a case' (*er konungs menn sóttu*), and above all the Swedish lawspeaker Þorgnýr, who threatened his king with rebellion and death if he did not do what the peasants wished, and explicitly added that this was how their (pagan) forefathers had behaved towards their kings (*hafa svá gǫrt inir fyrri forellrar várir*) (358–59).

The king himself is not essentially different from these magnates. The term *hǫfðingi* ('chieftain') can be used for vassals as well as for jarls and kings; it is the main term for any kind of ruler — even the king has to have

hǫfðingskapr ('the qualities of a chief') — and since the lexical material contains an organological conception of human communities, the term also affirms that lordship itself is a natural given. Snorri is actually firmly convinced that this is a given, or even a necessity. When, as happens quite frequently, he describes a country, a population group or a warband as *hǫfðingjalauss* ('without a lord'), he means that this is a defective state, one which has fallen away from the natural order of things, a vacuum that will soon be filled (*at landit myndi vera auðsótt er hǫfðingjalaust var*). In particular, Snorri shows again and again that the peasants are politically and militarily helpless, 'headless' in the truest sense of the word, incapable of concerted decision-making or of acting as a group, if they lack their *hǫfðingi*. This, however, also means that the *hǫfðingi* is committed to protecting the interests of the peasants. Thus throughout the whole of *Heimskringla* we find running like a *leitmotiv* the concept that the king, as the highest *hǫfðingi*, is duty-bound always to act in agreement with the peasants' *þing* meeting; to take the traditional beliefs and cults of the peasants into consideration; to resolve inevitable conflicts by negotiation and compromise rather than by force; to ensure peace and the rule of law; and not to burden the peasants with unnecessary demands for service, that is, to remain in the country and not indulge in campaigns to distant lands (359).

It is in the light of this that Snorri makes Einarr þambarskelfir, whom we have already mentioned as the ideal peasant chieftain, appear in a scene in which he warns King Haraldr that it is more advisable to bring King Magnús's body back to Norway for burial 'than to fight in a foreign country and desire another king's dominions' (*en berjask útlendis eða girnask annars konungs veldi ok eign*). It is of no significance that this scene corresponds to a text which also appears in *Morkinskinna*, since it is totally consistent with Snorri's own ideas. The same holds true of the 'comparison of manhood' between Kings Sigurðr and Eysteinn. Even Sigurðr's journey to Jerusalem, which, in contrast to the skaldic stanzas usually quoted, is moreover described not as a Christian pilgrimage but as a Viking raid, appears to Eysteinn, who has stayed at home, less 'useful' than what he has meanwhile achieved in the country. He has built churches, harbours and the Hall in Bergen 'while you have been slaughtering Moors for the Devil in the land of the Saracens; I do not think that was very profitable for our land' (*meðan þú brytjaðir blámenn fyrir fjándann á Serklandi; ætla ek þat lítit gagn ríki váru*). The provocative irony with which Snorri makes King Eysteinn speak of the senseless slaughter of distant peoples, and the pointedness which he gives the dialogue in contrast to the *Morkinskinna* text, but also more particularly the praise which he heaps on the king elsewhere: all this leads to

the conclusion that the author himself is speaking through the mouth of Eysteinn (360).

This criticism seems even more pointed in the saga of King Magnús berfœttr. Snorri ascribes to the king, who fell early in battle, an utterance that could stand as a central statement of the heroic ethic. To the reproach that he was often careless 'when he was campaigning abroad' (*er hann herjaði útan landz*), Magnús answered 'that kings are made for fame, not for long life' (*til frægðar skal konung hafa, en ekki til langlífis*). At the same time Snorri explains that Magnús was opposed to the peasants, and imposed great trouble and cost on them through his campaigns, and also that Magnús had displayed very little *hǫfðingskapr* in his conflict with the peasants' leaders and had even affirmed in a vainglorious way that must have disqualified him in Snorri's eyes 'that what he said was law' (*at þat var rétt, er hann sagði*) (361–62).

Since Snorri avoided specifically Christian motivation as much as possible, it is all the more remarkable that in his demand for policies that would ensure peace and the rule of law for the peasant *þing*-communities he should find himself completely in agreement with the aspirations of the Church. This agreement also made it possible for him to make the saintliness of King Óláfr comprehensible from a genuinely Norse viewpoint. In an anonymous skaldic stanza quoted by Snorri, which belongs to the legendary tradition of St Óláfr, we already find the concept that it is a precondition for the saintliness of a king that he should have fallen, not on a campaign for conquest or booty abroad, but at home, in the defence of his own country. In Snorri's account the stanza is spoken by the dead Óláfr, who appears to his brother Haraldr in a dream, prophesies his approaching end and thus reminds him of his own death, which was pleasing to God and 'holy' precisely because it occurred *heima* ('at home'): *hlautk, þvít heima sǫtum, / heilagt fall til vallar* (362–63). At the end of *Haralds saga harðráða*, in the 'obituary' for Haraldr, presented as a comparison of the dead man with his half-brother St Óláfr, Snorri returns to this idea once more: it permits him to accept Óláfr's sanctity without having to modify his criticism of the king's violent rule and its hostility to the peasants. He cautiously puts the comparison in the mouth of a certain Halldórr Brynjólfsson, a 'clever man and a mighty chieftain'. When this Halldórr heard people say that the characters of the two brothers were very different, he used to answer: 'I never found two men with such a similar personality.' Both had been 'greedy for booty and power, capable in punishment and in ruling'. The only difference was that rebels had killed King Óláfr 'in his own country, and that is why he became a saint' (*feldu hann á eigu sinni sjálfs; varð hann fyrir þat heilagr*). Haraldr, on the other hand,

campaigned 'to increase his glory and his power' (*til frægðar sér ok ríkis*); moreover 'he fell in the country of other kings' (*fell hann . . . á annarra konunga eigu*) (363).

It is highly significant that Snorri's ideal of the ruler comes to its fruition at the end of *Heimskringla*, in the narration of the reign of King Magnús Erlingsson and his father and guardian Erlingr skakki. Snorri praises this reign unusually highly as a time in which 'the kingdom of the Norwegians flourished greatly. The peasants were rich and powerful and no longer suffered deprivation of freedom and peace because of marauding troops' (*stóð Nóregsveldi með blóma miklum. Var bóndafólk auðigt ok ríkt ok óvant ófrelsi eða ófriði flokkana*) (365). Snorri does not conceal the fact that Erlingr was concerned to confirm the rule of his son by a church coronation. Thus it may have been all the more important for him to represent Archbishop Eysteinn of Niðaróss not as a churchman in the first place but as 'a man of high degree' (*maðr ættstórr*), whom the people of Þrándheimr were happy to accept because 'most of the people of Þrándheimr were related to him by blood or by marriage'. It becomes clear that there is some kind of political ideology behind this obviously idealised portrait of aristocratic rule when we consider that Snorri avoids all mention of the reign of King Sverrir which followed almost immediately (366). Even if the results of modern scholarship no longer permit us to believe in a complete replacement of the old ruling class of chieftains by a new nobility of office, the fact remains that after the reign of Sverrir a modern conception of royal office which corresponded to the norm in the rest of Europe began to prevail. Snorri, however, closes his *Heimskringla* with the description of a state of affairs which must have seemed to him to be a meaningful result of the three hundred years of conflict and development since Haraldr hárfagri had united the kingdom: the peasant chieftain class seemed to have succeeded in bringing the monarchy and the recently created archbishopric of Niðaróss into their sphere of influence. This was a process made even more portentous by the fact that Erlingr skakki was a descendant of the *Hlaðajarlar*, the jarls of Hlaðir, thus of a family which embodied Snorri's ideal of lordship in its purest form because of its religious tolerance and its policies, which were both positively inclined to the peasants and committed to the local territory (367).

In his highly praised *Heimskringla* monograph of 1991, Sverre Bagge considers Snorri's work 'relatively unaffected by ideological bias'; it contains nothing but 'conflicts between individuals' who pursue their personal interests according to the somewhat cold-blooded motto 'nothing succeeds like success'. In answer to the question of why, then, Snorri wrote this

work, he can only say that it was some kind of collection of examples for 'future politicians' (369–72). I believe, in contrast to this, that I can discern a precisely formulated and consistent conception: the gradual replacement of the Viking form of kingship, based on roaming foreign lands in pursuit of fame and fortune, by a type of kingship that is sympathetic to the peasants, respects the traditional laws and concerns itself with peace at home. For Snorri this is the general theme of Norwegian history and indeed of Scandinavian history overall (367–68). Snorri does not know, or chooses to ignore, the legend of Troy, so popular everywhere in the Middle Ages and quoted in the *Prologue* of *Snorra Edda*, and so he rejects the idea of a *translatio* either of the *imperium* or the *artes*. His ideal of the *hǫfðingi* springs from purely Norse roots.

The *Hávamál* compilation, too, is in my opinion part of the broader context to which Snorri's efforts to create a cultural tradition peculiar to the *Norðrlǫnd* belong, although *Hávamál* is generally regarded as an ancient indigenous example of a Norse paganism untouched by Christianity. The majority opinion is still that the received sequence of stanzas, once it had been established, existed in oral tradition more or less unchanged over a long period of time until it was finally committed to writing in the Christian period, in the thirteenth century. '*Hávamál* is very much a text for performance,' Carolyne Larrington declares; 'it must have been recited many times in halls similar to the one represented in the opening sections.' On the contrary, I believe:

1) that the 164 stanzas of *Hávamál*, and more particularly the 79 stanzas of the 'Gnomic Poem' that form its first part, cannot possibly have survived in a purely oral tradition, because it is a characteristic of gnomic poetry that every stanza forms a self-contained unit of thought, and therefore is rarely able to achieve a fixed and unchangeable position in the context of a larger whole;

2) that the material we know as *Hávamál* was loosely bound together to form a complex at the time when it was committed to parchment, and that its only basic unifying feature is the three lines in which the name *Hávi* appears (stanzas 109, 111, 164);

3) that this name for Óðinn betrays the influence of Christian ideas, because it is only in Christianity that the concept 'high' is felt to be a quality of the divine;

4) that the redactor was attempting to provide by means of his collection a genuinely Old Norse counterpart to *Hugsvinnsmál*, a paraphrasing

translation of the Latin *Disticha Catonis*, and that in so doing he made use of a great deal of older gnomic material, but also added some stanzas which are influenced by *Hugsvinnsmál* and occasionally perhaps even directly by the *Disticha Catonis*;

5) that *Hávamál* was intended in this way to place the Norse god Óðinn on a par with the Biblical Solomon and the Roman Cato as a teacher of morality and wisdom (373–74).

David A. H. Evans rejected this interpretation in his *Hávamál* edition of 1986. For him, the archaic pagan, and even timeless, character of *Hávamál* is self-evident. Thus he fails to see that the alliterative formula *hold ok hiarta* ('body and heart') is attested only in *Hávamál* 96 and nowhere else, but that this linking of the two concepts occurs in the French troubadour lyric of the twelfth century, and then in the German Minnesang (*cor e cors, herz und lip*) and is therefore a fashionable theme in courtly poetry. He is equally uninterested in the fact that *Hávamál* 95 is the only Old Norse instance of the alliterative linking of *hugr* 'mind' and *hiarta* 'heart', whereas in the Old Saxon *Heliand* the alliteration of *hugi–herta* is almost formulaic; nor does he notice the obvious fact that in Old English the alliteration *hyge–heorte* is concentrated in Christian religious literature (374–75). Elsewhere Evans also denies any connection between *Hávamál* and Christian biblical tradition. In his interpretation of the scene of Óðinn's self-sacrifice (*Hávamál* 138–41) he is concerned solely to declare that any similarity to the death of Christ on the cross is superficial and coincidental, and to confirm the genuinely pagan and ultimately shamanistic origin of the scene. Reference to the word-pair *orð* and *verk* in *Hávamál* 141 is avoided, even though its Christian character has long been pointed out. The sudden popularity of this word-pair is based on the idea of the twofold revelation of God in 'word and works', in the Bible and in the creation of the world. As *word endi werc* it is found nineteen times in the Old Saxon *Heliand*, and since it also appears in baptismal oaths, as in the Old Saxon *uuercum endi uuordum*, it must have reached the North by way of the language of the Christian missionaries. Stanzas 138–41of *Hávamál* probably have their origin in the period of the Christian missions, and therefore also the period of religious syncretism, and it is hardly by chance that the only apparently pagan use of 'word and works' appears in a group of stanzas which for other reasons are open to the suspicion that they contain a mixture of pagan tradition and ideas about the crucifixion of Christ (382–83).

In my view, the famous verses in *Hávamál* stanzas 76 and 77 *Deyr fé, deyia frændr, / deyr siálfr it sama* are influenced by the biblical passage Eccl. 3: 19: 'for that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: as the one

dieth, so dieth the other'. In disagreeing with this, Evans is content simply to remark that the alliterative pair *fé–frændr* doubtless comes from Old Germanic poetry. But apart from Eyvindr's *Hákonarmál* it appears only in purely Christian texts: in the Old English *Wanderer*, in Wulfstan's Homilies and also in the thirteenth-century Old Norwegian rune-poem. In Old Norse prose it is also first recorded in a late text: in King Hákon Hákonarson's prologue to the *Frostaþingslǫg*. There is also the fact that the four oldest examples in Old English as well as in Old Norse are combined with the theme of transience, even though this is in no way obvious from the semantic content of the alliterating words. Therefore it is perfectly permissible to assume that the *fé–frændr* alliteration in *Hákonarmál*, an elegy for King Hákon góði, who spent most of his life in England, could be derived from Old English poetry, and is therefore one of the many examples of linguistic contact between English and Norse, collected by Dietrich Hofmann in 1955 (376). And it is surely also permissible to assign the subsequent wording of *Hávamál* 77 to the clerical sphere: *ec veit einn, at aldri deyr, / dómr um dauðan hvern*. Evans translates *dómr* with 'renown', but *dómr um* can only mean 'judgement on', and the following *dauðan hvern* makes Evans's translation totally meaningless, because 'renown' would not be 'renown' if it could be achieved by 'every dead man'. The meaning of this 'judgement on every dead man' is shown by *Konungs skuggsjá*: for Lazarus, as for 'all the other dead' there will be after four days 'a firm judgement on his case' (*at staðfastr domr var kominn a mal hans*). The Old English *Dream of the Rood* also explains that God, when he sits in judgement on the Latter Day, will have 'the power of judgement over everyone' (*domes geweald anra gehwylcum*). Here too it is emphasised that this is a 'judgement' that will affect every single individual. And this divine judgement has one other aspect besides the fact that it will apply to everyone, namely that it will be an 'eternal judgement' (*iudicium aeternum*; Hebr. 6: 2). The Old English text implicitly expresses this by contrasting God's judgement with earthly life, which is 'transient' (*læne*). In *Hávamál*, however, this opposition is expressed explicitly: the transience of earthly life in 77, 1–3 is followed in 77, 4–6 by the eternity of the divine judgement: *ec veit einn, at aldri deyr* (377).

The word *orðstírr* (*Hávamál* 76, 4), usually translated 'fame', is also to be interpreted in the light of this context. This is shown by Christian descriptions of God as *stýrir als tírar* (*Leiðarvísan* 24), and even more by the parallel section in *Hugsvinnsmál* 74, which says that there is no 'better reputation' (*orðstírr hæri*) than that acquired by a life without sin. And *Hugsvinnsmál* 74 has other phrases in common with *Hávamál*:

Hugsv: Fégirni [. . .] líkams munúð / orðstír [. . .] getr [. . .] aldrigi
Hávm. 79: fé eða flióðs munuð / *Hávm*. 76: orðztírr [. . .] aldregi [. . .] getr.

If we ask which text is primary in relation to the other, it turns out that *Hugsvinnsmál* 74 is a relatively close rendering of *Disticha Catonis* II, 15 (note that *luxuria* does not have the modern sense 'luxury', but means rather 'lust, the desires of the flesh'). The correspondences are:

luxuria = líkams munúð
crimen avaritiae = fégirni
fama = orðstírr

Since it would be absurd to assume that the close *Disticha* translation in *Hugsvinnsmál* had hit purely by chance on just the same words as appear in two closely associated *Hávamál* stanzas, the only possible sequence of dependence must be *Disticha Catonis* > *Hugsvinnsmál* > *Hávamál* (378).

In the context of the present discussion it is sufficient to point out two further examples of this dependence. In *Hugsvinnsmál* 25, the conditional clause introduced by *ef* has as its source the conditional clause introduced by *si* in *Disticha Catonis* I, 9: (*Hugsv.*) *Ef þú vin átt* 'If you have a friend'; (*Disticha Catonis*) *si tibi sit carus*. Here too it would be absurd to assume that *Hávamál* 44 *Ef þú vin átt* represents a genuine Norse tradition which is similar to *Disticha Catonis* and *Hugsvinnsmál* by pure coincidence. The common three-line structure of the Old Norse stanzas also clearly shows that *Hávamál* 44 cannot be anything but a transformation of *Hugsvinnsmál* 25: the *Hugsvinnsmál* line *fýs hann gott at gera* corresponds exactly to the text of *Disticha Catonis*, while *Hávamál* 44,3 *oc vill af hánom gott geta* may differ in content, but makes it obvious that the poet, as he formulated his line, had the words of the *Hugsvinnsmál* line ringing in his ears (386). In the case of the parallels between *Disticha Catonis* I, 26/*Hugsvinnsmál* 42/*Hávamál* 45 the content is exactly the same in all three: between friends, true and false, one should repay like with like. *Hugsvinnsmál* 42 *Fláráðs orðum, þótt fagrt mæli* is a very close translation of *Disticha Catonis*, and is repeated in *Hávamál* 45, 4–5 *fagrt scaltu við þann mæla, en flátt hyggia*. The certainty of this dependence is reinforced by the fact that *Hávamál* 42 *oc gialda giǫf við giǫf, hlátr við hlátri* uses a rhetorical device which is most unusual in Old Norse to describe reciprocal behaviour. This is found in the text of *Disticha Catonis: sic ars deluditur arte* and in *Hugsvinnsmál*: *gjalt svá líku líkt* (386).

Even though it is difficult to assign individual *Hávamál* stanzas to a particular historical milieu (several derive from the pagan period, some from the period of religious syncretism, and yet others from the clerical, didactic sphere), *Hávamál* as a whole can be dated with some certainty. The starting-

point is the name *Hávi*. As one would expect, Evans assumes that it already existed when the gnomic collection was first created. However, *Hávi* as a name for Óðinn is extremely unusual. The term most closely related to it is *inn ríki* 'the Powerful One', related not only in respect of its grammatical form as a weak noun, but also in its blandness as a descriptive term. In *Vǫluspá*, *inn ríki* obviously refers to the Christian God, and even the name *Hávi* for Óðinn has Christian terms as its model, since the attributive 'high, High One' is not given to the pagan gods, but is frequently used by Christians to describe heavenly powers: God as *hár goð*, Mary as *víf et hæsta*, the hope of salvation as *ván hás batnaðar*. Since *Hávi* does not occur in any other text than *Hávamál* apart from a passage in *Gylfaginning* based on the poem, and in *Hávamál* itself only appears in three lines, it is probably an *ad hoc* formulation whose purpose was to provide a basic frame for this gnomic collection.[1] In other words, whoever invented the device of Óðinn as the mouthpiece of the poem also coined the name *Hávi* (392).

Where did this idea come from? The collection of gnomic stanzas seems to me to be indirectly related to Snorri's cultural and ideological intentions: *Hávamál* is intended to provide in the field of rules for human behaviour what *Gylfaginning* provides in the mythical sphere. And just as in *Gylfaginning* the triad *Hár*/*Jafnhár*/*Þriði* ('High, Just as High, Third') appear as teachers, so we have *Hávi* ('The High One') in the gnomic collection, and Óðinn is behind these names on both occasions. As soon as the currently prevailing prejudice about the age of *Hávamál* is thrown overboard, the possibility begins to dawn that the *Hávamál* compiler was inspired to use

[1] The following sentence in *Gylfaginning* ch. 2 may provide us with a further indication of the age of the *Hávamál* compilation: *þá sá hann þar háva hǫll, svá at varla mátti hann sjá yfir hana* ('then he [Gylfi] saw there a high hall, so that he could scarcely see over it'). The words *háva hǫll* in this passage could only be interpreted as a species of parody, designed to lead the reader astray, if the author of *Gylfaginning* were already acquainted with the *Hávamál* compilation and therefore also with the phrase *Háva hǫll* ('the hall of the High One [Hávi]'). A few sentences later the words *háva hǫll* occur again, but this time they mean something completely different: this time Hár refers to his own hall as 'the hall of the High One' (*þar í Háva hǫll*). This phrase is undoubtedly the work of a later scribe who was acquainted with and influenced by *Hávamál*. He either added the phrase to the text or perhaps altered a phrase (*þar í hári hǫll*?) found in his exemplar. It is hardly plausible that Hár would refer to himself in the third person—like Tarzan—and especially implausible that he would suddenly use the weak form *Hávi*. The adjective *hár* occurs several times in Eddic poetry in connection with buildings: *unz at hári kom hǫll standandi* (*Oddrúnargrátr* 3), *á borg inni há* (*Atlakviða* 14), *unz ec hǫll Hálfs háva þecþac* (*Guðrúnarkviða II* 13).

the gnomic stanza (*Gáttir allar)* cited in the Gylfi scene of *Gylfaginning* as the first stanza of his *Hávamál*. The gnomic content of *Hugsvinnsmál*, which the tradition of Christian learning had brought northwards, could have suggested to him the idea of creating a background of genuinely Norse tradition for linguistic material of this and similar kinds by setting up the Norse Óðinn as one of the ancient teachers of wisdom beside the Biblical Solomon and the Roman Cato.

