

INTERTEXTUALITY IN *BJARNAR SAGA HÍTDÆLAKAPPA*

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WORKS like *Landnámabók* (a chronicle), Snorri's prose *Edda* (a treatise on religion and poetics), or *Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa* (a family saga) differ from each other in so many ways that we normally do not think of them at the same time. Yet aside from their common language, their narrative passages resemble each other in one respect: the narrative voice is one and the same, the reticent, so-called objective narrator who poses as the sole authority for the information imparted. If we restrict our attention merely to this one aspect of narrative rhetoric, we must admit that the authors of these works apparently knew only one way to tell a story. Wherever it came from—oral tradition?—Icelandic writers stuck to it through thick and thin. In contrast to the variety of narrative modes developed hundreds of years later in novels, the narrative voice so often praised by Icelandic scholars does at times seem decidedly monotonous.

Such thoughts merely acknowledge that all narrative styles have their limitations. Now it is clear that sagas are more than their narrators profess them to be, namely naturalistic records of the settlement of Iceland, the history of kings and bishops, contemporary accounts of feuds, fantastic stories of mythical heroes, and so on. Equally clearly, the meanings we draw from sagas are not restricted to those transmitted by the literal sense of the narrative, for sagas as works of fiction additionally communicate a coded (and a perhaps more important) message the unscrambling of which requires the reader's willingness to hold in suspension a number of elements that achieve significance only in relation to each other. The saga code, like all literary codes, derives its meaning from a narrative tradition. Because sagas can be read in relation to their tradition, each saga has a dimension extending beyond itself. As many readers have remarked, sagas consist of stereotyped characters, a limited stock of actions, and a fixed repertoire of conduct (Allen 1971, 95–127; Andersson 1967, 31–64; Clover 1974, 57–83; Heinemann 1974, 102–119; Lönnroth 1976, 42–103). The reading process consists of *déjà lu* experiences in which characters and events—many of which cannot properly be understood apart from the tradition—are weighed against the composites drawn from the corpus at

large. We may call the interrelations among sagas *implicit intertextuality*, a saga's mostly unconscious relations to other sagas.¹ In what follows I will analyse how implicit intertextuality informs Chapter XI of *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*. Specifically, I will argue that the narrative code in the chapter (here quoted in full from Nordal's edition, *Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 136–38) communicates a message that contradicts the literal sense of the text:

Nú er þat sagt, at Þórðr spurði Oddnýju, hvé ráðligt henni þætti at bjóða Birni til vistar, (1) ok kvazk eigi vilja, at menn gengi milli þeira ok rægði þá saman, — (2) 'ok vil ek svá reyna skap Bjarnar ok trúlyndi við mik.' Hon latti, kvað þat óráð at því orði, sem áðr lék á. Þórðr lét eigi letjask ok (I) **fór í Hólm í Hítardal**; (II) **hann reið einn saman í blári kápu**. En fjall stendr at húsbacki í Hólmi, ok gengr hryggr sá niðr af fjallinu at húsunum heim. Þat höfðu þau at sýslu þann dag, Björn ok móðir hans, at þau breiddu niðr lérept ok þurruðu, er vát höfðu orðit. (III) **Hon tók til orða: 'Maðr riðr þar,' segir hon, 'í blári kápu ok er alllíkr Þórði Kolbeinssyni, ok hann er ok, (IV) ok mun hans ørendi óþarft.'** (V) **'Eigi mun þat,' segir Björn. (I) Þórðr kom þar**. Þeir kveðjask ok spyrjask almæltra tíðenda. Síðan mælti Þórðr: 'Þat er ørendi mitt hingat, at vita, hvárt þú vill halda sættir við mik, þær er konungr gerði milli okkar, ok skuli nú hvárgi eiga qðrum sakar at bæta, ok er þat merkiligt, er skilríkr maðr hefir samit milli okkar; en var mér þat í hug um hríð, at vit myndim ekki sættask.' Björn kvað þat einsætt, at halda sættir, þat sem þeir höfðu um mælt. Þórðr mælti: (3) 'Ek hefi þann hluta haft mála, er vegligri þótti, ok mun ek nú þat sýna, at ek vil, at vit sættimsk heilum sáttum; ek vil bjóða þér þangat til vetrvistar til mín, ok skal ek vel veita þér; vænti ek ok, at þú munt svá þiggja.' Þórðr fór þar um fögurum orðum. (VI) **Þórdís mælti: 'Þat mun sýna, at ek mun ekki mjök talhljóðin. Hugðu svá at, Björn,' segir hon, 'at því flára mun Þórðr hyggja, sem hann talar sléttara, ok trú þú honum eigi.'** Þá kemr Arngeirr at ok spyr, hvat þeir ræði. Þórðr segir honum. 'Svá sýnisk mér,' segir Arngeirr, 'sem sá sé þeim meiri vinr, er þessa fýsir, ef þeir væri þá sáttari en áðr, ok fýsa vil ek Björn at fara, ok mun Þórðr þat efna, sem hann mælir'; ok stenzk heldr í móti með þeim hjónum. Björn mælti: 'Þat hefi ek ætlat, at vera með fõður mínum, ok morgungum mun kynligt þykkja heimboð þetta sakar orðróms manna.' Þórðr mælti ok kvað, at Björn væri honum eigi trúr, ef hann þægi eigi boðit. Ok nú hét Björn at vera þar nokkura stund ok kvazk þó mundu dveljask fyrst með fõður sínum. Þórðr reið heim ok segir Oddnýju, hvert hann hafði farit um daginn, ok kvazk nú hafa þat ørendi fengit, er hann vildi. 'Hvert er þat?' segir hon. (4) Hann segir, at þangat hafi hann boðit Birni, ok kvazk þat hafa gort til yfirbóta við hana. 'Þat hygg ek,' segir hon, 'at nú ljúgir þú, ef þú kannt það.' Þórðr segir: 'Eigi verðr einn eiðr alla.' Skilja þau nú hjalit.

Now it is said that Þórðr asked Oddný how advisable she thought it to invite Björn for a visit, and said he did not want people spreading slander-

ous stories back and forth between them. 'In that way I want to test Björn's mettle and his loyalty to me.' She tried to dissuade him, said it was unwise in view of all that had been said before. Þórðr did not let that deter him, and he set out for Hólmr in Hítardalr. He rode alone in a blue coat. Now a mountain stands behind the house at Hólmr, and a ridge leads down from the mountain to the farm. Björn and his mother were busy that day spreading out linen to dry that had become wet. She spoke: 'A man is riding there,' she says, 'in a blue coat and is very like Þórðr Kolbeinsson, and that's who it is, and his purpose will prove harmful.' 'No, it will not,' says Björn. Þórðr arrived there. He and Björn exchange greetings and ask each other about the commonly known bits of news. Then Þórðr said: 'It is my purpose here to learn whether you wish to keep the settlement with me that the king made between us. Now neither of us has to compensate the other, and the settlement that a judicious man has made between us is a significant one, for I thought for a time that we would never reach a settlement.' Björn said the only course was to keep the settlement that they had agreed on. Þórðr spoke: 'I got what seemed the more honourable terms in the case, and I will now show that I desire that we settle our differences once and for all. I wish to invite you to be my guest over the winter, and I will entertain you well. I expect also that you will accept in like spirit.' Þórðr presented his proposal in glowing terms. Þórdís spoke: 'It will be seen that I am not easily persuaded. Think, Björn,' she says, 'the smoother Þórðr speaks, the more deceitfully he is thinking, so do not believe him.' Then Arngeirr arrives and asks what the two men are talking about. Þórðr tells him. 'It seems like this to me,' says Arngeirr, 'that he who urges this is their better friend, if they become more reconciled than before, and I wish to urge Björn to go, and Þórðr will honour what he says,' and man and wife were rather at odds. Björn spoke: 'I was intending to stay at my father's, and many would think this invitation strange because of the rumour going round.' Þórðr spoke and said that Björn would not be acting in good faith towards him if he did not accept the offer. And now Björn promised to be there for a time and said though he would stay first with his father. Þórðr rode home and tells Oddný where he had been that day, and said that he had achieved his aim. 'What is that?' she says. He says that he has invited Björn to visit them and said that he had done that to make amends to her. 'I think,' she says, 'that you are now lying if ever you knew how.' Þórðr says: 'One broken oath does not invalidate all others.' They now end the conversation.²

The chapter's literal sense, despite the linguistic difficulty of much of this passage, is sufficiently plain. Before embarking on his venture, Þórðr asks his wife what she thinks of his plan to invite Björn for the winter, to which she responds sceptically. Unpersuaded, he rides over to Hólmr and extends the invitation, which Björn reluctantly accepts in the face of conflicting advice from his mother and father. Þórðr returns

home and informs Oddný of the impending visit, which, he claims, he has arranged to please her. She accuses him, not for the first time, of lying. Readers who respond only to the literal sense of this passage tend to accept virtually everything at face value. One such reader, Laurence de Looze,³ interprets Þórðr's invitation as a gesture of reconciliation, and Theodore M. Andersson (1967, 138) views Björn's acceptance as a token of 'good faith'. Further, the ensuing action becomes either an attempt to resolve differences, or 'polite feuding' gotten out of hand, or deadly conflict caused by abusive poems (Andersson 1967, 139). The latest editors of the saga also find no fault with Þórðr's motives (*Sígildar sögur* I 1986, 84). Finally, literal-minded readers may even find the saga deficient where it is most subtle. Nordal, for example, regards chapters 10–26 as 'mjög í molum, óskipulegt og samhengislaust' (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, lxxvi).⁴ By failing to pick up the signals the code imparts, such readings almost certainly miss part of its message.

As I understand the code in Chapter XI, Þórðr's invitation is a challenge that Björn accepts to renew their feud. Björn recognises, as an initiated reader ought to, that Þórðr's plan (which Björn terms the *kynligt heimboð*) will enable them to conduct the feud without fear of outside interference. Correctly interpreting this passage influences how we see the rest of the saga, both what comes before Chapter XI and what happens afterwards. If it is true that 'of all the sagas, *Bjarnar saga* comes nearest to the pure conflict pattern' (Andersson 1967, 137), then perhaps the saga will seem more consistent if we regard Björn in the beginning as an appealing and clever young man, but one who, as a result of his dealings with Þórðr, has become insatiable in his desire for revenge.

Before we examine the intertextual topoi operating in Chapter XI, remembering the scene's context will cast light on the two enemies' motives in spending the winter together. Þórðr Kolbeinsson is introduced as a great poet whose craft has won him favour abroad among royalty but unpopularity with the homefolk, especially with those whom he bullied with scurrilous verse.⁵ He may not exactly be an *ójafnaðarmaðr mikill*, but he can certainly be unpleasant to those whom he dislikes. Björn, on the other hand, comes equipped with virtually all the charm a saga can give a young hero (*Björn var snimma mikill vexti ok rammr at afli, karlmannligr ok sæmiligr at sjá*, p. 112—'Even as a boy Björn was large, strong, manly, and handsome'). Trouble begins in earnest, as often in the sagas, over a woman. Björn

agrees to allow Þórðr to deliver a pledge of love to Oddný. Þórðr deceives Oddný, first, by claiming that Björn has authorised Þórðr's marriage to her if Björn dies or fails to return and, second, by having people spread rumours of Björn's death, and, third, by asserting that he has heard of Björn's burial. Björn's retaliatory attack on Þórðr in Norway—he spares Þórðr's life out of deference to the king—causes King Óláfr to settle the dispute. A temporary cessation of hostilities follows. Now some saga grievances are scarcely resolvable short of violence or some other drastic form of reprisal (see Meulengracht Sørensen 1983). In such a situation an arbitrated settlement forced upon the disputants by more powerful forces scarcely ever proves lasting. Peaceful composition is even less likely when the guilty party cannot be forced to relinquish the fruits of his offence. Such is the situation prior to Chapter XI. Now back in Iceland their decision to spend a winter together suggests that they are either deceiving themselves or are playing at some clandestine game, for neither has reconciled himself to the forced settlement, as Þórðr implies when urging Björn to accept his invitation. The loss of his betrothed still rankles Björn, especially when he must now experience Þórðr in possession of Oddný's wealth and body, whereas Þórðr has also lost face (and money) in acceding to the king's wishes. More immediately, Þórðr requires a means of working off the effects of Oddný's stinging rebuke delivered when she learns of Björn's unexpected arrival in Iceland ('*Víst eru þat tíðendi, segir hon; ok enn görr veit ek nú, segir hon, 'hversu ek em gefin; ek hugða þik vera góðan dreng, en þú ert fullr af lygi ok lausung,*' p. 135—'Indeed this is news; I now realise more clearly how I am married; I thought you were a man of honour, but you are full of lies and deceit'). In addition to branding him a liar, she perhaps implies a preference for Björn. Thus, the narrative situation in which Chapter XI occurs makes it highly unlikely that either Þórðr or Björn desires reconciliation or seeks the other's friendship, and the scene is bound to puzzle those who accept it as naturalistic.

In addition to the narrative context several unique features of the text give us the feeling that whatever Þórðr and Björn say to the contrary, their agreeing to spend the winter together was never designed to increase mutual esteem or trust. Anyone who doubts that Þórðr is lying ought to consider the following. The four reasons he offers for extending the invitation are as follows (underlined thus in the chapter quoted above and numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals): (1) to prevent third-party slander from driving a wedge between the two of

them; (2) to test Björn's mettle and loyalty; (3) to rectify an imbalance in his favour in the settlement already reached; (4) to please Oddný. None of them is convincing. The first argument, in itself plausible in another's mouth, loses all force by being uttered by Þórðr. Aside from its challenging nature—the best way to lose a friend's loyalty is to test it gratuitously—the second argument lacks credibility because of Þórðr's niggardly conduct later as host. The third requires giving back something acquired dishonestly and enjoyed excessively. As to the fourth, Oddný so forcefully squelches it that we can give it no credence. Perhaps most important of all, like Oddný and Þórdís, we believe Þórðr incapable of uttering the truth.

Admittedly, demonstrating Björn's participation in Þórðr's charade requires more subtlety, because the saga in general demands our faith in his frank probity but in this chapter requires our acceptance of, without accounting for, his incongruous posing. The literal level characterises Björn as conciliatory and even naively foolhardy. How could he refuse his mother's shrewd advice? (How the text establishes the quality of her advice will be dealt with below.) We must move beyond the naturalistic and recognise Björn's stated motives for accepting the invitation as cold-blooded and duplicitous rather than simple-minded. He, like Þórðr, plays a role staged for the benefit of the community at large. We cannot believe that Björn has swallowed his old enemy's slick arguments, for he himself labels them 'strange'. Moreover, this scene echoes an earlier one (in Chapter III) in which Þórðr dupes Björn for the first and, we may believe, last time. While drinking together with Björn (*váru þeir þá drukknir báðir, ok þó Björn meir*, p. 117—'they were both drunk, but Björn more'), Þórðr feels him out as to his plans for the summer. Björn explains that he hopes to go raiding. Þórðr urges him to return home in order to claim his bride, but when Björn insists on his undertaking, the dialogue continues as follows (pp. 118–19):

Þórðr mælti: 'Send þú þá Oddnýju, festarkonu þinni, hringinn jarlsnaut ok fá mér í hönd, því at þá veit hún enn górr elsku þína ok alvöru til sín, ef þú sendir henni þvílíkan grip, ok mun henni þú þá enn hugkvæmri en áðr, ok þér því síðr afhuga verða; en ef þú kemr til Íslands út, sem vér væntum, þá tekr þú bæði hring ok konu ok allan fjárlut, er þér var með henni heitit; ok satt er þat,' segir Þórðr, 'at slíkt kvánfang getr eigi á Íslandi, sem Oddný er.' Björn mælti: 'Satt segir þú þat, Þórðr, at Oddný er in sömiligsta kona ok fullboðin mér í alla staði, ok hefðir þú jafnvel verit til mín, þá er vit várum á Íslandi, sem nú, þá mynda ek þetta allt gera, sem nú beiðir þú; en vant ætla ek, at mér verði at trúa þér, ok þat mun mælt, at ek halda laust jarlsgjöfinni, ef ek læt hringinn koma þér í hendr.' Þórðr bað hann vitja

ráðsins. Björn kvezk hafa setta menn til þess at gæta, — ‘ok seg þú, Þórðr, satt til um ferðir mínar, er þú kemr út; en ek þykkjumk enn of lítt reynt mik hafa í framgöngu ok óvída kannat hafa góðra manna siðu, en ef ek fer þegar til Íslands, þá mun ek eigi nenna at fara svá skjótt frá ráðahag mínum.’ Þórðr het því, — ‘en því beiddumk ek gripa, at sanna sögu mína, ok eigi þarftu, Björn, at gruna mik, því at ek skal þér trúv vera.’ ‘Til þess skal nú ok hætta,’ segir Björn, ‘um sinn; en ef þú bregzk mér, þá trúi ek þér aldri síðan á mína daga.’ Fær nú Björn hringinn jarlsnaut í hendr Þórði ok bað hann færa Oddnýju. Þórðr hét því ok talaði þá allfagrt við Björn ok hét allgóðu um at vera honum trúv ok reka vel hans ørendi; skilðu þeir Björn talit at sinni. Ok þá er Björn var ódrukkinn, þóttisk hann nógu mart fyrir Þórði talat hafa ok honum of vel trúat hafa.

Þórðr said: ‘Send Oddný, your betrothed, the ring Jarl’s Gift—let me have it—because if you send her such a treasure, she will more clearly appreciate your love and sincerity towards her. You will be dearer to her than ever before and she will be thus less likely to lose interest in you. And if you return to Iceland, as we expect you will, then you will have the ring, the woman, and all the wealth promised to you with her. For it is true,’ says Þórðr, ‘that there is no match like Oddný in Iceland.’ Björn said: ‘You are certainly right, Þórðr, that Oddný is a most honourable woman and a fitting match for me in every respect. Had you always been as kind to me in Iceland as you are now, then I would do all that you now request. But I find it difficult to bring myself to trust you. And people will say that I do not value the Jarl’s gift if I entrust the ring to you.’ Þórðr urged him to see to his marriage. Björn said he had authorised men to look after it—‘and, Þórðr, tell the truth about my expedition when you get back home. I think I have too little tested my valour and too little experienced the customs of honourable men, but if I return immediately to Iceland, then I would not care to leave so soon after my wedding.’ Þórðr promised to do so—‘which is why I requested tokens, to confirm my story. Björn, you need not suspect me, for I shall be true to you.’ ‘The risk must be taken for now,’ says Björn, ‘but if you fail me, I will never believe you again all the days of my life.’ Björn then hands the ring Jarl’s Gift to Þórðr and requested him to present it to Oddný. Þórðr promised to do so and was kindness itself in the way he spoke to Björn and promised earnestly that he would be true to him and carry out his mission faithfully. They ended their discussion for the time being. But when Björn was sober, he thought he had said quite enough to Þórðr and had trusted him too much.

In some respects this deception-scene mirrors Chapter XI. That is, in the first scene Þórðr, by means of fraud and flattery, prevails upon Björn to adopt an obviously ill-judged course of action. In Chapter XI he embarks on a similar undertaking, to persuade Björn to risk visiting him for the winter. The earlier scene also dramatises Þórdís’s charge (the glibber Þórðr’s language, the more pernicious his lies) and predis-

poses our acceptance of her accusation. Moreover, the drinking scene provides another key to the code in Chapter XI by programming the reader to respond to Þórðr's sweet reasoning, no matter how plausible, with the greatest of scepticism. We come to learn that whatever Björn decides when confronted by Þórðr at his most appeasing, acceding to his request is fraught with danger. Björn arrives at the same conclusion after his inebriation subsides, but too late to ward off disaster. This brief suspension of his inherent suspicion of Þórðr causes a loss that no one would be likely to forget.

But the contrast between the two scenes perhaps tells us more than do the similarities. In the earlier scene the two are alone (*ekki vissu menn gørla tal þeira Þórðar ok Bjarnar*, p. 119—'no one knew for sure what they had said to each other'), whereas later they perform in front of an audience which keys our responses. (More on this point below.) Most important, Björn in Chapter XI is no longer the untried, inexperienced, drunk and gullible eighteen-year-old of Chapter III. His bitter experience has made him a wiser man, and he is eager to even the score and no longer receptive to Þórðr's blandishments. Besides, he has apparently learned that the more he objects, the subtler Þórðr becomes.

So far in my discussion, I have been posing as the ideal reader who has cracked a code without demonstrating how I pulled it off. The key to the code is to be found in the saga's intertextuality. The most prominent intertextual topoi operating in Chapter XI that contribute to dramatic irony are the following (printed in bold type **thus** in the chapter quoted above and numbered consecutively in Roman numerals): (I) an inauspicious visit to a neighbouring farm; (II) a rider dressed in a blue coat; (III) the description of an approaching rider; (IV) predictions of doom; (V) the hero's denial of impending danger; and (VI) the garrulous woman's wise counsel. The first of these is perhaps best known from *Njáls saga* where Gunnarr visits Otkell's farm or from *Hænsa-Þóris saga* where Blund-Ketill visits Hen-Þórir. Naturally, not all visits to neighbouring farms end disastrously, for there are, of course, numerous examples in the sagas of neighbours visiting each other back and forth who do not engage in strife. Only a saga's narrative requirements determine how a visit develops. Indisputably, Þórðr's visit to Hólmr, on the literal level, does not seem to involve hostility—aside from Þórdís's acid tongue. But topos II signals that Þórðr, in Acker's phrase (1988, 209), is in a 'killing mood'. While he attempts to kill no one, his blue attire betokens his frame of mind and portends conflict. Instead of directly attacking his physically supe-

rior enemy—a virtual suicide mission—Þórðr chooses as his weapons deceit and falsehood. Perhaps the most important indication that we ought to shift to the ironic level, this topos alerts us to the ambiguous character of this scene. For a reader who misses such signals, the sagas lose much of their charm and narrative brilliance. Moreover, they shed meaning.⁶

Thus, when Þórðr appears dressed in blue on the mountain ridge, Þórdís, Björn and the reader recognise his hostile intention. Her description of Þórðr's approach (topos III) reinforces our apprehension, as does her prediction of doom (topos IV). There is often a difference between the narrator's and a character's descriptions of another character's movements about the community, especially when the rider approaches the speaker and when predictions of doom follow. Björn's gratuitous denial (topos V) of his mother's forecast adds further cause for suspicion, for even without knowledge of the tradition we would surely wonder how he can be so sure. Experienced readers, on the other hand, recognise that such comments serve more as invitations to question characters' motives than as insights into their thinking. Such denials tend to verify the assertions they negate; here we automatically upgrade Þórdís's estimate of impending trouble from the probable to the virtually certain. She has not misread Þórðr's hostility, but, unfortunately for Þórðr and Björn, has made it public. This, we must understand, is why Björn quickly contradicts her. In effect, by politely silencing her (and at the same time tacitly agreeing with her), he wishes to preserve a façade of secrecy in which his negotiations with his enemy can take place. Now while it is obvious that Björn cannot read Þórðr's mind, the blue clothes announce that the visit bodes trouble. Björn bides his time until the nature of Þórðr's scheme becomes clear. Indeed, neither adversary wishes the true nature of their discussion to become public, for as Arngeirr makes clear, all interested parties in the feud would immediately intercede should they suspect Þórðr and Björn's true motives. Feuding may well satisfy various inner needs of those at the centre of the storm, but those on the periphery usually attempt to avoid its destructive winds. Moreover, neither party wishes to be seen breaking a settlement made by a king, for although King Óláfr has no official power in Iceland, his arm reaches further than that of normal men. Thus, both participate knowingly in a charade whose true purpose is to provide them with a theatre for the next round of feuding where they will not have to endure interruption from well-meaning intruders.⁷

In choosing his own farm as feud-arena, Þórðr hopes to renew his *spott ok áleitni* ('scorn and abuse') so vexing to his adversary in his youth, while devising additional rules to the game in the expectation that Björn, bound to stay the winter, must sit and take what is dished out. And what better audience than his own wife to whom he can demonstrate his imagined superiority. On the other hand, Björn has an even greater score to settle, his loss of Oddný. For this reason, Þórðr's unexpected invitation can be easily fitted into Björn's plan, no doubt as yet unformed, to get even. Whereas as an untried youngster he was forced to submit to Þórðr's insults, Björn has in the meantime acquired the power of poetry, the means of striking back. Moreover, his increased experience abroad has added self-confidence to the many positive qualities he displayed as a promising young man. We can imagine that, as the returning hero whose masculine lustre shines brighter than ever, he welcomes the opportunity to parade his added charms before Oddný. Although she was blameless in marrying Þórðr, nothing in Björn's character suggests the modesty necessary to restrain an overwhelming impulse to demonstrate the enormity of her error in choosing the wrong man. Thus, both men, in competing for Oddný's favour, have reason to keep their conflict dark. Björn can best annoy her by feigning indifference, at least to begin with, whereas Þórðr cannot afford to betray his anxiety at Björn's return to Iceland. We might wish to view these two adversaries as if they were courtly lovers in that the objects of their desires, in this case a woman *and* revenge, must be pursued, under the veil of secrecy, by enacting an elaborate ritual. The winter of discontent at Þórðr's farm provides the venue for such an exercise.

One final note on how intertextuality points the way out of a potential ambiguity. We can imagine a naive reader's perplexity at the contradictory advice mother and father give their son. Þórdís cautions her son not to believe a word Þórðr says, and Argeirr applauds the plan as a fitting means to preserve the peace. How do we know that Þórdís is right? To be sure, when she maintains that the slicker Þórðr's arguments, the corrupter his motives, the cogency of her judgement sways us, as we have seen. Moreover, contentious women in the sagas are seldom shown to be mistaken, whatever their motives. Þórdís's function (topos VI) contrasts with the usual role of the goading woman—see Clover 1986 and Jesch 1991, 182–191— for she urges deliberation rather than headlong action. Of course, she fears for her son, not unjustly as the course of the saga shows. Argeirr, on the other hand,

simply fails to understand what is going on, and voices the standard litany on how to keep the peace. Arngeirr apparently believes Þórðr, but the saga has already implied the father's fecklessness in helping his son against Þórðr (see note 5). Here, as so often when men and women disagree, a woman's assessment of a situation is shown to be the more reliable.

What does the code teach us that we need to know in interpreting the saga? Recognising the function of Chapter XI alters the notion propagated by some readers—can we posit a standard reading of the saga on the basis of the remarks of Nordal et al.?—that Björn is drawn willy-nilly into the conflict. On the contrary, he seeks the opportunity for revenge as passionately and deviously as Þórðr does. Björn's desire for revenge explains his feeding his dog at table and spoiling the hay set aside for his horses: it is to provoke Þórðr and escalate the feud. What then happens occurs by their design, not by narrative accident. Before Chapter XI Þórðr is clearly the offending party, but as to who bears more responsibility for breaking the peace, there is little to choose between the two. The saga portrays feud, what ignites it, what feeds it, and what ends it. Moderation, if this virtue can be said to play any role in this saga at all, serves merely as a tactic to win a temporary advantage. What counts is humiliating, injuring, and finally destroying one's opponent.

Notes

¹ For an excellent discussion of the various meanings of intertextuality, see Hans-Peter Mai (1991); see also Vésteinn Ólason (1985, 92), Erhard Reckwitz (1990), and Joseph Harris (1990, especially 237, where he quotes Culler's identification of intertextuality and code; and also note 26 on the same page, where he provides a thumbnail sketch of the history of the term). By implicit intertextuality I refer to the relationships of any one saga to all other sagas that can be dated before, say, 1400. For the purposes of my analysis and *only* for these purposes, I assume that all sagas were written in the year 1, by the same author, in the same place. That is, I assume no stylistic development from one saga to another, no conscious indebtedness of one saga to another, and no copying of one saga by another author. While it is reasonable to assume that sagas do have a relative chronology, such dating is too vague to allow a rigorous discussion of the development of saga style. One saga has simultaneously the same style as all others, while differing in many respects from all the others. The differences must be demonstrated in each case.

² Translations in this article are my own; but I would like to thank Christopher Sanders, Helle Degnbol and Sigrún Davíðsdóttir for saving me from numerous blunders and howlers before I read a version of this article at the Eighth

International Saga Conference in Gothenburg (August 11–17, 1991). The editors of *Saga-Book* have also made useful suggestions. Finally, Magnús Fjalldal of Háskóli Íslands vetted the final translation. None of these people is responsible for any remaining infelicities in my translation of this unusually difficult text.

³ Laurence de Looze (1986, 483) believes that ‘Oddný even refuses to believe her husband when he *is* telling the truth—as, for example, when Þórðr has (strange as it may seem) invited Bjørn to stay with them in order that the two men might be reconciled (Ch. 11)’. De Looze implies that Oddný’s accusation refers to the reasons Þórðr gave at the beginning of the chapter before he invited Bjørn—where it might be inferred that his stated motive is reconciliation (but see my later discussion)—whereas she, in fact, brands him a liar because he pretends to have had her wishes in mind (*kvazk þat hafa gort til yfirbóta við hana*). She might be thinking that her husband is incapable of considering her interests, given his deception of her in the past. De Looze’s thesis, that Þórðr and Bjørn’s conflict is ‘presented as an opposition between two attitudes toward language’ (481), though attractively argued, must be rejected. Both Þórðr and Bjørn seem to agree that poetry makes a fine weapon. Once de Looze begins to analyse the text after Chapter XI, especially where he discusses the poetry, his discussion greatly improves.

⁴ I encountered another kind of objection to the saga when I presented the paper in Gothenburg. Following the session an Icelander, celebrated both for his wit and his scholarship, confided to me that my enthusiasm for the saga was misplaced for two reasons: (1) no respectable Icelandic hero would ever dream of asking his wife’s advice, as Þórðr does; (2) nor would a real hero help his mother with the laundry, as Bjørn does. Behind this witticism there may or may not lurk an aesthetic theory that accounts, in part, for an older generation’s relative indifference to the saga.

⁵ The original beginning of the saga has been lost. What now comprises the first four and part of the fifth chapters is preserved in a version of *Óláfs saga helga* contained in *Bæjarbók*. See Nordal’s discussion (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, lxiii–lxiv and xcvi–xcvii). This textual history may account for some of the peculiarities at the beginning of the saga. Aside from the saga’s unusual use of first-person narration (see quotation below), Bjørn’s meetings with Oddný, as Nordal (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 113) points out, cause none of the usual censure. In addition, the narrator’s statement that the early quarrels of the two poets do not belong in the saga may have been appropriate to *Óláfs saga helga* but is here distinctly out of place (p. 112):

Bjørn hafði enn sem margir aðrir orðit fyrir spotti Þórðar ok áleitni; var hann því með Skúla, frænda sínum, meðan hann var ungr, at hann þóttisk þar betr kominn sakar áleitni Þórðar Kolbeinssonar en hjá föður sínum. En því get ek eigi þeirra smágreina, sem milli fóru þeira Bjarnar ok Þórðar, áðr Bjørn kom til Skúla, at þær heyra ekki til þessarri sögu.

Like many others Bjørn had suffered Þórðr’s scorn and abuse, and thus he lived with Skúli, his kinsman, while he was young, because he thought he

was better off there than at his father's in view of Þórðr Kolbeinsson's abuse. But nevertheless I won't mention the trifles that occurred between them before Björn came to Skúli's, because they do not belong in this saga.

I would gladly hear more of these *smágreinir*. Alison Finlay (1991, 167) mentions 'some give-and-take of offence rather than a completely one-sided quarrel; nevertheless, it is made clear that Þórðr is the instigator and that Björn, fifteen years his junior, is, like others, victimised by his *spott* "mockery" . . . and *áleitni* "malice"'.⁶

⁶ Recently, Roberta Frank (1991, 102) makes a point about Germanic legend in Old English poetry that applies equally well to sagas: 'Explicitness was not a virtue in the poetry of Germanic legend; reticence was. But reading too much into this verse is probably less dangerous than reading too little. Poets give clues when they are responding to something outside their texts, when they want us to know that they mean more than they say . . . A useful working principle for the student of Germanic legend is that all details in the text are capable of explanation, even at the cost of oversubtlety and error.'

⁷ Miller (1991, 275) speaks of the community's desire to reconcile the litigants, 'if for no other reason than to avoid the vexations of being expected to separate combating disputants, of suffering the depredations of outlaws on their livestock . . . or of having the outlaw's dependents become a charge on the district.' Miller also discusses a third party's obligation to make peace between feudants; cf. 'Breaking Up Fights', pp. 260–67. For excellent studies of, among other matters, dispute-settlement and revenge-taking, see the articles and the book by Miller listed in the bibliography. What Þórðr and Björn want to avoid can be imagined if we look at Chapter 27, p. 180, where we are told: 'En er menn kómu af þingi um sumarit, þá heldu menn vörðu á sér, ok tókusk af mjök heraðsfundir, ok vildu menn nú varir um vera, at þeir fyndisk miðr en meir, Þórðr ok Björn, en þá er nú kyrrt' ('When in the summer people returned from the þing, they became especially vigilant, and the local þings were greatly reduced in number, for people wanted to be careful that Þórðr and Björn met much less often, and things were now quiet.'). At this later stage in the saga, of course, increasing amounts of blood have been spilled, so that the community obviously fears that matters will get completely out of hand. Nevertheless, in a more limited sphere—family and close friends—the reaction to Þórðr's invitation, and Björn's acceptance, would also be negative if their real purpose were suspected.

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PILGRIMAGE AND PRESTIGE IN THE ICELANDIC SAGAS

By JOYCE HILL

THE PURPOSE of this article is to examine the way in which some saga-writers exploited pilgrimage as a prestige-motif, but since contrasting examples can sharpen our perceptions of and responses to narrative conventions, I begin by considering the documentary record of an actual pilgrimage, Nikulás of Þverá's journey to Jerusalem, undertaken, as we deduce from internal evidence, before the Crusaders captured the port of Ascalon in August 1153.

At the time when he made the pilgrimage, Nikulás was a monk of the Benedictine monastery of Þingeyrar. Apparently without companions, he crossed to Norway, went thence to Denmark, and travelled south to Rome by river and on foot, traversing the Low Countries and Germany, passing through the Alps by the Great St Bernard Pass, and then following the well-established pilgrim route south through Vercelli, Pavia, Piacenza, Lucca, Siena, Bolsena, and Viterbo to Rome (Hill 1984). After staying in Rome for some unspecified time, he travelled, via old Roman roads, to the Adriatic port of Bari, calling at Benedict's own monastery of Monte Cassino on the way. From Bari he took coasting vessels through the eastern Mediterranean, eventually reaching Cyprus and from there the Holy Land, which he entered through what was then its chief port of Acre. Once in the Holy Land he visited sites in Galilee, Jerusalem and the surrounding Holy Places, Jericho and the river Jordan, which was geographically the easternmost point on his journey and which he regarded as his final goal, since it was from there that he described his return, in more summary form than the outward trip.

Nikulás's great pilgrimage must have been undertaken for reasons of piety—a true pilgrimage. It is difficult to conceive of any other impulse, however much weight we give to the other necessary factors of curiosity and a spirit of adventure. Yet, in its way, as one might well expect, it gave Nikulás prestige of a kind and a posthumous reputation. In 1155 he was elected abbot of the newly-founded Benedictine monastery of Þverá (Eiríkur Magnússon 1897), and the account of his journey to Jerusalem, dictated to an amanuensis a few years later, had achieved authoritative status by the fourteenth century, if not earlier,

for it was embedded in an encyclopaedic miscellany of 1387 from western Iceland, AM 194 8vo (Kålund 1908; for Nikulás's account see also Riant 1865, Kålund 1913, Magoun 1940 and 1944, Gelsing 1972, Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen 1978–79, Hill 1983, Lönnroth 1990). The closing words testify to Nikulás's prestige as the amanuensis saw it, and gave him an enduring reputation (Kålund 1908, 23):

Leidar-visir sea ok borga-skipan ok allr þessi frodleikr er ritinn ath fyrir-sogn Nicholas abota, er bædi var vitr ok vidfregr, minnigr og margfrodr, ráðvis ok rettordr, ok lykr þar þessi frasogn.

But Nikulás's narration is not a saga, nor were his prestige and reputation measured in saga terms. The account of his journey, whilst it gives us several clues about the personality and interests of the pilgrim, is a documentary record, at times nothing more than a list of sites. The impulse, as noted above, must be presumed to have been piety, not the seeking of prestige in itself, and the reputation and prestige that did accrue to him were a reflex of his ecclesiastical milieu: elevation to an abbacy, fame because of his pilgrimage, a reputation for wisdom, truth and scholarship, and the posthumous reward of his personal history achieving encyclopaedic status within a written, scholarly tradition. Nikulás cannot be left out of account when considering the question of pilgrimage and prestige in medieval Iceland, but he provides a contrast with the interaction of pilgrimage and prestige in the sagas and thus helps to define the literary motif by throwing it into relief.

In the sagas themselves pilgrim journeys must be seen in the context of journeying as a whole, which often has an important part to play in the course of the narrative and the establishment of prestige (see Davidson 1976 and Blöndal 1978 for journeys to the eastern Mediterranean; see also Gelsing 1972, 164 note 40). Commonly in *Íslendingasögur* the journey is to the court of the Norwegian king and the narrative purpose, as clearly exemplified in *Laxdæla saga*, is to provide dramatic proof of the hero's moral and physical prowess. Kjartan distinguishes himself from his companions in matching up to King Óláfr better than any other Icelander present; he equals him in swimming and he asserts his moral superiority in planning to burn the king in his house and then owning up to it afterwards. As Kjartan says (ch. 40; 1934, 119):

Engis manns nauðungarmaðr vil ek vera . . . þykki mér hinn kostr miklu betri, ef maðr skal þó deyja, at vinna þat nokkut áðr, er lengi sé uppi haft síðan.

Only then, with his independence, courage and prestige well established and publicly recognised by the king, is Kjartan prepared to accept a relationship with him, a relationship in which, paradoxically, the hero then gains further prestige from the glory of the royal association.

Earlier in the same saga Óláfr pái, already distinguished by virtue of his mother's lineage, remarkable behaviour, beauty and exotic history as a slave-princess, confirms that distinction for himself by his visit to his grandfather King Mýrkjartan in Ireland, where again the acceptance of royal—and in this case also family—favour is balanced by an assertion of independence which establishes equality. A device used in this scene and later in Bolli Bollason's return from Byzantium is to measure the prestige in terms of dress and accoutrements. Óláfr, for example, standing with defiant courage at the prow (ch. 21; 1934, 55),

var svá búinn, at hann var í brynju ok hafði hjálm á höfði gullroðinn; hann var gyrðr sverði, ok váru gullrekin hjöltin; hann hafði krókasþjót í hendi höggtekkit ok allgóð mál í; rauðan skjöld hafði hann fyrir sér, ok var dregit á leó með gulli.

Bolli Bollason, returning from his travels, 'var svá mikill skartsmaðr . . . at hann vildi engi klæði bera nema skarlatasklæði ok pellsklæði, ok ǫll vápn hafði hann gullbúin' (ch. 77; 1934, 224–25).

Bolli ríðr frá skipi við tólfta mann; þeir váru allir í skarlatasklæðum fylgðarmenn Bolla ok riðu í gyldum sǫðlum; allir váru þeir listuligir menn, en þó bar Bolli af. Hann var í pellsklæðum, er Garðskonungr hafði gefit honum; hann hafði ýzta skarlataskápu rauða; hann var gyrðr Fótbit, ok váru at honum hjölt gullbúin ok meðalkaflinn gulli vafiðr; hann hafði gyldan hjálm á höfði ok rauðan skjöld á hlið, ok á dreginn riddari með gulli . . . Bolli varð frægr af ferð þessi.

Other examples include Eyvindr in *Hrafnkels saga*, who is killed by the status-conscious Hrafnkell because he poses a threat, that of an equal in prestige, instantly assessed as such on the basis of his successful travels, themselves symbolised by his coloured clothes and bright shield (ch. 8; *Austfirðinga sögur* 1950, 125–27; see Nordal 1958, 49–50). In this saga too it is significant that when the challenge to Hrafnkell's standing is made at the outset, the one who takes the lead is Þorkell Þjóstarsson, a traveller who had not long since returned from service with the emperor in Constantinople (ch. 4; *Austfirðinga sögur* 1950, 111).

In *Íslendingasögur*, then, as these examples show, travels and notably the return of travellers precipitate action, giving travels and travellers a prestige within the plot which interacts with the prestigious reputation that the travels themselves have established or confirmed. In

Heiðarvíga saga the bloodfeud is special because it is executed in Constantinople (ch. 11; *Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 243). In *Grettis saga* Þorsteinn likewise carries vengeance for Grettir as far as Constantinople, which both elevates the vengeance and gives Þorsteinn the chance of earning wealth and glory (chs 85–86; 1936, 271–73), and in the *Spesar þáttr* episode, the story is made to draw to a close with a pilgrimage to Rome (chs 91–92; 1936, 288–89). In *Finnboga saga* Finnbogi pursues a debt on behalf of Earl Hákon as far as Constantinople and there, in admittedly exaggerated fashion, he establishes his reputation as well as recovering the debt (ch. 19; *Kjalnesinga saga* 1959, 287–88). In *Njáls saga*, Kolskeggr's journey to Constantinople and ultimate death after a prestigious life is the other side of the coin to Gunnarr's outlawry, for Gunnarr, setting out with Kolskeggr, fatefully changes his mind, stays at Hlíðarendi, and thus accepts his inevitable death (chs 75–78, 81; *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, 181–94). In *Njáls saga* too, the long sequence of revenge after the Burning, once it has reached the stage of exhaustion, is brought to the necessary point of reconciliation after Flosi has established an honourable reputation at the court of Earl Sigurðr in Orkney and both he and Kári have made separate pilgrimages to Rome (chs 158–59; *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, 460–64).

Such journeys are plausible but are not, of course, necessarily historical. The Lady Spes episode in *Grettis saga* is a case in point; Eyvindr and Þorkell probably never existed (see Nordal 1958, 9–13, 19–20); Kolskeggr may likewise be fictional (see *Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954, 53–54, note 7, and Blöndal 1978, 196–97); and Finnbogi, though historical, would have been an unusually early visitor to Constantinople, if the account of his journey were true (Blöndal 1978, 196–97). But this simply confirms the point being made: that journeys are essentially elements within the prestige mechanisms of the created narrative. Pilgrimages in the *Íslendingasögur* are a sub-group within this journey motif, though they are limited in occurrence and degree of detail partly because of the period within which the events are set and partly because of the geographical and cultural orientation of the narratives.

In sagas about the rulers of the Scandinavian world, however, there is no such chronological limitation, and it is in these texts that pilgrimage is developed as a major prestige motif through which the heroes are glorified in worldly terms. Thus, even in sagas about Sigurðr Jórsalafari, Rögnvaldr of Orkney and Eiríkr of Denmark (discussed in Blöndal

1978, 136–40, 154–57, 131–36 respectively), who actually did undertake pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the imaginative focus is on episodes in which secular values prevail, as the Scandinavian heroes are challenged in ways which test their ingenuity, pride and extravagant disdain of wealth. In these respects such journeys are not functionally different from other, less ambitious travels in *Íslendingasögur*. But they have their own distinction, nonetheless, because the very distance lends prestige, as does also the exceptionally high status of the foreign rulers who are shown to accept the Scandinavian visitors as equals. A measure of this reinterpretation of pilgrimage is that more space may be devoted to events in Constantinople than in Jerusalem, and that the point of return—and hence the implied climax of the journey—may be assessed by different criteria from the ones we would expect to operate in a genuine pilgrim account. On the one hand we have the example of Nikulás, the true pilgrim, for whom the river Jordan is the point of return; on the other we have the example of Sigurðr, whose more extensive narrative treats his return as beginning not from the Jordan—which for him as for Nikulás was the easternmost point—but from Constantinople, following his subsequent climactic encounter with the world’s most prestigious ruler.

The chronological sequence of the pilgrimages of the three rulers so far mentioned is as follows: Eiríkr died in Cyprus in 1103 whilst still en route for Jerusalem, Sigurðr arrived in the Holy Land in 1109 and left in 1110, after assisting King Baldwin in the capture of Sidon, and Rǫgnvaldr’s visit is datable to 1152. But the compositional sequences and lateral influences which underlie their surviving narratives are much less clear, not least because they share a network of prestige motifs which suggest that borrowing and imitation took place amongst texts anterior to the earliest now extant. A further possibility is that as additional copies were made there was the potential for yet more borrowing to take place in order to embellish the narrative, though investigation of developments in this area is handicapped by the fact that not all recensions have been fully edited. The intricacies of textual history are beyond the scope of this article, but attention will nevertheless be drawn to thematic relationships between the narratives of Sigurðr, Rǫgnvaldr and Eiríkr because their existence confirms that their pilgrim-journeys, as narrated in the written texts, evolved as literary constructs, and that their primary motive was the establishment of prestige, not simply within the narrative, but also between narratives as one Scandinavian ruler is shown to be as good as another Scandinavian

ruler in a recognisably similar situation: in other words, the heroes gain prestige not only by proving themselves to be the equals of the foreign rulers, but also by proving themselves to be the equals of each other—a comparison which some versions of some sagas explicitly recognise.

Although Sigurðr Jórsalafari's journey was not the earliest of the three, it is the most suitable starting point because it is the most famous, the most elaborately narrated and the best served by modern printed texts. The earliest extant accounts are Theodoricus's *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*, written between c. 1177 and 1187, and the anonymous *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum* from the 1190s, which drew upon the *Historia* as a major source. But these are synoptic chronicles and thus, although they show an awareness that Sigurðr gained worldly prestige through his travels (Kalinke 1984, 154), they do not display the essentially literary features that are the subject of the present discussion. Our attention must therefore be confined to the extended narratives in *Morkinskinna* (*Útferðar saga Sigurðar konungs*), *Fagrskinna* (chs 86–92) and *Heimskringla* (*Magnússona saga*), attributed to Snorri Sturluson (Whaley 1991, 13–19). As will be noted below, these accounts differ from each other in a number of important ways, but they all interpret the expedition as a prestige-enhancing journey, and since they deploy many of the same narrative episodes to give expression to their interpretation, they will be examined concurrently. The anthology of *konungasögur* transmitted in *Morkinskinna* is thought to be the earliest of the three, compiled between c. 1217 and 1222, but the extant text dates from the latter half of the thirteenth century and it is evident that it includes accretions and interpolations which cannot now always be distinguished from the original. Its version of *Sigurðar saga* is 'a conflation of history and fiction, the work of a first-rate exegete of history possessed of a raconteur's penchant for vivid characterisation and intense drama' in which the author shows himself to be 'well versed in the learned and narrative traditions of his time' (Kalinke 1984, 153). *Fagrskinna*, much inferior to *Morkinskinna* in literary merit, was probably written soon after 1220 and drew heavily on *Morkinskinna* in its later chapters, but it is clear that the text of *Morkinskinna* which it used was older and purer than the one now extant (Turville-Petre 1953, 218–19). *Heimskringla*, which is more sophisticated than *Fagrskinna* and more restrained than *Morkinskinna*, cannot be precisely dated, but Snorri perhaps began to write his kings' sagas in the period between 1220 and 1235, after his return to Iceland from Norway. His sources were diverse but he obvi-

ously made substantial use of materials which underlie *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna*, though we cannot take either of these manuscripts as an exact witness to the narratives which he consulted.¹

That the focus of Sigurðr's Jerusalem journey is on prestige in all three accounts is evident in individual episodes, as we shall see, but it is also apparent from the differing scale of attention given to the various stages of the journey. It is true that in *Morkinskinna* a leaf is missing at the point where Sigurðr is actually in the Holy Land (1932, 348), and that in *Fagrskinna* there is a lacuna which begins part-way through the subsequent visit to Constantinople (1984, 320), but since these two texts and *Heimskringla* are closely related, it is possible to make the confident generalisation that the relatively little space given to Sigurðr's visit to the Holy Land was part of the established response to the journey. In *Magnússona saga* in *Heimskringla*, for example, thirteen of the thirty-three chapters are devoted to the expedition, but the visit to the Holy Land takes up only chapters 10–11. Most space here, as in *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna*, is given over to Sigurðr's two years of piratical adventures en route, as he travels with his fleet of warriors around Spain, through the Straits of Gibraltar and across the Mediterranean, visiting on the way two significant rulers, Henry I of England and Roger of Sicily. In *Heimskringla* and in *Fagrskinna* (allowing for the lacuna), the visit to Constantinople is given approximately the same amount of space as the visit to the Holy Land; in *Morkinskinna*, if we make a reasonable guess about the content of the lost leaf, the visit to Constantinople was the more detailed of the two.