In addition to *Hávamál*, there is a second Eddic poem which appears to belong indirectly to the context of the establishment of a genuinely Norse cultural consciousness in the thirteenth century: *Rígsþula*. As is well known, the dating of this poem is strongly contested: it varies from the ninth to the thirteenth century. The influence of Georges Dumézil and his adherents has caused the earlier dating to become more attractive in recent years, as Germanic studies together with Scandinavian studies have accepted Dumézil's theory of the (supposedly typically Indo-European) *idéologie tripartie* somewhat less critically than other branches of the humanities (128–44). Even Ursula Dronke has attempted to prove that *Rígsþula* is 'pagan and archaic' on this basis. She wishes to interpret the words *sem jarlar forðum* 'as the jarls once [did]' in a skaldic stanza by Víga-Glúmr as a reference to *Rígsþula*, and therefore to date the work with certainty as early as the tenth century. But in this stanza, *forðum* is linked with *nú*, and therefore refers not to *sem jarlar* but to *ek*, the subject of the sentence: 'I once won the land, as jarls do [. . .] Now I have lost it.' Jarls were obviously looked upon as the prototype of the violent and warrior-like character, as a proverb in *Málsháttakvæði* shows: *oddar gerva jarli megin* ('Spear-points give a jarl his strength'). Thus there is no obvious reference to *Rígsþula*. Dronke further wishes to trace back to Indo-European tradition not only the tripartite division of society but also the particular motif of the god Rígr's lying between a husband and wife for three nights. It is not, however, the Indian Gandharva himself who lies between the married couple, but rather his symbol, his staff; nor does he beget any offspring. And there is not the remotest suggestion that he might be the creator of a social order. This far-fetched and isolated 'parallel' is therefore unconvincing (408–09).

In contrast, the parallels between *Rígsþula* and the legend of the Vǫlsungar are extremely striking. Jarl's snake-like eyes (*ǫtul vóro augo sem yrmlingi*, 'his eyes were as sharp as a little snake's') are a reference to the *frægðarmark*, the 'mark of honour' of the Vǫlsung lineage, which gives Sigurðr's grandson of the same name the nickname *ormr-í-auga*. Konr ungr in *Rígsþula*

shares with Sigurðr Fáfnisbani the no less remarkable gift of understanding the speech of birds, and the birds' advice determines the fate not only of Sigurðr but also of Konr ungr. The same is true of the ability to use runic magic, the art of making swords blunt and the art of helping women in labour. The *grœnar brautir* on which Sigurðr travels to Gjúki appear in the first lines of *Rígsþula*. And the word *konr*, a word that is central to *Rígsþula* since the word-play with *konungr* is based on it, is found in only one other place in Eddic poetry, in the Sigurðr poems, where he is called *konr Sigmundar* and *Yngva konr*. Dronke calls the fact that Konr ungr as youngest son succeeds Rígr/Jarl 'a rare case of becoming king by ultimogeniture'. However, Sigurðr ormr-í-auga, the grandson of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, is also the youngest of Ragnarr and Aslaug's four sons, and is destined from birth to be the heir and continue the family line (409).

Dronke claims that the word *karl*, which in *Rígsþula* is the name of Rígr's second son, who becomes the founding ancestor of the class of freemen, is not a legal term in Norwegian. This is only correct in as much as in the earliest texts it is used simply for 'man' in general, or for 'husband'. However, it is precisely in the legal reforms of King Hákon Hákonarson and generally from then onwards that *karl* is used for the 'free subject', that is, the representative of the class which stands in the middle between king and serf, thus precisely what is meant by *karl* in *Rígsþula*. The introduction to the *Frostaþingslǫg*, which was written at the instigation of King Hákon, is where the phrase *konungr ok karl* appears for the first time, and it is used several times. This form of words also appears in the Vǫlsung legend. When Áslaug announces the birth of her son Sigurðr ormr-í-auga, she reveals that she is a *konungs dóttir, en eigi karls*. Thus the use of the word *karl* as a political term for the legal definition of social status is best suited to the time of the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson, i.e. the mid-thirteenth century (410).

As it is, Hákon's reign, with its legal reforms and the coronation of 1247, is the most likely political and cultural milieu for the appearance of a poem like *Rígsþula*. It was only in the relatively stable state structures of the High Middle Ages that models of an ideal three-class social order became relevant in western and central Europe (139–40), and it is only with the constitutional reforms that began at the end of the twelfth century that a social division of the kind presented in *Rígsþula* would be conceivable. Moreover, a number of details from the poem seem to have been inspired by events of Hákon's time, such as the figure of Jarl, who is reminiscent of the powerful jarl Skúli, and the name of Konr ungr, which could have been inspired by the nickname of Hákon's own son, Hákon ungi, also referred to as *konungr*

ungi. Konr ungr also shares with Hákon ungi a predilection for falconry (410). Even the conflict between Jarl and Konr ungr could be a reflection of the dramatic events of the years 1239–40: jarl Skúli arrogated to himself the royal title, King Hákon then gave the title to his son, Hákon ungi, who was also the jarl's grandson, and then Skúli lost his life after a military defeat. The kingdom was saved, but the early 1250s already saw the beginning of skirmishes with the Danes, to which *Rígsþula* seems to allude. Thus the 1250s may well be the time when *Rígsþula* was composed (411).

The poet of *Rígsþula* may have received some inspiration from *Vǫlsunga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar* which had perhaps been produced shortly before. And this text, too, belongs in its own particular way to the sphere of the efforts to establish a genuine Norse mythical, saga and historical tradition and with it the consciousness of a peculiarly Norse culture. In so doing the author was probably not primarily trying to glorify the ruling dynasty, as Barend Symons thought, but rather to integrate the extremely rich Old Norse heroic saga tradition, which itself was largely of Continental European origin, into the Norse cultural sphere. And how could such an integration be more lastingly established than by genealogically linking the Vǫlsung legend, the story of Sigmundr, Sigurðr and Brynhildr, on the one hand with Óðinn and on the other hand with the Norwegian royal house? The saga text itself points to this political interpretation: it says that a powerful lineage stems from Sigurðr ormr-í-auga, the son of Ragnarr and Áslaug, the daughter of Sigurðr and Brynhildr, since the daughter of Sigurðr ormr-í-auga was Ragnhildr, *modir Harallz ens harfagra, er fyrstr red aullum Noregi einn* ('the mother of Haraldr hárfagri, who was the first sole ruler of all Norway'). This genealogical link was obviously more suited to the needs of the time after the king's coronation in 1247 than the traditional Yngling genealogy. While the paternal line of descent of Haraldr hárfagri, founder of the kingdom, from the Ynglingar made the Norwegian royal house a mere offshoot of the Swedish royal house, the newly established link via his maternal line of descent to the lineage of the Vǫlsungar and further to that of Óðinn asserted the political independence of the Norwegians. Snorri, on the other hand, with his cultural-political conception of the *Norðrlǫnd*, could continue to accept the idea of the descent of the Norwegian dynasty from the Swedish Ynglingar with no further problems (412).

In several passages, not just in the description of Sigurðr, *Vǫlsunga ok Ragnars saga* made use of *Þiðreks saga*, written about 1250 in Hanseatic Bergen. This latter does not, of course, form part of the courtly literature whose import was so energetically encouraged by Hákon Hákonarson, but

it does nevertheless owe its production to the political and economic conditions the king had created. It is also in some ways related to his cultural programme in that it places the Germanic, and thus also the Norse heroic legends, in a broader European context, which stretched from Apulia and Spain to the North. For the author of *Vǫlsunga ok Ragnars saga* this may have amounted to a challenge to locate the legend of the Vǫlsungar as far as possible (that is, as far as the facts of the traditional legendary material permitted without too much forcing) in the Norse lands and to make Sigurðr Fáfnisbani the greatest hero of the Norse pagan era (405). In so doing the saga author found himself in a dilemma, in as much as the distinguished history of Sigurðr's lineage is one of multiple death and doom. Unlike Carola Gottzmann, however, I feel that he has succeeded in providing the saga with a general underlying meaning which made it suitable for his particular purposes. The multiple deaths and disasters that plague the Vǫlsungar become in his interpretation the proof that the lineage had an indestructible ability to survive and could flout the danger of extinction over and over again (400–03).

By integrating the Vǫlsungar into the Norse historical tradition *Vǫlsunga ok Ragnars saga* achieved for heroic legend what, *mutatis mutandis*, Snorri's *Gylfaginning* had done for Norse mythology. We should, however, perhaps be somewhat sceptical in judging what effect these efforts actually had at the time. King Hákon Hákonarson's cultural programme had a totally different aim, the 'Europeanisation' of the North, so the tendencies introduced by Snorri could be understood as a kind of 'anti-programme'. How little this was able to establish itself in the face of the 'modern' literary genres, which were mainly imported from the Continent, above all the *riddara sǫgur*, the 'chivalric sagas' translated at Hákon's instigation, can be seen from the very meagre textual tradition. *Vǫlsunga ok Ragnars saga* is found in only a single medieval manuscript, the Eddic collection of poems about gods and heroes only in the rather shabby and carelessly written *Codex regius*. Despite its initial neglect, however, since the 'Scandinavian Renaissance' of the seventeenth century this literature has been far more influential, culturally and ideologically, than the *riddara sǫgur*, which were more popular and officially promoted at the time. If the peoples of Scandinavia down to the present day still look to the traditions of the late pagan Viking period in defining their identity, this is due less to the merits of the Viking period itself than to the achievement of the high-medieval literature that reactivated these traditions and first made them available for ideological exploitation.

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ON HEIÐR

By JOHN McKINNELL

1. *Who is Heiðr in* Vǫluspá*?*

> Þat man hon fólcvíg fyrst í heimi,
> er Gullveigo geirom studdo
> oc í hǫll Hárs hána brendo;
> þrysvar brendo, þrysvar borna,
> opt, ósialdan, þó hon enn lifir.
>
> Heiði hana héto, hvars til húsa kom,
> vǫlo velspá, vitti hon ganda;
> seið hon kunni, seið hon leikin;
> æ var hon angan illrar brúðar. (*Vǫluspá* 21–22)[1]
>
> She remembers a killing between peoples, the first in the world,
> when they propped up Gullveig with spears,
> and in the hall of Hárr they burned her;
> three times they burned her, three times reborn,
> often, not seldom, and yet she still lives.
>
> They called her Heiðr, wherever she came to houses,
> a prophetess foretelling good fortune, she laid spells on spirits;
> she understood magic, practised magic in a trance;
> she was always the delight of an evil bride.

The interpretation of these two stanzas constitutes one of the most familiar problems in the study of eddic poetry. Most of the critics who have wrestled with them have been mainly concerned to elucidate the enigmatic figure of Gullveig, and since the work of Karl Müllenhoff (1883) and Sigurður Nordal (*Vǫluspá* 1978) the majority view has been that she is a quasi-allegorical figure associated with the Vanir, that the Æsir burn her in Óðinn's hall in order to try to exorcise the greed for gold which she represents, but that this merely leads to her being reborn as the *vǫlva* Heiðr, whose name is usually translated as the adjective 'Bright'. The attack on her then leads indirectly to the war between the two races of gods, hence to the destruction of the fortress-wall of the Æsir, the

[1] Eddic poems are normally quoted from NK throughout this article, but in *Vǫluspá* 22/5–6 I reject their emendation of the Codex Regius text, adopting instead the smaller emendation of *leikiN* to *leikin* (H reads *hugleikin*); further see *Vǫluspá* 1978, 44.

employment and betrayal of the Giant Builder, and thus to the moral fall of the gods and the confrontation with the giants which ends at Ragnarǫk.

It is a powerful and elegant interpretation which enables us to see the whole poem as a structure combining logical clarity with moral force. But for that very reason, it may be worth revisiting the evidence for it; might it have been accepted, perhaps, more because of the elegance of the construct than because of any independent evidence in its favour? And elegant as it is, it leaves two problems unsolved. First, it does not explain how the burning of Gullveig and her reincarnation as Heiðr lead the Æsir to attack the Vanir, rather than vice versa. Second, if the defining vices of the gods are oathbreaking and murder (in the killing of the Giant Builder, *Vǫluspá* 26) and greed for gold (in the Gullveig episode), it seems odd that evil men are later punished for oathbreaking, murder and — not the greed for gold, but the seduction of other men's wives (*Vǫluspá* 39/1–6). The parallel is so nearly perfect that we should perhaps question whether we have understood the point of the Gullveig story correctly.

However, I shall leave Gullveig aside for the moment and concentrate on the identification of Heiðr. In the first two lines of st. 22,

> Heiði hana héto hvars til húsa kom
>
> They called her Heiðr wherever she came to houses

does the pronoun *hana* refer back to the last stated feminine subject (i.e. Gullveig), or is it, as Hermann Pálsson (1994, 60) has suggested, part of the pattern whereby the *vǫlva* who is the narrator of the poem opens a number of stanzas by referring to herself in the third person? (stt. 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 35, 38, 39, 59 and 64, and at two other significant moments: introducing the theme of Ragnarǫk at 44/5, and when she sinks down at the end of her prophecy, 66/8). The reciting *vǫlva* does not always refer to herself in the nominative case; in st. 29 she unambiguously uses a dative construction:

> Valði henni Herfǫðr hringa oc men.
>
> Herfǫðr (i.e. Óðinn) chose rings and necklace for her.

Nor can we appeal to the moral force and clarity of the poem's structure and outlook as seen by Müllenhoff and Nordal; that would be circular argument, since their view depends in part on the interpretation of this crux. Instead, we must try to place ourselves in the position of the poem's early audiences and ask who they are likely to have assumed Heiðr to be.

There is only one other occurrence of the name in Old Norse poetry, in *Hyndluljóð* 32:

Haki var Hvæðno hóti beztr sona,
enn Hvæðno var Hiǫrvarðr faðir,
Heiðr oc Hrossþiófr Hrímnis kindar.

Haki was somewhat the best of Hvæðna's sons,
but Hjǫrvarðr was Hvæðna's father,
Heiðr and Hrossþjófr (were) Hrímnir's children.

Probably because of the conventional identification of Heiðr with Gullveig, *LP* (236) and Simek (1993, 135) treat Heiðr here as an otherwise unrecorded name of a male giant, though Sijmons and Gering refer to Heiðr and Hrossþiófr as 'geschwister', 'brother and sister' (SG III:1 391). *LP* also cites a supposed instance of Heiðr as a masculine name in a skaldic verse by Helgi Ásbjarnarson, but this seems to be a simple use of the masculine noun *heiðr* in the sense 'honour', 'praise (in the form of poetry)' (Kock I 97). *Hyndluljóð* 32 is clearly concerned with the kindred of giants of both sexes (since Hrímnir is a well-known male giant-name and Hvæðna is undoubtedly female); the long lists of names of male giants in *Þulur* IV b, f (Kock I 323–25) do not include Heiðr, although other names listed here do appear (Hrímnir in *Þula* IV b 1/5; Hrossþjófr in *Þula* IV f 3/1; Haki twice, but in the lists of names of sea-kings, *Þula* III a 8 (Kock I 322) and IV a 2/7; Hveðra — probably a variant of Hvæðna — in the list of names of troll-women, *Þula* IV c 2/7).

This section of *Hyndluljóð* has clearly been influenced by *Vǫluspá*, so much so that it (or perhaps the whole poem) is referred to by Snorri (*Gylfaginning* ch. 5) as *Vǫluspá in skamma* (ed. Faulkes 1982, 10, 176; trans. Faulkes 1987, 10; and further see *Vǫluspá* 1978, 119–20; SG III:1 390), and there is no reason to think that Heiðr here is a different figure from the one in *Vǫluspá*. Hrímnir is a common giant-name, and Hrossþjófr is probably to be connected with the Lappish soothsayer Rostiophus, who prophesies to Othinus in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* III.iv.1 (ed. Olrik and Ræder I 70; trans. Fisher and Davidson I 76) that Rinda will bear him a son who will avenge the killing of Balderus. Davidson suggests (II 56) that Rostiophus may be Loki in disguise, the epithet 'Horse-Thief' referring to his seduction of the giant builder's horse, for which see *Gylfaginning* ch. 42 (ed. Faulkes 1982, 35; trans. Faulkes 1987, 36), and this is quite possible.

The association with magical prophecy is reinforced by the opening of the next stanza in *Hyndluljóð*:

Ero vǫlor allar frá Viðólfi.

All prophetesses derive from Viðólfr.

This link may derive from the fact that *Heiðr* was a traditional name for a *vǫlva*; and the name *Viðólfr*, which appears nowhere else, can most obviously be interpreted as 'forest wolf' (SG III:1 392 'lupus silvaticus'), which would be a 'wild nature' name similar to *Heiðr* 'heath'. However, Viðólfr may be the same figure as Vitolfus, a retired warrior and magic-worker who heals the wounds of Haldanus and magically conceals his own house from the pursuing forces of Haldanus's enemy in Saxo, *Gesta Danorum* VII.ii.2 (ed. Olrik and Ræder I 183; trans. Fisher and Davidson I 203, see notes in II 110). This name is probably to be derived from *vitt* 'magic' (in verse only in the phrase *vitta véttr*, *Ynglingatal* 3/3 and 21/3, Kock I 4, 7) and *vitta* 'to enchant' (in verse only in *Vǫluspá* 22/4), which perfectly describes the character's role (see Fisher and Davidson II 110 and Simek 1993, 365). In that case, the poet of *Hyndluljóð* or the scribe of *Flateyjarbók* may have re-interpreted the name.

The poet of *Vǫluspá in skamma* clearly thought of Heiðr as a *vǫlva* of giant ancestry, and this would link her, not to Gullveig, but rather to the narrator of *Vǫluspá*, who says that she remembers the giants who gave birth to her or brought her up:

> Ec man iǫtna, ár um borna,
> þá er forðom mic fœdda hǫfðo. (*Vǫluspá* 2/1–4)
>
> I remember giants, born of old,
> who had given birth to me (or brought me up) long ago.

Of course, it is possible that this may be a misinterpretation of *Vǫluspá* 22, but at our distance of centuries we are in no position to assert this; without evidence to the contrary, we should rather assume that the poet of *Hyndluljóð* understood *Vǫluspá* correctly.

2. *Heiðr elsewhere*

In prose sources Heiðr is a fairly familiar name for a *vǫlva*, and examples of it appear in:

Ǫrvar-Odds saga ch. 2 (*FSN* I 286–89; for a discussion of this see Quinn 1998, 34–36);

Hrólfs saga kraka ch. 3 (*FSN* II 9–10);

Landnámabók (1968, 216–19; in the same story in *Vatnsdœla saga* chs 10–15 (1939, 28–42) the *vǫlva* is not named);

Hauks þáttr hábrókar (*Flateyjarbók* II 66–69);

Ch. 5 of the longer version of *Friðþjófs saga ins frœkna* (1901, 14; here she is one of a pair of *seiðkonur*, the other being called *Hamgláma*, which may refer to her shape-changing ability. They are unnamed in the shorter version, see *FSN* II 247–70).

These stories share a number of major features besides the name of the *vǫlva*:

1. Heiðr is typically seen as a peripatetic *vǫlva* who is invited to prophesy at feasts; this may explain the line *hvars til húsa kom* (*Vǫluspá* 22/2). The only Heiðr who does not prophesy is one of a pair of *seiðkonur* in *Friðþjófs saga* who try to destroy the hero and his men by raising a storm at sea.

2. She may be of an alien origin connected with the far north — a Lapp (*Vatnsdœla saga*) or a giantess (*Hauks þáttr* and cf. *Hyndluljóð*). If Heiðr is the narrator of *Vǫluspá*, she has already claimed to have been *fædd* ('brought forth' or 'brought up') by ancient giants; and *Heiðreikr* (possibly 'heath-wanderer', cf. *reika*, 'to wander') appears as a male giant-name in Eilífr Goðrúnarson's *Þórsdrápa* 18/2 (Kock I 78), a poem which may be roughly contemporary with *Vǫluspá*.

3. The prophecies (or spells) are delivered from a high platform (*Hrólfs saga*, *Vatnsdœla saga*, *Friðþjófs saga*) and are preceded by a seizure in which Heiðr opens her mouth wide and gasps for breath (*Hrólfs saga*, *Hauks þáttr*); sometimes the hidden information is gathered at night (*Qrvar-Odds saga*). These features are not explicit in *Vǫluspá* (though the *vǫlva*'s 'sitting out' in st. 28 probably implies that it is night), but they could easily be imagined in it.

4. The prophecies may be a 'song' which comes into Heiðr's mouth from elsewhere (*Qrvar-Odds saga*, *Hrólfs saga*), in which case she refers in the verse to her own faculty of 'seeing', and may refer to herself either in the first person (*Hrólfs saga*) or in both first and third persons (*Qrvar-Odds saga*). Similarly, in *Vǫluspá* the prophecies clearly represent an external truth, and the narrating *vǫlva* refers to herself in both the first and third persons.

5. The prophetess is paid with gifts, which may include a gold ring (*Hrólfs saga*, *Hauks þáttr*, though in the former the ring is given in an attempt to stop Heiðr's revelations); similarly, Óðinn presents the speaking *vǫlva* with *hringa oc men* (*Vǫluspá* 29/2).

6. The story in *Hrólfs saga* suggests that once the questioner has employed the correct procedure, Heiðr may be unable to stop her prophecy unless she can escape from the questioner's presence, or at least from the prophecy platform. In the same way, the narrating *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá* is apparently forced to speak when Óðinn looks her in the eye (*Vǫluspá* 28/4).

7. There is usually a powerful hostility between Heiðr and her male hearer, who may wish to defy his future or remain ignorant of it, and may attack or threaten her (*Qrvar-Odds saga*, *Hrólfs saga*, *Vatnsdœla saga*). We should probably assume a similar hostility between Óðinn and the

narrating *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá*, though in this case, as in *Hrólfs saga*, he is forcing her to speak rather than trying to prevent her.

8. Heiðr sometimes prophesies her hearer's death (*Qrvar-Odds saga*, *Hrólfs saga*), as the narrating *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá* prophesies that of Óðinn (*Vǫluspá* 53/7–8).

9. Heiðr's prophecies always come true; this must also be assumed to be the case in *Vǫluspá*.

10. In *Landnámabók*, *Vatnsdœla saga* and possibly *Hauks þáttr* Heiðr seems to be connected with (or opposed to) the cult of Freyr, though she is never one of the Vanir herself. I shall return to the significance of this for the figure of Heiðr in *Vǫluspá*.

It seems, therefore, that nearly all the features traditionally associated with the name Heiðr are obviously borne out in what we are told about the narrating *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá*. The fact that some of them also appear in stories about *vǫlur* with other names is not important for this argument; the point is that they recall other parts of *Vǫluspá* besides stt. 21–22. Of course it is true that all the other sources I have looked at are later than *Vǫluspá*, and one might argue that they have all used this famous poem in creating a traditional character for the name; but even if this were so, it would be rash to assume that they had all misunderstood the poem, and in the same way. The balance of likelihood must be either that *Vǫluspá* and the other sources all draw on a pre-existing tradition, or else, if it really is the source for all the others, that they understood it correctly, and consequently that Heiðr is the narrator of the poem.

The original meaning of the name Heiðr is uncertain. In the study of *Vǫluspá* it has usually been connected with the neuter noun *heið* 'brightness (of the sky)' and especially with the adjective *heiðr* 'bright', but this may be merely because of the assumed identity of Heiðr with Gullveig and her association with gold.

A second, more complex possibility is that it is derived from the feminine noun *heiðr* 'heath', perhaps with a perceived semantic link to the adjective *heiðinn* 'heathen', which first appears in Old Norse in Eyvindr skáldaspillir's *Hákonarmál* 21/5 (composed *c.* 962–65; Kock I 37). As Hákon had grown up and been converted to Christianity in England, it may here be a direct borrowing from Old English *hæðen*. There was probably a perceived connection between heathenism and the wild countryside in both Old English and Old Norse; OE *hæð-stapa* 'heath-stepper', 'stag' appears in the hellish context of Grendel's mere in *Beowulf* 1368, and ON *heiðingi* occurs both in the sense 'heath-dweller', 'wolf' (seven instances in verse, the oldest of which

are probably *Atlakviða* 8/3 and 8/5), and also meaning ‘heathen’ (four surviving examples in twelfth-century verse, e.g. Einarr Skúlason, *Geisli* 55/4, Kock I 217).

A third derivation would be from the masculine noun *heiðr* ‘honour’, ‘praise’ and the related feminine noun *heið* ‘payment’, ‘fee’. It may seem odd for a *vǫlva* to be given a name like this, but when Loki disguises himself as an old magic-working woman in *Gylfaginning* ch. 49, he adopts the equally curious name *Þǫkk* (apparently ‘Thanks’, ed. Faulkes 1982, 48; trans. Faulkes 1987, 51). In purely grammatical terms, the second of these derivations seems most likely, since the name Heiðr declines like *heiðr* ‘heath’; but to decide which is most probable in cultural terms, we must look at other significant names given to *vǫlur*.

3. *Heiðr and her sisters*

The majority of names associated with *vǫlur* and *seiðkonur* in Old Norse prose sources are conventional two-element female names which are also used for women who have no association with magic, and they probably have no particular significance (e.g. Oddbjǫrg in *Víga-Glúms saga,* Sæunn in *Njáls saga*, Þorbjǫrg lítilvǫlva in *Eiríks saga rauða*, Þórdís in *Fóstbræðra saga*, Þórdís at spákonufelli and Þórveig in *Kormáks saga*, Þuríðr sundafyllir in *Landnámabók*). However, there are some other single-element names besides Heiðr which are particularly associated with magic-working women:

1. *Busla* in *Bósa saga* (chs 2, 5, *FSN* II 467, 472–73) is the foster-mother of the hero Bósi, who confronts King Hringr and chants a poem against him, in which she threatens him with various disasters if he refuses to give up his hostility towards Bósi and Herrauðr. Busla refers to herself mainly in the first person, but also once in the third person (by her name), and she ends with a question:

> eða viltu þulu lengri?
>
> or do you want a longer list?

which strongly recalls the second refrain in *Vǫluspá*:

> vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?
>
> do you know enough yet, or what?

The name Busla may be connected with the poetic verb *bysja* ‘to gush’ (past tense *busti*), but I have not found any other example of it.

2. The name *Gríma* is used for three different magic-making women, one in *Laxdæla saga* chs 35–37 (1934, 95–107) and two in *Fóstbræðra saga*

chs 9–10 and 23 (1943, 161–69, 242–48), as well as being applied to a troll-woman (*Þula* IV c 1/6, Kock I 324); but there is also one woman in *Landnámabók*, Gríma Hallkelsdóttir, who is not associated with magic (1968, 83, 108–10). The name is linked to the noun *gríma* 'mask', 'cowl' (and in poetry also 'night').

3. *Gróa* is one of the commonest names for a *vǫlva*, and is the only one of this group which is also relatively common as a non-magical female name; *Landnámabók* records twelve different examples of it. In *Svipdagsmál* 1–16 (SG I 196–200), Gróa is awoken from the dead to chant nine protective *galdrar* over her son. Another mythological Gróa (in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17, ed. Faulkes 1998, I 22; trans. Faulkes 1987, 79–80) begins to extract the fragment of Hrungnir's whetstone from Þórr's head (cf. also Þjóðólfr of Hvin, *Haustlǫng* 20/1–4, early tenth century, Kock I 12); the fact that Þórr has to fetch her husband Aurvandill across Élivágar ('Frozen Waves') suggests that she was probably thought of as the wife of a giant. A more sinister Gróa, in *Gǫngu-Hrólfs saga* ch. 2 (*FSN* II 362–63), fosters the foundling Grímr and teaches him her magic. In *Vatnsdœla saga* ch. 36 (1939, 95–96), Gróa has supernatural foreknowledge of her own fated death. Saxo's Gróa (*Gesta Danorum* I.iv.2–12, ed. Olrik and Ræder I 13–18, trans. Fisher and Davidson I 16–19 and notes II 27) is not a *vǫlva*, but has strong giant associations; she is wooed by King Gram, partly through his champion Bessus, in a sequence of verse reminiscent of *Skírnismál*. The name Gróa is obviously derived from the verb *gróa* 'to grow'.

4. *Hulð* is a *seiðkona* and *vǫlva* in Finnmark in Snorri's *Ynglinga saga* chs 13–14 (1941, 29–31), though she does not appear in either of the two stanzas of Þjóðólfr's *Ynglingatal* which are quoted in these chapters; she may also have been the central figure of a lost *Huldar saga*, about a *trǫllkona mikil*, which Sturla Þórðarson recited before the court of King Magnús Hákonarson in Bergen in 1263 (*Sturlu þáttr* ch. 2, *Sturlunga saga* II 232–33). She has also been linked to the German fairytale figure of Holda or Frau Holle, Mother Winter (Simek 1993, 165); but her name is related to the verb *hylja* 'to conceal' (past participle *huliðr* or *huldr*), and seems to mean 'Hidden'.

5. *Hyndla*, the wise giantess of *Hyndluljóð*, is called upon to give esoteric information, some of it about the future (*Hyndluljóð* 42–44). Like Busla and the narrating *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá*, she challenges her hearer in one of her refrains (*Hyndluljóð* 17/8, 18/10, 34/4, 36/4, 39/4):

> viltu enn lengra?
>
> do you want still more?

The name means 'little bitch' (see SG III:1 369; *LP* 305), and probably had giant associations (cf. the giant-name *Hundalfr* in *Þula* IV f 3/2, Kock I 325); it also appears as a common noun in *Maríu saga* (1871, 494), where the little bitches symbolise *þarflausar hugsanir* 'idle thoughts'.

Nearly all these names seem to be connected with wild nature or with concealment, and a derivation of Heiðr from *heiðr* 'heath' therefore seems more likely than one which connects the word to brightness or to honour; this is also borne out by the grammatical declension of the name (see p. 400 above).

The name Heiðr apparently implied an ancient woman, often of giant or Lappish origin, and Hermann Pálsson (1996, 14–26) has suggested that the narrator (and authoress) of *Vǫluspá* is herself to be assumed to be one of the Saami. I think this unlikely; of all the *vǫlur* considered above, only Heiðr in *Vatnsdœla saga* (but not in the same story in *Landnámabók*) is said to be Lappish, and this may be influenced by the male Lappish enchanters whom Ingimundr employs in the same story in an attempt to find his silver Freyr image. Hulð in *Ynglinga saga* apparently lives in Finnmark, but her ethnic origin is not stated. Against this, Heiðr is a giantess in *Hyndluljóð* and apparently also in *Hauks þáttr*; Gríma is a troll-woman in the *þulur*; Gróa in *Skáldskaparmál* is the wife of a giant, in Saxo she is betrothed to a giant, and in *Gǫngu-Hrólfs saga* she is the foster-mother of a monstrous son whose actual mother is thought to have been a sea-hag; Hulð also has elemental associations which suggest a giant origin; and Hyndla is explicitly called *brúðr iǫtuns* (*Hyndluljóð* 50/3). Since the narrator of *Vǫluspá* also says that she was herself brought up by giants, it seems likely that this was a common literary assumption about *vǫlur* in mythological and legendary sources, and that cases where *vǫlur* are said to be of Saami or other remote northern origins represent a later rationalisation of this tradition.

4. *Heiðr and the evil woman*

At the end of *Vǫluspá* 22 it is said of Heiðr,

> æ var hon angan illrar brúðar
>
> she was always the joy of an evil woman

and most commentators have merely remarked on the bad reputation of those who practised *seiðr*. Hermann Pálsson (1996, 50) differs from other editors (including his own earlier edition, see Hermann Pálsson 1994, 9) in reading *þjóðar* 'nation' instead of *brúðar*, again associating it with the Saami; but as the Codex Regius scribe himself has apparently corrected

this reading to *brúðar* (which is also found in H), it is difficult to justify reading *þjóðar* here. But what exactly does *brúðar* mean in this context? Does it refer to a particular evil woman, or to evil women in general, and what kind of evil is meant?

The word *brúðr* is common in Old Norse verse (*LP* gives 55 examples) in the lexical senses 'bride', 'wife' and 'woman' (which flow into each other to some extent). But most instances of it are of a few specific kinds, some of whose connotations may seem surprising. Since the reference in *Vǫluspá* is to an *ill brúðr*, three small groups of approving usages may be ignored here (*brúðr* plus the title of a nobleman, e.g. *iarla brúðr, Guðrúnarkviða I* 3/2; cases derived from Christian religious expressions of the 'bride of Jesus' type, e.g. *brúðir Jésú, Heilagra meyja drápa* 4/1; and complimentary addresses to attractive and/or noble women as *brúðir*, e.g. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 35/7).

Most, however, appear in more sinister contexts:

1. The largest group is of 'brides' or potential 'brides' of giants: *bergrisa brúðr, Grottasǫngr* 24/1–2; *brúð(i)r iǫtuns, Hyndluljóð* 4/6, 50/3; *brúðr Aurnis jóða, Draumvísur (XI)* 10/3 (Kock I 198); *brúðr bergjarls, Anon (X) lausavísa III A* 1/1 (Kock I 92); *brúðir bǫlvísar, Hárbarðsljóð* 23/3; *brúðr sefgrímnis mága, Þórsdrápa* 4/7–8 (Kock I 77). Other *brúðir* who fall more loosely into this group include the proposed bride of the dwarf Alvíss in *Alvíssmál* 1/2, 2/6, 4/2 and the *brúðir berserkia* whom Þórr boasts of having fought in *Hárbarðsljóð* 37/1–2.

2. Other *brúðir*, though sometimes the sexual partners of gods, are themselves giantesses (Skaði in *Grímnismál* 11/5; Jǫrð in Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld's *Hákonardrápa* 6/1–2, Eyvindr skáldaspillir's *Háleygjatal* 15/3, and Eyjólfr dáðaskáld's *Bandadrápa* 3/5). Others again are hags who appear to have no husbands, like the *gýgr* ('hag') who speaks out of a stone and is addressed as *brúðr* by the dead Brynhildr in *Helreið Brynhildar* 3/2. A particularly interesting example of a troll-woman 'bride' in the context of this argument is the wolf-kenning *heiðingja . . . brúðar* in the last stanza of Oddi's *drápa* quoted in *Stjǫrnu-Odda draumr* ch. 9 (1991, 481), referring to Hléguðr, who in battle magically acquires a wolf's head and becomes invisible unless looked at under one's left hand.

3. Three doubtful cases may refer to the idea of features of the natural world as giantesses: Snæbjǫrn's reference to waves as *skerja . . . níu brúðir*, (*lausavísa* 1/2–4, Kock I 105); the reference to the sun as *heið brúðr himins* in *Grímnismál* 39/6; and most interestingly, though very uncertainly, Einarr Skúlason's designation of Freyja as *Vanabrúðr* in *Øxarflokkr* 5/2 (Kock I 221), though this might be placed in the 'complimentary' group.

4. There are four uses of *brúðr* in contexts connected with death: *Atlakviða* 41/7, where Guðrún is setting fire to Atli's hall, killing everyone inside; *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 46/9–10, where Helgi refers to the presence of *brúðir byrgðar í haugi* 'brides buried in a mound'; *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 53/4, where the dying Brynhildr is referring to herself; and Hrafn Ǫnundarson, *lausavísa* 1/3 (Kock I 100), who dreams that the bed of his *brúðr* is reddened with his own blood. Akin to this are at least two references to valkyries as *brúðir*: *Grípisspá* 16/2, referring to the valkyrie Sigrdrífa, and *Helgakviða Hjǫrvarðssonar* 7/3, referring to Sváva. Two other valkyrie-like figures are also called *brúðir*: the favourable dream-woman who will receive Gísli after his death (Gísli Súrsson, *lausavísa* 22/3, Kock I 58); and the figure of Guðrún in armour in *Atlakviða* 43/3.

5. *Brúðr* also appears in a number of contexts which imply the unreliability or treacherous behaviour of women: *Grípisspá* 45/6, 46/2, 49/2 all use *brúðr* to refer to Brynhildr while predicting her resentful and treacherous behaviour; one of the proverbially unreliable things listed in *Hávamál* (86/5) is *brúðar beðmál* 'the words of a woman in bed'; *Sigrdrífumál* 28/2–3 warns against being tempted to kiss *fagrar / brúðir becciom á* 'pretty women on the benches'; and Kormákr (*lausavísa* 23/2, Kock I 45) alludes regretfully to how he used to trust Steingerðr. One might perhaps add *Vǫlundarkviða* 19/2 (which may refer to Vǫlundr's swan-wife and could also belong to the valkyrie group) and 33/9 (referring to the sexually pliant Bǫðvildr).

A few of these examples are doubtful, but between them these groups account for up to 41 of the 54 other instances of *brúðr* listed in *LP*. To judge from the surviving uses of the word in verse, therefore, the phrase *illrar brúðar* in *Vǫluspá* 22/8 is most likely to refer to a giantess or the like, to a context associated with death, or to sexually motivated unreliability. It does not otherwise appear in contexts directly connected with *seiðr*, so we should probably assume that whoever this woman may be, she needs Heiðr's prophetic gifts because she does not share them.

5. *Gullveig*

I shall now turn back to the meaning of the name *Gullveig*, which is found only in *Vǫluspá*. It seems likely that the poet may have invented Gullveig himself; if so, her meaning can only be what a contemporary audience could gather from the name. I used to think that this points towards an allegorical interpretation of her; but it is alternatively possible that the poet intended his audience to recognise in her a mythological being who

usually goes by another name. In either case, the interpretation of her must begin from the meaning of her name.

Gull- is a rare element in personal names; see *Gullrǫnd*, Guðrún's sister in *Guðrúnarkviða I*; *Gullmævill*, a dwarf in *Þula* IV ii 4/3 (Kock I 336); *Gullintanni* 'gold-tooth', a by-name of Heimdallr (*Gylfaginning* ch. 27, ed. Faulkes 1982, 25; trans. Faulkes 1987, 25) (and *gulltǫnnr*, a royal nickname in Snorri Sturluson, *Ynglinga saga* ch. 42 (1941, 73), where the divine origins of the family suggest a mythological sense); *Gulla*, *Gulli* and the giant-name *Gullnir*, derived from nicknames denoting wealth; and *Gullkúla* 'gold knob', possibly from a gold possession (for the last four, see Lind 1905–15, cols 349, 400–01). In nicknames *gull-* is commoner (see Lind 1920–25, cols 123–25); it may be prefixed to the names of rich people (e.g. *gull-Ása*, *gull-Haraldr*), can appear alone (*gul(l)i*), or in compounds like *gullkleppr* 'gold-mass', *gullkorni* 'rich farmer', *gullskór* 'gold-shoe' (applied to King Hákon Hákonarson's messenger Hallvarðr). It can also denote owners of gold objects, e.g. *gullberi*, *gullháls*, *gullhjálmr*, *gullkambr*, *gullknappr*. Three names might refer to blonde hair (*gullbrá* 'gold-(eye)brow', *gullkárr* 'gold-curl', *gullskeggr* 'gold-beard'), but Lind sees the latter two as double nicknames = 'rich bearded/curly-haired man'. Gullbrá in *Vilmundar saga viðutans* is named after an omen that she will marry a king (Loth 1964, 141), and here it must refer to a gold crown. In the folktale *Gullbrá og Skeggi* (Jón Árnason 1961, I 140–44) she is a witch who owns a chest of gold; perhaps the nickname implied a woman with gold ornaments on her forehead. The only metaphorical *gull-* nicknames are translated from Latin or Greek: *gullmunnr* (= St. John Chrysostom), *gullvarta* (a watchtower in Byzantium, de Vries 1977, 194). It seems that *Gull-* in human names normally refers to wealth or to objects made of gold, not to figurative excellence or golden colour.

There are some other mythological names beginning in *Gull-* (or *Gullin-*), mostly applied to animals which belong to the gods:

1. Freyja's (or Freyr's) sacred boar *Gullinbu(r)sti* 'gold-bristle' (*Hyndluljóð* 7/6; *Gylfaginning* ch. 49, ed. Faulkes 1982, 47; trans. Faulkes 1987, 50; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 7, ed. Faulkes 1998, I 18; trans. Faulkes 1987, 75).

2. The horse *Gull(in)faxi* 'gold-mane' (*Þulur* I a 2/6, IV rr 1/2, Kock I 321, 340), which Snorri explains was given by Þórr to his son Magni after Hrungnir was killed (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17, ed. Faulkes 1998, I 20–22; trans. Faulkes 1987, 77–79).

3. *Gullinhorni* 'gold-horn', a bull, of which nothing else is known (*Þula* IV ö 3/2, Kock I 334).

4. *Gullinkambi* 'gold-comb', the cock that wakes the gods (*Vǫluspá* 43/2).

5. *Gulltoppr* ‘gold-top’, listed as one of the horses of the Æsir (*Grímnismál* 30/5; *Þulur* I a 1/5, IV rr 1/3, Kock I 321, 340), and said by Snorri to be Heimdallr’s horse (*Gylfaginning* chs 27, 49, ed. Faulkes 1982, 25, 47; trans. Faulkes 1987, 25, 50; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 8, ed. Faulkes 1998, I 19; trans. Faulkes 1987, 76).

In these cases, the element *Gull(in)-* indicates possession by the gods, sometimes the Vanir, and probably that the animals concerned are in some way made of gold (see p. 409 below).

There are also many common nouns in Old Norse verse which have the first element *gull-*. The largest group of these, which is not relevant to *Vǫluspá*, is of terms for men who use gold, usually as gatherers or generous distributors of it (*gullbroti*, *gullkennir*, *gullmiðlendr*, *gullsamnandi* and six others), but occasionally as smiths (*gullsmiðr* and probably *Gullmævill*, see p. 405 above). Two terms for snakes, which probably refer to their lying on hoards of treasure, are also irrelevant here (*gullbúi*, *gullormr*).

When these are discarded, two types of compound remain. The first is a large group referring to objects made of or covered with gold: *gullband*, *gullbaugr*, *gullbitill*, *gullbrynja*, *gullhjálmr*, *gullhlað*, *gullhring*, *gullker*, *gullmen*, *gullseimr*, *gullskál*, *gullstafr*. The second is a pair of woman-kennings: *gullfit*, *gullskorð*, to which we should probably add *gull-Skǫgul* (where the valkyrie-name Skǫgul stands for ‘woman’) and *Gullrǫnd* (perhaps referring to her gold-edged clothing?). There are no compound nouns which refer to any psychological or moral effect of gold; and Lotte Motz’s theory that *Gullveig* simply means ‘golden (coloured) drink’ (Motz 1993, 82–84) also seems unlikely, since there are no other nouns that refer simply to golden colour.

The element *-veig* is not uncommon in female names; in verse we find *Álmveig* (one of the ancestresses of the Skjǫldungar, in *Hyndluljóð* 15/5), *Bǫðveig* (said in *Sólarljóð* 79/4 to be the eldest daughter of Njǫrðr), *Rannveig* (Óláfr inn helgi, *lausavísa* 1/3, Kock I 110, and *Málsháttakvæði* 18/4 — referring to two different women, apparently both historical) and *Þórveig* (Kormákr, *lausavísa* 22b, Kock I 45). Also relevant is the woman-kenning *hǫrveig* (*Víga-Glúms saga* ch. 23, *lausavísa* 7/6, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson 81; ed. Turville-Petre 42 and notes on p. 79), where the first element means ‘flax’, ‘linen’, and clearly refers to what the woman wears; the same might be true in the name *Gullveig*. It is even possible that some poets regarded *-veig* merely as a *heiti* meaning ‘lady’, possibly with ancestral or Vanic connotations. *Veigr* also appears as a male dwarf-name (*Vǫluspá* 12/1), but the meaning here is no clearer than in the case of the female name-element.

The origin of the element is uncertain. Noreen relates it to Gothic *weihs* 'place' and Latin *vicus* 'village', but this seems unhelpful (though it is historically possible),[2] for there is no way that a tenth-century poet could have recognised this meaning, or used it in a made-up name. Sijmons and Gering suggest that the root is that found in *víg* 'war' and Gothic *weihan* 'to fight', and this might have been more meaningful to a tenth-century poet (cf. the sword-*heiti veigarr*, *Þula* IV l 4/1, Kock I 328). Most commentators, however, have connected it with the feminine noun *veig* 'alcoholic drink', though Dronke (II 41) suggests that the poet may also have wished to draw on the sense 'military strength', which survives only in prose (see CV 690).

All these interpretations seem philologically possible, but the element should clearly be interpreted in the same way in all the names in which it appears, and it is certainly easier to find other female name elements connected with war than with drink. Common second elements of female names include *-gunnr*, *-hildr*, *-víg*, and among first elements we find *Bǫð-*, *Guð-*, *Hild-*, *Víg-* and the possibly relevant *Val-*. Similar elements connected with drink are much rarer: *Mjað-* among first elements (but not *Ǫl-*, which derives from PON *alu* 'magic', 'ecstasy', see Krause 1966, 239), but no second elements at all. Of course, *-veig* might be the exception, but the preponderance of military elements in other Norse female names suggests that a connection with military force may be more likely.