The emphasis given by the narrative structure is supported by internal assessments of the journey's significance. Neither *Fagrskinna* nor *Morkinskinna* expresses an initial motivation, but Snorri establishes one in the first chapter of his *Magnússona saga*, and this ensures that the audience shares his understanding of the journey as being about prestige rather than piety (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 238):

Þá er synir Magnúss váru til konunga teknir, kómu útan ór Jórsalaheimi ok sumir ór Miklagarði þeir menn, er farit höfðu út með Skopta Ögmundarsyni, ok váru þeir inir frægstu ok kunnu margs konar tíðendi at segja, en af þeim nýnæmum girntisk fjöldi manns í Nóregi þeirar ferðar. Var þat sagt, at í Miklagarði fengu Norðmenn fullsælu fjár, þeir er á mála vildu ganga. Þeir báðu konungana, at annarr hvárr þeira, Eysteinn eða Sigurðr, skyldi fara ok vera fyrir því liði, er til útferðar gerðisk. En konungarnir játtu því ok bjoggu ferð þá með beggja kostnaði. Til þeirar ferðar réðusk margir ríkismenn, bæði lendir menn ok ríkir bæendr. En er ferðin var búin, þá var þat af ráðit, at Sigurðr skyldi fara, en Eysteinn skyldi hafa landráð af hendi beggja þeira.

Later, in chapter 21, when Sigurðr interprets the significance of his travels in a quarrel with his brother, the emphasis is on the expedition being ‘heldr höfðinglig’, judged principally with reference to success in battle, the acquisition of treasure and the earning of esteem from men of highest status. The Holy Land is mentioned only because Sigurðr swam across the Jordan and tied a knot in the thicket on the far bank (*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 261):

ok mæltu ek svá fyrir, at þú skyldir leysa, bróðir, eða hafa elligar þvílíkan formála sem þar var á lagðr.

Snorri was here obviously following an established interpretation, since the point-scoring quarrel, including the taunting use of the scene at the river Jordan, is found also in *Morkinskinna* (1932, 383), although the description of the event as it occurred would have been on the leaf now lost. The quarrel is not recorded in *Fagrskinna*.

Sigurðr’s arrival in the Holy Land was through Acre, which was then the Latin kingdom’s chief port. Jerusalem is of course named but there are no references to any holy sites within it and the only other holy place specified is the Jordan, and again no religious associations are made. In *Heimskringla* the rest of the visit is revealingly structured as a status-enhancing gift-exchange of a rather unusual kind. Baldwin gives a splendid feast for Sigurðr and bestows on him many sacred relics, in particular a fragment of the True Cross.² Sigurðr then assists Baldwin in the capture of Sidon and subsequently, as Snorri puts it, ‘gaf Baldvini konungi alla borgina’ (ch. 11; *Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 250–51). The implication is that Sigurðr was on equal terms with Baldwin, that he was generous in a suitably lavish fashion, and that he thus satisfactorily brought to a close the reciprocal cycle of gift for gift among equals, an exchange in which a gift of war (the city of Sidon) was deemed a fitting return for the gift of relics. Snorri’s manner of presenting this event harmonises with the skaldic verses of Halldórr skvaldri and Einarr Skúlason, which Snorri quotes and which also elevate Sigurðr. But in fact, however important Sigurðr’s ships might have been to Baldwin, the city was not really his to give. At best he could be said to have surrendered a half-share in it, but in truth he was only a temporary ally of the king to whose territory Sidon would geographically belong. *Fagrskinna* presents the events in the same way as Snorri, likewise following Halldórr skvaldri in stating that Sigurðr gave the city to Baldwin. No doubt, then, in the light of this agreement and the fact that the interpretation was already established in verse, it is reasonable to suppose that the missing leaf in *Morkinskinna* would

have dealt with this aspect of the visit to the Holy Land in a similar fashion. It is possible that its account also included the prestige-enhancing episode in the *Hulda–Hrokkinskinna* version of *Saga Sigurðar Jórsalafara*, ch. 9, in which Baldwin tests Sigurðr by ordering costly clothes to be spread on the roads (*Fornmanna sögur* 1825–37, VII 87):

ef hann ríðr réttan veg at borginni, ok lætr ser lítið umfinnast fyrirbúnað várn, þá virði ek svá at hann mun slíkri virðing vanr í sínu ríki; en ef hann snýr af veginum, ok vill eigi ríða á klæðin, þá þykki mér ván, at lítill mun vera ríkdómr í hans landi.

Sigurðr, needless to say, rides over the clothes with great disdain and orders his men to do the same, an act which dramatically justifies his being received by Baldwin as an equal. The episode is not in *Fagrskinna* or *Heimskringla* though it is found in other versions of *konungasögur* (see *Heimskringla* 1941–51, III liii).³ It could well be an embellishment by internal imitation of the similar scene, commented on below, when Sigurðr enters Constantinople, but if that is so, it simply confirms that the transmitters of the Sigurðr narrative responded to the visit to the Holy Land as an event governed by the prestige culture characteristic of the sagas rather than the religious culture of the medieval Church.

For the journey to Constantinople and the arrival, the lacuna in *Morkinskinna* obliges us to continue focusing on *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*. In *Fagrskinna* (ch. 90; 1984, 319) we read simply that Sigurðr goes directly to Constantinople and that he sails into the sound (the Golden Horn) with his sails fore-and-aft so that they could be seen from the shores, since they are made ‘af pillum’, some kind of costly fabric. The Emperor Alexius (Alexis Comnenos I, emperor 1081–1118) then opens the Golden Gate and has precious cloth laid on the road in front of Sigurðr, who orders his men to disregard it and proceed in the normal way. The account is clearly designed to emphasise Sigurðr’s pride and extravagance, but it is told in the rather unimaginative way characteristic of *Fagrskinna*. It was undoubtedly more vivid in *Morkinskinna*, as it is also in *Heimskringla* (*Magnússon saga* chs 11–12; 1941–51, III 252–53), where more is made both of the careful arranging of the sails and of the arrival. According to Snorri, Sigurðr sails first to Cyprus and then crosses to Greece, where he moors the whole fleet at Engilsnes.⁴ There he waits for two weeks, not because there is no suitable wind to sail on to Constantinople (the necessary wind blew daily, as Snorri carefully points out), but in order to have a side-wind so that the sails can be set fore-and-aft. The immediate

reason given, not paralleled in *Fagrskinna*, is that it is for the benefit of those in the ships, who are thus able to admire the costly fabric on both sides of the sails. Only then are we told of Sigurðr's spectacular entry into port when, as in *Fagrskinna*, although with a little more circumstantial elaboration, Snorri describes how those on shore saw a dense assembly of spread sails with no space between them. The initial reason given for the arrangement of the sails is not superfluous, however, since it increases Sigurðr's status by suggesting that, although his action has the effect of impressing others by creating the overlapping effect apparent to those on land, this is incidental to the act itself; Sigurðr, in other words, is shown to be motivated by his own innate sense of status, pride and generous attention to his own followers, and not, in this instance, by calculations about how to create a good impression amongst strangers. Admittedly these details may already have been present in Snorri's source, corresponding to the missing portion of *Morkinskinna*, but this does not invalidate the comparison with *Fagrskinna*, since it is the fact of the enhancement of prestige and the means employed to achieve it which are important in the present context, not whether the enhancement is attributable to Snorri or his source. Snorri's account of the entry into the city agrees with *Fagrskinna* in recording the opening of the Golden Gate and the strewing of the streets with costly cloth, but the status of Sigurðr is enhanced by the explanation that this is the gate through which the emperor rides when he has been away from Constantinople for a long time, and when he returns victorious. In *Morkinskinna* the scene was further embellished by the account—not in *Heimskringla*—of how Sigurðr fitted golden shoes to his horse and arranged for one to be cast along the way, with instructions that no one should attempt to retrieve it. The lacuna in *Morkinskinna* in fact deprives us of the first part of this extra incident, but where the text resumes (1932, 348) the remaining part of the final sentence is enough for us to see that it was identical with the incident fully recorded in other manuscripts.⁵ In common with the embellishment of the arrival in the Holy Land, it has the same effect of confirming how Sigurðr's journey was understood.

What follows are further demonstrations of Sigurðr's prestige. *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* begin immediately with the Emperor presenting the choice of a vast quantity of gold or the transitory (though equally costly) display of games in the hippodrome. Sigurðr rises to the occasion and chooses the games. The lacuna in *Fagrskinna* comes at this point. Snorri comments briefly on the games and then

proceeds directly to Sigurðr's reciprocating gift of all his ships. Special mention is made of the fact that his own ship had gilded heads and that these were placed on St Peter's church (located between Hagia Sophia and the Great Palace). The Emperor gives him many horses in return and Sigurðr begins his journey home, leaving a great many of his men in military service with the Emperor. *Morkinskinna* (1932, 348–51) is much more elaborate, but has the same end in view: the testing of Sigurðr to demonstrate that he is the equal of the great Kirialax (Alexis). The tests begin with a sequence of three lavish gifts: purses of gold and silver, coffers of gold, and finally a costly robe, more treasure and two rings. Sigurðr pays no attention to the first two sets of gifts but orders the treasure to be distributed to his men, thus earning approving comments from the Emperor who, on hearing of this, naturally judges him to be extremely wealthy. On the third occasion, however, Sigurðr puts on the rings and thanks the Emperor (in Greek!) for his generosity. The outcome is that Sigurðr is treated as an equal, and it is at this point in *Morkinskinna* that the Emperor makes the offer of more treasure or games in the hippodrome. After this Sigurðr, in an appropriate act of reciprocal hospitality, prepares to feast the Emperor and Empress and, discovering that there is no wood available, orders his men to burn walnuts, a phenomenal demonstration of lavish extravagance (Riant 1865, 210 note 2). But it turns out that this is yet another test, which Sigurðr passes with flying colours, since the shortage of wood had been arranged by the Empress. The visit concludes with the same exchange of gifts as in *Heimskringla*.

As Kalinke points out (1984, 158–59), the walnut-burning episode is a folklore motif. We can also readily recognise that *Morkinskinna*'s initial triple challenge is another: three similar tests, with variation in response to the third. We do not know whether the walnut episode was included in *Fagrskinna* because of a lacuna at this point, but it seems that the initial triple test was not, since this would presumably have preceded the games-or-gold test, as it does in *Morkinskinna*, and so would have come before the lacuna. It is possible, then, that Snorri's source did not have the initial triple test either and that it may have been an addition to the *Morkinskinna* version of the narrative in order to reinforce the interpretation of Sigurðr's journey as a prestige-enhancing event. The walnut test is likewise not in *Heimskringla*, but we cannot tell whether this is because it was not in Snorri's source, or whether he chose to omit it as being unnecessary and perhaps somewhat frivolous. There is a similar though less well-motivated incident

in *Morkinskinna's* saga of Haraldr harðráði (1932, 65–66), but again this is not in Snorri's corresponding *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*. If the omission of the walnut-burning episode in *Magnússona saga* were Snorri's own choice, it would be explicable in the context of his rather more sober approach and as a judicious authorial assessment that the episode reiterated, but did not add to, the essential points already made: that Sigurðr was the equal of the Emperor, generous in gifts, lavish in display and disdainful of wealth. Clearly, whichever account one reads, it is prestige not piety which motivates the telling of Sigurðr's pilgrimage, and it is literary tradition which shapes it, regardless of the text's imaginative quality, narrative style or stage of transmission.

The Jerusalem pilgrimages of Earl Rognvaldr and King Eiríkr as narrated in *Orkneyinga saga* and *Knýtlinga saga* respectively must similarly be understood in literary rather than historical terms. In themselves the journeys contribute to the heroes' prestige using techniques that have already been identified in this article, but it is important to notice that a further source of prestige in both these cases is the reflected glory of association with Sigurðr's prestigious journey, signalled by overt comment in each saga and by imitation of status-enhancing motifs.

The possibility of a journey to Jerusalem is first introduced in *Orkneyinga saga* in chapter 85 (1965, 194), when Rognvaldr is urged to go to the Holy Land by Eindriði, who has just returned from Constantinople. The sole reason advanced is that the journey will enhance Rognvaldr's prestige:

Þat þykki mér undarligt, jarl, er þú vill eigi fara út í Jórsalaheim ok hafa eigi sagnir einar til þeira tíðenda, er þaðan eru at segja. Er slíkum mönnum bezt hent þar sakar yðvarra lista; muntu þar bezt virðr, sem þú kemr með tignum mönnum.

There is a delay in starting the expedition but, once begun, it mirrors that of Sigurðr: extensive adventures en route as the fleet sails around Spain, through the Straits of Gibraltar, and across the Mediterranean (chs 86–88); arrival in the Holy Land through the port of Acre and a relatively brief account of the visit, with focus on the Jordan (part of ch. 88); and a journey on to Constantinople (parts of chs 88 and 89), from where the return journey begins. The ruler of the Holy Land was Baldwin III, but he is not named; the Byzantine Emperor, named in ch. 89, was Menelaus (II 43–80).

The adventures along the way confirm Rognvaldr's prestige as a ruler and a warrior both by sea and by land, but when he reaches Acre

this secular value-system is reasserted, for we are told that they ‘gengu þá upp með þrís miklum ok fararblóma þeim, er þar var sjaldsénn’ (1965, 229). It is stated that they ‘sóttu alla ina helgustu staði á Jórsalalandi’ (1965, 231), but no details are given and no religious associations are mentioned; as with Sigurðr’s narratives, the only places specified are Jerusalem and the Jordan, to which by far the most attention is given. Rognvaldr and a companion swim across the river, tie knots in the thicket on the far bank and compose taunting verses which assert their superiority over comfort-loving stay-at-homes. They then return to Jerusalem and set off for Constantinople. They break their journey at Imbólum—a town whose identity is debated (see *Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 233 note 2)—and they then continue by putting out to sea and travelling north to Engilsnes (1965, 235):

Þar lágu þeir nokkurar nætr ok biðu byrjar þess, er þeim þótti góðr at sigla norðr eptir hafinu til Miklagarðs. Þeir vönduðu þá mjök siglingina ok sigldu þá með þrís miklum, sem þeir vissu, at gort hafði Sigurðr Jórsalafari.

As they sail on, Rognvaldr asserts in verse that they will add to the Emperor’s honour, although in fact the stay in Constantinople is summarily described: they are well received, are given much money and enjoy the best of entertainment. They then return by sea to Italy, thence via the overland pilgrim route to Denmark and by sea to Norway, where Rognvaldr stays for a time before returning to Orkney. The assessment of the journey is unequivocal: ‘Ok varð þessi ferð in frægsta, ok þóttu þeir allir miklu meira háttar menn síðan, er farit hǫfðu’ (1965, 236).

The parallels with King Sigurðr are particularly noteworthy in the case of the visit to the Jordan and the delay at Engilsnes, where the saga-writer calls our attention to the parallel as a means of enhancing Rognvaldr’s prestige. But whereas the two events are fully integrated into Sigurðr’s narrative, here they are blind motifs. The scene at the Jordan is a feeble echo of Sigurðr’s in being a generalised taunt, which has no relationship to anything else in the saga, and the delay at Engilsnes is simply accounted for in practical terms, although it is propped up by the telling allusion to Sigurðr and the vague assertion that Rognvaldr then sailed on to Constantinople in fine style.

The shaping of Rognvaldr’s pilgrimage according to the literary model provided by Sigurðr probably depends in the main on the texts which underlie *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*. But there may be some element of direct influence because, although the *terminus a quo* for the original *Orkneyinga saga* is 1192, when Rognvaldr

was proclaimed a saint, the extant version may be as late as 1234–35, when the reviser of the saga could have had access to the versions of these compilations now extant.⁶ If the emphasis on secular concepts of prestige is original, as is highly probable, then the saga stands as an interesting cultural response to the declaration of sanctity in 1192, since this placed Rognvaldr within a powerful ecclesiastical prestige system which runs counter to the values of the saga even as exemplified in the narration of the journey to the Holy Land.

Religious concerns are more evident in the stories told of King Eiríkr of Denmark. He first makes a pilgrimage to Rome and founds charitable institutions at Lucca and Piacenza (*Knýtlinga saga* ch. 74), whilst both Saxo Grammaticus (Bk XII, ch. 7) and Markús Skeggjason's *Eiríksdrápa* (quoted in part in *Knýtlinga saga*) make specific reference to churches and relics in their accounts of his journey to Jerusalem. Even so, it is noteworthy that the version of his encounter with the Emperor Alexis Comnenus I in *Knýtlinga saga* includes a parallel with Sigurðr which is not in Saxo's twelfth-century Latin account.⁷ According to the saga, Alexis welcomes Eiríkr, gives him a splendid reception and offers him the choice of a great quantity of gold or games in the hippodrome. In Sigurðr's case this choice is seen as a prestige-test, which Sigurðr passes because he chooses the games. Eiríkr, by contrast, chooses the gold. The saga-writer explains, rather apologetically, that this was because the overland journey to Constantinople had been very costly, but he is aware of the tension between such practical realities and the implications of the literary motif and he invites us to make a comparison between Eiríkr and Sigurðr (ch. 81; 1982, 237):

Þessi sami Álexis Girkjakonungr bauð síðan Sigurði Nórekskonungi Jórsalafara slíkan kost. En með því at Sigurðr konungr fór þá heimleiðis ok hafði þá lokit inum mesta fékostnaði í ferð sinni, þá kaus hann fyrir þá sök leikinn. Ok greinask menn at því, hvárt hofðingligar þótti kosit vera.

An attempt is made here to put Sigurðr on an equal footing with Eiríkr by making the decision of both men subject to practical considerations, but what gives the game away is the reported question 'hvárt hofðingligar þótti kosit vera'. The invitation to compare Sigurðr and Eiríkr and to judge which choice was the more noble makes no sense unless the audience can be presumed to know Sigurðr's story and recognise that the choice posed is, in literary contexts, a prestige motif.

The examples of Sigurðr, Eiríkr and Rognvaldr show historical pilgrimages being transformed into events within a literary tradition as each is exploited as a prestige motif. The two final examples in this

article show pilgrimage being exploited for its prestige value in contexts which are wholly fictional.

In the year 1000, King Óláfr Tryggvason was defeated at the battle of Svǫlð and lost his life when he plunged into the sea, but in the subsequent elevation of Óláfr to heroic status, particularly within the Christian traditions of Iceland (Turville-Petre 1953, 190–96), he was given a fictional after-life, since it was assumed that he miraculously survived and lived out his life in the East. The first of these fictional extensions is that of Oddr Snorrason, a monk of the Benedictine house of Þingeyrar, whose saga, written in Latin, but now extant only in early thirteenth-century Icelandic translations, describes how Óláfr escaped to Mediterranean lands and, in a manner which would give him prestige in a monastic context, ended his days in a monastery in Greece or Syria (Oddr Snorrason 1932, ch. 78). Gunnlaugr Leifsson, a younger contemporary of Oddr at Þingeyrar, went still further and transported Óláfr to the Holy Land as the fittingly prestigious and exotic home in which the mighty and now somewhat mysterious hero could live out his days in a kind of miraculous second life (*Flateyjarbók* 1860–68, I 501–06; not in Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga* as now extant). Gunnlaugr's narrative, like Oddr's, was translated from its original Latin into Icelandic and it is only fragments of this that survive. The purpose of both writers 'was to demonstrate the moral worth of their hero, and to show that the Icelanders had special reasons for devotion to him' (Turville-Petre 1953, 196). What is significant in the present context is not that Snorri, in his *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, rejected the patently fictional extension (ch. 112; *Heimskringla* 1941–51, I 367–68), but that, in building up Óláfr's after-life in order to elevate him, Oddr and Gunnlaugr exploited the pilgrimage motif. In Gunnlaugr's narrative, Jerusalem is the site of Óláfr's postponed death.

The second fictional example is from the legendary *Kirialax saga*, extant in manuscripts from the fifteenth century. The hero Kirialax (Alexis) bears the name of several Byzantine emperors but he otherwise has no relationship to history: he is a rich and powerful 'king' who, in a series of extraordinary adventures, moves widely over Europe and the Near and Middle East, having dealings amongst others with Theodoric the Goth (died 526) and Attila the Hun (died 453), figures whose roles in the saga are no more historical than that attributed to Kirialax himself. In the midst of all these improbabilities, the hero visits Jerusalem, and for this the saga-writer (or a later redactor) has copied, often verbatim, a documentary pilgrim-record found a few

folios on from the pilgrim narrative of Nikulás of Þverá in AM 194 8vo (compare Kålund 1908, 26 line 17 to 31 line 6, with *Kirialax saga* 1917, 64–67). As a result, the saga shows at this point an abrupt change of style and the sudden use of systematic historical detail for the duration of an episode which has no function in the narrative beyond the bestowing of yet more prestige on the hero.

The saga-writer's source for this episode has been given the editorial title of Variant Description of Jerusalem (Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen 1978–79, 197). It is embedded in AM 194 8vo without any indication of its origin, but the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is described in considerable detail and there is no doubt that this is the Crusader Church, which was dedicated on July 15, 1149. The text can hardly be later than the Battle of Hattin in 1187, when the Latin kingdom was overthrown. Stylistically the account is similar to Nikulás's pilgrim narrative, and Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen (1978–79, 197) were inclined to think that it originated with Nikulás, although Wilkinson (1988, 17–18) has argued against this on the grounds that Nikulás's description of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre pre-dates the completion of the rebuilding undertaken by the Crusaders, which would indicate that he was in Jerusalem some time before the writer of the Variant Description.⁸ However, this is not a debate which is significant in the present discussion. What is important is that the writer of a late legendary saga, or a subsequent redactor, thought it necessary to attribute to its hero a lengthy visit to Jerusalem and that, in order to provide this prestige motif, he went to the trouble of looking out an existing pilgrim text.

The author (or redactor) was no scholar; he was a careless copyist and did not always understand what he was writing,⁹ but his imagination was fired by the sense of the marvellous that the Jerusalem pilgrimage conveyed, as we see from his tendency to embellish descriptions and his repeated exaggerations when emphasising the miraculous. For example, pillars described in the Variant Description as white, black, red, blue and green (Kålund 1908, 30) are described in *Kirialax saga* as being of carved stone—red, blue, green, yellow, white and black.¹⁰ The uncorrupt body of St Charithon (Caretas) is described in a restrained fashion in the Variant Description as lying 'med heilu liki' (1908, 29), but in *Kirialax saga* a sense of amazement is conveyed by the emphatic detail that she lies 'med holldi ok hári ok heilum likama' (1917, 65). Exaggeration of a similar kind occurs also in the following sentence, where we read that a short distance from St Charithon

is a rock in which one can see ‘stad beggia handa ok allra fingra vors herra Iesu Christi, er hann stakk haundunum vid berginu, þa er illmennin hlupu at honum, svo sem han hefði i leir stungit’ (1917, 65), in contrast with the Variant Description’s more sober statement that ‘ser þar enn fingra-stadinn i berggino, sem hann stakk vid höndunum, þa er illmennin hliopo ath honum’ (Kålund 1908, 30–31). Likewise we are told that at Lazarus’s tomb ‘voru þar gior til aull merki, hvar vor herra Iesus Christi stod, þa er Ladarus reis af dauda graufini’ (*Kirialax saga* 1917, 66)—a meaningless ‘detail’ which has no foundation in either the Variant Description (Kålund 1908, 31) or the biblical account. There are other variations of this kind, but we should not be surprised; as we have seen, the exaggerated flourish, the vivid realisation, the extra detail, are all part of journey descriptions exploited for their prestige value, whether the journey is to Norway, Byzantium or Jerusalem. In this instance the Jerusalem episode stands apart from the surrounding text because of its style and its use of sober, factual details (which predominate, despite the modifications), and because it is presented as impersonally as the Variant Description which it more or less follows; apart from Kirialax’s arrival and departure, which are not part of the description proper, it is not until near the end of the passage that the saga-writer remembers to present the sites as if they are being visited by his hero. But its stylistic isolation, which takes us back full circle to the documentary tradition with which I began, draws attention to the fact that within the saga tradition pilgrimage had achieved such status as a prestige motif that it had to be included at all costs, even in the unlikely context of *Kirialax saga*.¹¹

Notes

¹ Throughout this article I take Snorri’s *Heimskringla* to be the main text as edited by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson from transcripts of the Kringla manuscript, which was all but lost in the fire of 1728. It is thought that the original Kringla vellum is the best witness to Snorri’s original text, although the fact that it was copied from an intermediate copy now lost, and not from the archetype, means that we cannot be certain that its (transcribed) text is faithful to Snorri’s own text in every detail. On the manuscripts and sources of *Heimskringla*, see Whaley 1991, 41–47 and 63–82 respectively. Andersson 1985 provides a survey of the tradition of kings’ sagas, which includes comment on inter-textual relationships.

² The gift is mentioned in *Fagrskinna* (ch. 88; 1984, 318) but the details that Snorri provides are from *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum*, ch. 53: see *Heimskringla* 1941–51, III liv.