The second element of the name *Gullveig* therefore seems most likely to mean either 'military strength' or simply 'lady'; the sense 'drink' is possible, but there is no particular reason to favour it, and *veig* never appears in the abstract sense 'intoxication', as Müllenhoff's interpretation (1883, 95–96) would require. The first element could mean 'made of gold', 'wearing gold', 'having much gold', or perhaps 'belonging to the gods (especially the Vanir)'. If the poem's first audience were expected to recognise Gullveig, therefore, it would probably have been as a female figure made of, wearing or possessing gold, and endowed with military strength. There does not seem to be any warrant in the other uses of the name-elements for taking her as an allegorical figure constructed by the poet to symbolise the intoxicating greed for gold.

[2] Cf. the name, *Goldeburh*, of the heroine of the Middle English romance *Havelok*, which has strong Scandinavian connections, and the second element of the Norse personal name *Herborg* (*Guðrúnarkviða I* 6/1), in both of which the second element seems to mean 'fortress'.

6. *Gullveig, Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr and Hyndla*

Turville-Petre (*MRN* 158–59) regards Gullveig as a version of Freyja, and Ursula Dronke (II 41, 129) has usefully linked the gold-adorned and sensual nature of Gullveig/Freyja with that of the Freyja-like figure of Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr, who appears in a variety of sources and was particularly worshipped by Hákon jarl inn ríki, the last great upholder of heathenism in Norway. The sources for the cult of Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr are:

Skúli Þorsteinsson, *lausavísa* 4 (Kock I 145);

Þorkell Gíslason, *Búadrápa* 9–10 (Kock I 261);

Bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson, *Jómsvíkingadrápa* 30, 32 (Kock II 4–5);

Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 45 **(**Faulkes 1998, I 60);

Njáls saga ch. 88 (1954, 214–15);

Harðar saga ch. 19 (1991, 51–52);

Ketils saga hængs ch. 5 (*FSN* I 261);

Flateyjarbók: *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 114 (*Flateyjarbók* I 157, also regarded as *Færeyinga saga* ch. 23, 1967, 43–45);

Flateyjarbók: *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* chs 154–55 and *Jómsvíkinga saga* chs 32–34 (*Flateyjarbók* I 210–11; *Jómsvíkinga saga* 1962, 36–38);

Flateyjarbók: *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 173 (*Flateyjarbók* I 235, also regarded as *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds* ch. 7, 1956, 225–27);

Flateyjarbók: *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 326 (*Flateyjarbók* I 452–54).

Two further possible references to her are Tindr Hallkelsson, *Hákonardrápa* 1/1–4 (Kock I 75); Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, III.ii.8 (ed. Olrik and Ræder I 65; trans. Fisher and Davidson I 71, see notes in II 53–54).

The sheer variety of sources in which Þorgerðr appears tends to suggest that, although some details are historically improbable, her cult itself is a historical fact. The range of forms of her title (*hǫldabrúðr*, *Hǫlgabrúðr*, *Hǫrðabrúðr*, *hǫrgabrúðr*, *Hǫrgatrǫll*) points to the same conclusion (see Storm 1885 and *Jómsvíkinga saga* 1962, 51–52), and implies that she was worshipped in more than one province of western Norway, and perhaps in southern Iceland as well.

Þorgerðr's first name may be best explained as derived from that of *Gerðr*, the consort of Freyr, with the prefix *Þor-* added to link this Vanir-connected being to the majority cult of the Æsir. This suggestion is strengthened by the likelihood that her name may sometimes have been shortened to *Þóra* or (if Tindr Hallkelsson means to refer to her) to *Gerðr* (see Chadwick 1950, 411–12, 400 respectively).

The second element of her title is usually *-brúðr*, though the form *Hǫrgatrǫll* in *Ketils saga hængs* shows that she had some giant associations (as

brúðr itself often has, see p. 403 above), and the nouns *flagð* and *trǫll* are also applied to her and/or her sister in *Jómsvíkingadrápa* and *Jómsvíkinga saga* respectively (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 1962, 37). The various forms of her title may perhaps be translated 'wife of noblemen', 'wife of Hǫlgi' or 'woman of the Háleygjar', 'woman of the Hǫrðalanders', 'woman/trollwoman of the shrines'. Snorri and the writer of *Flateyjarbók* ch. 173 take *-brúðr* here to mean 'daughter', but this sense is never found elsewhere, and these sources have probably misunderstood a situation in which the male ruler of a province and his dead ancestors were regarded as the sexual partners of the goddess. In most surviving sources, her living 'husband' is Hákon jarl (in *Flateyjarbók* ch. 326, Óláfr Tryggvason mocks her by saying, after Hákon's death, that she has just lost a husband who was very dear to her); dead ancestors are also seen as sexual partners of a goddess in *Ynglingatal* 7, 30–32 (Kock I 5, 8 and with commentary in Snorri Sturluson, *Ynglinga saga* 1941, 33–34, 76–79), where dead kings are said to provide Hel with sexual enjoyment, and probably in *Grímnismál* 14, which claims that Freyja takes half the slain each day.

Þorgerðr is strongly associated with gold, and the jarl had to make offerings of treasure to her in order to keep her favour (see *Skáldskaparmál*, *Flateyjarbók* chs 114, 154–55, 326 and *Jómsvíkinga saga*). In *Flateyjarbók* ch. 326 Óláfr Tryggvason even implies that she was so covetous for gold that she could be 'bought' like a prostitute (like Freyja, as we can see from *Sǫrla þáttr* ch.1, *FSN* II 97–98). The idol of Þorgerðr is described as wearing gold rings (*Njáls saga*, *Flateyjarbók* ch. 114), as inlaid with gold (*Flateyjarbók* ch. 114) or as possessing treasure (*Skáldskaparmál*, *Flateyjarbók* ch. 326). Snorri's statement that the funeral mound of Hǫlgi was made of alternate courses of gold and silver and of earth and stone is obviously a hyperbole, but it may point to the custom of using *goldgubber* as temple offerings. This has been well illustrated by Margrethe Watt's recent excavations at Sorte Muld, Bornholm, where about 2300 *goldgubber* were found (Watt 1999, 132–42). They are tiny gold plates, apparently dating from between the late sixth and the late ninth century, stamped with male and/or female figures (or in a few cases with the forms of animals, usually boars), and they were probably deposited as religious offerings at sites connected with the worship of the Vanir. They are extremely difficult to find, and the huge number of them found at Sorte Muld probably reflects the unusually meticulous excavation methods used there, notably the water-sieving of large amounts of spoil. The much smaller numbers found elsewhere may therefore represent only a small proportion

of those that were actually present on the sites concerned; they may have been deposited in very large numbers at these sites. If Gullveig refers to a figure like Freyja or Þorgerðr, it would make perfect sense for her to be referred to as rich in gold, wearing gold, or made of gold. The apparent absence of tenth-century *gubber* may suggest that this kind of cult became less popular in the last century of heathenism; perhaps this may also explain why late heathen Norwegians were not prepared to tolerate Hákon jarl's 'sacred promiscuity' (see p. 412 below).

Þorgerðr also engages in military magic on behalf of her followers, shooting arrows from her fingers and sending driving hail against their enemies, though she sometimes demands human sacrifice in return (*Flateyjarbók* chs 154–55, *Jómsvíkinga saga*, *Flateyjarbók* ch. 173), or kills her followers when she withdraws her patronage from them (*Harðar saga*). It would thus be appropriate, if Gullveig represented a figure like Þorgerðr, for the name-element *-veig* to refer to military strength, and this would also supply an explanation of the battle-magic (*vígspá*) which the Vanir subsequently use in their war against the Æsir (*Vǫluspá* 23–24).

According to *Flateyjarbók*, *Jómsvíkinga saga* and *Njáls saga*, Þorgerðr has a sister called *Irpa* 'the Swarthy One', who is present in her temple and also helps her in warfare. The name *Irpa* is probably related to *jarpr* 'swarthy' (cf. OE *eorp*, used of dark-skinned peoples, e.g. the Egyptians in *Exodus* 1997, 105, line 194 and note; and cf. the ON personal name *Erpr* applied to sons of foreign fathers, e.g. in *Atlakviða* 38 and *Hamðismál* 14, 28, ed. Dronke I, 11, 164, 167 and note on p. 71; see also Simek 1993, 327). It looks like a nickname substituted for the name of a figure whom it was considered unlucky to name directly. She may have been either a 'dark' aspect of Þorgerðr herself, or a figure of Hel, and perhaps the two things sometimes became synonymous.

Irpa is not the only dark sister of a fertility goddess. Freyja opens the narrative framework of *Hyndluljóð* by calling on her 'sister' Hyndla (1/3), who is a giantess and lives in a cave. Freyja's lover Óttarr needs to obtain detailed knowledge of his ancestry from Hyndla in order to assert his land rights in a legal dispute. The relationship between the two female characters, however, is one of bitter enmity, and after Hyndla has given the necessary information and the *minnisǫl* 'ale of memory' which will enable Óttarr to remember what he has been told, Freyja destroys her with fire (or, if we accept Judy Quinn's interpretation, Hyndla makes an unsuccessful attempt to attack Freyja with fire, see pp. 411–12 below).

After telling Óttarr his ancestry Hyndla turns to the parentage of the gods, giants and other beings, the future collapse of the world, and the

coming of another figure, which seems to resemble the Second Coming of Christ (stt. 29–44). This passage bears such an obvious resemblance to *Vǫluspá* that Snorri refers to it (or perhaps to *Hyndluljóð* as a whole — see Steinsland 1991, 461–94) as *Vǫluspá in skamma* (see p. 396 above); it may have a separate origin from the rest of the poem, but even if this is so, it would hardly have been interpolated into *Hyndluljóð* if the interpolator had not seen a parallel between the situation in that poem and the one in *Vǫluspá*.

Despite her association with *seiðr*, Freyja in *Hyndluljóð* is apparently unable to prophesy herself; nor is Þorgerðr ever portrayed as having magical powers of her own, apart from the ability to intervene in battle (and even there, she is not victorious against the Jómsvíkingar until she and Irpa unite to employ their storm of hailstones). In the same way, Heiðr and Hamgláma in *Friðþjófs saga* unite in an attempt to destroy Friðþjófr by making the air dark *með sjódrifi ok ofveðri, frosti ok fjúki ok feiknarkulda* 'with sea spray and a violent storm, frost and snowstorm and deadly cold' (1901, 25).

Freyja needs prophetic information from Hyndla, and similarly, the queen in *Ynglinga saga* chs 13–14 has to employ the *vǫlva* Huld rather than carry out the required magic herself. If Gullveig is a representative of Freyja (or of a similar deity), she may well also be the *ill brúðr* who takes pleasure in Heiðr, and even the choice of the word *brúðr* itself could be a covert reference to a figure like Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr or Freyja as *Vanabrúðr*. The rare word *angan* 'delight' may point in the same direction; it appears only three times in verse, and both the other cases are connected with goddesses (*Friggiar angan*, *Vǫluspá* 53/7–8; *Freyju angan*, in a small fragment of a love poem by Óláfr Leggsson svartaskáld, Kock II 52). It is probably a figurative variant of *angi* 'a delightful perfume', and might well be connected with incense used in burnt sacrifices to goddesses. The only instance of *angi* in verse is in Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld, *lausavísa* 18/8, Kock I 87, where it refers to the delightful scent of a woman; so there could also be a suggestion that Gullveig derives her sexual allure from the magic performed for her by Heiðr.

For Freyja in *Hyndluljóð*, fire is a weapon, whether used by her against the giantess or unsuccessfully by Hyndla against her (depending on who is taken to be the speaker in st. 48); it is also probably a means whereby she is worshipped by Óttarr (st. 10/1–4), so there would be a particular irony in using it as a means of attacking her. There are three apparently distinct stories of sacrilege against shrines of Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr (in *Njáls saga*, *Harðar saga* and *Flateyjarbók* ch. 326); all three

involve the burning of the idol and/or her temple, and in the last case, she is burnt along with an idol of Freyr. Judy Quinn (forthcoming)[3] argues that Hyndla uses fire against Freyja in *Hyndluljóð* 48 rather than vice versa, and if this is correct, that would be a fourth instance of the same thing. These stories may all originate from the Christian taste for destruction of idols, but as two of the burnings are carried out by heathens, it may be worth considering whether there could have been another motive for them.

One of the most notable features of Þorgerðr's *protégé* Hákon jarl is his sexual promiscuity. According to *Ágrip* ch. 12 (ed. Bjarni Einarsson 16; ed. and trans. Driscoll 22–23) *var . . . gǫrr . . . engi grein, hvers kona hver væri, eða systir, eða dóttir* 'no distinction was made as to whose wife or sister or daughter each one was'; *Fagrskinna* ch. 22 (1985, 139) adds *var hvárki þyrmt frændkonum ríkismanna né eiginkonum bæði ríkra ok óríkra* 'neither the kinswomen of powerful men nor the wives of either great or small were spared'; and in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 45 (Snorri Sturluson 1941, 290–91; see also *Flateyjarbók* I 237–38) Snorri says that his reign was characterised by good harvests and peace, and then immediately passes on to his sexual immorality: *jarl lét taka ríkra manna dætr ok flytja heim til sín ok lá hjá viku eða tvær, sendi heim síðan, ok fekk hann af því óþokka mikinn af frændum kvinnanna* 'the jarl had the daughters of powerful men seized and brought to him, and he would sleep with them for a week or two and then send them home, and because of that he gained great unpopularity among the relatives of the women.' This may be explained by Richard North's suggestion (at a Leeds conference a few years ago) that Hákon's promiscuity was linked with his worship of Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr, and that he saw himself as the sexual partner and agent of the fertility goddess, empowered to pass on her gift of fertility both to the land and to human beings, especially noble families, through brief cohabitations with a large number of women.

7. *Conclusions*

Let me summarise the results of the argument so far. If I am right, *Gullveig* means either 'woman made of gold', 'gold-adorned woman' or 'the gold-adorned military power'; it refers to an idol of Freyja or some similar goddess, which is attacked with spears (the weapon of the rival cult of Óðinn) and subsequently burned, because of the abduction of other men's wives and

[3] I should like to express my thanks to Judy Quinn for allowing me to read this article before publication.

female relatives which is a feature of her cult. One can burn an idol, but just as gold emerges refined from the fire, the cult of the goddess herself survives. Because of this, the Æsir then begin a war against the Vanir which may have had political echoes of the attack of the Jómsvíkingar on Hákon jarl, but they are no more successful against the battle-magic of the Vanir than the Jómsvíkingar were against Þorgerðr and Irpa, and this leads them to a peace-settlement in which they compromise with and absorb the sexual evil represented by the Vanir. So thoroughly do they accept Freyja that they then break their oaths to the Giant Builder and kill him in order to keep her. This would also provide a better explanation of the human sins which the gods choose to punish in *Vǫluspá* 39; they are vainly trying to prevent the world from getting even worse by punishing the same three errors into which they have themselves fallen: murder, oathbreaking, and the abduction of other men's wives.

More importantly, it seems probable that Heiðr is not a reincarnation of Gullveig, but rather the narrating *vǫlva* of the poem. Her name originally means 'heath'. Like Hyndla and perhaps also Irpa, she is of giant origin, and somewhat like Heiðr in *Hrólfs saga kraka* she can be induced by magical ritual and by gifts (including gold) to reveal the mysteries she has seen. The other eddic poem whose text and framework resemble those of *Vǫluspá* is *Baldrs draumar*, and here again we meet a *vǫlva* from whom Óðinn extorts wisdom about the mythic future. This time the *vǫlva* is explicitly raised from her grave, and in the final confrontation between them Óðinn denies that she is a real *vǫlva* at all; rather, she is *þriggia þursa móðir* 'mother of three monsters' (perhaps the trollwoman Angrboða, the mother of Fenrir, the Miðgarðsormr and Hel? — *Baldrs draumar* 13/7–8). When Óðinn says she is not a *vǫlva*, he presumably means the word in its ordinary, non-mythic sense of a travelling female fortune-teller; for the figure he has raised from the dead is not a living and mortal woman, but a giantess or her *draugr*. In view of this parallel, it seems most sensible to interpret Heiðr's statement that she 'remembers nine worlds' (*nío man ec heima*, *Vǫluspá* 2/5) as a hint that she, too, may have been raised from the dead (or even that she could be a version of Hel herself).

Heiðr may be the sinister 'dark sister' of Gullveig/Freyja, but the tenor of her true prophecy is not finally under her own control. In *Vǫluspá* 22/3, *vǫlu velspá* has been variously translated. Guðbrandur Vigfússon's suggestion (*CPB* I 196) that the second word has a long first vowel, so that *vélspá* should be translated 'making deceitful prophecies', may be discounted, since all the predictions made by *vǫlur* in these stories can be

relied on to come true (see SG III:1 28; and oddly, Guðbrandur's own subtext translation reads 'the sooth-saying Sybil'). But the compound adjective *velspá* appears nowhere else; so does it mean 'accurate in prophecy' (as in Nordal's translation 'spávís' (*Vǫluspá* 1978), Hermann Pálsson's (1994) 'réttspá', *LP*'s 'dygtig spående') or 'making favourable prophecies' (as in Dronke II 12 'a good seer of fair fortunes')? La Farge and Tucker (1992) give both alternatives ('prophesying well or rightly'). The interpretation 'accurate in prophecy' might seem to fit the context of *Vǫluspá* better, since many of the predictions made by the *vǫlva* are anything but pleasant for Óðinn; but the encounter between the *vǫlva* Oddbjǫrg and her hostess Saldís in *Víga-Glúms saga* ch. 12 (ed. Jónas Kristjánsson 41; ed. Turville-Petre 21) seems rather to point towards the other translation. Saldís asks Oddbjǫrg to prophesy something about her two grandsons, *ok spá vel* — and there is no doubt that her meaning here is 'and prophesy something favourable'. When the response is not what she was hoping for, she threatens that the *vǫlva* will be driven away *ef þú ferr með illspár* 'if you go making evil predictions'. If the phrasal verb *spá vel* means 'to make a favourable prophecy' and the noun *illspá* means 'an unfavourable prophecy', we are bound to ask in what sense Heiðr prophesies good fortune: is she speaking from the point of view of her own kind, the giants, to whom any disaster that befalls the gods is good news; and/or is there a deeper hint of the ultimate rebirth of a new and better world, which in the longest possible term is good news for gods and men?

I would like to finish with a word or two about the tools and methods I have used in this paper. I began this investigation with a genuinely open question; I really didn't know how to interpret Heiðr, and the results of looking at other instances of the name were a surprise to me. As we all must, I based my work on that of past scholars — lexicographers, editors and critics from the time of Snorri Sturluson until now — and it is a measure of the sweep of their achievements that I have struggled here to interpret a mere two stanzas with their help, and even so have left much unsaid — for example about the attack on Gullveig with spears, about the *ganda* of 22/4, about the whole process of *seiðr* and about how many *vǫlur* there are in *Vǫluspá* (I think one, but for a different view see Dronke II 27–30, 99–101). But this is also a measure of how much still remains to be done in eddic research: we have just begun to look seriously at the emotional connotations of vocabulary, at type-scenes and characters, and at the question of how far individual poets were free to diverge from these patterns. And what is true here could be demonstrated with equal force in

any other area of research into Old Norse literature, and more generally in all areas of the study of early Scandinavia.[4]

[4] An earlier version of this paper was delivered as the Society's presidential address at its annual general meeting in Durham in June 2000.

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REVIEWS

THE LANGUAGE OF THE OGAM INSCRIPTIONS OF SCOTLAND: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF OGAM, RUNIC AND ROMAN ALPHABET INSCRIPTIONS IN SCOTLAND. By RICHARD A. V. COX. *Scottish Gaelic Studies Monograph Series* 1. *Department of Celtic, University of Aberdeen.* Aberdeen 1999. xvi + 187 pp.

'It was during the afternoon of Wednesday 12 August 1998 that certain possible correspondences between the so-called "Pictish ogam inscriptions" of Scotland and Scandinavian runes presented themselves to me' (p. ix). In this dramatic way the author describes his moment of revelation, in the introduction to his study of the language of nineteen inscriptions of Scottish provenance, of which seventeen are written in ogam and two apparently in the Roman alphabet. It has been assumed that the language of at least some of these inscriptions was that of the Picts, whose reign is thought to have come to an end by the ninth century AD. Innumerable theories have been set forth about the language of the inscriptions. A milestone in this debate was the famous discussion by Kenneth Jackson in 1955, proposing that the Picts had two distinct languages: a non-Indo-European language and a variety akin to Brittonic Celtic. Aside from a few interspersed Celtic elements, Jackson concluded, the Pictish inscriptions would have been written in this non-Indo-European language. Some recently suggested non-Indo-European connections include Sino-Caucasian and Finno-Ugrian. By contrast, it is the contention of the work under review here that the inscriptions are, for the most part, not only considerably younger than is generally thought, dating from the middle of the eleventh century to the early thirteenth century, but that they were written by Scandinavians active in Scotland. Accordingly, the language of the Scottish inscriptions would be Old Norse. As the author himself admits, however, the 'gestation period' for his theory was very short — not least since it is 'ground breaking in subject matter, iconoclastic by implication, and potentially far-reaching in its significance for our understanding of the history of both Scotland and Scandinavia'. The reason for going ahead and publishing the volume anyway is said to be that 'the subject in its broadest terms can only benefit from public debate' (p. ix).

On the interpretation defended in this book, the Scottish inscriptions are memorial texts, apart from two or three. As to the question why Norse texts were carved using ogam rather than runes, the author suggests that 'ogam retained an important place in clerical practice in Scotland in the early Middle Ages' (p. 166). Moreover, he speculates that if these nineteen inscriptions are written in Old Norse, it may provide an answer to the question of why there are so few runic inscriptions in Scotland considering the amount of Scandinavian activity there.

The book is divided into four parts: Part I is an Introduction. Part II contains a detailed discussion of the seventeen ogam inscriptions, while Part III deals with the two inscriptions claimed to be written in the Roman alphabet (this is obviously true of one of them, Fordoun, but not so obvious in the other case, Newton II). Part IV, containing nine sections, is an extensive analysis of the language of the inscriptions: first, there is a summary of the texts; this

is followed by a discussion of alleged formulae occurring in the inscriptions; the third section deals with 'contractions, abbreviations and errors' (of which more below); the next four sections focus on orthography, phonology, morphology and syntax, respectively, based on the author's own readings (which are usually, but not always, in accordance with those of Katherine Forsyth). The last section in Part IV is on the chronology of the inscriptions, as established on the basis of the author's analysis. The book finishes off with some Conclusions and Implications. In addition, there are, near the beginning of the book, lists of symbols and abbreviations and of tables and figures, and a map showing the places where ogam inscriptions have been discovered in Scotland; and at the back are lists of works cited and three indexes (one general, one of runic inscriptions and one of words and names). All in all, the physical appearance of the book is that of a serious scholarly monograph. With the considerable learning that he demonstrates, the author does not, at first glance, come across as a dilettante, but rather as a professional investigator, well versed in Old Norse grammar and in ogam and runic epigraphy.

This appearance is deceptive, however. The method by which the author is able to arrive at the conclusion that the inscriptions are, in fact, written in Old Norse is largely based on his premise that they contain a number of lacunae. These are claimed to be of the three kinds mentioned above: contraction, abbreviation and error. The term 'contraction' is used to describe the alleged omission of word-final inflexional endings and of certain word-internal consonants. 'Abbreviation' involves the assumed shortening of words, even to the extent of using their initials, on what is, by the author's own admission, 'an ad hoc basis' (p. 121). In addition to the omission of graphs through abbreviation or contraction, certain phonemes are said to be omitted from inscriptions, apparently because 'ogam had not been adapted to accommodate their values' (p. 141). Finally, a few other alleged omissions, which are considered unintentional, are simply classed as errors. Independent justification for the assumption of these deficiencies, as well as for some alternative readings deviating from the ones proposed by other scholars, is nowhere presented.

As stated above, almost all the inscriptions are supposed to be considerably younger than is generally assumed, dating from the period between 1050 and 1225. The criteria for the dating are the alleged linguistic characteristics of the inscriptions themselves, as read by the author. There is one exception, involving an inscription found on a building slab at Pool in Orkney, which is dated on archaeological grounds to the sixth century. Accordingly, this is taken as evidence for the presence of Norsemen in Scotland as early as the sixth century. If true, this would, in itself, be a remarkable finding. The actual text can be transliterated as follows: RV AV ORC. The reading suggested by the author is: (H)R[OL]V[R] AV ORC[NEIUM]. This is interpreted as ON *Hrolfr af Orkneyjum* 'Hrolfr from (the) Orkneys' (pp. 37–38). Here we see in action the devices at the author's disposal — omission, contraction, abbreviation — to make an otherwise unintelligible inscription consisting of seven ogam characters into an impeccable Old Norse text. The remainder of the inscriptions are subjected to arbitrary emendations

of a similar kind. After working through the author's proposals, it is hard to avoid the suspicion that almost any text could be 'amended' into some kind of Old Norse (or any other language, for that matter) by applying to it the method of this book. That the emendations are in fact invalid is made all the more likely by some of the odd and unparalleled Old Norse forms allegedly occurring in the inscriptions. One example is **ettermun* 'in memory' claimed to be found in four inscriptions. In two cases (Brodie, Scoonie) it is written EDDARRNONN, while the other two are read PIDARNOIN (Fordoun) and INEITTEMUN (Gurness). A further example of this kind is **sjáluvaka* (lit.) 'soul-wake', i.e. 'anniversary of one's death' (Newton II). This form is claimed to bear witness to a stray East Norse dialect element in these otherwise Old West Scandinavian texts (cf. Danish *sjæl* in contrast to Icelandic *sál*, *sála* 'soul'). Be that as it may, and putting aside the fact that the reading of this inscription is very uncertain (it may be mere gibberish scribbled by someone who was illiterate), the text as presented by the author has the sequence *sialauaka*, and not **sjáluvaka*. Further alleged forms would only have parallels in later dialects, including past tense verb forms in *-ade* instead of ON *-aði*, interpreted as *lagade* 'made' and *markade* 'inscribed' for LAQET and MAQQOT, in Buckquoy and Formaston respectively. In order to escape the contradiction that this interpretation would present to his theory, the author makes the following proposal: 'If the suggested chronology for the inscriptions is correct, it provides early evidence for several phonological developments which are not otherwise attested until much later' (p. 168).

In conclusion, the possibility that isolated Old Norse forms do occur in the ogam inscriptions cannot be excluded altogether (for example in the case of the much-discussed DATTRR on the Bressay Cross, which may or may not represent Old Norse *dóttir* 'daughter'). The entire corpus of ogam inscriptions of Scotland, however, can be claimed to be written in Old Norse only by stretching the imagination beyond reasonable limits. If this book has any merit, it demonstrates that even in such an esoteric field as ogam epigraphy it is possible to make a distinction between reasonable and well-founded conjecture and fanciful speculation.

ÞÓRHALLUR EYÞÓRSSON

RECASTING THE RUNES: THE REFORM OF THE ANGLO-SAXON *FUTHORC*. By DAVID N. PARSONS. *Runrön: Runologiska bidrag utgivna av Institutionen för nordiska språk vid Uppsala universitet* 14. *Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet*. Uppsala 1999. 148 pp.

This book contains five chapters, a Bibliography and separate Indexes of Anglo-Saxon and non-Anglo-Saxon inscriptions. Its main contention is that the rune-forms of the Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* were deliberately standardised, probably by the Church, in the middle years of the seventh century (625–675). The evidence for standardisation is the abrupt disappearance, after *c*.675, of certain distinctive variant rune-forms attested in English inscriptions of the pre-Christian period (from the fifth century to *c*.625), and an impressive level of consistency in the rune-forms

used in inscriptions produced after *c.*675. Parsons also adds weight to the view that the Anglo-Saxons derived their *futhorc*, not from Frisia as many have thought, but from Scandinavia and/or Schleswig-Holstein. The book's argument is very detailed, and the summary I offer below can only be a broad sketch.

After a brief Introduction (pp. 11–14), Chapter 2 (pp. 15–39) considers the origin and early history of runes. The total runic corpus is then divided into four main groups along geographical lines: (i) eastern European and Scandinavian; (ii) 'continental', mostly sixth and seventh centuries and mainly German, though excluding the eastern European finds included under (i); (iii) Frisian, mostly fifth to eighth centuries; and (iv) Anglo-Saxon, the earliest specimens of which date from the fifth century. Next, variant rune-forms within the older *futhark* are discussed in detail (pp. 26–32), with the *h*-, *s*-, and *e*-runes given particular attention because of the radical differences of shape among the variants. The well-known innovations contained in the Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* are then summarised (pp. 32–36); and the chapter concludes with a discussion of certain problems of transliteration arising from the difficulty of dating precisely the phonological changes reflected in these developments.

Chapter 3 (pp. 40–75) consists largely of a serial account of the sixteen runic inscriptions that have been dated to the pre-650 period of Anglo-Saxon history, with particular emphasis on the rune-forms. Chapter 4 (pp. 76–100) deals first, in less detail, with the runic inscriptions and texts of the Christian period which constitute a corpus 'substantial enough to give a good (though doubtless not exhaustive) idea of the *futhorc* in use across a fairly wide section of Anglo-Saxon rune-literate society in the Christian period' (p. 79). Contrasts are then noted between the runic forms of the early corpus described in the previous chapter. Some early forms (single-barred *h*, for instance) have disappeared in the later corpus. Did the standardised *futhorc* arise by evolution, 'natural selection' of certain existing variants, or was it 'imposed at a single reform' (p. 89)? The fact that no inscriptions so far known show a transitional *futhorc* argues against 'a gradual process of influence and acceptance' (p. 89). The coin evidence suggests that the standard may have been adopted first in Kent *c.*660; but 'the problems of how, when and where the standard later Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* was established remain unresolved' (p. 97). It is maintained, however, that the adoption of the runic standard finds a parallel in 'the dissemination of roman script in inscriptions' which 'is surely due to the Church' (p. 97), and Parsons is tempted 'to wonder whether the dissemination of the standard *futhorc* might also have been due to the Church'.

Chapter 5 (pp. 101–130) considers anew the question of the origins of the Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* on the continent and comes down (for various reasons) in favour of the Scandinavian or Anglian north (i.e., Scandinavia proper, or the territory of the continental Angles, which may have extended into Denmark) rather than Frisia. The chapter continues with a discussion of some of the implications of the standardisation-theory, and considers (only to reject it for lack of compelling evidence) the possibility of a purely secular runic tradition running alongside the Christian one. Finally, the question of whether manuscript runes and epigraphical runes should be taken as evidence of different runic traditions is

reopened; and although Parsons seems to favour the idea of a single tradition, no firm conclusion is reached.

Parsons's argument throughout is learned and well-organised. It is, naturally, possible to query his conclusions, though to be fair, most of these are expressed very tentatively. Perhaps the chief weakness of the standardisation idea is that we do not, and probably cannot, know how a programme of standardisation might have worked. The hierarchical Church was well placed in theory to impose standard practices on all ecclesiastical centres; but the sort of administrative efficiency needed to reach and call to order every runemaster in the country is not easy to imagine in the Church of the mid-seventh century, when the conversion was still progressing. Furthermore, Parsons's identification of the Church as the agent of standardisation appears to rest rather heavily on the absence of any rival institution that might have got the job done. The argument is that if the Church could impose its wishes in the matter of the use of the roman alphabet for inscriptions, it possessed the sort of machinery that could also be used to impose runic standardisation; but we have no particular reason to suppose that the use of the roman alphabet in inscriptions arose from a centrally-defined policy within the Church, and it is not very difficult to imagine it arising through independent, spontaneous developments at different centres of roman literacy. I also suggest that more attention might have been given here to 'standardisation' as an idea, as well as to possible parallels to runic standardisation within Anglo-Saxon literary culture —the standardisation of Old English spelling in the tenth century, for instance. More to the point, perhaps, is the question of why there was no central standardisation of roman letter-forms in manuscript writings as well.

Parsons has made an important contribution to runic studies here by drawing attention to some significant chronological variations within the Anglo-Saxon corpus of runic inscriptions. We may look forward confidently to much interesting discussion of his findings.

PETER ORTON

AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH RUNES. Second Edition. By R. I. PAGE. *The Boydell Press*. Woodbridge 1999. xv + 249 pp.

The first edition (1973) of this invaluable book has long been out of print and a revised edition is therefore very welcome. There are some improvements in its organisation, as well as the sort of changes of content that are inevitable after nearly thirty years of work, by the author and others, on English runes. The plates, presented centrally *en bloc* in the first edition, are now distributed so that each appears close to the text referring to it. Many of the longer paragraphs in the first edition have been broken up. Added to the original fourteen chapters is a fifteenth, 'Runic and Roman', on aspects of the relationship between the two scripts. Some twenty additional runic inscriptions discovered since the first edition went to press are now included. The Bibliography and Indexes are, of course, brought up to date.

In spite of these changes, the general nature of Page's book remains very much the same: an entertaining, often drily humorous history of runic studies in England, followed by an account of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions, coins and manuscript texts using runes, with a distinctive emphasis on the practical and intellectual problems faced by the working runologist. Only a small part of the book is devoted to a systematic account of English runic inscriptions: Chapter 9 covers runic coin-legends, Chapter 10 inscriptions on stone and Chapter 11 the remainder of the corpus: inscriptions preserved on other kinds of object or material. Most chapters deal with some particular aspect of English runology, drawing on the extant inscriptions as illustrations. Information about individual runic texts is thus scattered throughout the book, so that a reader interested in certain texts in particular must rely heavily on the Indexes. Individual inscriptions seem to be fully indexed, though in one case—the York wooden spoon—I could find no actual transcription of the runic text anywhere in the book, even though the artefact itself receives five separate mentions according to the 'Index of Inscriptions'. The 'General Index' gives reasonable coverage, though it is not always helpful, as I found when I tried to locate discussion of the use of runes for Latin in England: 'Latin' is not listed, either as an independent headword or as a sub-entry under 'runes'. These are minor problems in themselves, though they draw attention to the fact that we still lack a standard edition of the English runic corpus. It seems strange that Page's book, designed as a basic introduction to English runology, remains the natural first port of call for the non-runologist interested in any aspect of the subject or in particular inscriptions. Page is not, of course, to be blamed for not writing a different kind of book; but a computerised database of English runic texts, accessible to scholars everywhere and regularly updated as new inscriptions come to light and new knowledge illuminates those already known, is an obvious desideratum, and has been for a long time.

The failure to produce such a resource is partly excused by the inherent volatility of English runology (see Page's essay, 'Anglo-Saxon Runic Studies: The Way Ahead?' in *Old English Runes and their Continental Background*, ed. Alfred Bammesberger (Carl Winter: Heidelberg, 1991), 15–39, at 15–16). Given the modest size of the corpus, it only takes a few new discoveries to upset the apple-cart, as is shown here by the revisions Page is obliged to make (pp. 18–19) to his original remarks about the use of the single-barred *h*-rune in England in the light of the more recent discoveries at Wakerley and Watchfield (the former mentioned briefly in a footnote in the 1973 edition, p. 37). Furthermore, the runologist is dependent upon (or at the mercy of) experts in other fields. He needs to shape his conclusions to fit into a cross-disciplinary chain of mutually compatible findings and implications. Historians, archaeologists and other specialists must all have their say and contribute their individual links to the chain. But it only takes one expert to change his or her mind to necessitate an extensive revision of ideas. The dates of some inscriptions are here revised, for example the Chester-le-Street stone is now ninth century (p. 139) instead of late tenth or eleventh century, as the 1973 edition suggested (p. 143); and the Thames scramasax is now tenth century (pp. 29, 80, 113), whereas the 1973 edition wavered (apparently, at least) between eighth (p. 30) and ninth century (p. 115). These two are among the latest

runic inscriptions in England, and in the latter case especially, the question of date impinges heavily on the interpretation of the inscription. The Thames scramasax, which lacks any very specific provenance (it was found in the river Thames in the nineteenth century), is inscribed with (1) a 28-rune *fuþorc* (a form I prefer to Page's *futhorc*, simply because the whole point of the word is to spell the first six letters of the standard runic series) with a somewhat unconventional order of characters and some unusual rune-forms, and (2) the word *beagnoþ*, also in runes, and attested elsewhere in Old English as a personal name. Page thinks that *beagnoþ* (which might, I imagine, mean something of the order of 'ring-bold') may be the name of the smith who made the sword and produced its text (p. 169), though a warrior-name might suit the sword itself and might have been inscribed upon it with the aim of enhancing its effectiveness as a weapon. There is some evidence for this procedure among the early continental inscriptions in the older *fuþark*, some of which are mentioned on p. 108. But it is the irregular *fuþorc* that drives Page's interpretation. In both editions of his book, he sees the Thames scramasax as 'a late survival'. Its *fuþorc* shows a deliberate revival of an outdated, originally magical use of runes. Knowing of the old practice of inscribing magical runes on weapons, 'the man who ordered the Thames scramasax wanted an old tradition followed for prestige purposes, so his smith bodged up a *futhorc* for him' (p. 113). The sword thus constitutes 'a tentative and indirect piece of evidence for English rune magic'.

The most striking aspect of this interpretation is that it contains much more speculation than Page normally permits himself: the sword was not just made, it was commissioned from a runically semi-literate smith by a man who wanted the prestige of a rune-inscribed weapon. But if prestige still attached to runic weapons in the tenth century, why were they no longer manufactured? This is not to say, of course, that Page is necessarily wrong. I only suggest that he may have been too strongly influenced here by the idea of the weapon's date (on which expert opinion seems to have changed, or is perhaps still divided), combined with an instinct to confine the use of runes for magical purposes to the pre-Christian period of Anglo-Saxon history. Only by seeing the sword's manufacture as an antiquarian exercise (itself, perhaps, a rather too modern concept to command unquestioning assent) can he leave the tenth century clear of any primary use of runes for magical ends. Page's interpretation completes the chain; but it raises the question of how strong the other links really are.

It cannot have been easy to pitch an introduction to such a complex field of study at a consistent and appropriate level; but although it is occasionally frustrating to find interesting problems merely sketched in and then abandoned (as for example in the rather abruptly truncated discussion of the Anglo-Frisian question on pp. 43–44), the book is very clearly written and fulfils its purpose as an introduction admirably. The few errors and editorial failings I noted are mainly in new or revised passages. Typographical mistakes seem rare (9/14 'AngIo-Saxon' for 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'retinence' for 'reticence', 119/5 'of' for 'or'); the wrong font is occasionally used (4/12 '*is*' should be in roman, 177/21 'saga' should be in italic); the punctuation is sometimes inappropriate (15/9, 17/3, 170/3) or is omitted where it is needed (22/24 requires a comma after 'Sculpture'); and xiii/18 'the

latter' is used in a context where there is no former. In the 'Index of Inscriptions' I noted only two inaccuracies: 'Lindisfarne stone II' refers to '139' instead of '140', and 'Mortain casket' refers to '36' instead of '37'.

PETER ORTON

VIKINGS IN SCOTLAND: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY. By JAMES GRAHAM-CAMPBELL and COLLEEN E. BATEY. *Edinburgh University Press*. Edinburgh 1998. 296 pp. 96 black and white illustrations.

For over a decade Barbara Crawford's *Scandinavian Scotland* (1987) has been the standard work on Viking Scotland; it now has an excellent and complementary companion. Although Crawford's work drew its material from a range of types of evidence it took a largely historical perspective. This volume, as its sub-title suggests, is primarily an archaeological survey. The authors admit that it has had a long gestation. It was conceived in 1979 by James Graham-Campbell; Colleen Batey was brought on board in 1991 to provide input on settlement and environmental archaeology; and the volume still took a further six years to complete. Despite this lengthy process it does not suffer from dated evidence; account is taken of the latest archaeological discoveries, many of them still unpublished.

The volume is organised very much as a survey of evidence. Brief introductory chapters set the scene. The first provides a conventional introduction to the topography of Scotland, including its geology and geography, to the peoples who inhabited Scotland before the Scandinavian settlements, and to their economy. Chapter 2 looks at Scandinavia, focusing especially on Norway. Chapter 3 then outlines those sources that may be used to study Viking Scotland, although for documentary evidence the reader is referred to Crawford. Here the limitations of the archaeological evidence are revealed and we see the need for much more work before sound conclusions can be drawn. Although there are 130 pagan Norse graves from Scotland, many were excavated in the distant past; there are few settlements, with only a single known site from mainland Scotland.

Following these background chapters the reader is introduced to the evidence, region by region, in three chapter surveys: Northern Scotland, the West Highlands and Islands, and South-West, Central, Eastern and Southern Scotland. With further work this might allow regional comparisons to be drawn, but the reader is left with the impression that any differences in established interpretations may be as much a product of ways in which the evidence has been treated as a reflection of underlying realities in the nature of the Scandinavian settlers and their relationship with the native population. No comparisons are drawn beyond Scotland.

The following chapters then survey the evidence theme by theme, starting with two chapters on the pagan Norse graves. The first describes the better documented graves in detail; the second, a shorter but important chapter, focuses on their interpretation. It is suggested that all the burials date from the late ninth century to the second half of the tenth century, with most concentrated in the

middle of that period. Again, problems of interpreting the evidence are emphasised, including the lack of contemporaneous cemeteries and settlements; the difficulties involved in distinguishing between dress accessories and deliberately placed offerings; and the danger of drawing simplistic conclusions. Whilst balance scales might denote a trader, a raider, it is suggested, would have had just as great a need of weighing silver. One firm conclusion is advanced. With the increase in sample size Brøgger's 1929 conclusion — that whereas the graves from the Northern Isles represented complete peasant families, those from the Hebrides were aristocrats — can now be dismissed, with no significant difference in wealth apparent.

The next two chapters consider excavated settlements, first of the Early and then of the Late Norse period, although this is an artificial division and inevitably some sites appear in both. The inadequate attention to environmental sampling in the past and the lack of excavation of middens hamper our current understanding of settlement. There are also problems with chronology and sequence at classic sites such as Jarlshof. Uncertainties about the security of deposits at Skaill and Buckquoy further impede attempts to come to firm conclusions on the relationship between Picts and Norse, as the authors acknowledge, and they refuse to be drawn on this issue. Finally, there are chapters on the Norse economy, on silver and gold, and on earls and bishops, the last focusing on the construction of churches and erection of crosses. Again, these chapters are rich in detailed description of the evidence, but cautious in drawing conclusions from it, emphasising, for example, that we do not understand the pattern behind the practice of burying treasure at this period, although some significant observations are made.

A major difficulty in attempting any synthesis for a large and diverse area over a long period is whether to organise it geographically or thematically. By doing both, Graham-Campbell and Batey allow readers to use this book in several ways, but some repetition is inevitable and most sites are dealt with twice: by region and by theme. This leads to some frustration in identifying where to go for the most complete description of a specific site, and there is also a lack of cross-referencing between sections. Odin's Law, for example, is quoted extensively on pp. 143–44 in the context of burials, and again on p. 245 in the discussion of hoards. In referencing sources and further reading the authors have avoided footnotes or Harvard-style citations, preferring to name the authority for specific research or interpretations. This can make it difficult to locate the appropriate bibliographical references, and some are missing. On p. 48 we are told that hogbacks have been catalogued by James Lang, but Lang's paper is not in the further reading for this chapter.

However, these are relatively minor reservations about a book which will be the standard secondary source for the archaeology of Viking Scotland for many years. Graham-Campbell and Batey have succeeded in providing a thorough comprehensive description of the current state of data gathering, and have written an essential text for those who will seek to use it further.

JULIAN RICHARDS

THE EMERGENCE OF RUS 750–1200. By SIMON FRANKLIN and JONATHAN SHEPARD. *Longman.* London and New York 1996. xxii + 450 pp.

The initial volume of the *Longman History of Russia* has been eagerly anticipated by Russian scholars. Since the publication in the 1960s of the *History of the USSR* in eight volumes there has been no large-scale project incorporating both new and old material. Another reason for the advance interest in the book was that its authors, Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, are well known and highly esteemed in Russia for their scholarly writings on the history and culture of Ancient Rus', as well as for their editions of source texts. In their competent survey Franklin and Shepard investigate the beginnings of the country, placing their emphasis on the gradual transformation that took place from the time when the Eastern European region was sparsely settled by scattered tribes of different ethnic origins to the period when Ancient Rus' had become a strong and prosperous state with a unified culture firmly anchored in Orthodox Christianity (the word 'emergence' in the title indicates the authors' particular interest). Especially noteworthy here is the year 750, incorporated into the title — a date not found in any of the Russian chronicles (where the dating begins in 852/6360), nor in other written sources. The earliest archaeological finds from the town of Ladoga (called *Aldeigjuborg* in Old Norse written sources), however, point to 750 as the time from which we can clearly trace the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe. Thus, according to Franklin and Shepard, the emergence of Rus' or, as they put it on p. xvii, of 'the land of the Rus'', begins around that year with the arrival of the Scandinavians (the Rus').