³ The episode is included without comment in Erling Monsen's 1932 translation *Heimskringla or the Lives of the Norse Kings by Snorre Sturlason*. Monsen does not state which manuscript he is following but it is probable that here it is the *Hulda–Hrokkinskinna* version of the kings' sagas which, as Jonna Louis-Jensen shows (1977), is mainly a compilation of *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*.

⁴ In Nikulás's itinerary Engilsnes is undoubtedly Cap San'Angelo (Akra Maléa), the southern tip of the easternmost promontory of the Peloponnese (see Hill 1983, 185–86 for Engilsnes and the identity and location of the places named immediately after it), but this is too far west for Sigurðr and for Rognvaldr, who similarly pauses at Engilsnes (see p. 445 above). Sigfús Blöndal (1978, 137, 156) suggests that the reference in both sagas is to the Gallipoli peninsula, which is geographically more plausible. The Gallipoli peninsula was, of course, in Greece as then understood, since it lay within the territory directly ruled by the Byzantine ('Greek') emperor.

⁵ See *Heimskringla* 194–51, III liii and note 1, although not all manuscripts use identical wording; compare, for example, the *Frísbók* version of this episode: *Codex Frisianus* 1871, 287. Davidson 1976, 260–62 summarises Sigurðr's adventures using the *Fornmanna sögur* edition (1825–37, VII 94–95) without identifying this as the *Hulda–Hrokkinskinna* version (on which see note 3 above).

⁶ For a convenient summary of the possible textual relationships, see Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards 1981, 10–11. For a more detailed survey of the complexities of the relationships between *Heimskringla*, *Morkinskinna* and *Orkneyinga saga*, see Whaley 1991, 72–73, and Finnbogi Guðmundsson's edition of *Orkneyinga saga*, where the suggestion is made that the saga was revised under Snorri's supervision (1965, xlii–xliii).

⁷ On the literary relationship between the episode as told of Sigurðr in *Morkinskinna* and that in *Knyttlinga saga*, see Albeck 1946, 138–39. The incident involving Sigurðr must have been available in the texts underlying *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*, see above pp. 442–43 in conjunction with pp. 438–39.

⁸ Wilkinson's argument is far from conclusive. Nikulás's description is ambiguous (Kålund 1908, 22), since he brings together the sites of the sepulchre and the crucifixion as if they are parts of one church, which he identifies as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. But before the Crusader church was built, enclosing all the juxtaposed sites at this spot, pilgrim descriptions generally distinguished them as separate (though adjacent) sites. Wilkinson also refers to Nikulás's statement that, since this is the centre of the earth (a traditional belief), the sun shines down directly there on the Feast of St. John. Wilkinson argues that this must mean that the courtyard in which the centre of the earth was marked was still open to the sky, as it was before the Crusader church was completed. But again Nikulás's statement is ambiguous: he does not say that the evidence for the sun being directly overhead on June 24 was apparent from the way the light was cast on the ground at the central point. The solar 'proof' for Jerusalem's privileged position would presumably have been repeated even

to pilgrims who saw the marker for the centre of the earth within the enclosed Crusader church. See Hill 1983, 191–94. It is also relevant to note that Nikulás is elsewhere said to have returned to Iceland in II 54. This is consistent with the itinerary's internal evidence that he was in the Holy Land before the capture of Ascalon (in August II 53). The dates for the start of the pilgrimage and the arrival in the Holy Land are, admittedly, unknown, but they are not likely to be as early as Wilkinson suggests, because a date significantly before the dedication of the Crusader church in July II 49 would mean that the pilgrimage lasted for an unusually long time. A more likely date for Nikulás's arrival in the Holy Land is sometime after the Second Crusade (II 48), which was followed by a period of relative peace and stability in the eastern Mediterranean generally and in the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem in particular.

⁹The Variant Description and the passage in *Kirialax saga* can conveniently be compared in Kedar and Westergård-Nielsen 1978–79.

¹⁰In the Variant Description the pillars are in the *Templum Domini*, the Crusader name for the Dome of the Rock. The description occurs immediately after that of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In *Kirialax saga* there is confusion between the various churches and so the pillars are attributed to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

¹¹*Karlamagnús saga* is a further excellent example of the use of pilgrimage as a prestige motif, but I have chosen in the present paper to restrict my analysis to Scandinavian figures or—in the special case of *Kirialax saga*—to a figure whose supposed visit to the Holy Land is taken almost verbatim from a documentary pilgrim record which originated in Scandinavia. I should like to thank Dr Rory McTurk and the editors of *Saga-Book* for their encouragement and advice in the preparation of this paper.

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THE *RÍMUR*-POET AND HIS AUDIENCE

BY HANS KUHN

MY SUBJECT-MATTER is an aspect of that vast submerged continent of epic narrative that succeeded the medieval sagas and remained dominant in literary production in Iceland for half a millennium, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, the *rímur*. It may be taken as a sign of Icelandic stubbornness or independence of mind that they switched to a form of verse epic just as other European literatures were abandoning the verse epic for prose, while Iceland had produced superb narrative prose at a time when the rest of Europe could not conceive of narrative literature except in verse. Many of the early *rímur*-cycles were simply reworkings of sagas, at times following the texts almost word for word within the formal and stylistic constraints of the new form. To that extent, there is still a tangible link with the more familiar saga literature.

The 'audience' in my title is not an historical body of listeners but the listening partner implicit in the text of the *rímur*. In this respect, the step from saga to *rímur* meant a change more drastic than the formal leap from prose to a new verse form with elaborate conventions. The sagas are unique, in a medieval context, in their virtual lack of an explicit authorial presence, of a narrator pointing out, commenting, moralising, or simply assuming the God-like role of reading the fictional characters' minds and hearts. In the *rímur*, in contrast, the narrator continually asserts his presence, by speaking in his own person at the beginning and the end of each *ríma*, and by making his presence felt by referring to himself or to his sources at frequent intervals.

When I say 'presence', I do not necessarily mean a manifestation of his historical individuality, as a person with a specific background and specific experiences, with individual opinions, prejudices, emotions. A scholar who, in the nineteenth-century fashion, would wish to use the *rímur* to reconstruct the life and personality of the author, would find few nuggets in the course of his quest. Whether they are fleeting references within the narrative, or the conclusion of each *ríma* or the substantial first-person section at the beginning of each *ríma* (usually between six and ten stanzas), they are largely stereotyped in content and partly also in form, which is an argument for assuming a consid-

erable period of oral tradition before the first *ríma* appears in writing in *Flateyjarbók*, c. 1390.

The opening section is the most varied one. Often it justifies its name, *mansöngur*, by dealing with love, either the poet's love for a particular (unnamed) woman, or about his lack of success in love matters. Or he can deplore the reprehensible practice of using *mansöngur* for lewd purposes, or women's foolishness in falling for such literary evidence of love. Criticism or complaint is often the keynote; the subject can be the poet's age, poor state of health, or economic conditions, or his perceived lack of literary skill, or the political state of affairs. Or he often simply says 'I am composing poetry' in a very elaborate way. If one compares the concerns, opinions and attitudes expressed by the *mansöngvar* of one and the same *rímur*-cycle, the picture of the 'author' emerging may not be very consistent. If, on the other hand, *mansöngvar* of different authors are compared, the stereotyped nature of the contents emerges (see Björn K. Þórólfsson 1934, 266–84). This suggests that the author not so much makes an individual statement as assumes an accepted, traditional role; he 'performs' in a situation which warrants first-person statements and an interplay, however formalised, with his audience.

These are well-known facts; well-known, that is, among readers of *rímur*, which may not be a majority of Old Norse scholars. I thought it might be worth while examining what results a detailed investigation of some particular *rímur*-cycles would yield in these respects. For reasons of space, I am restricting myself here to just four:

Vilmundar rímur viðutan (henceforth abbreviated *Vilm*; 16 *rímur*, 1143 stanzas) by a certain Ormur, of about 1530, if we accept Ólafur Halldórsson's late dating (1975, 28; for consistency and readability, the orthography of *Vilm* quotations has been normalised).

Two cycles by Hallgrímur Pétursson, the author of the beloved *Passúsálmur*, namely *Króka-Refs rímur* (abbrev. *KR*; 13 *rímur*, 936 stanzas) and *Rímur af Lykla-Péttri og Magelónu* (abbreviated *LPM*; 9 *rímur*, 638 stanzas), of about 1650 (Finnur Sigmundsson 1956).

Sigurður Breiðfjörð's *Rímur af Þórði hræðu* (abbrev. *Þhr*; 10 *rímur*, 717 stanzas) of 1820 (1971, 43–135).

The material on which these observations are based thus comprises 48 *rímur* or 3,434 stanzas.

I will for the moment disregard the *mansöngvar* and the conclusions and look at instances of authorial presence scattered over

the narrative sections. By ‘authorial presence’ I mean not just occasions where the author speaks in the first person but any instance where he alludes to the performance situation, e.g. by referring to his source or asserting the veracity of the story. Such remarks may be stereotyped or simply inserted because they supply a number of syllables, alliterations, end rhymes or internal rhymes demanded by the stringent rules of the chosen metre, but they nevertheless remind the audience of the other ‘scene’, as Lars Lönnroth called it (1978), the presence of a performer and their own presence as an audience. Among the works considered here, such instances occur most frequently in *Vilm* (114 times, or more than seven times, on average, in every *ríma*), a little less frequently in *Hallgrímur* (*KR*: 83 times; an average of more than six times per *ríma*; *LPM*: 45 times; an average of five times per *ríma*), and least often in *Þhr* (33 times; an average of more than three times per *ríma*).

Instances of authorial presence in the narrative parts can be divided into three large groups:

- (1) References to the author or his work, namely
 - 1.1 ‘I tell you’ / ‘the *ríma* tells you’;
 - 1.2 ‘I told you’ / ‘the *ríma* told you’;
 - 1.3 ‘I will tell you’ / ‘the *ríma* will tell you’.

1.A A special case is the author addressing a particular person or particular persons in the audience; this is not uncommon in the *mansöngvar* but very rare in the narrative.
- (2) References to the source of the story, namely
 - 2.1 ‘I have been told’;
 - 2.2 ‘The work/poem says’; this is often ambiguous as it can refer to the source or to the poet’s own reshaping of it;
 - 2.3 ‘The book says’; here, the reference to a written source is unambiguous (though not necessarily truthful).

2.A A special case is the assertion of truthfulness which can, but does not have to, refer to the source.
- (3) References expressing the author’s opinion, namely
 - 3.1 ‘I think’ / ‘I believe’;
 - 3.2 A comment on an aspect of the story.

1.1 is particularly frequent in relative clauses:

KR vii 21 sem *skýri* eg frá (cf. vi 21); *Vilm* iii 53 sem *inni* eg (cf. i 14; xii 37); *LPM* iv er *segi* eg frá; *Vilm* xiii 24 sem *hermi* eg frá; *KR* v 32 sem *ræði* eg frá; *Vilm* vi 70 sem eg *greini*; *Vilm* vi 63 sem *tel* eg.

In other syntactic contexts:

skýra *Vilm* i 12, *KR* viii 75; *greina* *KR* iv 30, xi 29; *herma* *KR* vi 23. Other verbs: *Vilm* x 40 *eg votta skjótt*; *LPM* ix 27 *kveð eg*; *Þhr* i 12 *ég fræði yður*.

With *fá* as auxiliary:

KR i 15 *fæ eg fest*; *KR* xiii 50 *fæ eg tjáð*; *Þhr* viii 66 *greint eg fæ*.

Nefna is mostly used to introduce a new character (where a saga author might use the impersonal forms *er nefndr* or *hét*):

Vilm i 10 *Vísinvold nefn eg* (cf. iii 15 under 1.3), but also *Þhr* x 17 *ég nefni sísona*.

In negative contexts ('I am not telling', 'I have difficulties telling'):

Vilm i 12 *skýr eg ei hvað hún heitir*; *Þhr* x 16 *Nenni ég ekki að herma hér / hvernig bragnar sátu*; *Vilm* x 32 *Seint verður oss til mála*.

1.2. References to persons or events mentioned before also occur mostly in relative clauses if they appear in the course of the narrative:

Vilm ii 12 *sem fyr voru nefndar sögunni í* (cf. *Þhr* ii 49); *Vilm* iv 12 *sem greindi eg fyrri í spjalli* (cf., not in first-person form, iv 31 and xv 10); *Vilm* x 22 *sem hermdum vér*; in impersonal constructions: *Vilm* x 53 *sem innt er frá*; xii 55 *sem kynnt er fyrri*; *KR* x 9 *getið er fyrir um fræða reit*; x 15 *forðum glöggt þess getið varð*.

The most frequent references to an earlier stage of the narrative occur at the beginning of the 'epic' part of the *ríma*, after the *mansöngur*. *Rímur* were intended for oral delivery, normally sung, and represented 'Vortragsabschnitte', the amount of text rendered in one 'fit'. Hence the audience had to be reminded where the singer/poet left off, possibly the evening before, at times probably after a longer interval. The general formula for these openings of the narrative sections is '(Last time) I / the *ríma* stopped where', followed by a situation, a character or an incident described at the end of the preceding *ríma*.

Simple references in first-person form are:

Vilm viii 11, *KR* xii 11 *Hvarf eg frá þar*; *LPM* ii 9 *Hætti eg við þar*; *Þhr* ii 7 *Þar ég áður þulu hætti míni*; *LPM* v 10 *Skilda eg við þar*; *Vilm* xiii 10 *Greindi eg næst*; *Vilm* ix 11 (*Af bróður hennar*) *birti eg fyrir*; *KR* xiii 12 *Áður lýsti eg atburð*; *LPM* iv 10 *Geymda eg fyr í gríðar byr*; *Vilm* iii 11 *hefi eg það sett í óðinn minn*; *Vilm* vi 8 *frétt hefi eg rétt*; *KR* viii 9 *Felldi eg óð í fyrri sinn um*; *Þhr* v 12 *Minn var áður málateinn / margbrotinn um*; *Þhr* vi 10 *Bragur minn var áðan einn á enda þulinn / sem*.

Simple impersonal references:

Vilm x 2 *sem fyrir var getið í kvæði*, cf. *LPM* vi 10 *getið var í fræði fyr*; *LPM* viii 7 *Fyrri tjáði fræði þar*; *KR* v 11 *Ræðan var í rénan þar*; *Vilm* xvi

4 rétt var þanninn ríman fyllt; KR vi 11 Ördug mæðin áðan stríð / öll þar falla náði.

Sometimes the *ríma* is referred to by one of the elaborate kennings for ‘(the mead of) poetry’ characteristic of *mansöngur*, usually harking back to *Skáldskaparmál* chs 5–6:

Suttungur or Óðinn’s gain (*Vilm* xiv 7 Suptuns gróður *sagði* óður / (seggjum) næst og ekki góður; xv 8 Fyrri *greindi* Fjölnis gróður / fræða galla); Óðinn’s ale yeast (*LPM* vii 10 Þar trú eg *stæði* kólnuð kveik / Kjalars í drykkjar vinnu); Óðinn’s arrow (*KR* ix 6 Hnikars *lá* þar hulin ör); dwarf’s ship or life-saving (*KR* iii 13 Norðra lét eg hafna hauk / *hlaupa* áðan þar í kaf; iv 9 Dregið af sundi dverga far / Dvalins í nausti *hvíldi* þar; *KR* vii 10 Suðra far að sandi bar / Suptungs hlaðið minni / *brotnaði* þar, sem; *LPM* ix 5 Þar var dverga lausnin lífs / *lægð* í hyrjar gráði). (The editor lists *hyrjar gráð* under kennings for *hugur*, *brjóst*, but *hyrr* ‘fire’ does not make sense. Rather, we may suspect that *hyrjar* is an objective gen. and that ‘hunger, greediness for fire’ is a water kenning, the whole phrase meaning ‘the dwarves’ ship was sunk [at the end of the last *ríma*] where . . .’)

1.3 Here the poet/performer announces what he is about to tell the audience:

Vilm i 52 Af siklings arfa *segja skal* fyst; *Vilm* viii 31 *Greinum* hitt hvað görðist heima (cf. *LPM* viii 39, *Þhr* i 14), *Þhr* v 77 því *skal* líka *greina* frá; *Vilm* ix 22 nú *skal herma* að, xiv 34 Hróðrar val að *herma skal*, *Þhr* x 32 *herma verð*; *Vilm* xi 17 svo *vil* eg *inna* í Sónar mar; *KR* vi 18 Ólufu *vil* eg *glósa*; *LPM* vi 17 þar so til sem *birta skal*; *LPM* vii 69 *skal* nú *tjá*; *Þhr* iii 37 sem eg frá *mun spjalla*; *Þhr* vi 14 Nú *mun verða* að *nefna* fleiri njóta stála.

Or the poet declines to tell the audience something:

Vilm iii 39 Eg *kann* ekki að *koma við* fleira að sinni; *KR* ix 74 (King Haraldur’s prophetic description of Refur’s *virki* in Greenland) Í setning kvæða *sízt* eg *kann* / sveit að *fræða* um atburð þann.

Such announcements often mark the introduction of a new person or the beginning of a new episode and are thus similar to the ‘change of scene’ situation where in the sagas, too, the author intervenes to bridge the narrative discontinuity. The difference is again, as with the introduction of new characters, that in the sagas an impersonal form is favoured (*Þar er frá at segja*, *Nú er þar til at taka*) while in the *rímur* the author is more likely to speak in the first person.

The most usual formula is:

‘Let’s turn to/away from’ (*Víkjum til Vilm* v 11, xi 59, xvi 30, frá *LPM* v 4) or ‘The story turns to’ (Þangað *víkur* Þundar feng *KR* x 6, x 23, xii 12; xi 10 Ríman þangað ræðu *snýr*; *KR* viii 11 Til *Víkur* aftur vísan *fer*, *Vilm* v 12 Til *vísis* dóttur verður að *venda*) or ‘from’ (*KR* xii 53 Ræðan *víkur* ræsir frá);

‘Let’s relate what’ (*Vilm* viii 31 *Greinum* hitt hvað gjörðist). More elaborate: *KR* viii 34 Af ljóða porti um Noreg næst / náms eg svipti hurðu; *Þhr* vi 36 Fjöltnis hani flýgur minn og frá því glósi, er.

Sometimes it is a two-step operation, ‘Let’s leave X and turn to Y’:

Vilm iii 15 Seggir hverfa úr sögu og þessa fræði / Algaut nefni eg ýtran jarl; x 48 *Látum* hoskan hvílast þar / hrumþvengs nöðru starfa / Vestrar ferju víkja skal / víst til þengils arfa; xii 13 *Látum* gildan geymir hers hjá gotnum sitja / fleira verða að fylla kvæði / frægðar menn með stoltar æði; *LPM* vi 42 *Látum* fangaðan dvelja dreng . . . Víkjum þangað Fjöltnis feng, sem; *KR* iv 32 *Kemur* lítt við söguna sú / segja verður fleira nú; *KR* vi 54 Í hætti settum hulið hjal / eg hlýtt til þrautar teygja; *LPM* vii 68 Viðrix gildi vík eg frá / vænni bauga þöllu / skarlats Hildi skal nú tjá / hvað skeði í greifans höllu.

Further expressions for ‘Leaving X’ (without mentioning Y):

Vilm iii 29 segir nu ekki meira af þeim; *Þhr* ii 16 Ljóðin sleppi þeim um síð; vii 62 söguna við er skilinn hann.

For the introduction of new characters, *koma við söguna*, as above, is also found in *KR* i 25, *koma til sögunnar* in *KR* ii 12. ‘Let’s get on with it!’ Hallgrímur at times admonishes himself:

KR iv 20 Yggjar fundur óðs um krá / aftur snúi veginn á; iv 26 Til sögunnar í svip eg renn.

1.A. While the audience, or an individual in it, is often addressed in the *mansöngvar*, I have found only two such specific references in the narrative of *LPM*, namely the *skarlats Hild(i)* in the passage quoted in 1.3 and the *þorna Lín* to be quoted in 3.2.

2.1. The *rímur*-poet may be proud of his poetic skill but he claims to relate a true story and therefore often, as a proof of authenticity, refers to ‘having heard’ or ‘having read’ a particular fact. The most frequent formula is *frá eg*, which is also a handy line-filler where two extra syllables are needed. It does not occur in *Þhr*, but appears no less than 32 times in *Vilm* and 12 times in Hallgrímur. Equivalent expressions occur only occasionally:

KR xiii 70 hef eg það af fræði frétt (cf. *LPM* ii 48); *Vilm* iv 14 af höldum völdum hermt var mér; *Vilm* vi 62 sem þegnar spjalla; *Vilm* x 35 sem sagt er frá; *KR* iii 47 var það komið so fyrir mig; *Þhr* 29 er þess getið; *Þhr* x 29 sem birtir skraf.

2.2. The indiscriminate use made of a great variety of words meaning ‘poetry’, ‘poem’, ‘work of literature’ often allows no certain conclusion whether the poet is speaking of his source or his own work.

Whichever it is in a particular instance, he moves from the fictional scene to the performing scene in that instant. I list the lexical items in order of frequency:

Vilm viii 18 sem hermir *fræði* (cf. iii 56, x 8, xiii 58, *KR* vi 15, *LPM* viii 82; *LPM* ix 85 er segir í *fræða línum*); *Vilm* vii 51 *brag[u]rinn* trú eg svo ræði (cf. x 64, xiii 30, *Þhr* iv 13); *Vilm* xvi 8 *sagan* vill þanninn hljóða (cf. i 15, *Þhr* v 43); *Þhr* ix 59 um sem heyrast *sögur*; *Vilm* iii 32 sem *óðurinn* tér (cf. iv 23, *KR* xiii 82); *Vilm* xvi 15 *kvæðin* segja að (followed by something that is *not* in the source! Cf. *Vilm* iii 39, *LPM* ix 76); *Vilm* xi 76, *Þhr* i 67 *ríman* segir; *KR* iv 47, xi 32 sem innir *spil*; *KR* vi 13 Þorgils tjörgu Týrinn hér / tel eg *málið* kalli; *KR* vii 32 sem innir *tal*; *Þhr* viii 21 sem *ljóðin* inna; *KR* x 47 sem greinir *spjall* (again about something not found in the source); *Þhr* vi 21 sem *mærðin* greinir; *Vilm* xi 9 *Orða snilld* . . . áður skýrði; *Vilm* xvi 8 So réð greina *Sónar vín* (xvi 23 *Suðra vín*).

Verbal phrases:

Vilm xiii 36 sem *kynnt er frá*; *KR* iv 48 sem *greinir frá*; *LPM* iv 54 *getið er þess*.

2.3. Post-Reformation Hallgrímur is particularly fond of invoking the authority of a written source in a general form, even though that source may not fully confirm him, as when he says *KR* xiii 77 about Refur having settled down in Skagen: *Átján ár þar sat með sóm / so er greint í letri*, while *Króka-Refs saga* (ÍF XIV 160) only says *nökkura vetr*—but then, there are not many words rhyming with *sankti Petri*.

Other instances of *letur* are found in *KR* iii 67, v 58, vii 70, xi 19, *LPM* v 44 (orða letur), ix 88, *Vilm* xiv 17, xv 11. *Bók* is also popular: *Vilm* xv 24 (Svo vill birta bókin frá), *KR* iii 26, iv 20, v 19, xii 66, xiii 33, *LPM* i 21, ii 19, ii 22, vii 55. *Historían* *KR* x 13 and the plural in *KR* xii 65 Í *historíunum* þetta finnum presumably also means written sources. Further *KR* x 70 þanninn greinir *rit*. A confused kenning is *Vilm* xvi 61 Svo vill greina *Sónar skrá*; ‘Són’s wine’ (quoted above) makes sense for ‘poetry’, ‘Són’s [written] list’ does not.

Verbal phrases:

Vilm xiii 54 *lesið er lengur*; *Þhr* viii 62 *ritað finn* (Sigurður’s only reference to a written source).

2.A. Assertions of truth are mostly found in *Vilm*; there are none in *Þhr*. In one instance (*Vilm* vii 25 *það stendur í dag til merkja*) it corresponds to a similar assertion in the saga source; otherwise they are the *rímur*-poet’s addition:

Vilm i 32 kynni eg allt hið *sanna*, vii 14 af *sönnum* orða greinum, xi 17 slíkt er *satt* með öllu, cf. *LPM* vii 11 *satt* eg um það glósa, ix 75 frá eg að *sönnu*

and ix 74 skal eg *hið rétta* inna, KR vi 42 sem skýri eg hér *með rétti*; *Vilm* ix 11 bragurinn vill það *sanna*, cf. KR x 17 *sanna* þetta öldin kann.