The term *Rus'* is understood by Franklin and Shepard in its traditional sense to designate the groups of Scandinavians, mainly traders, who first came to the Russian North in the vicinity of Lakes Ladoga and Ilmen', drawn by easy access to fur trade and Oriental silver, and then gradually penetrated to the east and south. The authors depict them vividly as 'small bands of traders trekking along the rivers through the dense and sparsely populated northern forests between the Baltic and the Middle Volga, lured towards the silver of the east; faint specks on a vast landscape; transient Scandinavians among Finno-Ugrian tribes' (p. xvii). This definition places emphasis on only one of the many characteristics of the Rus': their role as merchants in Eastern Europe (which necessarily involved being warriors as well). The authors also call attention to the inconsistency and inaccuracy in the use of *Rūs/Rhōs* by southern writers (Latin, Greek and Arab) who un-doubtedly denoted by it 'a grouping of predominantly Scandinavian characteristics', referring either to their social roles or to ethnic origins (p. 29). Franklin and Shepard do not specify the changes in the meaning of the term with the development of the society to which it refers. To clarify the question, reference to the Old Russian sources, where the word *русь* is used more consistently than in the southern written sources as both an ethnic and a social term, is helpful. The evolution of its meaning roughly corresponds to the stages of the development of the Ancient Russian state: *Rus'* as an ethnic term for the Scandinavians—*Rus'* as a social term for the élite—*Rus'* as the term for designating the population of Rus'. A discussion of this problem based on the comparison of the sources would have been useful in the book.

The first part of the book (pp. 3–180) deals mainly with the activity of the Scandinavians before 1015, a period of great importance for the formation of Rus', and of course of keenest interest for the readers of this journal. The lack of firm support from written sources for this dark age of Russian history is generously compensated for by numismatic and archaeological data, which, however, are liable to different interpretations, and therefore require thorough coverage of the evidence. According to the Introduction, one of the main purposes of the book is to survey recent developments and Russian scholarship for those who are not well acquainted with it, while at the same time providing a 'fresh synthesis' for specialists in the field (p. xviii).

For a long time the 'Norman aspect' of our history was hidden and hushed up by official Soviet historiography. Only in the 1970s did Russian scholars gain access to the archaeological finds supporting a special role for the Scandinavians in the earliest stages of our history. The primary question for historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — the role played by the Scandinavians in the formation of the Russian state — has naturally been replaced by other issues, which reveal the different stages and various aspects of the Norman presence in Rus', such as the time and intensity of the Scandinavians' connections with different tribes, their sphere of interest and main activity in Eastern Europe and their contribution to and connections with the ruling élite. The timeliness of the summing up put forward by Franklin and Shepard cannot be overestimated. As a way of reducing the immensity of their task, however, the authors decided not to 'qualify in detail every judgement which may happen *not* to coincide with received opinion', so as not 'to distort the balance of narrative by making a fetish of innovation' (p. xxi). Disputed matters dealing with the Scandinavian exploration of Eastern Europe, irrespective of how important they are, are deliberately confined to footnotes, and thus the treatment is rather scanty and might suggest that there exists no controversy about the subjects discussed and that the solutions presented in the book are the only possible ones.

The weakness of such an approach can be demonstrated in, for example, the presentation by Franklin and Shepard of the reasons why the Rus' were attracted to Eastern Europe. The first was undoubtedly easy access to Northern pelts, discussed only briefly by Franklin and Shepard, who emphasise the Scandinavian role in the silver trade with the Orient. The authors give the impression that from the very arrival of the Rus' in Eastern Europe to the time when the route from the Baltic in the North-West to the Volga and the Baghdad Caliphate in the South-East was intensively used (tenth century), the Scandinavians themselves were engaged in trading and travelling the whole length of the 'silver route'. It is more likely that silver was delivered mainly by non-Scandinavian traders with whom the Rus' had to barter for it. The development of a permanent long-distance route was an extensive process, in which the Rus' played a variety of roles.

What is known testifies that along with the fur and silver trade there were other attractions for the Rus' in Eastern Europe, including the existence of a possible site for migration. Anthropology tells us that Nordic elements contributed to the formation of one of the two main racial types existing in northern Russia, and it has

been proved that in some settlements in this area the proportion of Norsemen reached ten per cent of the population. This is a clear indication that some of the Scandinavians settled there permanently and integrated into local society. In addition, Rus' in the tenth century provided the poorest of the Northern nobility and bonders with an opportunity for well-paid service in the guard of Russian rulers. It was the kind of service which allowed them to ascend the social ladder and become part of the emerging new Russian élite which was replacing the old tribal élite.

The question of the relations between the Rus' and the local population has been the subject of harsh dispute, and the emphasis given by Franklin and Shepard to the material distorts the picture of the ethnic situation revealed by archaeology. Their Rus' seem to have existed in an almost complete vacuum. Brief references to the early (fifth to early eighth century) appearance of the Finno-Ugric and Baltic population (p. 6) in the Russian North — the area of the earliest Rus' arrival — and to the Slav migration to the Middle Dnieper and from there in different directions, especially eastward and northward, including to the great lakes Ilmen' and Pskov (pp. 72–75, 82), do not improve the picture. The presence of these tribes in the same territory that the Scandinavians came to is affirmed by the authors, though the nature of the relations between them is not specified. From this book one could infer that the Rus' isolated themselves from the local population, never intermingling with it; the evidence of archaeology, however, points to close and friendly contact between the Scandinavians and the peoples of the forest zone of the Russian North, in contrast to the stereotype of endless hostility between them furnished by the Scandinavian written sources.

Franklin and Shepard focus their attention upon the Rus' as one of, if not the main ethnic and cultural components in the formation of Eastern Europe. Against a background of thorough studies of other ethnic groups (the Slavs, the Finno-Ugrians and the Balts) that took part in the genesis of Russian culture, such an approach seems to be fully justified. Nonetheless, for research of this kind the principal problem is achieving a balanced approach, necessary for presenting the historical process as a unified whole. In the case of Franklin and Shepard, the balance is lacking. Their historical interpretation is strongly affected by the choice of source material and scholarly works. While many readers will share the ideas of Franklin and Shepard, some would prefer to be able to consider the opposing side in the discussion and evaluate for themselves the view imposed on them by the book. Unfortunately, the authors have not provided this opportunity.

The way Franklin and Shepard work with written historical sources deserves special mention, as it is an improvement in many respects on other histories of Russia written both in Russia and in the West. The book is a perfect example of an effective combination of data taken from sources of wide provenance. Its first merit is the abundant use of Old Russian sources in the original. The second is the authors' generous citation of foreign sources in creating a living picture of historical events not adequately described in Russian writings. The list of the sources that the authors employ to substantiate their position is almost endless (strangely enough, the sources of Scandinavian origin occupy a very modest place). Thirdly,

the range of genres of the sources quoted is quite overwhelming: chronicles and codes of law, church documents and secular literature, birchbark inscriptions and graffiti, etc. Unfortunately, however, the work is completely devoid of source-criticism (the only exception is the treatment of the *Russkaja Pravda*). The impression received is that all the data derived from the writings of different peoples from different times have equal historical value and deserve equal treatment. An appeal to a later source in describing an earlier event is often misleading. A short guide to the written sources, giving the basic data about the author, date and place of creation, sources, genre and tradition, the main manuscripts, as well as pointing to further reading, would have been of great help in the book. This is especially desirable because a remarkable feature of the authors' account is their keen attention to the slightest hints of early historical events in the sources and their bold presentation of their own hypotheses.

GALINA GLAZYRINA

THE NORWEGIAN INVASION OF ENGLAND IN 1066. By KELLY DEVRIES. *The Boydell Press.* Woodbridge 1999. xii + 322 pp.

Nobody loves a loser. In what he concedes to be 'an old-fashioned war story' (p. 3), Kelly deVries attempts to rescue the reputations of two considerable 'warlords' who met their respective Waterloos in 1066. On 25th September of that year the invasion of Northumbria by the Norwegian king Haraldr harðráði ended in his death in the battle of Stamford Bridge. Less than three weeks later his conqueror Harold Godwineson, his troops weakened by a remarkable forced march to meet this northern threat, was himself defeated at Hastings. This book aims to present Harold, however briefly, in a victorious light, and to cast some reflected glory also on Haraldr, whose intervention presumably influenced the outcome at Hastings. Despite deVries's partisan spirit, however, this ambition is weakened by his avowed unwillingness to pursue issues of cause and effect. As old-fashioned as the preference for narrative is the book's biographical style of analysis, devoting much of its space to introductory and often repetitive chapters on Haraldr, Harold's father Godwine and Harold himself.

Unfortunately, the author's zeal in his heroes' cause is not matched by competence. He alludes to the reluctance of modern historians to rely on the almost exclusively Norse sources — for English and Norman chroniclers, like modern commentators, were distracted from Haraldr's campaign by the more significant southern aftermath — but does not adequately justify his own extensive reliance on them. He fails to explain the complex relationships between the various Norse kings' sagas or their claims to represent earlier sources. Throughout his detailed account of the battle of Stamford Bridge and of Haraldr's earlier, successful, encounter at Fulford Gate he quotes extensively, though indiscriminately, from the parallel Norse sources, *Heimskringla, Morkinskinna, Fagrskinna* and a fifteenth-century addition to *Flateyjarbók.* An explanation for this anxious parade of learning emerges in his defence of the historical use of these

sources, generally discounted because of their late date. The author attempts to bolster their credibility by arguing that 'this is not just *an* account found in *one* Saga, but slightly different accounts found in three' (p. 275). His vague speculations on the nature of their relationship ('Was there some collaboration between the authors of these sagas?') go no way towards establishing any evaluation of historical reliability. Puzzling though the relationship between these texts may be, it is uncontroversial that the account of Haraldr's campaign in all derives from *Morkinskinna* (and that the *Flateyjarbók* addition preserves an earlier version than that now extant of the *Morkinskinna* text).

The author's understanding of the significance of the incorporated verse sources may be evaluated from his mistranslation of Snorri's *sumt er ritat eptir fornum kvæðum* as 'some is written from old declarations' (p. 12) and the unwary statement that Snorri 'puts [a] detail into the verses of the poet Þjóðólfr' (p. 27). The 'poems' are dismissed as 'later literary flourish' (p. 287). Nor has he read the sagas carefully, as witness the startling assertion that '*Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, Snorri Sturluson, and *Flateyjarbók* do not mention Magnús' [Óláfsson's] reign without Haraldr' (p. 40), thus wiping out at a stroke a whole saga in *Heimskringla* as well as shorter accounts in the other texts. A reference in *Fagrskinna* to Haraldr's early battles in Russia is transposed to Byzantium (p. 28). The thinness and inaccuracy in the treatment of these sources is not helped by a perverse preference for elderly editions. Unfortunately Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade's translation of *Morkinskinna* (also reviewed in this number of *Saga-Book*, pp. 432–35) was not yet available, but deVries cites Unger's 1867 edition rather than Finnur Jónsson's of 1932; he relies throughout on Munch and Unger's 1847 edition of *Fagrskinna*, seemingly unaware of Finnur Jónsson's of 1902–03, let alone that of Bjarni Einarsson in 1985. Out-of-date editions are also used for *Ágrip* and Saxo Grammaticus, and the recent translation of Theodoricus is not mentioned. *Knýtlinga saga* is dated to 'the mid-twelfth century' (p. 75), rather than, as now believed, later than 1257; this may be an outdated opinion inherited from E.A. Freeman, though elsewhere deVries confuses centuries again, dating early Viking incursions in England to the eighth rather than to the ninth century (p. 15).

Historians have also drawn back, deVries claims, from the linguistic difficulty of the texts. By way of remedy he cites these extensively, proffering his own translations — even where, in the case of *Heimskringla*, adequate published translations are available. The rashness of this decision is demonstrated on almost every page, starting with the inability to handle inflected name forms: 'Sverri' (p. 11), 'Rǫgnavaldr Brusáson' (p. 25), and the doubly inept 'Þóru, the daughter of Þorbergs Árnasonar' (p. 48). The mistrust induced by elementary blunders such as *var þat* 'it is true' (p. 23), *bjó í skógi* 'a farmhouse in a forest' (p. 25), *saga mikil* 'many stories' (p. 49) and rather colourfully, 'weapons' birth' for *vápnaburðrinn* (p. 206), is deepened by the garbling of more significant terms: *húskalr* (for *húskarl*), *bóndaherinn* translated as 'householder' (p. 204), and 'he was called *berserksgangr* by the Scandinavians' (p. 205). Muddle is added to linguistic incompetence when Haraldr's remark on his division of Norway with Magnús, '*Ertu maðr miklu ǫrvari en ek*', is put in the mouth of Magnús (p. 44), flying in the face of frequent allusions to Haraldr's stinginess in sagas and *þættir*; sometimes the context is

misread, as in Harold Godwineson's observation when Haraldr falls off his horse before Stamford Bridge: '*Mikill maðr ok ríkmannligr, ok er vænna, at farinn sé at hamingju*'. Kelly deVries translates this (from *Heimskringla*): 'He is a large and powerful man. Here it is likely that we have come to the end of our luck', noting a similar form of words in *Fagrskinna* (he misses its appearance also in *Morkinskinna*) (p. 68). But the remark, as the published translations agree, refers to Haraldr's luck. The misreading is repeated on p. 284 and compounded by the added mangling of Haraldr's own comment, *Fall er fararheill*, as 'That fall is the farewell of fortune'. Space does not permit the detailed unpicking of deVries's translations of longer passages essential to his narrative of the campaign, but the examples already cited will vouch for their unreliability. It can be said in partial mitigation, however, that this is not the result of distortion in order to fit any particular theory.

Kelly deVries's departures from straightforward narrative are few. On controversial points, such as the question of the reliability of Norse reports of the English use of cavalry charges at Stamford Bridge, he rehearses the arguments of earlier historians before falling back on inconclusive generality and over-use of the rhetorical question. Even his main thesis, that Harold's forced march and encounter with his namesake contributed to his defeat at Hastings by reducing and weakening his troops, is not so much argued as implied, within the confines of a two-page 'Aftermath'. If the Norse sources have the potential to rehabilitate the reputation of 'the other Conqueror, the warlord Harold Godwinson' (p. 299), their treatment in this book must be assessed as a wasted opportunity.

ALISON FINLAY

MORKINSKINNA: THE EARLIEST ICELANDIC CHRONICLE OF THE NORWEGIAN KINGS (1030–1157). Translated with Introduction and Notes by THEODORE M. ANDERSSON and KARI ELLEN GADE. *Islandica* LI. *Cornell University Press.* Ithaca and London 2000. xiv + 556 pp.

Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade have done the history of Icelandic literature an enormous service with this elegant and substantial volume, and yet they are the first to admit that much remains to be done. The earliest version of *Morkinskinna*, composed in Iceland in the early thirteenth century, 'established a new literary type, the historical compendium . . . *Morkinskinna* revolutionized history writing almost immediately. The chronicle form was imitated in *Fagrskinna* about five years later and in *Heimskringla* about a decade later . . . Both works . . . capitalized extensively on the narrative provided in *Morkinskinna*' (p. 497). It is hard to believe that this seminal text has never been available in a reader's edition or translated into any modern language, but the translators are no doubt right in their surmise that 'the book is not much read except by scholars' (p. 11) — always excepting the much-anthologised *Auðunar þáttr vestfirzka*, one of the sixteen (on the count of Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske kongesagaer*, 1937, pp. 154–55) semi-independent narratives mostly about encounters of Icelanders with the king of Norway that cluster in *Morkinskinna* about the figure of King

Haraldr harðráði. Not the least of the virtues of this translation is the reinstatement of the *þættir* to their proper context in the narrative of Norwegian political history, though their role in contributing to the distinctive 'Icelandic assertiveness' (p. 65) of the text is given due weight. Andersson and Gade incline to the view, following Jonna Louis-Jensen (*Kongesagastudier: Kompilationen Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*, 1977, pp. 77–78), that the bulk of the *þættir*, often supposed by scholars to be interpolated in the late thirteenth-century version of *Morkinskinna* that now survives, were integral to the original work: 'Louis-Jensen's argument seems to shift the burden of proof to those who believe in wholesale interpolation. The original author clearly cultivated an episodic style, and strong reasons are needed to demonstrate that any particular episode is not part of his conception. That does not, of course, preclude the possiblility that a number of the *þættir* were composed separately by other writers, but there seems no strong reason for believing that they were not included in *Morkinskinna* from the outset' (p. 24).

Characterisation of *Morkinskinna*'s episodic style also figures in the closely argued discussion of the extent of poetic interpolation in the surviving *Morkinskinna*. Differing conclusions are drawn on this issue for various parts of the text, but an overall picture is built up of an author with a taste for inclusion using his extensive familiarity with skaldic verse for his own individual ends. The author of *Morkinskinna* was, after all, a pioneer in the use of verse sources as he was in the art of historical compilation. A most fruitful comparison of the use of verse in the three compilations shows that the compilers of *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* 'were consciously selective in their use of the poetic corpus of [*Morkinskinna*], and that they included only stanzas that provided concrete information with a direct bearing on the events narrated in the prose', in contrast to the interest in 'seemingly superfluous stanzas describing ferocious beasts of battle and ships struggling on the wind-swept sea' revealed by the author of *Morkinskinna* and identified by Andersson and Gade as part and parcel of the text's preoccupation with poets and poetry: 'It is more than likely that the many *þættir* and smaller anecdotes about skalds and the composition of skaldic poetry in *Morkinskinna* reflect the interests and knowledge of the same author' (pp. 56–57).

At first sight the authors' claim in their preface: 'We hope that this first step may hasten the appearance of a standard edition in Icelandic with the necessary aids' (p. ix) seems unduly modest, for in addition to their extensive investigation of the literary and historical context of *Morkinskinna* and its textual relationships, and a series of annotations appropriate to different readerships, they include in their very readable text a complete re-editing of its 320 skaldic stanzas, Gade's principal contribution to the work. The Icelandic text of these is included in the translation, followed in each case by the 'prose word order' rendition conventional in skaldic editions and by a prose translation; notes on the stanzas appear in an appendix. While this layout does little to render the verses less intimidating, the thoroughness of the procedure suggests that the translators have taken more than a first step to earning the title of editors. But scrutiny of their translated text and the appended textual notes reveals the extent of the problem. The only existing manuscript of *Morkinskinna*, whether or not heavily interpolated, is defective,

lacking one of its original seven quires and five further leaves, and riddled with smaller lacunae. These were usually left blank by Finnur Jónsson in his edition of 1928–32, though footnotes provide some textual information about the readings to be deduced from later kings' saga texts which made use of earlier versions of *Morkinskinna* (primarily a fifteenth-century addition to *Flateyjarbók*, the *Fríssbók* version of *Heimskringla* and *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*). The earlier scholarly editor, C. R. Unger in 1867, filled in the blanks in smaller print, but without the formality of identifying his sources, be they manuscript readings later illegible, readings from other texts in manuscript or printed editions, or in some cases his own speculation. Unger's strategy of filling the gaps is adopted here 'for the sake of readability' (p. 405), though the enclosure of substituted text between asterisks, without any difference in text size, makes it difficult to see the demarcation of longer interpolations. The 'textual notes' signalling these uncertainties, and incidentally identifying a number of misreadings and misprints in Finnur Jónsson's text, confirm the need for an up-to-date edition based on full re-examination of the manuscripts.

The translation itself has a freshness and resourcefulness which does credit to the ambition to introduce this crucial, but also individual, work to a new readership. The original's characteristic blend of colloquialism and formality comes through well, and the translators are alert to the need to mediate its occasionally enigmatic style. In places colloquialism tips over into anachronism, to my taste: 'That is a mouthful' (p. 143) (*Mjǫk er mælt*), 'I have no management skills' (p. 171) (*ek kann engi forræði*), 'You're going all out' (p. 174) (*Mikinn tekr þú af*), 'He wound up on land' (p. 96) (*því næst er hann á landi*), 'as rich as Croesus' (p. 207) (*svá fésterkr*), and quaintly, 'You are a gentleman' (p. 250) (*Vel fer þér*). Gentlemanliness rears its ambiguous head again on p. 290, where 'a very fine gentleman' translates *enn kurteisasti maðr*. Occasionally the translators reach for a colloquialism totally foreign to this reviewer, presumably representing American usage: 'not everyone should be cut over the same comb' (p. 92) for *eigi munu allir jafnir í því*; 'there was no overage' (p. 250) for *ekki er um fram* (Webster's dictionary gives the sense 'surplus goods' for 'overage'). Specialised vocabulary gives rise to some inelegant coinages: 'thingmeeting' for *þing*, 'nonnoble men' (p. 183) for *ótignir menn*, 'not chieftainly' for *óhǫfðingligt* (p. 201), and 'compose a counterstanza' (p. 253) for *yrkið nú í móti*. *Lendir menn* are 'magnates' on p. 191, elsewhere 'district chieftains'. *Fór at veizlum* is 'made the rounds' on p. 209; with more appropriate dignity on p. 217, the king 'made a circuit of feasts'.

In an obscure passage recording the report of a bystander on the threatened punishment of Bishop Magni who had dared to remonstrate with the mentally unbalanced King Sigurðr Magnússon, *Morkinskinna* has it that *svá hefir Sigurðr frá sagt . . . at eigi þótti honum meiri himinn en kálfskinn, svá þótti honum konungrinn ógurligr.* This is boldly rendered here as 'Sigurðr . . . related that he seemed to see no more of the heavens than a piece of parchment because the king was so monstrous in his rage' (p. 257). But there is no justification for translating *kálfskinn* as other than 'a calf's skin', an interpretation supported by the proverbial instances cited by Fritzner (*Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* II, p. 249) — and in any case the translators' alternative hardly clarifies the obscurity of the phrase. Another

rare, and perverse, mistranslation comes at the end of the *þáttr* of Þorvarðr krákunef, where it is said of the sail given by Þorvarðr to King Haraldr: *Konungr þakkaði honum ok hafði þetta segl yfir sínu skipi, ok stóðzk þat eigi þessu konungs skipinu í kappsiglingum, því at skip var mikit, en þó þótti þat vera en mesta gǫrsimi.* Andersson and Gade translate: 'The king thanked him and raised the sail on his ship. The king's sail could not be rivalled in racing, for it was a large ship but nonetheless thought to be a great miracle of construction' (p. 225). But *stóðzk þat eigi þessu konungs skipinu* must mean 'it was not adequate for this ship of the king's' (*standask e-u* 'stand up to, be adequate for'; see Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* III, p. 523). A better rendering is that of a recent translation of the *þáttr*: 'The king thanked him and used that sail on his ship. It was not large enough for the royal vessel in competitive sailing because the ship was large, but the sail was considered to be of very great value' (George Clark, *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* I, p. 399).

The translators are misleadingly self-deprecating with regard to their provision of commentary: 'Most particularly we are aware of the preliminary nature of the "Explanatory Notes", which supply a bare minimum of information. In another five or ten years we could probably have worked out a proper commentary . . . ' (p. ix). One suspects that these generous scholars' idea of 'a proper commentary' would have filled a much larger volume, for the notes are thoughtful and wide-ranging, though often suggestive rather than definitive. They offer a thematic and stylistic running commentary on the narrative, with suggestions for wider reading on cultural and literary topics. Notes are confined to the back of the book and arranged under chapter headings, which makes them difficult to find when they relate to chapters extending over several pages, and raises yet again the question why publishers are so resistant to the appearance of notes at the foot of each page of text. Relegation to the back of the book would in any case have been the inevitable fate of the more specialist 'Textual Notes', 'Notes on Stanzas' and 'Concordance of Episodes in *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*', but the separation of this material probably does make the book easier to use. It is sometimes difficult to know, though, why some commentary was assigned to the 'Notes on Stanzas' rather than the 'Explanatory Notes', and the occasional cross-reference from one to the other adds an unnecessary layer of complication.

A few minor slips, mainly typographical, can be pointed out: the omission of 'been' from p. 15, l. 12 ('that may well have [been] the high point . . . '), and of a comma on p. 16: 'In the service of the Danish king, Sveinn Úlfsson, . . .' Chapter 5, note 12 refers erroneously to *Ágrip* Chapter 35; it should be 37 in the cited edition by Bjarni Einarsson.

It is a pleasure to see *Morkinskinna* set so firmly on the road to its reinstatement as a key text in the development of Old Norse historiographical writing and the creation of a distinctively Icelandic literary personality. This translation should win it 'the wider circulation that it surely deserves' (p. x); let us hope that the challenge set by the translators can soon be met by a new edition with full scholarly apparatus.

Alison Finlay

THE POETRY OF ARNÓRR JARLASKÁLD. AN EDITION AND STUDY. By DIANA WHALEY. *Westfield Publications in Medieval Studies* 8. *Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London*. London 1998. xvi + 369 pp.

Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson is one of the most important poets in the skaldic canon, not just because of the aesthetic quality of his poetry, but also because of the prominent place he is given in scholarly works and kings' sagas by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century writers. His verse is cited in sagas of eleventh-century kings and earls, or in works of skaldic poetics, where his stanzas are quoted for their relevance in historical or scholarly contexts. None of his poems is preserved complete, and one of the greatest challenges facing an editor of his verse, as of that of other skalds, is how to set about the task of reconstructing the original poems from the fragments and disjointed sections that are scattered here and there in various kinds of sources.

Diana Whaley has taken on this challenge, and produced an edition that is almost unique in skaldic studies, not only in its thoroughness and attention to detail, but also in its presentation of the *œuvre* of a single skald. She notes in her Preface the striking fact that her own edition and Krause's of the work of Eyvindr skáldaspillir (1990) are the only ones dedicated to the corpus of a single poet to have appeared in recent decades. Whaley has thus had to construct her own method of presenting the poetry of Arnórr. She divides her task into a study of his verse on the one hand and an edition on the other, the latter taking up two thirds of the book, the overall outcome being an edition with an introduction. This method is sensible, since it enables the edition to serve as an introduction for the inexperienced reader of skaldic verse while at the same time catering for the needs of those familiar with the field of skaldic studies.

Whaley starts with a thorough account of the manuscripts of the various sources containing the verse of Arnórr jarlaskáld. The presentation of this material is comprehensive, and she has given close attention to the textual history of the verse, which is the basis for her presentation of the text in the second part of the book. One minor oversight may be noted: she states that the author of *The Third Grammatical Treatise* is not named, but Óláfr Þórðarson is in fact recorded as its author in the A manuscript of the treatise and his authorship is therefore as well attested as Snorri Sturluson's of the prose *Edda*. The complexities involved in editing skaldic verse are immediately revealed in this chapter in the sense that it is not possible to trace the transmission of each stanza, only to present the different sources containing the verse, each source having its own particular textual history. The result is that the reader is not clear as to which source is the most reliable, in the cases, that is, where a stanza is preserved in more than one source. This question resurfaces when the reader attempts to judge the merit of one variant against another in the diplomatic edition of the text. This dilemma is not limited to Whaley's edition, but haunts everyone who undertakes an edition of skaldic verse, particularly of verse preserved in the kings' sagas.

The reconstruction of skaldic poetry is perhaps the other most controversial aspect of any edition of skaldic verse, and Arnórr's poems are not, as already indicated, preserved in their original contexts or as complete entities. The editor

must therefore put the poems together piece by piece. While generally indebted here to the editions of Finnur Jónsson and E. A. Kock, who agreed on the reconstruction of the poems, Whaley adopts an independent approach, deviating from those earlier editors in her presentation of the poems (as is shown lucidly in Appendix B). She also departs from Bjarne Fidjestøl's reconstruction in his book *Det norrøne fyrstediktet* (1982). She does not give 'a verse-by-verse rationale' (p. 27) for her reconstruction of the poems, referring instead to the more thorough discussion in her doctoral dissertation of 1979; readers of this edition would have been well served by being given the gist of those arguments here, as they are fundamental to her editorial principles. Her reasons for the placing of the stanzas within each of the five poems that can be attributed to Arnórr are well explained, even though the original contexts of the verses preserved outside the historical sources, such as the skaldic citations in *Skáldskaparmál*, remain questionable. Whaley's category of 'Fragments' is large compared with Finnur's; she has eleven fragments, all drawn from *Snorra Edda* or *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, where he had five. This result illustrates the caution she has exercised in presenting the material.

Whaley systematically documents the many sides to Arnórr's life and his verse-making, beginning with an account of his life-story as it can be deduced from the sources and the verse. Arnórr was the son of Þórðr Kolbeinsson, a well-known court poet famous for his quarrels with Bjǫrn Hítdœlakappi in *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*. He belongs, therefore, to an established family of poets. Whaley does not question the attribution of the verse to Arnórr, and indeed it would be problematic to enter into the attribution question here. There is, relatively speaking, good evidence for Arnórr's authorship: he was one of the most respected poets in the skaldic canon and his popularity was well established within the learned community in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The most important part of the study of Arnórr's verse relates to his poetic diction. Whaley gives a clear overview of the characteristics of his poetic vocabulary, moving from the more common elements to conclude with poeticisms and rare words. The difficulty in tracing a poet's use of particular poetic synonyms and diction inevitably highlights the weak foundations on which we base our sense of chronology in tracing the development of ideas in skaldic diction. Whaley's treatment of Arnórr's poetic diction is, in consequence, more descriptive than analytical.

The edition of Arnórr's verse falls into two parts, the first part giving the edited text and the second a diplomatic text, with full commentary. The choice of the main manuscript is the 'best manuscript' available (p. 101), but the arguments in each case are not always clear. For instance, the main manuscript within the same poem may differ from stanza to stanza, even though the stanzas are preserved in the same corpus of manuscripts. While I do not doubt Whaley's reasons for changing the main manuscript from one stanza to another, I would nevertheless draw attention to *Haraldsdrápa*, stanzas 4, 11, and 13, where *Heimskringla* takes precedence over *Morkinskinna* as the main text in her edition. Thirteen stanzas of the reconstructed poem are cited in *Morkinskinna*, whereas only five are in *Heimskringla*. This raises the question whether *Morkinskinna* should not have been used as the main text for all thirteen of the relevant stanzas, as it is for the ten where *Heimskringla* is not one of the sources.

Whaley gives the context in which each stanza is found, noting how the verse is introduced in the sagas or the scholarly works, as the case may be. This aspect of her commentary is particularly valuable. She furthermore presents admirably the ambiguities involved in interpreting skaldic verse in her commentary on each stanza, never simplifying the issue, but presenting the evidence concisely and taking account of the many sides of the argument. The edition is followed by some very useful tables in Appendix A, listing the distribution of Arnórr's verse in the manuscripts of any given work.

Diana Whaley's work on Arnórr jarlaskáld's poetry must be highly commended. Unfortunately we have had to wait a frustratingly long time for the publication of this important book, which appears almost twenty years after the completion of the author's Oxford D.Phil. thesis, on which it is based. But the passing of time has done nothing to outdate her scholarship and the thoroughness of her approach, which now challenge others to follow in her footsteps.

GUÐRÚN NORDAL

SKALDSAGAS: TEXT, VOCATION AND DESIRE IN THE ICELANDIC SAGAS OF POETS. Edited by RUSSELL POOLE. *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* (*herausgegeben von Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, Heiko Steuer*) 27. *Walter de Gruyter*. Berlin and New York 2001. vi + 365 pp.

As Russell Poole notes in his introduction to this collection of essays, although the Icelandic skalds' sagas offer a 'convenient and attractive' introduction to saga literature (p. 22), this is the first English-language monograph devoted to them. What his excellent volume clearly demonstrates is not only that this small body of sagas amply repays the attention paid to it, but also that in spite of — or perhaps even because of — their closeness of form and subject matter, the skalds' sagas raise all the fundamental questions of saga criticism: genre, authorial intention and audience expectation, the development and dating of saga writing, its relation with other (continental) literatures, the literary potential of prosimetrum, and finally, two of the most engaging themes in saga literature, one time-honoured and one relatively new: the relationship between paganism and Christianity, and gender politics.

As core skalds' sagas, this volume uncontroversially specifies *Kormáks saga*, *Hallfreðar saga, Bjarnar saga Hítdælakappa* and *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*. The first essay, by Margaret Clunies Ross, not only defines (and provides useful plot summaries of) these four, but also considers their relation with 'outliers' such as *Grettis saga, Gísla saga, Fóstbræðra saga* and *Egils saga*, in 'an aetiology of the literary form and content of the skald saga' (p. 25). Some long-held assumptions are given a shake in the process: Clunies Ross notes that there is 'curiously little evidence outside the saga' for Egill Skalla-Grímsson's poetry (p. 37) — beyond, as she suggestively points out, the work of Snorri. On the other hand, some are let lie: although Clunies Ross defines poets' stereotypical appearance as 'dark, with prominent, ugly features' (p. 45), of the core poet-heroes, Gunnlaugr and Hallfreðr are red-haired and ugly, Kormákr is dark but not ugly, and Bjǫrn is

good-looking. But there is something Odinic in the practice of poetry; Clunies Ross shows how the skalds' saga writers were especially interested in these awkward individuals 'on the cusp' of Christianity (p. 46).

The representation of the poet as professional Icelander is well treated by Diana Whaley, and Jenny Jochens carefully assesses not only the poets' ostensible heterosexuality, but also the evidence of 'homosocial desire' in their relations with both their poetic rivals and their royal patrons. As Clunies Ross points out, one of the essential themes of the skalds' sagas is the place of the poet in society, and the similarity of this theme to the basic plot structure of the *þáttr* is developed by John Lindow in his essay exploring the so-called 'travel pattern' (essentially, Joseph Harris's 'King and Icelander' plot), that structure of 'alienation and reconciliation that the Icelander and prince play out' (p. 218). Lindow shows that even the core skalds' sagas differ greatly in how closely they fit the basic travel pattern, noting that the author of *Kormáks saga*, for instance, was 'simply not interested in the possibilities inherent in [it]' (p. 222), and does not suggest that the skalds' sagas are a straightforward literary development from *þættir*. But since three of the four core skalds' sagas (*Kormáks saga, Hallfreðar saga* and *Bjarnar saga*), as well as two of the outliers (*Egils saga* and *Fóstbræðra saga*), have sometimes been identified as amongst the oldest sagas of Icelanders, the question of the genre's inception naturally arises. Both P. M. Sørensen and Clunies Ross make the connection between the poets' sagas on the one hand and, on the other, anecdotes about court poets in the kings' sagas, though it is hard to get beyond Clunies Ross's chicken-and-egg question: 'which came first, the discontinuous narratives about poets within kings' sagas, which may have given other saga writers the idea of concentrating and giving literary shape to that material in a separate saga devoted to the poet's life alone, or the continuous narrative which was then cut up and dispersed within the framework of royal sagas [?]' (p. 41).

Kari Ellen Gade applies her research on skaldic metrics to dating the verses in the skalds' sagas, moving on from the old criteria of recognised archaisms which younger poets might easily have imitated to reveal the much more integral use of forms which had ceased to be productive after the eleventh century. As a corollary, she notes instances in which later skalds used metrical types which by and large do not occur in earlier poems. As always, there is a danger of circularity in adopting Finnur Jónsson's *Skjaldedigtning* datings, but it is minimised by the subtlety and complexity of Gade's analysis, which is full of interest and potential — rather as the old intractabilities about the dating of *Beowulf* have been usefully opened up by metrical analyses. Gade is careful to note that her method is not a failsafe way of dating stanzas individually, but her conclusion, that 'the bulk of the poetry [in *Kormáks saga*] antedated the earliest Provençal troubadour lyric by almost two hundred years' (p. 74), is a clear advance.

The question of continental influence has always been a vexed one. Bjarni Einarsson has repeatedly claimed that the verse attributed to Kormákr was written under the influence of troubadour love lyrics, while Peter Dronke argues that literary representations of idealised love sprang up in many places at different times — early medieval Iceland amongst them. Here, Alison Finlay concludes that the love-triangle element in the skalds' sagas 'is not derived in any significant way

from the Tristan romance' (p. 269), but, as she rightly adds, this goes no way towards explaining its somewhat surprising appearance in saga literature. Finlay interestingly develops her analysis of the relationship between *níð* and sexual rivalry, pointing out that the verses alone make surprisingly little reference to the latter, which, she suggests, may have developed because the law proscribed *níð* and it lost its place in saga literature. T. M. Andersson suggests tracing the love-triangle theme to a 'general context of impulses from a refashioned Brynhildr legend, a first exposure to German bridal-quest narrative perhaps in oral form, and the first glimmerings of Continental romance' (pp. 280–81).

Two essays practise what Russell Poole calls 'compositional stratigraphy' (p. 11): the attempt to establish the compositional relationship between the verse and the prose. Edith Marold gives a good demonstration in her essay on *Bjarnar saga*, and Poole himself traces the contours of possible formal poems or informal sequences of stanzas which may have been dismantled in the production of *Hallfreðar saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga*. This is Poole's own special area of expertise, and though it is bound to be speculative to some degree, its conclusions are very persuasive. But it is at least equally important to evaluate the finished saga prosimetrum — to answer the question of why the saga author went to all this compositional trouble — as P. M. Sørensen does in a fine piece. Torfi Tulinius develops Lee Hollander's idea that the structure of saga narrative echoes the micro-structure of the skaldic stanza with its interlaced juxtapositions, polysemous syntax and absent connectors.

Poole raises the intriguing idea that saga audiences had what he calls 'double vision' (p. 13): an awareness of the original contexts (perhaps as long poems) of stanzas quoted in saga narratives even as they listened to the new prosimetrum, valuing the ingenuity with which the saga author recontextualised his material. The reworking of the love triangle theme in the skalds' sagas is in itself clear indication of their fictionality, and P. M. Sørensen also addresses the difficult but insistent questions of intention and reception in his piece on saga prosimetrum; perhaps, he argues, the audience would not regard such recycling, or re-modelling, as in any way 'fraudulent' (p. 188), but would enjoy hearing what *might have* happened. Sørensen notes (pp. 189–90) that in *Fóstbræðra saga*, when King Haraldr completes Þormóðr's dying verse, he says, 'Svá mundi skáldit vilja kveðit hafa' (this is what the poet would have wanted to say) — a fitting epigraph to the whole issue of the fictionality of saga literature.

HEATHER O'DONOGHUE

SORG OCH ELEGI I EDDANS HJÄLTEDIKTNING. By DANIEL SÄVBORG. *Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Stockholm Studies in History of Literature* 36. *Almqvist & Wiksell International*. Stockholm 1997. 485 pp.

This study of the eddic elegies, especially their age, origin and coherence as a genre, brings to bear at least one novel approach to counter their traditional literary historical placement as late, medieval and sentimental: constructed

differences are invalidated by disagreements among the users of the resulting categories (ch. 1) and by continuities across category lines (especially ch. 3) —procedures prominent in deconstruction, here presumably home-grown. The primary distinction is Heusler's group of old heroic poems versus his much younger elegy group (at one point Heusler posits half a millennium between the groups! (p. 8)), and Sävborg's first chapter shows how, before Heusler and to some extent after, scholars offered wildly different groupings and datings.

This is rhetorically effective and makes amusing reading, but a historically fairer way of viewing this portion of eddic scholarship would be in terms of progress through hypotheses, corrections, new syntheses, and so on, inspired by institutions, personalities and outside influences. Sävborg's purpose here is instead polemical, and a full study, especially of the sources of Heusler's vision (as in n. 17) and the growth of the consensus from his seminal paper of 1906 through the first edition of *Die altgermanische Dichtung* in 1923 (Sävborg's reference exclusively to the revised second edition of 1941 obscures the story) down to Mohr on the eve of the war would be a desideratum. Such a study would reveal gems like Finnur Jónsson's uncited anticipation of Sävborg's main theme in a scorching review of Neckel's important book of 1908, which includes unrestrained scorn for Neckel's subjective historical judgements, especially concerning the lateness of those soft elegiac feelings; Finnur Jónsson asks how Neckel knows all this:

> Ich meine im gegensatz zu den verfasser, dass elegische stimmungen bei den Nordleuten ebensowohl im 9. und 10. wie im 11. jahrhundert sich äussern konnten und dass dieses moment überhaupt kein brauchbares kriterium für die datierung der alten lieder abgibt. Dass die Nordleute, speziell die Norweger, in den sogenannten wikingerzeit durchweg rohe, grausame, blutgierige gesellen gewesen sind, lässt sich nicht beweisen, wie es auch apriori höchst unwahrscheinlich ist (*Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 41 (1909), 382).

The remainder of Chapter 1 is filled out chiefly with methodological positions (which I will return to) and other introductory matters.

The 'deconstruction' continues in a more general sense in Chapter 2, on dating, perhaps the liveliest section of the book. First Sävborg shows how thin and intuitive were Heusler's dating methods, then goes on to demonstrate the logical gap between the lists of dating methods (*of/um* and so on) and actual literary-historical sitings of poems and groups of poems. An encyclopædia article of mine becomes whipping boy number one here, but I am in good company: with Jan de Vries, Jón Helgason, and many others. Like these authors, I did point out that the so-called scientific dating methods were weak, but it is amusing to see that after such a tip of the hat to 'objective science', literary historians make virtually no use of the listed criteria. Mercifully Sävborg also devotes a paragraph to pointing out that an encyclopædia article, by its nature, is attempting to represent dominant opinion and that my original work had in fact challenged the orthodoxy on some of the same points Sävborg himself is interested in (p. 57). Sävborg is particularly successful in showing the circular reasoning behind the

datings of de Vries and Kuhn — an innocent eye describing the king's new clothes by the device of abstracting an argument to the simplest level.

Chapter 3, at about 260 pages the weighty central section of the thesis, produces Sävborg's secret weapon, 'grief'. He reasons that grief (usually *sorg*) is the element without which no one would have arrived at a group called elegy and proceeds to break down the distinction on which the group depends by showing that eddic heroic poems, of both the old warlike and the young elegiac types, 'have' this element to some extent. Moreover grief in eddic heroic poems of both types is predominantly grief over a slain kinsman, and the presence of grief, and grief of this particular type, is paralleled outside the Poetic Edda in Viking Age skaldic poetry and older West Germanic poetry, but not extensively in literature of the High Middle Ages. These similarities and differences are patiently demonstrated in a carefully defined corpus for comparison, generally all preserved literature that might be contemporaneous with or antecedent to eddic poetry: Old West Germanic and skaldic poetry and High Medieval literature such as sagas, Norse translations of continental writings, Latin, Middle High German and Old French. Obviously the 170 pages devoted to the 'genomgång' of eddic and non-eddic poetry are subtler than the establishment on a plus-or-minus basis of the presence or absence of grief, but these pages do require a determined reader.

It is the chapter's last hundred pages that I find most interesting. The section on 'the presentation of grief' (pp. 229–87) comes close to being the kind of catalogue of elegiac elements I had myself once envisaged, and these pages may be useful even to students who cannot subscribe to Sävborg's genre interpretations (pp. 293–320). In two well-argued sections the author shows that 'love' in the elegies functions only to highlight grief and that grief and revenge are the twin (not complementary) outputs of a killing. These three elements — a killing, grief, and revenge — constitute a kind of structural definition of the Norse heroic lay and show the elegies to be at most a subtype of that genre.

Thus, if one can date by affinities tied to genre or more basically to the central emotion of the 'elegiac', the Old Norse eddic elegies belong to the same tradition as Old English, Old High German and Old Norse heroic poetry — an Old Germanic tradition — and not to traditions of the High Middle Ages. This is the basic teaching of Sävborg's study, though his method leads immediately to an apparent contradiction. Although the boundary between old and young, warlike and elegiac has been deconstructed, we are still left with a feeling for an elegiac group which has more emphasis on grief than in the other poems:

> Gruppåtskillnadstanken har i detta kapitel fått sig många törnar. Likväl kvarstår frågan varför ett antal eddadikter, ungefär motsvarande gruppen 'elegier' . . . utmärker sig ifråga om intresset för sorg. De uppvisar inga fundamentala skillnader mot övriga ed[d]adikter eller några (avvikande) kopplingar till någon annan diktning, men de skildrar dock sorgen betydligt utförligare, utvecklar den mer och låter den dominera helheten mer än i de övriga eddadikterna. Kan man ändå se dessa dikter som en grupp, 'typ' eller 'subgenre' av sorgdikter inom Eddan? (p. 320).