‘I am not exaggerating’:

Vilm vii 14 Sagan er ekki af seggjum *rengd* (after describing Vilmundur’s prowess at spear-throwing); xi 18 Ekki slíkt með orðum vex / oss í ljóða gjörðum (before claiming that six men could hardly lift the rock Vilmundur lifted by himself).

3.1. Expressions under this heading are part of a role-play on the performing scene. They serve not so much to convey the convictions, assumptions, guesses of the poet as to draw the audience into the act by inviting them to consider the plausibility of the events related. By feigning conviction, uncertainty or doubt, he makes himself one of the audience, so to speak, and thus becomes a true mediator between the fictional plane and the listeners. In reality, *trú eg* may be the same sort of line-filler as *frá eg*, but both create links between the audience and the fiction, links provided by the performer’s ‘personal’ experience.

Hallgrímur uses these little insertions a great deal, Sigurður never. They are listed in order of frequency:

trú eg *Vilm* vii 51, 68, KR i 25, 66, vii 24, xi 24, LPM vi 34, vii 10, 14, ix 88, pl. *trúum* KR v 15; *get eg* *Vilm* i 65, KR i 69, ii 13, xi 36, xiii 51; *tel eg* KR i 42, vi 13, ix 27; *ætla eg* *Vilm* vi 73, vii 33; *hygg eg* LPM vii 83.

3.2. The *mansöngvar* are the place for comments by the poet/performer, but occasionally they are found in the narrative as well. *Vilm* has only one such passage when the author in v 67 anticipates future events: *Skjótt mun svikanna skamt á milli*.

LPM has two comments in the ninth and last *ríma*. In ix 72 the author says his pen is unable to describe the joy of the lovers finally reunited:

Fögnuð þeirra Fjölnis vín
fær ei greint með öllu
það má sérhvör þorna Lín
þenkja í minnis höllu.

In ix 79 he takes a short cut by only briefly describing the next recognition scene, that of parents and son:

Hjónin þegar sinn þekktu son
þó (var.: so) til fátt vér leggjum
gledinnar nægð sem var til von
vóx fyrir hvorutveggjum.

Sigurður generally takes a fairly light-hearted approach to his story, e.g. he occasionally calls the main character *Monsér Þórður*. In i 45 the

story of King Sigurður slefa's lecherous ways with the wife of the Hersir Klyppur make him laugh. In v 43–46 he expresses doubt whether the nightly encounters between Sigríður and Ormur were as innocent as the saga claims. In x 15 he says that everybody was invited to a wedding except himself and comments that the poor always miss out.

Space will not allow a full discussion of authorial presence in the *mansöngur* but some general observations can be made to illustrate both the tenacity of tradition and the individuality of an author's handling of that tradition. It will not come as a surprise that the oldest work, *Vilm*, is the most formalised, and the youngest, *Phr*, the most individualised of the four works in question.

One such tenacious tradition is a difference of style between *mansöngur* and the narrative bulk of the *ríma*. While the latter abound in kennings for 'man' and 'woman' and occasionally for other popular referents such as 'ship' or 'battle', and while some metres may call for all sorts of grammatical contortions to satisfy the rules, the diction is characterised, on the whole, by an easy flow. In the *mansöngur* and the corresponding short conclusion of each *ríma* a much more elaborate style is used. There are, in particular, plentiful references to the story of the winning of the mead of poetry by Óðinn in the form of kennings for 'poetry' and 'poem', and these can in turn form the basis of extended conceits. This is true, at least, of the older *rímur*, and the complication can be such that even an expert like Ólafur Halldórsson is induced to sigh: 'Mansöngurinn er þesskonar líkingamál og rímhnoð sem tilgangslaust er að reyna að skýra' (1975, 187). Hallgrímur, more than a century later, uses a much more discursive style, and in Sigurður the difference between *mansöngur* and narrative narrows even further.

Mansöngur and conclusion form a bridge between the performance scene and the fictional scene. The performer announces the start of another session, identifies what is coming, says who he is performing for, usually numbers the part and names the metre and often asks for silence. At the beginning of the work he may also say who commissioned it, and at the end he may identify the woman he dedicates it to and himself (usually in a teasingly roundabout way reminiscent of cryptic crosswords). This is practical information for the audience easily explained by the oral performance situation, but it would seem that from an early stage the performer strove to hold the stage in his own name for a little longer at the beginning of each *ríma* and to use the opportunity both to show off his poetic skills and to make personal

remarks, whether genuine or pretended, before submitting to the slavery of the narrative.

Mansöngur means ‘love song’, and we know both from the sagas and from *Grágás* that the Icelandic community in the Middle Ages took a dim view of a man compromising a woman by making her the object of such a song; it seems to have been considered as libel, a sort of *níð*. The *rímur*-convention is that composing and performing the work is a form of homage to a female in the audience, who is referred to under a variety of florid kennings but hardly ever by name except in the form of an anagram hidden away in the text. Otherwise the poet’s language is often that of the hopeful or rejected lover, not unlike that of the courtly poet of the high Middle Ages on the continent, pleading for attention, expecting a reward, complaining about the beloved’s indifference or his own loneliness. As in the case of the troubadour, these feelings were expressed in Iceland in a public context, before an audience, not in private, and in this way may be as much a product of audience expectation as of a personal predicament, although in the case of more recent poets such as Sigurður, the lady may actually be identified.

Whether the poet as a pleading, unsuccessful lover owes his existence to European role models, or whether he was conceived in Iceland, possibly as a comic act, is hard to say; he is, however, the norm in the older *rímur*. In *Vilm* i, ii, iii, vii and xv, this is the main theme of the *mansöngur*, sometimes coupled with self-criticism for being a talker, not a doer, for having no practical experience (iii 3–4; vii 1–4; ix 6), or blaming lack of success on age (i 4–5; iii 1–2; vii 2, 5–7, where he gives his age as 57; ix 2–3) or on lack of poetic brilliance (i 6; ix 2–3; xi 3–5). But he also criticises men who use their verbal skill to fool girls (ix 5–9), commends the man who is discreet about his amorous bliss (iii 7), and praises the ideal woman in almost biblical terms (viii 3–8). In another passage, however, he says that a person is mad to honour women if he can never sleep with them (xiv 5). Much *mansöngur* space, in all the four cycles, is used to say why the poet cannot, or does not wish to, write *mansöngur*.

But despite the term *mansöngur*, even in *Vilm* the principal theme is not love but ‘I compose poetry’. And the way the poet expresses it is not only by using the mythological concepts of the divine origin of the mead of poetry but by displaying a firework of kennings and metaphors that puts the *profanum vulgus* in its place. In all of iv, v, vi, xii and xvi, and in most of xi and xiii, this is the subject matter of the *mansöngur*.

In v, vi and xii the (dwarves') boat is the dominant conceit, in xi and xiii brewing. The first and last *mansöngvar* give a veritable pot-pourri of metaphors; in i animals (1–2), liquid from the pen (2), the mead of poetry (3), grinding, sifting and baking (3–5), the dwarves' boat (6–8); in xvi the smithy (1–3, with Óðinn working the bellows), brewing (4), sounds and music (5). The smithy also appears in xi 4; in vi and xii the boat-imagery is enriched with the mythology of love (in vi Frigg and the dwarf Frosti are to share a bed; in xii *Venrix dygðin* and *afmors frygð* go into the building of the boat), and in xii the boat's cargo is Óðinn's drink. The conclusions are less heavily weighed down with metaphorical language but they still carry a fair load: Óðinn's drinking-horn (i 82, ii 66) or beer-keg (xii 68) is empty, the mead of poetry (ii 89, xi 87–88), the dwarves' drink (iii 76), Frosti's beer and flour (vi 73) are used up. The last conclusion provides a whole bouquet of metaphors: I have messed up Són's yeast (xvi 62), my purse of poetry is empty so I cannot feed songs any more, I have hammered together stiff ('blue-cold') verses for you (63), my poetry-talk in the land of consciousness will stop, I lock again the hall of verses (66).

Hallgrímur has the same elements, if in simpler language, but his emphasis is quite different. The tenor of his *mansöngur* passages is his lack of skill and practice: he repeatedly (*KR* i 9, iv 7, xi 4, xiii 86, *LPM* ii 7) asks his audience to correct or improve his verses; he deplores his ignorance of the (Prose) Edda (*KR* i 7, iv 2, vi 7, *LPM* i 6); and what is worse, when he was shown an Edda text, he did not understand it (iv 5–7). The reasons for these shortcomings are his youth (*bernska* *KR* xiii 86) and his stupidity (*pursleg heimska* *KR* xii 9), and he asks the lady to accept his good intentions in lieu of achievement (*KR* ix 4, *LPM* iv 9). This ritual self-depreciation certainly belongs to a literary convention as *captatio benevolentiae*, but there is a ring of truth in his oft-stated dislike of *mansöngur*, his unease with the metre *frumhent* (*KR* viii 8), his professed inability to follow the lady's request for a change of metre (ix 3–4; he does, however, use a new metre in each *ríma*!), his longing for simplicity (*LPM* i 8 *slétt og einfalt*, *KR* v 9 *einfalt rétt með orðin slétt*) and his suspicion that poets who *myrkt kveða* (*KR* v 3) exploit their audience's lack of expertise. He more than once (*KR* v 7, *LPM* iii 2) rejects formal virtuosity (*hagleikr*); contents (*efni*) are more important. Once he even says that he is sick and tired of the whole enterprise (*KR* xii 2 *Leiðast tekur loksins mér þau ljóð að smíða*), but goes on to say that it will not help a lazy person to just look at the work ahead of him.

While the framework of writing for a lady and hoping to be rewarded is kept, he does not launch into discussions of the relationship between poetry and sexuality except obliquely, by criticising those who use the divine gift of poetry to hurt their neighbours: they will be called to account for having wasted their talents in such a way (*KR* iii 3–6; cf. *LPM* vii 8–9). But he also defends himself (*LPM* vii 5–7) against people who seem to have contested his moral right to write *mansöngur*, probably because of the supposed irregularity of his marriage (his wife was, technically, still married to another man; see Stefán Einarsson 1957, 196–97). He, too, provides an extended picture of the ideal woman (*LPM* ii 3–6), with an explicit warning against garrulousness and sneering.

Hallgrímur does not appear to have shared the scruples of some of the post-Reformation *rímur*-poets about using pagan mythology. On the other hand, he does not hesitate to thank Christ in the *mansöngur* for having improved his condition (*LPM* vii 4), and he fills one whole *mansöngur* (*LPM* v) with a baroque sermon on the transitoriness of human life which is reminiscent of the *Passíusálmur*. The metaphorical language is much more restrained. Poetry is almost invariably presented, both in the *mansöngur* and in the conclusions, as a ship taken out of the boat-shed or brought to shore, or one that founders at the end of a *ríma* and has to be rebuilt at the beginning of a new one. Turning the metaphor into an extended conceit occurs only in *KR* xii; typically for him, it is a description of the *dilapidated* state of his ship of poetry. The only other metaphors for producing poetry are those of seed springing up (*LPM* vi 1 *Kvæða sprettur kornið smátt*) and of a door turning on its hinges (*LPM* viii 6 *hurðin máls á hjörum snýst*). He is also more folksy in using proverbs and, once, a Wellerism (*KR* xi 7), something his audience is likely to have recognised with pleasure. Once (*KR* x 79) he pays homage to tradition by turning a concluding stanza into a firework of rhymes, with every stressed syllable providing a rhyme. This is the sort of device Sigurður is quite fond of (*Þhr* iv 51, vi 84, vii 70).

Sigurður Breiðfjörð lived in an age when disciples of the Enlightenment such as Magnús Stephensen had already criticised *rímur*, and an edict against sagas and *rímur* had been issued as early as 1746. These may be the *nýju lög* he refers to in *Þhr* iv 5, although it cannot have been half as effective as Jónas Hallgrímsson's denunciation of the genre (and Sigurður's *Rímur af Tístran og Indíönu* in particular) seventeen years later, in *Fjölnir*. He says he would not have taken to *rímur*

if he had remembered that before. But that is probably a tongue-in-cheek remark, for he is very playful in his *mansöngvar*: playful concerning tradition, playful with his audience. A short conspectus of the contents of the *mansöngvar* in *Phr* may illustrate this.

In i he takes the metaphor ‘mead of poetry’ literally. Óðinn puts a little keg of it on the table, but the poet prefers the merchants’ *brennivín*, and a gulp of that inspires him right away so he forswears Óðinn. In ii he recounts how he pretended to be not very interested when the girl asked him to compose a *ríma*-cycle, while in reality he went crazy with happiness. Now he hopes to join the line of poets, even though only as the lowest limb of the tail. In iii he makes fun of the show of modesty *rímur*-poets are fond of, e.g. by claiming that theirs is not the mead of poetry regurgitated (from the mouth) by Óðinn in eagle shape but ejected at the other end (e.g. *KR* x 4 *dvel eg því við arnar stél*). Sigurður claims that his girl would reject such birdshit; and he invokes Bacchus to help him produce something better. In iv, Óðinn (*monsieur ásagramur*) has no mead left, and even if he had, it would be no better than the horrible mixture the poet is served in real life; he finally invokes mighty Minerva. In v he takes up the cliché of the unhappy poet, feeling as if excluded when in love, with everybody putting obstacles in his way—and women’s love being as flighty as aurora borealis. But then he suddenly stops in mid-track. Is he, who is so fond of women, going to criticise them? He hastens to apologise to the girl the *ríma* is written for. In this *mansöngur* he also addresses Ormur, a character not yet introduced in the story but one who meets an unhappy end. In vi the conceit of the dwarves’ ship is taken up. Should he take Þórður (the story’s protagonist) on board? There are so many other farmers wanting a ride (cf. the saga: *Nú verðr at nefna fleiri menn til sögunnar*, *ÍF* XIV 190); he will take them on for the time being and throw them out when the time comes. Up with the sail, Austri! I am taking the helm. The traditional motif in vii is the poet’s adversities: not enough time and quiet to write, personal misfortunes. In Sigurður’s case, it is the imminent separation from his lady that threatens to depress him; but creating joy and entertainment in times of worry is better than riches (something of a cliché in *mansöngur* comments). In viii he again blends the performance scene with the scene of fiction. What woman will Þórður be able to enjoy on earth? (At that point of the story, he is living in the household of an unworthy older husband of a young wife.) The poet would have been assured of a happy married life for Þórður in heaven, but now a clergyman has claimed that there

will be no such thing. The poet refuses to spy and speculate on intimate details (motif love/women's favour). In ix occurs what must be the shortest *mansöngur* in *rímur*-history, a paltry three stanzas with the barest information about that *ríma*'s properties, as if to prove that against all precedent, you *can* come to the point of the story right away. The *mansöngur* of the last *ríma*, x, is a variation on the 'I compose poetry' theme, namely a review of his *rímur*-production up to that point, 116 *rímur* in 20 cycles, with titles given; he also vows *not* to write any more. At the conclusion of his work he asks the audience to leave quickly because he still has to talk to his girl. He then asks her, Guðrún, for a kiss for his trouble but stops himself because people might be listening.

This bare enumeration can only convey Sigurður's play with the *rímur*-conventions, not that with his audience. The conclusion is one example of the latter: his pretending that the listeners have left when in reality they are all still sitting there. By inner monologues and sudden outbreaks he makes them accomplices of a created private persona; he anticipates interjections, asks the men to be quiet but then remembers he is not singing for them but for one particular woman. His playful mixing of fictional stage and performance stage, once even in the narrative, has been shown to be an almost constant feature. It is romantic irony in a place where and at a time when Romanticism cannot have made an impact yet. The whole performance amounts to a puckish game with the audience by an author who could take neither literary conventions nor himself (in the poet's role) quite seriously.

Lars Lönnroth was right in speaking of 'den dubbla scenen', for oral performance is not a contrast of a fictional world with the 'reality' of the performing situation but an artist acting on two stages, as a creator of a fictional world and a performer taking on a variety of roles: in the *mansöngur* as announcer, demonstrator, dazzler, interlocutor, moralist. He was heir to two traditions: skaldic poetry with its stereotyped contents and its emphasis on style and form, an oral tradition with a performer and a live audience; and the saga tradition, largely free in style and form and with its emphasis on the content. The saga tradition, too, was an oral form once, but the very act of fixing it in writing must have 'depersonalised' it as far as authorial presence was concerned. In skaldic poetry the authorial presence could not disappear because it was preserved by formal constraints; when oral prose stories came to be written down, nothing prevented the 'ephemeral' features of performance from vanishing. It still happens today. A speaker at a confer-

ence may do a certain amount of improvisation geared to the occasion, to the audience, to what has happened at the conference before his talk. But even if he writes down these performance-oriented features in his typescript, they are unlikely to appear in the volume of published papers. The saga narrator must have referred to his audience, to the place, to topical events in a performance situation, just as certain forms of theatre do; these references must have disappeared as soon as the saga was written down. In skaldic poetry and in *rímur* they could not be improvised, or only by the exceptional virtuoso; rather, the network of performer/audience relations was written into the text and preserved, as occasional references in *lausavísur* in the sagas must have been, by its strict form, whether occurring in the *mansöngur* or the narrative. It is true that at times *rímur* were copied in manuscript without the *mansöngvar*; but such omission is unlikely to have happened in performance, where a warm-up period and a bridge between reality and fiction were needed—a bridge, however, which also set an Ormur, a Hallgrímur or a Sigurður in his role as poet and performer firmly apart from the Ormur, Hallgrímur or Sigurður of normal daily intercourse.

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ÞÓRR'S RIVER CROSSING

BY LOTTE MOTZ

ÞÓRR'S visit to Geirrðr, a fierce and dangerous giant, in his mountain fastness, is well remembered in Germanic texts. It was commemorated by the tenth-century poet Eilífr Goðrúnarson in his *Pórsdrápa* (*Skj B I* 139–44) and recounted by Snorri in his Edda (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 18). A version of the adventure appears in Saxo's *History of the Danes* (Book VIII; 1979, 262–66); here the hero Thorkil goes to meet the giant Geruth. Another variant is found in the heroic saga *Þorsteins þátr bæjarmagns* (chs 5–10). A fragmentary poem by Vetrliði refers to Þórr's killing of Gjálp, the giant's daughter, and two other poems, the *Húsdrápa* of Úlfr Uggason and an anonymous stanza, tell of Þórr's crossing of a river encountered in his journey (all three are cited by Snorri, *Skáldskaparmál* chs 4 and 18).

Three great dangers are met and overcome by the god in this particular adventure: the traversing of a swollen waterway, the hostile attacks of the giant's daughters and the contest with the giant. All versions note the raging waters and the meeting with Geirrðr; Saxo, Snorri, Eilífr and Vetrliði note Þórr's confrontation with female members of the giant's race. Only Snorri combines this meeting with the passage through the waves.

The river is named Vimur by Úlfr Uggason and Snorri, and Hemra in the heroic saga; here it is of such murderous cold that it destroys any part of the body which it touches. With Saxo it lies in the distant region of Permland. The river is not named in Eilífr's poem where its fury is most vividly described. Snorri's treatise transmits the striking image of a giantess who straddles the riverbed, standing on cliffs and swelling the water with her urine. The god counteracts the danger by casting a stone at the source of the deadly flow.

It is clear that the river crossing is as essential to the story as the meeting with the giant. Some recent studies have examined the significance of the passage through the water and the nature of the stream itself. Vilhelm Kiil (1956) assumes that the river runs with the menstrual blood of a giantess. This interpretation has been accepted by Margaret Clunies Ross (1981, 377–88). To her the river is filled with the menstrual flow of Mother Earth, Jǫrð, who is Þórr's mother in

North Germanic myth. His escape from the aggressive liquid thus would celebrate a young man's liberation from maternal bondage and his entrance into the world of adult men. His later defeat of a male giant would symbolise the overcoming of his father.

It is the purpose of the first part of this paper to examine these novel and stimulating claims concerning the meeting of the river and the god.

I. THE WATERS OF THE RIVER

Kiil bases his conclusion on kennings in the poem *Þórdrápa* and supports his view by reference to the urinating giantess of Snorri's text. He proposes the following readings (1956, 104–29):

Strophe 4a: *fljóða frumseyris dreyra* 'the first-destroying blood of women' (*kvinnars fyrste-spilles blod* = menstruation) = the river (*frum* 'first'; **seyra* 'to destroy, cause to waste away'; *dreyri* 'blood'; *fljóð* 'woman').

Strophe 5a: *vegþverrir fetrunar* 'the diminisher of the path of the footstep-stream (i. e. the stream between the feet)' = Þórr (*þverra* 'to diminish'; *fet* 'footstep'; *run* 'small stream'; *vegr* 'way').

Strophe 5a: *af hagli Nönnu hjalts* 'from the hail of the woman's sword-pommel (vulva)' = menstrual flow (*hjalt* 'boss at the end of a sword, hilt, guard'; *hagl* 'hail').

Strophe 7b: *Mornar snæriblóð* 'the whirling blood-stream of Morn' = the river.

Strophe 8a: *Fríðar sverðrunnit fen* 'the fen (flow) running from the sword of Fríðr (vulva)' = the river (*sverð* 'sword'; *fen* 'swamp'; *renna* 'to run').

Strophe 9b: *æðdu stáli stríðan/straum hrekk-Mímis ekkjur* 'the widows of mischief-Mímir (giantesses) made the fierce stream furious with their steel weapon (vulva)' (*æða* 'to madden'; *stál* 'steel weapon'; *stríðr* 'strong, severe'; *straumr* 'stream, current').

Kiil's interpretation rests heavily on Snorri's anecdote which he uses to support his views. In Snorri's Edda the deadly flow issues indeed from a woman's private parts. This episode, however, is not presented in the skaldic poem. The existence of the image is not confirmed by any reference in folktales, literature or speech. The text of the poem can be, and has been, understood in other ways.¹ If one sets aside the interpretations implied by Snorri's tale other metaphors are equally valid and sometimes more convincing. The translation of the kenning in 4a twists grammatical rules; it actually means 'the blood of the first destroyer of women'. Kiil's kennings and *heiti* for 'vulva' are *Nönnu hjalt* 'sword knob of Nanna', *Fríðar sverð* 'the sword of Fríðr', *stál* 'the steel weapon'; a sword knob, a sword, a steel weapon cannot be related to the visual image of the female genitals which are usually symbolised

by the triangle of pubic hair or the cleft between the labia.² The sword, in particular, generally symbolises the male organ.

It is true that 'blood' (*dreyri*, *blóð*) occurs twice as a metaphor for 'water'. The equation of blood with liquids of many kinds is normal in skaldic poetry. Meissner (1921, 204–05) lists the following, among others, used in referring to 'blood': sea, lake, flood, fjord, wave, surf, river, waterfall, fountain, dew, rain, tears, sweat. A body of water may, conversely, be defined through 'blood' as in *sals dreyri* (*Skj B I* 104,36,4) = 'the blood of the earth' = 'brook'. None of these kennings contains a reference to the monthly course of women.

It is also true that the turbulence of the river is attributed to the action of troll-women (the 'widows of hrekk-Mímir', st. 9). Let us now consider what means the creatures employ to achieve their undertaking:

Strophe 5a: *hlaupáar af hagli oltnar* 'rushing rivers rolling (whipped) with hail' (*velta* 'to roll').

Strophe 5b: *þjóðáar fnæstu eitri* 'the mighty waters spewed poison (i. e. ice?)'.

Strophe 6b: *hreggi hoggvin* 'battered by storm'.

Strophe 8a: the water is *sverðrunnit* 'flowing with the biting fierceness of swords'.

Strophe 8b: the stream is *hretviðri blásin* 'lashed by tempest'.

None of the images evokes or describes the monthly flow, for they describe and evoke the fierceness of northern weather. Giantesses, moreover, no matter how grotesquely drawn, are never, to my knowledge, seen in relation to their bodily needs and functions. They are, on the other hand, closely linked with the frost and ice of the northern landscape, as dwellers in such places as Hálogaland, Greenland or the Polar Bay (Motz 1987, n. 18). Some giantesses' names have a meaning 'snow' (*Drífa*, *Fönn*, *Mjöll*; see Motz 1981). The giantess *Gói* represents a winter month; the troll-woman *Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr* sends a hailstorm to defeat an enemy (*Jómsvíkingadrápa*, *Skj B II* 7,32). A numbing chill may come upon a hero before his meeting with a giantess (as in *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra* ch. 3; see Motz 1987, 472, n. 74). If giantesses caused the fury of the icy river they did so through their powers over wind and weather. It is even possible to understand the combination 'widows of hrekk-Mímir' as a metaphor for 'storms' (though misunderstood by Snorri; *hrekk* might be a variant of *hregg*, 'storm'). In the same way the wind is described as 'son of Fornjótr' (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 27). Since Snorri's image of *Gjálp* is nowhere present in *Þórsdrápa*, Kiil's arguments do not convince.

Margaret Clunies Ross accepts most of the readings proposed by Kiil. She adds more kennings for ‘vulva’ to the list: *Fedju steði* (st. 6b) ‘the anvil of Fedja (a river)’, because it is against this base that the gods press their staves; she accepts an emendation of (*fríðar*) *sverðrunnit fen* (st. 8a) ‘sword-running flow’ to *Fríðar svarðrunnit fen* ‘the flow from the grassy patch (pubic hair, vulva) of the giantess’ (1981, 375). She finds the fact that the river is ‘thick with dangerous rocks’ an indication of its threatening female power, for in skaldic kennings stones are sometimes described as ‘the bones of the earth’. She sees further support for her claim in images of Norse myth in which rivers are replete with knives and stones, and in the figure of the goddess Rán who catches sailors in her net (1981, 376).

While it is true that streams and oceans present many dangers to a population of fishermen and sailors and that this danger was visualised in poetic imagery, we cannot therefore conclude that this danger had arisen in the functions of the female body and that the river Vimur was running with the menstrual blood of a giantess.³ Clunies Ross bases her interpretation, furthermore, on the assumption of an ‘early Scandinavian thought-pattern’; in this pattern the waters of the world were seen as female features of the landscape and were described in terms of female effluvia (1981, 373). Let us now consider this assumption.

The Waters of Eddic Mythology

Water, as well as frost and ice, is indeed endowed with creative force in Eddic myth. This creative force is not allied with women.

The pre-cosmic void contained the waters of Hvergelmir from which rivers fell into the gaping space (*Gylfaginning* ch. 4), and these hardened into solid ice. The ice melted through contact with sparks of fire, and the first living being, the giant Ymir, came into existence (*Vafþrúðnismál* st. 31). He, in turn, brought forth through his *sveiti* ‘perspiration’ the first man and woman. Later he was killed and from his blood ran the ocean and the rivers of the earth. The gods caused the blood of his wounds to flow as a ring around their world to separate it from the dwellings of the giants (*Gylfaginning* ch. 8; *Vafþrúðnismál* st. 21; *Grímnismál* st. 40). This ring of water is exceedingly difficult to cross. A male creature thus came forth as the first form of biological life and in him originated other species.

The cosmic waters belong, on the whole, with male rather than with female beings. The rivers of the world are said to issue from the horns of a stag which is stationed on Óðinn’s hall (*Grímnismál* st. 26,

Gylfaginning ch. 39). Snorri gives the names of twenty-five and the Eddic poem names thirty-seven of these streams. The cosmic ash is also linked with sacred waters: Mímir's well, replete with the liquid of wisdom, and Urðr's well, its contents sprinkled on the leaves of the hallowed ash and falling as dew into the valleys (*Gylfaginning* chs 15–16, *Völuspá* st. 19, 28). Dew drips also from the jaws of the horse of night, Hrímfaxi (*Gylfaginning* ch. 10, *Vafþrúðnismál* st. 14). In this list of cosmic waters only Urðr's well is guarded by women.

The waves of the sea are indeed imagined as female creatures since they are the daughters of a goddess and the giant of the sea (*Skáldskaparmál* chs 25, 33, 61). The waves, however, are not presented in anthropomorphic shape and were certainly not symbolised through female biological functions. Three instances (Rán, Urðr, the waves of the sea) out of many cannot substantiate the claim that the waters of the land were 'described . . . in terms of human female effluvia' (Clunies Ross 1981, 373).

Folktales of the Giants

The giants are singled out in this discussion because it is to them, more than to other spirits of folklore, that the origin of the landscape is ascribed. I have not come across a single tale in which a lake, a river or a brook is created by a giantess.

Male giants, on the other hand, sometimes cause the existence of a waterway, a pond or a stream. A giant of Slesvig thus dug a hole and this later filled with water (Broderius 1932, 16). In Halland, Sweden, a giant cut into the earth to form a drainage canal; it became a river (Broderius 1932, 16). A spring or pond originates at times in a giant's blood. It is told near Magdeburg that a giant took to leaping across the village for his amusement. He stubbed his toe against the spire of the church and his blood formed a small pool; it is now named Hünenblut (Grimm 1891, I, no. 326). The Tyrolean giant Thyrsis was killed by Haimon, his enemy. The blood of the slain creature became the Thyrsenbach (Broderius 1932, 35). Thus it is male and not female blood which is the origin of features of the landscape.⁴

Skaldic Poetry

It is not possible to treat this category exhaustively and only some characteristic instances are cited.

In kennings the ocean may be referred to as 'Ymir's blood', *Ymis blóð* (*Skj B I* 135,2,2), 'Rán's home', *Ránheimr* (*Skj B I* 482,16,4), or

‘surrounder of the earth’, *jarðar umgerðir*, *grundar garðr* (*Skj* B II 215,16,1; B I 207,3,5–6).

The waves are known as ‘Ægir’s daughters’ (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 25). A river may be named ‘blood of the earth’, *sals dreyri* (*Skj* B I 104,36,4), *vengis dreyri* (*Skj* B I 268,3,1–3), *jarðar dreyri* (*Skj* B II 379,28,6); or ‘sweat of the earth’, *foldar sveiti* (*Skj* B II 227,3,4). A river may also be the ‘ocean of the mountains’, *hallands marr* (*Þórsdrápa* st. 7a); the river Vimur in *Þórsdrápa* is described as ‘the blood-stream of Mjörn (a giantess)’ (st. 7b, according to Kiil) or ‘the blood of Gangr (a giant)’, *Gangs dreyri* (st. 4a, according to Finnur Jónsson).

We note again that the ‘blood’ which fills a river is not necessarily the blood of a female creature. The metaphors in which a river is the ‘blood of the earth’ do not imagine the earth as a woman of flesh and bone. The noun *jörð* ‘land’ is feminine, the noun *vengi* ‘land’ is neuter and the noun *salr* ‘home, land’ is masculine. We may note, furthermore, that Jörð, Þórr’s mother, is never visualised in any myth.⁵ Even if the water of a river is equated with a woman’s blood, there is no reason whatsoever to assume that this blood is of a menstrual nature. Ymir’s blood has certainly no menstrual aspect.

On the basis of folklore, poetry and myth we cannot ascribe cosmogonic significance to the specific effluvia of women.

II. SNORRI’S MODEL

In the second part of this paper I attempt to trace Snorri’s episode to a model, and this would have to be found outside the Germanic cultural area.

Tales which testify to the cosmogonic creativity of urine appear in the matter of France and Ireland, both rooted in Celtic tradition.

The French Heritage

The sailors of the Bay of Saint-Brieuc relate that the sun, a giant, descended to earth; there he emitted such an intensity of heat that people perished. The saints came down from paradise and begged him to return to heaven, but he would not listen to their pleas. Then they relieved themselves of urine, unceasingly, for eight days. In this way the salty ocean was created, and the sun went back to his former dwelling (Sébillot 1905, 7).

A woman of Touraine was hospitable to a saint and was granted the reward that whatever task she undertook in the morning would continue by itself throughout the day. The woman eagerly prepared her

linen, but she crouched down before she worked. The flow did not cease all day and formed the river passing the foot of the Loges in Anjou (Sébillot 1905, 327–28; the same story is also told in the Bourgogne. She is called *commère* Lasseine, and the river is the Seine). A young girl believed that she was forbidden by her confessor to relieve herself for a fortnight. In her anxiety she urinated for three hours, creating thereby a pond near the castle of Combourg (Sébillot 1905, 403; Ille-et-Vilaine, Basse Bretagne). There is a small spring in a grotto in the valley of the Autise that owes its existence to the urine of Mélusine (Sébillot 1905, 176).

Gargantua, above all, is given credit for originating waterways through the fluid of his body. In this way the rivers Arguenon and Frémur were brought forth in Haute-Bretagne and various waters of the valleys of the Dauphiné (Sébillot 1905, 328).

The Irish Heritage

In Irish tradition we encounter themes and images that show great resemblance to those of Snorri's episode. In the tale of *The Second Battle of Moytura* (Stokes 1891, 85) the god Dagdae meets a woman, at the time of Samain, in the river Unius.

He beheld the woman in Unius in Corann washing (herself), with one of her two feet . . . to the south of the water, and the other . . . to the north of the water . . . The Dagdae conversed with her, and they make a union . . . The woman that is here mentioned is the Morrígan.

The Irish story thus shows the image, also present in Snorri's story, of a woman straddling a river glen and exposing her pudenda.

In the *Cattle Raid of Cuailnge* it is Queen Medb who has to relieve herself before a battle; she asks her husband Fergus to take over the defence.⁶

‘Take over the shelter of shields . . . until I relieve myself’ . . . and Medb relieved herself. It dug three great channels, each big enough to take a household.

The place is designated as Fual Medba, ‘Medb's Urine’.

In a story derived from this one, *Táin Bó Flidaise* II, the queen, likewise, attended to her needs. In this case ‘neither root nor underbrush . . . was left, down to the gravel of the earth.’ This place also, consisting of some stones, received the name Mún Medhbhi, ‘Medb's Urine’.⁷

The Irish texts also provide an analogue to the stone cast at the vulva. The event takes place in a tale about Cuchulainn, the great hero of the Ulster cycle. He was in grim pursuit of his enemy when this man's

foster-mother, Richis, barred the warrior's way by planting herself before him and exposing her female parts, thus paralysing the hero in his action (cited in Stefán Einarsson 1986, 145, after Thurneysen 1921, 483–84):

Richis overtook Cuchulainn *at a ford* and lifted her skirts before him. In his embarrassment Cuchulainn buried his face in the ground and could not be prevailed upon to move . . . Then Laeg threw a stone into her vulva, whereupon she fell down dead with a broken spine [*italics mine*].

The episode encapsulates a belief which had taken strong root in some areas of Celtic settlement, such as Normandy, Brittany and the British Isles, that a powerful magic issues from a woman's exposed genitals. This belief is reflected in the many figures of grotesquely shaped hags which are placed in prominent positions above a church door, the entry to a castle or a monastery, or on a belfry.⁸ Such a figure is known as Sheela-na-gig and she always bares her sexual organs.

We now have the following parallels between Snorri's tale and the Irish narratives: the image of a woman above a river who straddles a ravine, the water of a river generated by a woman's urine and the stone sent into the vulva which destroys the woman's powers. These images and themes do not occur elsewhere in Germanic culture and we must assume that Snorri has introduced foreign matter.

Snorri and the Folktale

Snorri repeatedly employed themes of folk narrative in his rendering of Germanic myth.⁹ Many elements of Celtic provenance have been discerned in his stories, especially in the tale of Þórr's journey to Útgarða-Loki. In this journey Þórr and his companions enter the castle of a giant and engage in contests which they cannot win, for the opponents of the gods are allegorical figures. Þórr thus wrestles with an old woman; she is, in fact, the personification of old age which cannot be defeated by anyone (*Gylfaginning* chs 44–47).

Michael Chesnutt finds an analogue to Þórr's voyage in the Irish tale *The Reception of Fionn at the House of Cuanna*. In this narrative the hero meets a girl who personifies intellect, as in Snorri's account Þórr's companion meets Hugi, 'thought'. Fionn struggles with an animal that symbolises the crimes of the world, while Þórr struggles with a cat which is, in reality, the mighty Midgard snake.¹⁰

Friedrich von der Leyen sees the counterpart to Þórr's adventure in the Irish fairy-tale of Diarmuid. When the heroes of this story receive hospitality they must battle with a ram, i. e. 'the strength of the world'.

Diarmuid is entranced by the beauty of the host's young daughter, but he cannot gain her for his own. She is 'youth' which no man can hold for long.¹¹

The story of Þórr's journey contains yet another widely-diffused theme. While staying with a farmer the god slaughters his goats to provide for the evening meal. The next day the god reawakens them to life with his sacred hammer. One of the goats is lame, however, because its thigh bone has been split. Tales of slaughtered and resurrected beasts, whose life resurges from their collected bones, are spread throughout the world.

The theme must have originated among hunting nations, for these believe that a beast's life-force resides within its bones, and these must be treated with reverence and care and must be carefully assembled.¹² These stories are usually set in pastoral communities. The tales occur in Alpine areas, in Switzerland, Carinthia and southern Tyrol, and also, less frequently, in such places as Brittany and Ireland. The theme has been incorporated into fairy-tales and legends throughout the world.¹³

Another well-known story is encountered in Snorri's book. It is widely reported in the Germanic provinces that an important structure originated in the labour of a superhuman being who was later tricked of his wages and who left the place of his defeat in anger.¹⁴ The task is usually accomplished by a giant or by the devil who is his successor. In Snorri's account the story is attached to the building of Ásgarðr, the fortress of the gods. After he was cheated, the giant's skull was shattered by Þórr's hammer (*Gylfaginning* ch. 42).

Although the tales here discussed are derived from the cultural stores of various peoples they are put by Snorri into a framework of North Germanic myth, and endowed with cosmic significance. In his adventure with Útgarda-Loki Þórr creates aspects of the landscape, viz three valleys and the ebb-tide of the sea. He also struggles with the Midgard snake, the cosmic creature that dwells in the ocean.

In folktales of reawakened beasts, they are returned to life by being covered with their hide. In Snorri's version alone the miracle is worked by Þórr's hallowed hammer. The topos of the cheated mason, in turn, is placed in relation to the fortress of the gods, the defeat of a giant, Óðinn's wonderful steed, the shape-shifting of Loki and the valour of mighty Þórr. Þórr and his hammer are, in fact, brought in after the story has run its folktale course.

III. THE GERMANIC CONTEXT

In the third section of this article I will seek to identify the underlying pattern of Germanic myth with which the tale of Gjálp has been combined.

Þórr the Wader

The image of the god's stride through water recurs repeatedly in the texts, and the word *vaða* 'to wade', is consistently employed to describe the activity.

He thus waded across the *Élivágar* carrying *Aurvandill* in a basket (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17), 'he had waded from the north over *Élivágar* and he had carried *Aurvandill* in a basket on his back' (*hann hafði vaðit norðan yfir Élivága ok hafði borit í meis á baki sér Aurvandil*). This passage parallels the story of the crossing of the river *Vimur*, where he carried *Loki* (*Snorri*) or *Þjálf* (*Eilífr*), in that here too *Þórr* carries a smaller figure. He also contends with *Élivágar*, which separate the world of giants from the world of gods and men, just as *Vimur* separates the world of men from the fortress of the giant.

Þórr also wades into the middle of a stream to capture *Loki* (*Gylfaginning* ch. 50), 'and then *Þórr* wades along the middle of the stream' (*en Þórr veðr þá eptir miðri ánni*). *Þórr* waded to the shore after he defeated the Midgard snake (*Gylfaginning* ch. 48) 'and *Þórr* waded to the land' (*en Þórr óð til lands*). The god wades through four rivers every day to attend the assembly of the gods (*Grímnismál* st. 29):

Kǫrmt and Qrmt and the two Kerlaugar
through these *Þórr* must wade.

Kǫrmt oc Qrmt oc Kerlaugar tvær
þær scal *Þórr* vaða.

Snorri refers to *Þórr*'s passage through the river (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4), 'A river is named *Vimur*, through which *Þórr* waded when he visited the fortress of the giant *Geirrǫðr*' (*Á heitir Vimur, er Þórr óð þá er hann sótti til Geirrǫðargarða*). *Þórr* himself speaks of his 'wading' at the moment of the greatest danger (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 18):

Do not grow now, river *Vimur*,
since I wish to wade across you
to the giants' dwellings.

Vaxattu nú *Vimur*
alls mik þik vaða tíðir
jǫtna garða í.

The god is called 'Víðgymnir of the wading-place of Vimur' (*Víðgymnir Vimrar vaðs*) by Úlfr Uggason (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4; *Skj B I* 129,6,5–6). The wading of Þórr even found pictorial expression on the Altuna Stone of Sweden (eleventh century), which shows Þórr in a boat as he fights the Midgard snake, and his foot protrudes through the bottom of the boat into the water.

The Giant Waders

As wading through water forms an important part of Þórr's image in Norse myth, so wading through water belongs with the image of the giants of Germanic folklore. While a human in his voyage would have to cross a body of water by swimming or by boat, it is natural for a giant to cross it with his mighty stride. The accounts are numerous and only a few examples will be cited. In Pomerania a giant girl took her way through the water when she wished to visit Rügen (Grimm 1882–88, II 536). A giant on the isle of Rügen began construction of a dam, for he was tired of wading through the ocean when he desired to visit Pomerania (Grimm 1882–88, II 535). The giantess Hvenild of Zealand wanted to carry a piece of land to the Swedish shore; she placed it in her apron but the string broke, and the land slid into the sea. Thus the island Hven came into existence (Grimm 1882–88, II 535). And a giant of Saxony became angry when the water touched his breeches (Broderius 1932, 113).

In a literary text we encounter the giant Vaði, 'wader'; he had carried his son Vǫlundr on his shoulder when he strode through the Grönsund (between Falster and Møn) where it is nine yards deep. Vaði has indeed a relation to the sea, for he was fathered by King Vilkin on a mermaid (*Þiðriks saga* 1905–11, ch. 85). Vaði of *Þiðriks saga* has a counterpart in Old High German Wato, Old English Wada. Wato (Wate) is remembered as a physician in the Old High German *Gudrunslied*, who learned his craft from a wood-wife. Wada, later Wade, is remembered through place-names in the English countryside. Wada–Wato surely was a figure of importance in the mythology of West Germanic peoples (Grimm 1882–88, I 376–77; III 1148).¹⁵

Þórr and the Giants

Þórr the wader has a counterpart in the wading giants of Germanic folklore, myth and literature. The relentless killer of giants and troll-women is himself drawn in the likeness of a giant. He is named 'Víðgymnir of the wading place of Vimur' by Úlfr Uggason, and this

kenning is explained by Snorri as ‘the giant of the wading-place of Vimur’ (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4). The presumably related name Gymir is, in fact, another name for Ægir, the giant of the sea. It also occurs in Snorri’s lists among the names for the ocean. Gymir thus would be the Lord of the Ocean as well as its embodiment. (The murmur of the sea is referred to as *Gymis ljóð* ‘Gymir’s song’ in *Ynglingatal*, *Skj B I* 11,25,11.) Named Víðgymnir by Úlfr, and striding through the waters, Þórr has the aspect of a giant of the water who may also be the element itself.

This consideration throws new light on the words addressed to the river by the god in the lines of the anonymous poet quoted by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 18:

Do you know, if you grow,
that then will grow my godlike strength
as high up as the sky?

Veiztu, ef þú vex,
at þá vex mér ásmegin
jafnhátt upp sem himinn?

Surely the lines indicate an affinity between the might of the god and the mighty waters. A similar thought is voiced in Eilífr’s *Þórsdrápa* (st. 7b). Here it is stated that Þórr will allow his strength to rise to heaven unless the blood of Mjörn (the river) diminishes (cited after Kiil 1956, 119):

And the diminisher of giants’ offspring said his godlike strength would rise to heaven, unless the blood-stream of the giantess diminished.

Þverrir lét, nema þyrri,
þorsbarna, sér, Mjornar
snæriblód, til svíra
salþaks megin vaxa.

The same idea, stated positively, might be rendered ‘as long as the blood of Mjörn rolls on’.

That the god has an affinity with giants is also indicated by a formula (surely an expression of belief) engraved on an amulet from Sigtuna dating from AD 1073 which calls Þórr ‘Lord of Giants’ (*þur vigi þik þorsa trutin*; see Ljungberg 1947, 121).

The Monster-Killer and the Monster

To solve the puzzle why Þórr, the giant-killer, shares aspects with his enemy, let us turn to a context in which we meet a number of monster-slaying divinities, well defined in images and texts. The god who, like

Þórr, defeats the monster with his thunder-weapon and thereby establishes cosmic order is a leading divinity in various cultures of the ancient Middle East, for instance Canaanite Baal or Teschup of the Hittites.¹⁶ As the champion of human values he is always in human form, and in subduing the uncouth forces of the non-human environment he symbolises in his triumph man's triumphant stand against chaos.

In earlier, less anthropocentric religions, however, the non-human forces, the ocean, mountains and beasts, had themselves been adored as divinities. Some of these developed into godheads that were shaped like men. And when a god fights and defeats a monster he might battle against his own earlier epiphany.¹⁷

The process of transformation and blending is illustrated by the example of the Mesopotamian Lord of Storms, Ningirsu-Ninurta, who slays the thunderbird, a lion-headed eagle. Some seals (of the second Dynasty) draw a bird which possesses in his lower portion the body of a human. The god is glimpsed in a dream as 'winged and ending in a flood'. A temple relief shows him as a man with bird-like wings growing from his shoulders throwing darts at a winged bird-lion. A hymn addresses Ningirsu as 'dragon with the front paws of a lion and the hind paws of an eagle'. The god is also drawn in fully human shape, and he vanquishes the thunderbird.¹⁸

In archaic Ugaritic myth the storms and winds were created by a bull. When he was replaced, eventually, by the human god of weather, Baal, the latter remained strongly linked with bulls, and is shown on images as standing on a bull, leading a bull by a nose-ring or riding in a bull-drawn carriage (as sign of his superiority); he also carried a bull's horns on his helmet.¹⁹

Þórr and the Monster of the Sea

The monster-slayer Þórr defeats the creatures of the mountains and the sea. He engages in fierce encounter with the Midgard snake, the monster of the water which also personifies the ring-shaped sea. In resembling a giant of the ocean, Þórr shows, like Ningirsu, aspects of the force which he defeats.

I suggest that the tale of Þórr's river crossing contains a vestigial version of the god's struggle with the Midgard snake, the uncouth power of the sea. When the god's *ásmegin* rises in proportion to the rising waves his action parallels the action of the enemy. Ultimately the god is stronger because, like other monster slayers, he employs an implement: the staff *Gríðarvölr*, given by a giantess.

A tool is nearly always mentioned in connection with a god's triumph over chaos, e. g. Baal's cudgels, Ninurta's mace, Marduk's net. Roberta Frank (1986, 95–98) has pointed to the prominence accorded to Þórr's 'tool' in Eilífr's poem, where it is visualised in varying images (a rod, a metal file, a staff) as he crosses the river.

The language of combat is employed in some strophes describing the crossing. In st. 5a the verb *vinna* 'fight, conquer' is used for Þórr's stride through the waves. In st. 10a the combination *Glamma stōðvar stríðkviðjandi* 'the strong enemy (fighter) of the water' appears for the god and his companion (according to Reichardt's reading (1948, 360); he bases his interpretation on the fact that Glammi is the name of a sea-king in the name-lists; *Glamma stōð* would then be a kenning for 'water').

Wolfgang Mohr (1940, 225–26) believes that two accounts are embedded in Snorri's narrative: one popular and humorous (the urinating Gjálp), the other serious and heroic (Þórr's power rising against the power of nature). I too believe in two sources for the narrative, ascribing them, however, to foreign and to Germanic tradition respectively. I do not wish to deny the complexity and subtlety of allusion which the passage has acquired in the works of the medieval authors. These have been successfully explored by, for instance, Roberta Frank (1986) and Edith Marold (1990). I merely wish to point to the archaic frame.

IV. SUMMARY

In the first section of this article I contested the assumptions that the waters of Vimur represent a particularly female fluid and that a male–female confrontation lies embedded in the tale. I showed that water holds no strong association with femininity in Germanic folklore, literature and myth. The kennings of *Þórsdrápa* can be interpreted in various ways; their interpretation does not have to be based on the episode of the urinating giantess which is found only in Snorri's prose version.

In the second portion of the study I pointed to analogues to the tale of the urinating giantess. I found these in Celtic tradition in which urine has a cosmogonic function. The imagery of Irish tales, especially, contains parallels to the action and station of the woman in the Icelandic story.

In the third section I placed the crossing of the river in the context of Germanic myth. I interpret it as a version of Þórr's struggle with a water-monster, the representative of chaos, thus as a parallel to Þórr's encounter with the Midgard snake. Like monster-slayers of various cultures the god exhibits aspects of his adversary.

Notes

¹ Finnur Jónsson (*Skj B I* 140) reads *frumseyrir fríðrar himintorgu vargs fljóða* 'the destroyer of giantesses (Þórr)' *kom til Gangs dreyra* 'came to the blood of the giant, i. e. river'.