The remaining four chapters imply a 'yes' answer.

Chapter 4 (pp. 321–67) studies the relationship between form and the perception of an elegiac genre. As the formal feature known as 'retrospective' is surveyed, the *Eddica minora* are treated for the first time to extensive discussion, but Sävborg eliminates all these poems, including those identified as 'elegies' and the like by Heusler, from consideration by showing how this feature functions differently in different groups of poems, only the eddic elegies (discounting *Helreið Brynhildar* and *Guðrúnarkviða III*) using it consistently as a rhetorical device to foreground grief. Along the way the author does seek a common denominator of all retrospect in a brief section on 'spelet med tidsperspektivet inom hjältesagan' (pp. 348–49); this strikes me as one of the few poorly reasoned sections of the book, partly because it misuses the idea of a 'heroic age', borrowed from English. In general, I have portrayed the balance between form (or 'elegiac form', as I have called retrospect) and 'elegiac content' ('grief') rather differently in my articles; but Sävborg's single footnote reference to my study of the death song just by-passes such arguments and concludes that retrospective is too various a feature to serve as foundation for a category (p. 350). A second formal feature studied is called 'non-narrative form'. Under this phrase Sävborg collects a number of tendencies and proceeds to show (as with 'grief') that they are shared between the old heroic poems and the eddic elegies. There is a real confusion here (explicit on p. 356), however, between, on the one hand, *Situationsgedicht* and its synonyms and 'lyric' on the other; the author is more successful in attacking the latter. There are some good points here, especially the analogy of the springing style of the lay to the avoidance of action in the elegies; but on the whole the arguments in this chapter are debatable.

By contrast, I am in agreement with Chapter 5 (pp. 368–94), which treats the spirit of the supposed older and younger groups. In a first section dealing with explicit moralising, Sävborg shows that neither group is widely comparable to High Medieval literature such as the *Nibelungenlied* in authorial judgments; the conclusion of *Atlamál* (which linguistic tests show to be truly late) is the only exception. Parenthetical outbursts of the 'þæt wæs god cyning' type (which is not used) seem to be a different phenomenon, as are, more obviously, dramatic evaluations such as those that pepper *Hamðismál*. The Icelandic sagas, with their famous objectivity, are, however, conspicuously absent from the comparative material here. A second section, dealing with the more slippery concept of ideals (or perhaps mentality?), focuses on the 'hard/soft' contrast and on the gentle ideals of medieval Christianity — which are shown, through examples from Middle High German heroic poetry and skaldic verse, to be more aligned with the inflicters of grief than with their victims. After a collection of examples of harsh ethics in the Bible itself, Sävborg comments: 'Tanken på en nära koppling mellan kristendomen och drag som känslighet, mildhet, fredlighet och medkänsla med den sörjande motståndaren hör snarre hemma i söndagsskolornas uppbyggelseskrifter än i forn- och medeltida kristna diktverk' (p. 392). Amen!

By this point necessary differences in dating, structure, and meaning have been largely levelled to the author's satisfaction, but the coherence of a sub-group of eddic heroic poems that foreground grief, roughly the elegy group, continues to persist. In the sixth and last substantial chapter (ch. 7 is chiefly a recapitulation of

results), Sävborg correlates this feature with focus on women, the chief expressers of *sorg*. In a good exercise in gender analysis, the author shows, among other things, that the 'hard' female model associated especially with the Guðrún of *Atlakviða* is explicitly marked as exceptional in the poem itself and in fact correlates better with High Medieval images of literary women than with attested Old English and Viking Age images. However, in his effort to maintain that the eddic elegies are poems of the same type as the 'old' double-sided lays and at most a subtype of them, he goes so far as to say, not that the foregrounding of grief and the focus on women *co-vary*, but that it is the focus shift (which he twice calls 'tillfälligt') which creates the subgenre, for example: 'Därmed kan "eddaelegierna" knappast betecknas som en kategori av sorg- eller klagodikter; inte heller har deras större sensibilitet och känsloinriktning en primär betydelse. Detta är sekundärt. Det är en *följd* av att huvudpersonen är kvinna och huvudperspektivet därmed en kvinnas' (p. 413, his emphasis; also explicitly p. 438: 'avhängigt'). But *Helreið Brynhildar* (which Sävborg had excluded from the remaining elegy group because it lacks *sorg*) proves that merely shifting the focus to a woman is not a sufficient condition.

If I am in agreement with Sävborg's main claims, I am less enthusiastic about his methods and modes of realisation. The book is unconscionably long, drastically inflated by repetitions and circumstantial swelling; every new section must begin and end with summary of the argument (my favourite example carries unconscious irony: 'Mina undersökningar är slut. Jag har varit generös med sammanfattningar av resonemang och resultat . . .', p. 450). Obviously an Anglo-American '(critical) book' is a different animal from a Swedish '(doktors)avhandling', but a reader from outside that (thankfully closed) system is likely to ask: Does the series have no *editor*? (The book is not free of typographical errors and bibliographical confusions, but such superficial flaws seem unimportant in what is essentially a printed dissertation.) With the sheer volume, which may in the end serve to make points that are, on the whole, worth making, goes a dogged adherence to the limited number of unsubtle ideas I have summarised, even though detailed textual work which I cannot review here often has new offerings.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of method, however, is the author's insistence that his work is an objective investigation, lacking preconceptions or even a hypothesis and independent of antecedent literature on the subject; this is especially enunciated under 'Principer och metod' (pp. 31–36), but the claim, though obviously untrue, is repeated countless times. This stance leads the author to squander space (and his reader's patience) by arranging the book as a series of laborious, ostensibly objective problem-solving 'investigations' instead of as a complete argument (which would be very much shorter) and to leave his formal *Forschungsbericht* until near the end. It does not mean that the predecessors with whom Sävborg disagrees are not soundly thrashed along the way, but it enables positive predecessors to be presented as (more or less accidentally) falling into agreement with the author. Since I have myself been deeply involved in the book's subject, I may be more aware than others of this flaw in method — though Sävborg makes several generous allusions to my work on elegy (especially on p. 445; but compare the review by Mats Malm in *Samlaren* 119 (1998), 129–37). Still, any

reader must see immediately that there is a deeply fallacious claim to some kind of scientific objectivity — a claim we are now cautious of even in relation to science. Humanistic scholars, at least, are the product of all they have read, in fact of 'discourses' of all kinds. I believe one should face this squarely and make it clear how one is building on the past.

Resisting the temptation to pursue more details (I *do* have an editor!), I shall close with my major agreements and disagreements with Sävborg's essential points. The similarities of the 'old' and 'young' groups are established, but the significance of similarity and dissimilarity in terms of 'genre' hovers unresolved in the absence of any explicit genre theory. (Indeed, the whole thesis would be called 'undertheorised' in the current Anglo-American literary context.) Established also is the inadequacy of all cultural dating; yet the late dating of *Grípisspá* and *Atlamál*, where indicators of literary affiliation coincide with linguistic indicators, is convincing. Some of the prejudices on which cultural dating depended are well and truly exposed in Sävborg's book, but among the remaining desiderata is a history of their formation and growth, part of the history of disciplines such as *altgermanische Altertumskunde*.

I still harbour a very different view of genre in which form (especially retrospective) is of prime importance and find that Sävborg's notion of genre development (the elegies are simply double-sided lays in which the focus 'accidentally' falls on a woman) leaves too much unexplained, for example, connections with Old English elegies, the Old English-Old Norse connection in death song (whether or not this is 'elegy'), male grief as in Hrothgar's tearful performance (which goes unmentioned), and the tradition of male elegy represented by *Sonatorrek*. In his discussion of (relative) dating, I find that the author underrates *Sagenform* (p. 49); while I agree that it is a weak criterion, Sävborg neglects eddic hints of German influence in the main example he gives (Guðrún's relation to her brothers) and does not mention harder questions such as Oddrún's addition to the story. The author elects to limit his corpus to certain heroic poems, accepting the evidence of the manuscript: 'Uppdelningen i guda- och hjältedikter har stöd i Codex Regius och ligger också utanför mig och den moderna forskningen' (p. 36). But his treatment of *Vǫlundarkviða* as 'heroic' and of the Young Sigurd group as 'märchenhaft' (if not mythological, especially pp. 294–300) violates this boundary. In fact, Sävborg has not applied his deconstruction evenhandedly. He prefers to deal only with poems that seem whole and closed (more like modern poetry), excluding prosimetrum and the many 'voices' of generic mixtures, while I tend to see all eddic poetry as ultimately vestiges of oral performances, a babble of discourses which were never pure and whole.

Yet Sävborg has wielded his positivistic scalpel to good effect, and the demolition work is to be welcomed. It has already stirred good discussion in reviews by Malm (see above) and Klaus von See (*Skandinavistik* 28 (1998), 87–100) and, together with Bjarne Fidjestøl's just published posthumous book on the dating of eddic poetry, should become a focal point for a fresh assault on the dating question as well as a more nuanced interpretation of genre.

JOSEPH HARRIS

THE SAGAS OF ICELANDERS: A SELECTION. Preface by JANE SMILEY. Introduction by ROBERT KELLOGG. *World of the Sagas*. Editor: ÖRNÓLFUR THORSSON. Assistant Editor: BERNARD SCUDDER. *Allen Lane, The Penguin Press*. London 2000. lxvi + 782 pp.

The volume reviewed here is the first selection (one may hope, only the first selection) from the five-volume set of all the 'Sagas of Icelanders', some forty full-length sagas plus close on fifty *þættir* or short stories, brought out in 1997 by an international team of translators working under the general editorship of Viðar Hreinsson, published by Leifur Eiríksson Press, and reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXV:3 (2000), 327–29. The major virtues of that set, apart from its very welcome completeness, included an agreed editorial policy which ensured that all translators translated some common terms in exactly the same way, together with an elaborate apparatus of maps, indexes, diagrams and notes on translation.

Many of these latter are reproduced in the volume of selections. Indeed one may as well say at the start that this 800-page volume, with its ten sagas, seven *þættir*, 'Preface' by Jane Smiley, 'Introduction' by Robert Kellogg, and full supporting apparatus, all at an extremely affordable price, makes life immensely easier for anyone considering teaching a course on sagas, as indeed for any privately interested reader. It gives a very fair survey of the entire field (poets' sagas, family sagas, a comic and a trickster's saga and the two 'Vinland' sagas as well), all done with professional competence but without intimidating academic apparatus. In all those respects it is an essential buy.

What it does not do is broaden horizons for the reader who has been buying saga translations already. Most of the works offered here are familiar staples. *Hrafnkels saga* and *Laxdœla saga* have been recently in print from Penguin, as have the two Vinland sagas; *Egils saga* and *Gísla saga* have been available from Everyman for many years, and *Bandamanna saga* from Southside Press's New Saga Library. *Gunnlaugs saga* figures in the World's Classics volume of selections, along with the *þáttr* of 'Authun and the Bear'. Of the full-length sagas translated here, only *Vatnsdœla saga* and *Króka-Refs saga* are likely not to be on a reasonably well-stocked shelf, and while both are welcome (as are the *þættir* like 'Bolli Bollason's Tale' which expand the saga narratives), it would be possible to wish for a selection which got further away from the old Anglophone favourites — though this would admittedly entail moving away from the aim of a cheap, substantial volume for (one hopes) a new mass market.

In spite of their familiarity, however, there remains a sense that the best of these sagas have kept their power to puzzle and challenge even the most professional of modern translators and commentators. Jane Smiley in her 1988 novel *The Greenlanders* caught the tone and behaviour-patterns of the saga-world better than any other modern writer, but both she and Robert Kellogg, in their respective 'Preface' and 'Introduction', seem fixed on the sagas' clear surface rather than their turbid depths. Both he and she thus pick out the simplicity of saga-prose as a main characteristic, 'Plain, unvarnished, and direct' being her words (p. xi), 'straightforward' and 'clear' being his (p. xviii).

Really? What, then, might one make of the well-known scene in *Hrafnkels saga* where the serving-woman rushes in and berates Hrafnkell for allowing his enemy's brother Eyvindr to ride by unchallenged? Rightly do they say in the old proverb,

she says (or perhaps shrieks), 'svá ergisk hverr sem eldisk'. Two of the five words here are clear enough, *hverr* for 'each man' and *sem* for 'who' (though *svá* here also gives *sem* something of the sense of 'as'). The middle-voice verbs are familiar enough too, and there can be no doubt about *eldask* as 'to grow old'. What about *ergjask*, though, related as it is to the adjective *argr*, meaning 'cowardly'? The adjective can also notoriously mean 'unmanly' and by extension 'impotent', but this does not seem to fit the context. Or does it? Probably what the serving-woman is using the proverb to say is (undeniable surface meaning): 'each man loses sexual virility as he grows old', but further (strong contextual meaning): 'and this explains why you have turned coward as well'. The complex and barbed insult is especially wounding when said by a woman to a man, and perhaps even more so when said by a woman of low status. But how to render it in English? Hermann Pálsson's Penguin translation runs here: 'The older a man, the feebler'; Gwyn Jones's World Classics one: 'Grow old, and grow afraid'. Terry Gunnell, in the volume reviewed here, prefers 'the older you get, the wetter you become' (p. 457). None of these really digs deep enough. Perhaps 'the older a man gets, the softer he gets' would catch some of the sexual scorn implied.

But in any case the woman seems to have got Hrafnkell dead wrong, and so, I fear, has Jane Smiley, who says here (p. xiii) that the woman 'goads him into seeking revenge'. Female goading is common enough in Norse literature, but in this case there is a strong suspicion (and this is the view of the Þjóstarsson brothers at the end) that Hrafnkell had sat quiet in disgrace so long, not out of fear of his main enemy Sámr, whom he had written off long since as a nobody, but so as to be able to take out Sámr's brother Eyvindr, identified as the real danger-man of the family, who until that moment had been out of range. His revenge would have taken the same form if the woman had never said a word. Her insult just shows how well he had everyone fooled; and also, perhaps, the self-control with which he endured not just physical torture but also years of scorn from the countryside's many dimwits. This is a lot to build on five words, but it is the way sagas work: verbally clear, direct to the point of taciturnity, hinting frequently at unknowable depths of motivation.

The sagas translated here offer several similar cruces. What does Guðrún mean in *Laxdœla saga* with her famously enigmatic remark when her husband comes back from killing his cousin and her lover Kjartan, 'Misjǫfn verða morginverkin. Ek hefi spunnit tólf álna garn, en þú hefir vegit Kjartan'? Is she complimenting Bolli? Complaining about women's work? Wishing she were a man? What in fact is she saying? Keneva Kunz translates it here (p. 372) as 'A poor match they make, our morning's work — I have spun twelve ells of yarn while you have slain Kjartan', but the Penguin version of Hermann Pálsson and Magnus Magnusson gives her first three words quite differently, and more proverbially, as 'Morning tasks are often mixed'. (For a judicious review of various possible interpretations, and for a conclusion rather different from Kunz's, see Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'A good day's work: *Laxdœla saga*, ch. 49', *NOWELE* 21/22 (1993), 267–81.)

Meanwhile *Gísla saga* raises the now-vexed question — by generations of scribes and readers it was never even noticed — who did kill Vésteinn? Was it Þorgrímr, as has long been assumed, from the evident fact that Gísli goes out and kills

Þorgrímr in revenge? Or could it have been Gísli's brother Þorkell, in which case the saga could be seen as neatly and grimly symmetrical, with two brothers each killing their wives' putative first lovers, and then covering up for each other, with further obscure suggestions of incestuous feeling and homosocial bonding? Either way, much depends on how the overheard words of the wives Auðr and Ásgerðr are translated, as simultaneously clear and enigmatic as usual. 'Prose narrative is prose narrative is prose narrative', declares Jane Smiley (p. xiv), and one appreciates the intended compliment from a modern novelist to her anonymous and relatively unsung predecessors. But sagas are not novels. It would not be unfair to say that the best of them make modern novels, with their continuous pointers and extended explanations, look flat-footed; and they certainly test the abilities of translators to the limit. The translations here are consistently able, even if no translation can be absolutely reliable. And as said above, every assistance is given to the new reader, from the careful explanation of one representative *dróttkvætt* stanza from *Egils saga* to the handy diagrams of Icelandic farms and Icelandic political structures. Andrew Wawn's *Vatnsdœla saga* and George Clark's *Króka-Refs saga* alone are worth the very moderate price of the volume, even for those who already possess translations of most of the others. And if one would have liked to see the former accompanied by, say, *Finnboga saga*, with its competing version of the feud between the Vatnsdalers and the family of Finnbogi the Mighty, one can always hope that this and others will be coming along in succeeding volumes.

TOM SHIPPEY

UNDER THE CLOAK: A PAGAN RITUAL TURNING POINT IN THE CONVERSION OF ICELAND. By JÓN HNEFILL AÐALSTEINSSON. Edited by JAKOB S. JÓNSSON. Appendix translated by TERRY GUNNELL. *Háskólaútgáfan, Félagsvísindastofnun*. Second, extended edition. Reykjavík 1999. 236 pp.

With the millenary celebrations of Iceland's conversion to Christianity last year there have been a number of new publications on the subject, including this new extended edition of Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson's earlier work on Iceland's conversion, *Under the Cloak: The Acceptance of Christianity in Iceland with Particular Reference to the Religious Attitudes Prevailing at the Time* (Uppsala, 1978). This was itself a revised version of his *Kristnitakan á Íslandi* (Reykjavík, 1971), which was based on his doctoral thesis. The new edition draws on the research he himself has done over the last twenty years, as well as on other recent research on the conversion, in order to present a more thorough approach to the problem with which the earlier works were concerned, namely the meaning of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði's sojourn under the cloak and its implications for the motives behind Iceland's unusually peaceful conversion to Christianity. The text of the first edition of *Under the Cloak* has been printed unchanged with the same pagination in order to facilitate ease of reference, but a new Preface, a seventy-page Appendix and an Index have been added. The Bibliography has also been rearranged and updated, including both works published after the first edition of *Under the Cloak* and earlier works that are referred to in the Appendix.

The Appendix is used both to revise aspects of the argumentation in the first edition and to take these arguments further. It is divided into seven chapters, the first four of which make specific reference to the chapters of the first edition on which they draw. The first (Chapter 15) serves as an appendix to Chapters 1 and 2 and summarises the conclusions drawn in Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson's recent work supporting the reliability of the accounts of sacrifices in *Landnámabók*. Chapters 16 and 17 pick up on details from Chapter 3 (on pagan gods in Iceland) and discuss two *níð* stanzas from *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* and the three articles of Úlfljótslǫg in *Landnámabók*. Revising to some extent his earlier views on Úlfljótslǫg, Jón Hnefill suggests that *hinn almáttki áss* referred to there is not Þórr but the rather more obscure god Týr, and that the first two articles of the law must therefore be very ancient, coming from a time when the worship of Týr was still alive: they 'provide us with a living example of a legal text from the time of the Old Norse faith' (p. 177). Chapter 18 is an appendix to Chapter 5 (sources on the acceptance of Christianity in Iceland) and provides a response to the criticism that Jón Hnefill placed too much reliance in the first edition on the historicity of Ari's work. In particular, he refutes the view that *Íslendingabók* should be read as a medieval religious history, arguing that it is better understood, like *Landnámabók*, as a folkloristic text, designed 'to preserve certain kinds of folk knowledge for posterity' (p. 180).

In Chapters 19–21 of the Appendix, Jón Hnefill turns to what he sees as the central event of the conversion, Þorgeirr's sojourn under the cloak, and connects this to the human sacrifice which, according to *Kristni saga* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, took place the day before Christianity was accepted in Iceland. This was a connection previously made in *Kristnitakan á Íslandi*, but omitted from the first version of *Under the Cloak* because of the author's uncertainty about whether human sacrifice could actually have taken place in Iceland. Jón Hnefill argues that there are a number of reasons for believing in the authenticity of this account: it is objective and unbiased, contains snippets of otherwise lost information reminiscent of Ari's method of working, and corresponds closely to other Icelandic sources on human sacrifice in *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Skarðsárbók*, *Reykdœla saga*, and Þorvaldr veili's verse against Þangbrandr. Rather than simply representing Christian propaganda against the heathen, these examples 'give complete support to the strong likelihood that human sacrifices were actually carried out at Þingvellir on the day before Christianity was accepted' (p. 196). He suggests that, given that Ari stresses Þorgeirr's paganism prior to the conversion, 'it is of course quite natural to assume' (p. 209) that he took a leading role in these sacrifices, and that they formed an important part of a traditional religious ritual for attaining knowledge about the future, a ritual for which he finds a parallel in the account of Brutus's journeys given by Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.

Although Jón Hnefill is careful to make clear that his interpretation is 'only one part of a much larger overall pattern' (p. 210), he is perhaps rather too ready to affirm the absolute reliability of Ari's narrative, especially given that a number of recent works on the conversion of Iceland have sought to modify the view of Ari as an unbiased and objective historian. Despite his emphasis on the importance of

'watertight scientific logic' (p. 5) in discussions of the conversion, the reader may question whether his own argumentation fits that description, indeed whether any reconstruction of the events leading up to the conversion of Iceland can be other than conjectural. While he is clearly right to emphasise the unconventionality of Ari's account of the conversion against attempts to read it as exemplifying medieval religious doctrine, there is perhaps too little attention paid to recent work on the literary conventions which might have influenced conversion narratives in the Middle Ages, and his emphasis on reconstructing pagan thought and belief at the time of the conversion, over and above Christian ideology at the time when Ari was writing, inevitably leads to some distortion. Nevertheless, this new edition of *Under the Cloak* represents an important continuation of the ideas in the original version, and provides a useful survey in English of Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson's more recent research on human sacrifice in Iceland.

In terms of presentation, the relationship of the Appendix to the first edition is clear and well co-ordinated, but there are a number of typographical errors and omissions, both new and old, throughout the work (see for example pp. 3, 4, 8, 13, 17, 18, 27). The Index is an extremely useful addition, although it is somewhat eccentric both in its choice of what to include and in the page numbers cited (for *Kristni saga*, for example, which is mentioned frequently, the reader is referred only to p. 12). The translations from Old Icelandic into English also run into trouble in some places, most noticeably in the extracts from the admittedly syntactically complex and non-normalised text of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (see pp. 186–88).

SIÂN DUKE

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