In st. 5a Reichardt (1948, 348) suggests: *varra hjalt* = 'sword-knob of the sea, i. e. cliff'; *varra hjalts Nonnu vegþverrir* 'diminisher of the honour of the Lady of the cliff (giantess), i. e. Þórr'.

In st. 7b Finnur Jónsson suggests for *þverrir Mornar barna* 'the killer of Morn's children, i. e. Þórr'.

In st. 8a Finnur Jónsson emends the MS reading *sverðrunnar* to *svarðrunnit* which is glossed in LP as 'running over grass, of a stream'; Reichardt translates *sverðrunnit fen* 'water fierce as knives'; *Völuspá* st. 36 has water running over (or with) 'swords and knives'.

In st. 9b Reichardt (l 948, 359) interprets *stál* as 'the walking stick of the god, which ends in an iron point'.

² A statuette of a naked woman was excavated on the Faroes; it is dated to the end of the Bronze Age. Apparently a goddess, she wears a necklace and exposes a marked vulvar cleft (see the illustration in Brøndsted 1938–40, II 225).

³ Ursula Dronke (1989, 104) considers the possibility of a 'topographic joke' in which the urine of giantesses runs as rivers to the sea. Turville-Petre (1964, 79) accepts the possibility of menstrual blood.

⁴ In Germanic folklore lakes, rivers and fountains originate in various ways: through a lightning-stroke from heaven, as punishment for sin (by drowning a community), through the rod of a hero or a saint. I did find one instance of a body of water originating in the urine of the devil's grandmother (Bächtold-Stäubli 1938–41, under *Fluss*, 9).

⁵ In kennings *Jörð* is usually referred to in terms of her relationship to another being, e. g. *móðir Þórs*, *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 24. In most skaldic references *Jörð* means 'land', e. g. *brúðr Báleygs* 'Óðinn's wife', i. e. the land of Norway, *Skj B I* 148,6,1–2. She extends 'all the way eastwards to the dwellings of the men of Agðir' (*alt austr / til Egða býs*), *Háleygjatal* 15, *Skj B I* 62,15,1–2.

⁶ Cited in Bowen 1975, 32; the translator (Kinsella 1970, 250) speaks, in fact, of Medb's 'gush of blood'. Bowen contests this translation, pointing out that the exact meaning is 'urine of blood'; also that the place is named afterwards 'Medb's Urine', and three times in the text afterwards the verb 'to pass urine' is employed. I would add that one does not 'relieve' oneself of menstrual blood, for this is beyond conscious control. The sexual significance of urine in Irish tradition is revealed in a tale, a fragment of the Ulster cycle, entitled *The Death of Derbforgaill*. In this tale women raise a pillar of snow and hold a contest. She whose urine will penetrate most deeply into the snow is shown to be the best at making love. When Derbforgaill wins she is beaten to death, out of jealousy, by the other women (see Bowen 1975, 26).

⁷ Cited in Bowen 1975, 33 from his own translation of *Táin Bó Flidaise II* (from Royal Irish Academy MS B IV 1, fol. 147 (144)). The parallel between

Snorri's Gjalp and the figures of the Irish tales has also been noted by Hilda Ellis Davidson 1991, 172.

⁸ Andersen (1977) has listed a large number of these figures from many areas of the world.

⁹ It is, of course, possible that the folklore themes were already present in Snorri's sources. More folklore patterns occur, however, in Snorri's treatise than in skaldic or Eddic poetry.

¹⁰ Chesnutt 1989a, 47–50; the story belongs to the Ossian cycle and appears in the *Feis tighé Chonáin, The Feast at the House of Conán*.

¹¹ von der Leyen 1908, 382–84, who believes the Germanic tale to be primary; but von Sydow 1910, 173–75, points to several Celtic tales in which heroes set out on a journey and receive hospitality in an enchanted place where trickery is practised on them; this is told of Diarmuid, Conan, Goll and Oskar, of Finn and his three companions, and of Finn, Coailte and Oisín. In two of these the men meet allegorical figures.

¹² Schmidt 1952, 512–25. For the ritual treatment of bones among certain nations see Meuli 1975, 958–64; the Eskimos of Cumberland return the bones of seals to the water so that they may rise again. The Lamuts of Central Asia place bones in their proper order on a platform fastened to a forest tree.

¹³ von Sydow 1910, 81–99, points to tales of slaughtered, eaten and revived creatures in such widely separated places as India and Madagascar. The classical topos is the tale of Pelops, son of Tantalus, who was slaughtered and set as a meal before the gods.

Chesnutt (1989b) traces Snorri's story to saints' legends like that of St Martin or St Germain, and he classifies it with other tales of the three wishes. In these stories hospitality is given to a superhuman being; three wishes are granted to the human and are squandered through foolishness. This classification may be contested on the ground that there is no hospitality (Þórr provides his own meal) and therefore no reward in the form of wishes. The tale might more easily be classed with those in which a taboo has been violated.

¹⁴ A number of collections of these tales have been published, e. g. Boberg 1955, Wünsche 1905, Höttges 1937. Joseph Harris (1976, 101) believes that Snorri's narrative derived from a local legend, from *Völuspá* and from *Trójumanna saga*. It may be worth noting that, just as the giant of the Edda built the fortress of the gods, so, frequently, the builder of the folktales erects a House of God. The Cathedral of Lund was built for St Lawrence by the giant Finn (in other stories the saint is St Olaf and the giant's name can be 'Wind and Weather'; Grimm 1882–88, II 548).

¹⁵ Chaucer mentions 'Wade's boat'; a group of stones in Yorkshire are designated as 'Wade's Grave'; the road from Dunsley to York is named 'Wade's Causey (causeway)' because he had built it for his wife; a place near the Roman wall bears the name 'Wade's Gap'. We note that he is linked with the form and function that are usually attributed to giants. He still has some relation to the sea (Davidson 1958, 150–51).

¹⁶ The figure of the monster-slayer is extensively discussed by Fontenrose (1959). Of the nine criteria which, according to him, define the figure, all but one are clearly applicable to Þórr.

¹⁷ This is seen in another example of Mesopotamian tradition, as indicated by Thorkild Jacobsen (1976, 128–29): ‘the human form of the god of the fresh waters, Enki/Ea, captured his own nonhuman form, Apsu, the fresh waters underground’.

¹⁸ The examples and their interpretations are given in Jacobsen 1975, 128–29. An Akkadian myth recounts Ningirsu's victory over the thunderbird Zu who had stolen the tablets of destiny (Pritchard 1955, 111–12). The hymn is recorded by Falkenstein and Soden 1953, 60.

¹⁹ Helck 1971, 170, fig. 174, representing a relief from Ugarit. Bronze figures from Ras Shamra and other parts of Syria also show this type.

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ARNOLD RODGERS TAYLOR

Arnold Taylor died on Sunday 30th May 1993 at the age of 80. For all those who knew him, who knew how much pain he had suffered over the years and how desolated he had been since the death in 1990 of his deeply loved wife Sigríður (Sigga), the feeling must have been gratitude that he was at last released from so much physical and emotional distress. But his friends and colleagues are the poorer.

Arnold was born in 1913 in Norton-on-Tees, County Durham, and after achieving well at school, notably in languages, went on to read English at the University of Manchester. It was here he came under one of the most formative influences on his life, his teacher Professor E. V. Gordon. Under Professor Gordon's inspiration he read Old and Middle English, Old Icelandic and Gothic, and during his second year went to the University of Iceland, Reykjavík, where he developed his love for the country and its people in addition to his already established addiction to the early language and literature. After achieving his degree he went on to specialise in Old Icelandic at postgraduate level, writing his thesis on *Droplaugarsona saga*, and working on it mostly in Iceland. His experiences of both Iceland and Icelandic were to take a practical turn during the war years. First he learned that there was a need for German speakers in the army and volunteered, but Icelandic speakers were even more difficult to come by and in 1940 he was posted to Iceland.

Arnold had met and lost sight of Sigga when previously in Iceland. In 1941 he met her again and they were engaged. A year later, in March 1942, they were married in Reykjavík.

Arnold's first appointments in England were in school-teaching, but in 1946 he was interviewed for a post in the English Department at the University of Leeds. Apparently believing that another candidate had already been appointed he tried to leave, but was forestalled by the Registrar who offered him an appointment to a second vacancy. The two appointees, W. A. G. Doyle-Davidson (DD) and Arnold Taylor became life-long friends as well as colleagues, and all those who subsequently came to know the medievalists in the English Department at the University of Leeds, colleagues and students alike, were to benefit enormously from the scholarship, wisdom and kindness of both.

For most of us in the academic world the memories of Arnold are the memories of the teacher at Leeds University. Students remember him for his eyebrows ('enormous bushy orange eyebrows, of the kind found

only in golden eagles and goshawks' (Helen Maclean)), and it is undoubtedly these that led to his pseudo-Icelandic nickname of Arnold the Red. But they also remember him for his academic integrity and his gentleness and his 'huge kindness' (Calum Campbell).

Colleagues remember those aspects of his personality too, but perhaps even more they remember the courteous incisiveness with which he could cut through academic debate or more precisely waffle, inserting 'measured and convincing comment which could swing the whole meeting to a decision' (Stanley Ellis). Another colleague, Elizabeth Williams, referred to the same quality as 'cutting through the rhetorical fog of even the most acrimonious meetings with his own dry brand of incisive pedantry'.

Arnold spent much of his life in pain, and though he meticulously carried out his duties as teacher within the University his scholarship was a victim of his health. His fine re-editing of Gordon's *An Introduction to Old Norse* is his major work, though he also produced excellent articles in *Saga-Book*. The one in Volume XIII:2 (1947–48), 78–96, on 'Auðunn and the Bear' is a splendid example of the crispness and elegance with which he wrote and translated. His services to Iceland and to Icelandic literature and language were recognised in 1963 when he became a Knight of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon, and again in 1978 when he became a Knight Commander of that same order.

His knowledge was always at the disposal of students and colleagues. I particularly remember when I was translating *Egils saga* the care with which he read through my translation and the many improvements both factual and stylistic for which he was responsible.

There can be no one who knew Arnold Taylor who does not remember him with deep affection and deep respect. We have watched his courage in the face of constant suffering, and seen how little that suffering affected his care for others, for friends and colleagues and students. We are grateful for his life and believe that we are the better for having known him.

C. E. F.

NOTES

UP THE CREEK WITHOUT A PADDLE: A RESPONSE TO LOTTE MOTZ'S 'ÞÓRR'S RIVER CROSSING'

BY MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS

In this response to Lotte Motz's article (*Saga-Book* XXIII:6, 1993, 469–87) I would like to stress the importance of using an appropriate methodology in the study of Old Norse myth. Like Edmund Leach (1982), in his stinging introductory critique to Steblin-Kamenskij's study entitled *Myth*, I endorse a holistic approach with the following characteristics:

1. As I stated at the beginning of my own (1981) interpretation of the Þórr–Geirrøðr myth, one cannot explicate the structure and meaning of a myth in a particular culture without examining all available representations of it. One must try to understand how each relates to the other, given what we know about the literary or iconographical context in which the various versions are to be found.

2. It is then important to see how the myth in question relates to the larger mythic world-view of the culture concerned. In the present instance, how does the myth of Þórr, Geirrøðr and his daughters relate to other Þórr myths, both structurally and conceptually, and what are they 'about'? What do the various component elements of the mythic world mean? When myths talk of various kinds of supernatural beings, of various places in which they live, of various attributes they possess, what do all these things mean for the culture concerned, in this case that of medieval Iceland? How do they relate to what we know of the social and cultural values and organisation of the human world that created the myths?

3. In order to answer the last question under point 2 with respect to the myth under consideration here, it is necessary to set the groups of myths in which the god Þórr travels to the land of giants and engages in agonistic episodes with them in the context of the semantic values generally attributed to gods and giants, and specifically to Þórr and his various opponents, in Old Norse myth. There is, as Lindow (1988) has reminded us, a specific sub-set of such myths in which Þórr engages with giantesses and kills them, and there is extant skaldic and eddic verse which shows that his encounter with Gjálp and Greip belongs to this group. (This evidence is not adduced by Motz.) We should be

asking what it means for Þórr to encounter such females, whether separately or in combination with a male adversary, in this case Geirrøðr.

4. One should adopt a rigorous procedure when resorting to comparative material from other cultures to explain the meaning of a recalcitrant myth or myth-element. My own view is that unless there is good evidence for the presence of a such an element or way of thinking in the culture under consideration, with supporting evidence to show that the element means much the same to the culture under examination as to the culture of supposed derivation, one should refrain from suggesting direct foreign models for things one finds difficult to explain. It is particularly important to be able to show that the motifs or myth-elements function similarly in the receiving culture as in the culture of derivation, otherwise the comparative exercise is of dubious value even if one accepts that a borrowing has taken place.

Too many studies of Old Norse myth, including the present example, fail to satisfy these four primary criteria, a point I examine in more detail in the first chapter of my forthcoming book *Prolonged echoes. Old Norse myths in medieval Icelandic society* (Odense, 1993).

Let me now examine Lotte Motz's article 'Þórr's river crossing' in the light of these criteria. First, however, I shall summarise her argument and those she opposes. She begins by questioning Vilhelm Kiil's (1952) and my own (1981) interpretations of that section of *Þórsdrápa* which represents Þórr's crossing of a swollen river on his way to the abode of the giant Geirrøðr. Kiil argued that a number of the kennings for the river involve a combination of words for 'blood' and elements that refer to female sexual organs and inferred that Eilífr Goðrúnarson wanted his audience to understand that the river was swollen with the menstrual blood of a giantess. He drew support in this interpretation from Snorri Sturluson's version of the myth in *Skáldskaparmál*, in which the river torrents are caused by Geirrøðr's daughter Gjálp straddling the stream to urinate higher up the mountain slope. In my 1981 article, I was critical of some of Kiil's interpretations, though I accepted his general position. I suggested that we have to try and understand why the river-crossing is represented as so dangerous to Þórr in all the Norse versions of this myth, even though Snorri's is the only one that associates the swollen river directly with the bodily effluvia of a giantess. I also tried to explore the meaning of the connection between the river-crossing (whether fully identified with the actions of a giantess or operating at the level of symbolic equation) and Þórr's subsequent encounter with Geirrøðr. There is also the question of how the various

versions of the myth show him armed, a matter taken up most explicitly by Roberta Frank (1986). In 1981 I suggested that the danger of the river, and the fact that it appears to be associated with female bodily fluids, whether urine or menstrual blood, could be understood if we connected it with the dangers that giantesses represent for the god Þórr, that deity who characteristically risks his life by venturing into giant territory. My interpretation then was that the river (named Vimur in some texts) was imbued with the qualities associated with giant, female chthonic beings, and specifically with the Earth, who happens to be represented in Norse myth as Þórr's mother. Thus I concluded that the myth of the river crossing signalled the dangers of incestuous attachment to the females of his own family group to Þórr and that the reason why this myth was coupled with that of his visit to Geirrøðr was that this giant was, at least on one level, a father-figure, who had to be subdued and his phallic weapon seized before the young god could establish his own dominance within the Norse mythological world.

I am not so keen in 1993 to endorse the Oedipal interpretation I accorded in 1981 to Þórr's dealings with Geirrøðr, nor would I necessarily place as much weight on the dangers represented by the giantesses as incestuous, though I do think that there is something in the notion that Þórr needs to repudiate his own matrikin with unusual fervour. What I still stand by, however, are the general symbolic values I attributed to the protagonists and the circumstances of the myth. I still believe that the river-crossing, insofar as it is associated directly or indirectly with giantesses, 'is centrally concerned with the ordering of chaos of a particular kind, unbridled female sexuality'. In my forthcoming book I have examined the semiotics of Old Norse myth as a whole, drawing also on the work of such others as Hastrup (1985), Lindow (1988) and Schjødt (1990), and have come to the conclusion that the gods are imbued with qualities of order, creativity, intelligence and cunning, which are generally seen as male attributes, while the giants are associated with disorder, natural resources (including those of sexuality, fertility and mortality), and passivity. These qualities are closely associated with female powers, to such an extent that, although there are of course males within the giant world, their whole sphere of operation is closely allied with qualities regarded as female. Thus relationships between male gods and giantesses are particularly intense and ambivalent, resulting either in sexual liaison (as often with Óðinn) or in physical destruction (as often with Þórr).

Lotte Motz will have none of the views expressed by Kiil or me. She denies first of all the significance of base-words for blood in river-kennings, pointing out (correctly) that blood-words can be used in skaldic poetry for liquids of various kinds. The reason why one might wish to accord them special significance in *Þórsdrápa*, however, is that they seem to occur in conjunction with words or phrases that refer to female beings and to those female beings' sexual organs. Motz argues against this in several cases on various grounds (including that of the inappropriateness of Kiil's *Fríðar sverð*, str. 8a, as a vulva-kenning), but she does not manage to remove all the evidence, I think. It is hard to discount a kenning such as *Mǫrnar snæribloð* (7b), for example, though I would agree with her that it is not necessary to construe it as referring to menstrual blood. Without doubt, however, it feminises the raging river.¹

Having cleaned up *Þórsdrápa* to her satisfaction, Motz then proceeds to discount Snorri's narrative of the urinating Gjálp as un-Norse and attempts 'to trace Snorri's episode to a model, and this would have to be found outside the Germanic cultural area' (p. 474). This procedure violates all four principles of interpretation I recommended at the beginning of this note. For reasons she does not explain, Motz searches the folklore of Europe, irrespective of chronology, for 'tales which testify to the cosmogonic creativity of urine' (p. 474). Of course she finds some—they occur all over the world, and I know some from Aboriginal Australia—but why are they relevant to the Gjálp story? Is her pissing cosmogonic? It does not create the river, only causes it to swell. The Old Irish material Motz adduces is indeed interesting but I think more careful consideration needs to be given to the significance of a woman's exposing of her genitals or urinating in full view of a man in both these instances and in the case of Snorri's *Edda*. And even if one sees some similarity between the Irish and Norse material, it is surely unnecessary to jump to the conclusion that 'Snorri has introduced foreign matter' (p. 476). It is really not true that 'these images and themes do not occur elsewhere in Germanic culture' (p. 476). I gave at least one example in my 1981 article (p. 378) from *Lokasenna* 34, where the Vanir god Njǫrðr is said to have been humiliated during the period of his captivity as a hostage to the Æsir by the daughters of the giant Hymir who urinated into his mouth.

Lotte Motz is certainly right to draw our attention to those aspects of Þórr's behaviour that associate him with the giants who are his maternal kin. The fact that he must often wade through the element of water

suggests to me, not that he ‘has the aspect of a giant of the water who may also be the element itself’ (Motz, p. 480), but that he especially among the gods must expose himself (and, as their protector, divine society also) to the dangers of a situation between his own world and that of the giants. Rivers, oceans and other watery elements are liminal things; they link worlds and they come from below the ground. They thus partake of the world of death, situated below ground in the Old Norse world picture, as well as the world of life. Women, like Gjalp, and monsters, like Miðgarðsormr, have their associations with disorder and with death, women because their ability to give life leads eventually to death for those they bring forth and monsters because their powers are not amenable to social control but are directed towards the destruction of divine society.

Note

¹ I do not have space here to engage with the section of the article that deals with the significance of water in Norse myth, nor with the significance of Þórr wading through water, nor with Snorri and the folktale. I discuss all these issues in my forthcoming book.

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ÓÐINN, D. A. H. EVANS AND HEIMUR HÁVAMÁLA

BY HERMANN PÁLSSON

Óðinn Bestluson and Bósi Brynhildarson have long been considered the outstanding womanisers of northern Europe in the old days, but as an unmitigated male chauvinist Óðinn belonged to a class of his own. In early poetry he gloated on his conquests of the fairer sex, admitting that he resorted to magic in order to achieve his ends:

Þat kann ek it sextánda,
ef ek vil ins svinna mans
hafa geð allt ok gaman:
hugi ek hverfi
hvítarmri konu
ok sný ek hennar ǫllum sefa.
Þat kann ek it sjautjándi,
at mik mun seint firrask
it manunga man. (*Hávamál*, str. 161–62)

As the most indiscriminate woman-chaser of the North, Óðinn had no qualms about seducing married women, even those who were not known for their feminine charm:

Miklar manvélar
ek hafða við myrkriður,
þá er ek véltu þær frá verum. (*Hárbarðsljóð*, str. 20)

When Óðinn boasts:

Ek var austr
ok við einherju dæmða'k,
lék ek við ina línhvítu
ok launþing háða'k
gladda'k ina gullbjörtu,
gamni mæri undi (*Hárbarðsljóð*, str. 30),

his son Þórr makes a simple observation with just a hint of admiration and envy: 'Góð áttu þér *mankynni* þar þá.' *Að eiga sér góð mankynni* has always been a young man's dream, although gentlemen are not supposed to boast of such things; but then, Óðinn has never been considered a true gentleman.

Until recently, there has been general agreement as to the meaning of *mankynni*. Finnur Jónsson, *Lexicon poeticum* (1931), 392, glosses the term 'bekendtskab med eller besøg hos unge kvinder'. In his *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog* (1883–96), II 638, Johan Fritzner

compares the term *mankynni* to *ástkynni* (*Atlamál*, str. 14) and defines it thus: ‘Besøg hos Kvinde . . . , hvorunder man nyder godt af hendes Kjærlighed.’ Cleasby and Vigfússon, *An Icelandic–English Dictionary* (1874), 409, render the phrase *góð mankynni* as ‘luck in love affairs’.

Various translators of *Hárbarðsljóð* leave the reader in no doubt as to the sense of Þórr’s memorable statement. Paul B. Taylor and W. H. Auden, *The Elder Edda. A selection translated from the Icelandic* (1969), 129:

‘You had luck in your choice of a lovely maid.’

Lee M. Hollander, *The Poetic Edda* (1962), 31:

‘Good was then the wench to thee!’

Felix Genzmer, *Edda. Zweiter Band: Götterdichtung und Spruchdichtung* (1922), 68:

‘Gute Weiberbekanntschaften hattest du damals dort.’

Ludvig Holm-Olsen, *Edda-dikt* (1975), 100:

‘Det var gode kvinnfolk dere kom til da!’

Régis Boyer and Éveline Lot-Falck, *Les religions de l’Europe du Nord* (1974), 409:

‘Alors tu avais là bonne sorte de femme.’

All these eminent scholars rightly assume that *mankynni* is a compound of the nouns *man* (n.) ‘a girl, maid, mistress’ and *kynni* (n.) ‘acquaintance, intercourse, friendly relations, etc.’ But recently in *Saga-Book XXIII:5* (1992), 414, D. A. H. Evans (hereafter abbreviated DAHE) rejects the time-honoured way of interpreting *mankynni*; according to him the term has nothing to do with *woman* but everything with *man*. In his hostile and ill-informed review of my *Heimur Hávamála* (1990), DAHE translates *mankynni* as ‘mankind’. In this context, the English gloss *mankind* can hardly mean ‘the human race’; rather, it appears to be the opposite of *womankind* and to denote ‘the men of the human race’. One wonders how DAHE would render the rest of the sentence in *Hárbarðsljóð* (str. 31).

Considering the fact that in my book *mankynni* serves as a label for that section of *Hávamál* which deals with Óðinn’s preoccupation with women and love, the reasons for DAHE’s revolutionary approach to the meaning of *mankynni* are somewhat puzzling, to say the least. Are we to assume that he is trying to suggest new ideas about Óðinn’s sexual proclivities? Was DAHE thinking of Snorri’s statement in

Ynglinga saga regarding the *ergi* of those males, including Óðinn, who practised *seiðr*? Or, perhaps, of Loki's defamatory remark in *Lokasenna* (str. 24)? While Óðinn may have been a sexual pervert as long as he was actively involved in the *seiðr* type of witchcraft, the evidence of *Hávamál* and *Hárbarðsljóð* shows beyond a shadow of doubt that the traditional way of looking at his *mankynni* is fully justified. And since my *Heimur Hávamála* deals with a poem in which Óðinn himself alludes to his intimate knowledge of women, it seems a bit queer to associate him as a lover with persons of his own gender.

REVIEWS

KVINNOR OCH FAMILJ I DET FORN- OCH MEDELTIDA SKANDINAVIEN. By BIRGIT SAWYER. *Occasional papers on medieval topics*, 6. *Viktoria Bokförlag*. Skara, 1992. iv + 112 pp.

Birgit Sawyer makes a bold attempt to present to a general reader some of the discussion topics on medieval women's history which have been aired in Scandinavian scholarship recently. Her short book is wide in scope, covering women and their families, women and the law, women under paganism and Christianity, women of different social classes, and women in fact and fiction. Rather than dealing with the subject chronologically and region by region, she chooses a broadly thematic approach. After an introduction to the source materials, there are two main chapters which are intended to be read separately. The first, on women and inheritance, explores the complexities of the overlapping systems of inheritance within Scandinavia; and the second, on the reality behind women in fiction, re-examines the myth of the strong independent female. The early medieval period is treated in more detail than the later, Christian, centuries, where there is certainly no lack of source materials; much space is given to runic inscriptions as social monuments, and other underlying themes are the effects of the growth in royal power and the decline in women's status after the conversion to Christianity. The bibliography is full in its references to recent work in the field of women's studies in Scandinavia, but not as comprehensive as might be hoped for in a book which skims the surface of so many issues. For example, while acknowledging that the word *Edda* is open to wide interpretation, Sawyer opts for the meaning 'great-grandmother' (p. 73), but without supplying a bibliographical reference for her reader to follow up other possible interpretations. This is a useful survey of the current state of research, and it will certainly stimulate further discussion. An English version of the book would be welcome, for Scandinavia has undoubtedly much comparative material to offer to the discipline of medieval women's history.

BRIDGET MORRIS

CORPUS OF ANGLO-SAXON STONE SCULPTURE. III. YORK AND EASTERN YORKSHIRE. By JAMES LANG, with contributions by JOHN HIGGITT, RAYMOND I. PAGE and JOHN R. SENIOR. *Oxford University Press for The British Academy*. Oxford, 1991. xiv + 439 pp.

The British Academy's *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture* continues to make a stately progress into print, and with the appearance of the third volume it makes a particularly substantial and appreciable contribution to the resources available for the study of Scandinavian-settled England in and immediately after the Viking Period. This book provides a comprehensive survey of the sculpture of a distinct geographical zone in eastern Yorkshire south of the

North Yorkshire Moors, and thereby sets a number of long-familiar ‘star pieces’, such as certain carvings from Middleton and other sites in or very near Ryedale, in a regional context in a highly informative way. Particularly to be welcomed in this volume is the full, illustrated catalogue of relatively recent finds from York—mostly from excavations on the Minster site—which again are all the more revealing when presented in the wider regional context. James Lang’s text in his introductory chapters and the catalogue provides a good deal of praiseworthy analysis and interpretation of all this material. Most of this has, admittedly, been published before in Lang’s many articles and papers, but it is nothing but a boon now to have a critical summary and restatement of this work by its author.

Lang’s study places a strong emphasis on the distinctly Anglo-Scandinavian character of the Viking-Period sculpture in question, most of which is to be dated to the tenth century, some, probably, to the late ninth, and a little, perhaps, to the eleventh century (setting aside a fascinating group of sundials, on which more later). But although it is possible to trace some important details reflecting continuity within the area from eighth- and earlier ninth-century sculpture into the period of Scandinavian settlement, the sense of strictly local continuity the study gives is not overwhelming, and the importance of influence from neighbouring parts of England, particularly the west and south-west, in providing the repertoire of the Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture is clearly revealed. The study leaves one in no doubt as to the strength of the case for the primacy of York in composing and disseminating this repertoire, but, curiously, the known Anglian-Period sculpture of York is rather undistinguished. Most of it is funerary in function, and much of this is very plain in style, though even this contributes distinctive elements to the range of Viking-Period sculpture in the city. From the Minster site, for instance, have come a considerable number of Viking-Period grave-covers, including one (Minster 42) which seems to show a Viking-Period adoption of a memorial formula, + ORATE PRO ANIMA, also recorded in the earlier, Anglian Period. The most distinctive Christian sculpture of eastern Yorkshire in the pre-Viking Period has clear monastic connections, at (or around) the monasteries/cells of Lastingham and Hackness. Detailed sculptural links between Hackness and Whitby (its parent house) and even Monkwearmouth are brought out in this study.

It is particularly satisfying to see the certainty with which Lang argues the existence and the pervasiveness of a pattern of hybridisation of originally distinctively English and Scandinavian elements to form a material embodiment of a new Anglo-Scandinavian culture in England. This union of cultures is most clearly reflected in the art-styles appearing on the sculpture, but, importantly, Lang brings out in his discussion some much deeper, structural aspects of the culture. Within this he emphasises, properly, the apparently easy and unchallenged prevalence of Christianity in the area, certainly from the late ninth century onwards, revealing too a thoroughly sensible perception of and attitude towards the Norse legendary and pre-Christian elements that are (relatively infrequently) adopted by the developing sculptural tradition. An important social contrast

between the Anglian and Viking Periods that may be detectable is noted in the shift from monastic concentrations of sculpture to more widely-dispersed funerary memorials at the rural precursors of parish churches. This has fairly plain implications for the possible mapping of the distribution of patronage, landholding and social power in this historical phase. To this extent, Lang ploughs a furrow closely parallel to that of Peter Sawyer in his controversial *The Age of the Vikings*. Lang is not, however, tempted to try to answer the ‘How many children had Lady Macbeth?’ question of the density of Scandinavian settlement on this basis.

There would appear to be scope for some very informative further work on the social relationship between the urban centre of York and its immediate hinterland in the Viking Period, starting from, or certainly making a great deal of use of, the work and material contained in this book. The case for the general supremacy of York over the countryside to the north and east is clearly presented and well illustrated here. Analyses of the stones used for the sculptures prove to be especially illuminating in the study of local patterns of supply and influence. Stone suitable for sculpture was not available in the vicinity of every site at which sculpture is found, and amongst other lines of supply it is clear that Roman-Period ashlar from York were widely used for Viking-Period sculpture. Such stones re-exported from York have been found over the whole range of the Yorkshire Wolds, where there is no suitable local material. Plausible cases of finished sculptures being exported from York are, however, very few. A spectacular but quite exceptional example appears to be a grave-cover that was sent as far away as to Gainford, on the Tees in County Durham. Perhaps the most significant monument in the whole corpus included in this book is the Nunburnholme cross-shaft, worked on by at least three hands and, stylistically at least, bridging the transition from the Anglian to the Viking Period. This too was probably carved on a re-used Roman ashlar from York, but it appears, from Lang’s silence on the question, not possible (or desirable) to speculate on how much of the monument was carved in York. It would have been desirable, however, for that much at least to be declared. Part of the importance of the Nunburnholme shaft is its seminal place in the emergence of the relatively prolific ‘York Metropolitan School’ of sculpture. Lang presents a well-argued case for the ‘Ryedale School’ in turn to have been substantially influenced by the York Metropolitan School. Against this general pattern of central dominance and influence, the rare postulated example of ‘a provincial carver working for once in the city’ (St Mary Bishophill Junior 3) stands out.

This book offers a clear and effective summary of the characteristics and relationships of the Anglo-Scandinavian art-style appearing on these stones. In common with the motif-stock of Anglian-Period sculpture, complex patterns of linear interlace are retained. The plant scroll survives too, albeit in a considerably less vigorous state. The great innovations of Anglo-Scandinavian sculptural decoration are the introduction—to a dominant level—of zoomorphic elements, and various developments in human portraiture. It would be, and has proved, all too easy to connect the prevalence of zoomorphic ornament with the classic

animal-styles of Viking art—in particular the Jellinge Style—but Lang argues firmly that such conclusions are superficial, and that immediate Insular sources underlie the form, the disposition, and many of the details of the beasts to be found on the Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture. The most substantial channel of derivation is one traced back through the York Metropolitan School to the area west of York, to Wharfedale; some details are traced back further afield, to ninth-century Mercia. Elements of truly Scandinavian character, such as Jellinge-style features on some beasts, are regarded by Lang overwhelmingly as ‘embellishments’. As is the case in Cumbria, intimations of the Mammen Style are quite ephemeral, and there is no suggestion of anything later in character. The naturalistic elements and human portraiture in the repertoire of this Anglo-Scandinavian art are of particular interest. Lang identifies a late-Anglian (mid-ninth-century) precursor to the portraits that become such a distinctive feature of the local Viking-Period tradition in two naturalistic human figures on a fragment of a cross-shaft from York, St Mary Bishophill Junior 1. The most conspicuous, and most frequently (and wildly) discussed, development of this portraiture is that of the Ryedale School, including, for instance, the ‘warriors’ on a number of crosses from Middleton. By reference to a fragment of a late ninth- or early tenth-century shaft at Old Malton, Lang importantly supports the argument that these warriors are represented as enthroned on some seat, which, more regrettably, he refers to by the now established shorthand term, the Old English poetic compound *gifstol*. The naturalistic animal depictions, we are told, usually appear in narrative scenes. Amongst these are scenes from Norse myth and legend. In this region we have one, somewhat tentative, identification of a scene from Ragnarøk, and two rather more readily recognisable portrayals of the hero Sigurðr (in his role as *Fáfnisbani*). The latter is interpreted in terms of typological Christian iconography where it occurs on the Nunburnholme shaft. The introduction of material from these tales into Christian carving is, of course, paralleled elsewhere in northern England, the Isle of Man, and indeed in Scandinavia. Rather more local to Yorkshire is a group of carvings which are convincingly identified as representing Weland (*Vǫlundr*) the smith. Although in one case the identification of a simple winged ‘human’ figure as Weland rather than an angel looks to be a thoroughly indeterminable matter, the presence of scenes from the Weland legend on Christian sculpture continues to challenge interpretation. Why, on the other hand, Lang should describe the iconography of familiar hunting scenes such as the ‘hart and hound’ vignette, the polysemous but congruent meanings of which have been thoroughly explored, most recently by Richard Bailey, as ‘puzzling’ (Stonegrave 7) is equally mysterious.

There are a number of details of the discussion and/or presentation of material within this book that bear highlighting for comparison with either or both of the two previous volumes in the series. In contrast with Richard Bailey, Lang is happy to talk categorically of Irish influence on the Viking-Period sculpture of Yorkshire, and the range of the details he cites, for instance of cross-head forms and crucifixions, lends considerable credence to his view.

One may still demur, however, at the privileged position given to the date of *circa* 920, extorted from slender historical sources, as a *terminus post quem* for such influence. It is also good to see the question of the evidence and date for the demise of the strong Viking-Period Anglo-Scandinavian sculptural tradition in the area being explicitly addressed, even if briefly. In discussing the previous volume in this series (in *Saga-Book* XXII:7 (1989), 444–56), I criticised the exclusive reliance on photographic illustration of the carvings. Although the same policy has been kept for this volume—and no doubt will be for future volumes—it gives relatively little cause for complaint on this occasion. It would still, nevertheless, have been good to have had a better idea of what the stag on Kirkdale 4 is supposed to look like, and Lang himself published a very much clearer photograph of Ellerburn 5 in an article in the *Yorkshire archaeological journal* 53 (1981), 22, fig. 4, than has made it into the *Corpus*.

From the viewpoint of Norse studies, it is also appropriate to comment on the discussion of the tenth- and eleventh-century inscriptions that appear within this volume. Since there are no runic inscriptions in this group, responsibility for presenting all of these falls to John Higgitt. His studies show a marked bias in favour of the details of Anglo-Saxon paleography, with a consequent tendency to undervalue the points of interest in the later inscriptions. In particular, one can point to a lack of appreciation of the positive interpretation that can be made of the bilingual (or multilingual?) character of several of these texts. In respect of the dedication stone of St Mary Castlegate in York, for instance, the text of which moves from English to Latin and then, apparently, back to a vernacular for the now irredeemably damaged final lines, he talks of a ‘lapse into Latin, perhaps influenced by an official ecclesiastical record of the dedication’. But taking the Latinisation of vernacular names and, arguably, words on contemporary York coins into account, we can see that linguistic mixing of this kind is not necessarily random or irregular. A very similar pattern is to be found in the York Minster 42 grave-cover—already noted above—of which Higgitt notes an ‘informality and lack of professionalism’; in fact this is an inscribed Roman sepulchral stone that was re-inscribed, apparently in the tenth or eleventh century, with a Latin formula for which Anglian-Period exemplars were available close at hand. The other set of noteworthy inscriptions are those on the reasonably well-known set of church sundials in this region of about the mid-eleventh century and later. Of these, Great Edstone shows a mixture of English and Latin; the examples from Aldbrough, Kirkdale, Old Byland and possibly Sinnington are good examples of the changing English language in the area at that time. In this context, the inclusion in this book of at least an illustration of the post-Conquest Latin-inscribed sundial from Weaverthorpe would have been fully justified.

More than either of the previous volumes, Volume III of the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture* reveals itself as a substantial piece of what will turn out to be a very impressive jigsaw indeed. One reason for this may be that a gap has been left between the area this volume covers and those covered by the previous volumes, a gap to be filled by a future volume although not, it

appears, as early as in Volume IV of the series. We already know that the north and west of Yorkshire is an area rich in sculpture, and James Lang's study in this book makes it clear how a detailed conspectus of that material is essential to set what is found in York itself and its hinterland to the east in a proper perspective. I would therefore further praise the volume under review here by recording with what interest and anticipation it leaves me looking forward to that future volume.

JOHN HINES

SNORRI STURLUSON. EDDA. HÁTTATAL. Edited by ANTHONY FAULKES. *Clarendon Press*. Oxford, 1991. xxviii + 169 pp.

Háttatal is preserved as the third part of *Snorra Edda* even though it was probably written earlier than *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, in all likelihood as early as 1222–23 (though the exact date is uncertain). The poem (the authorship of the commentary is more questionable) is the only work (apart from some *lausavísur*) that can be unequivocally attributed to Snorri Sturluson. It deserves therefore to be an obligatory text for all students of its author. Readers focusing on the technical complexity of *Háttatal* have nevertheless neglected the literary qualities of the poem. It is customary to see *Háttatal* only in the context of prosody and the study of skaldic metres, rather than to regard it as one of Snorri's most important works. In the 102 stanzas of *Háttatal* he sets out to exemplify all metres available to a thirteenth-century poet, starting hierarchically rather than chronologically with *dróttkvætt*, and concluding with the simpler forms of eddic poetry. It seems that metrical showmanship inspired Snorri—he even praises himself for his virtuosity in the last stanzas of the poem—rather than its subject matter. Admittedly, at first glance Snorri neither displays startling originality in the use of kennings nor does he offer much experimentation in poetic diction, yet a close reading of the verses enables a more subtle assessment of his verbal art and ingenuity. Snorri's choice of subject matter, that of a praise poem for King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway and Earl Skúli Bárðarson (a shared poem for the two most powerful men in Norway), cannot have been an arbitrary one. Clearly the masterly display of metres in the poem was a most fitting vehicle for a praise-poem of such distinguished men. But the over-prominence Snorri gives to Skúli (dedicating two thirds of the poem to him, and only one third to Hákon) has often been 'strangely' discarded by scholars, as Anthony Faulkes notes in his excellent edition of the poem. This fact provides a fascinating insight into Snorri's attitude to the Norwegian king, and bears out Snorri's unashamed bias in Norwegian politics of the thirteenth century. This edition of *Háttatal* by Anthony Faulkes is the first to be published in English. Faulkes has, however, translated the poem in his version of the complete *Edda*, published in 1987, and reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXII:5 (1988), 290–97. That translation and this new edition

with its fine introduction and notes will deservedly bring the poem to a wider public.

Faulkes gives in his Introduction a clear and concise account of the author Snorri Sturluson and places *Háttatal* firmly in the context of earlier sources, such as *Háttalykill* by Hallr Þórarinnsson and Earl Rognvaldr of Orkney, and Latin treatises on metre. Snorri must clearly have known *Háttalykill*, and though Faulkes does not succeed in pointing to one specific Latin source for the commentary to *Háttatal* (it shows only 'a passing familiarity with the manner of Latin textbooks'), he clearly demonstrates that it has much in common with Latin textbooks. The informative Introduction is accompanied by an Appendix in which Faulkes enumerates examples of Snorri's metres in other Old Norse verse, from both before and after Snorri. This inventory is much more than a simple list of metres, and demonstrates Faulkes's clear grasp of metrical variants. It is a most valuable contribution to the study of metres in Old Icelandic poetry, and poses many fascinating questions, e. g. whether a common metre could suggest a link between different poems. The text of *Háttatal* and the commentary are printed in a lucid and clear way and normalised to a thirteenth-century standard. Faulkes bases his edition on the Codex Regius manuscript, and has supplemented from the other three main manuscripts only when Codex Regius is either corrupt or the text 'does not give acceptable sense' (p. xxvi). This edition does not provide an exhaustive variant apparatus, so the reader must use editions of the other manuscripts to check alternative readings. I noticed only one typographical error; in stanza 13/3 *auðgjafa* should read *auðgjafa*, as is corroborated by the Glossary. The Explanatory Notes to the text provide illuminating comments on particular metrical problems. The emphasis in this edition is on stylistic and metrical aspects of the poem, rather than on an analysis of kennings and the meaning of stanzas. The less experienced reader of skaldic poetry may find it difficult to translate some of the stanzas with only the help of the Glossary, as Faulkes does not follow the practice of reordering the *helmingr* syntactically in order to provide a clear sequence of meaning. The Glossary is, however, excellent in providing lucid and crisp explanations of the terms. There are (usually) cross-references between different parts of kennings which will compensate for the lack of reordering of each *helmingr*.

This edition of *Háttatal* can only be praised. It has taken an extraordinarily long time to make the poem accessible to English-speaking students of Snorri Sturluson and to those interested in skaldic poetry. It is important to emphasise that this edition will not only benefit English-speaking readers, but that it is essential reading for all those studying *Háttatal*. Anthony Faulkes has in this meticulous and erudite presentation of the text successfully brought the poem to the centre stage of Old Icelandic literature where it undoubtedly belongs.

GUDRÚN NORDAL

VIKING POEMS ON WAR AND PEACE. A STUDY IN SKALDIC NARRATIVE. By R. G. POOLE. *Toronto medieval texts and translations*, 8. University of Toronto Press, 1991. xvi + 217 pp.

The apparent canonicity of the skaldic corpus as presented in the four stout volumes of Finnur Jónsson's *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning* (1912–15) is, as is only too well known, partly illusory—the inevitable result of the pragmatic necessity of producing a readable edition, arranged in chronological order, in which individual verses are assigned to named poets (or to 'anon.') and to particular poems in a particular order. It is not only that the authenticity of *lausavísur* attributed in sagas to speakers such as the three-year-old Egill, the ghost of Óláfr helgi, the partially decapitated Jökull Bárðarson, and assorted berserks and troll-wives is questionable, or that Gísli and Kormákr may have had assistance from makers of saga-narratives in their versifying. With few exceptions, the classic formal panegyrics of the ninth to twelfth centuries are mainly conjectural assemblages of single strophes or part-strophes which are preserved mainly within kings' sagas and treatises on poetics and grammar written around or after 1200. There are numerous disagreements between manuscripts about the speakers of verses, and even when the poet is known there is ample room for scholarly disagreement about the reconstruction of poems, a subject which receives most expansive treatment in Bjarne Fidjestøl's *Det norrøne fyrstediktet* (1982). To illustrate, one need only compare the treatment of the verses about Magnús Ólafsson inn góði and his campaigns attributed to Þjóðólfr Arnórsson—34 strophes or part-strophes, not including one about the king's death. There is a fair consensus among scholars that 19 of these verses belong to the *Magnússflokkur*, although only one is so labelled in a medieval source. The remaining 15 are printed by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* II (1883), 202–04 as 'Vísor (1044–45)', and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson in vol. III of his *Heimskringla* edition (1951, 7) is in almost total agreement with this division. Finnur Jónsson, who took the present tense as being diagnostic of *lausavísur*, tentatively adopted a middle course, printing 6 of the verses within the *Magnússflokkur* in *Skjaldedigtning* (A I 361–68, B I 332–38), while designating the remainder as *Lausavísur* 1–9 (A I 377–79, B I 347–49). Fidjestøl, following the evidence of the prose works, counts all 34 as part of the *Magnússflokkur* (1982, 133). As this example shows, a crucial part of the process of reconstructing the skaldic corpus is to establish which verses originally belonged to longer poems (i. e. were 'extracted verses' in Poole's terminology) and which were *lausavísur*, 'free-standing (improvisatory) verses' (p. 64). It is a fascinating problem, which touches on the broader questions, what kinds of long skaldic compositions there were, how many of the claimed *lausavísur* really were produced in the situations described in the sagas, how many minor, non-professional skalds there were, and in what form skaldic verses were handed down the generations; and it is one of the central preoccupations of Russell Poole's challenging and enjoyable book.

The ‘*lausavísa*’ question is addressed most directly in the two introductory chapters, which seek to demonstrate how the recognition of verses belonging to complete poems has been hindered by two factors: (i) the tendency of prose writers to treat extracted verses as *lausavísur* (and of modern scholars to believe them); and (ii) the internal features of the verses, especially the use of the historic present tense. Medieval and modern misunderstanding of (ii), Poole argues, has often led to (i). In the first chapter, ‘*Lausavísur* and other verses’, Poole, with rich exemplification from a wide range of sagas, confronts some of the problems of distinguishing *lausavísur* from extracted verses. He examines the possibility that sets of verses united by style and subject-matter might have been fragmented by prose writers who took their emotional intensity as a sign of on-the-spot improvisation and assumed their fictive speakers, where present, to be their actual poets. They then, in effect, turned them into *lausavísur* by inferring, and elaborating on, a dramatic context for the verse utterance from hints within the verse. *Ágrip*’s treatment of *Bersöglisvísur* 12 (discussed on pp. 8–10) is an early example of this practice, which, as Poole observes, became progressively more developed among saga-writers (including Snorri Sturluson) through time. The question how far back in the pre-history of the existing saga-narratives this process might have begun, is scarcely addressed, nor is it clear to what extent saga-authors were or were not conscious of what they were doing. Poole on p. 23 speaks of their literal-mindedness, but also of their ‘creative powers’. If a fairly conscious activity, it would be paralleled by the treatment of eddic poems in *Snorra Edda*, where Snorri quite knowingly extracts, for example, a verse from *Skírnismál* and places it in the mouth of Freyr with the words, *þá kvað hann þetta*.

The second major chapter, ‘Excursus: the present historic tense in poetry’ draws on *rímur*, fourteenth-century religious skaldic poems, eddic poems, *Háttatal*, *Merlínússpá* and then earlier skaldic poems in order to dispute Axel Åkerblom’s thesis that the historic present was practically non-existent in skaldic verse before 1100 (‘Bruket av historiskt presens i den tidigare isländska skaldediktningen’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 33 (1917), 293–314). There is rather more detail in this section than necessary, as the author concedes by heading it ‘Excursus’ and considerably suggesting that non-initiates might postpone reading it (p. xi); yet it is closely bound into the argument of the book, since it is the presence, but comparative rarity, of the historic present that Poole sees as one of the reasons that verses from long poems are misinterpreted as *lausavísur*. Not all the material here is equally convincing. The main drawback is that all the early skaldic works quoted belong, certainly or probably, to the ‘picture-describing’ genre—Bragi’s *Ragnarsdrápa*, Þjóðólfr’s *Haustlög*, Kormákr’s *Sigurðardrápa* and Ulfr Uggason’s *Húsdrápa*—and even in these, the present tense is extremely rare. Although Poole is right that Åkerblom’s interpretation of the tenses does not work in detail, one cannot exclude the general possibility that the present tense is not a genuine historic present but an actual present, serving as a periodic reminder that scenes are being looked at. Cumulatively, then, Poole makes a case for the present tense as a stylistic

possibility within skaldic verse—and in long compositions, not only in *lausavísur*—but the early evidence is difficult, and this is not the strongest part of his argument.

The corollary of the mis-classification of some verses as *lausavísur* is, Poole indicates, that there has been a too narrow view of what is possible within a long skaldic poem, and that a genre of poems has gone unrecognised. The remainder of the book amounts to an anthology, with expansive discussions, of seven representatives of this genre. These are quite short sets of verses that describe a battle or, more rarely, peace-making, normally within a pattern of prelude—action—aftermath. They are set either wholly in the present tense or in a blend of tenses, in which ‘the present tense of the running commentary, used alongside the preterite of the retrospective survey, takes on the feel of a present historic’ (p. 195). The poems frequently consist, in whole or part, of dramatic speech projected into the mouths of speakers other than the skald; incitements and vocatives are quite common. Four of the items are labelled ‘poems’ and three ‘reconstructed poems’. The four are *Liðsmannaflokkur*, the eddic *Darraðarljóð*, Þjóðólfr Arnórsson’s verses about the battle of the River Niz/Nissa (1062), and the *Friðgerðarflokkur* (Poole’s title), anonymous verses about the ensuing peace-negotiations between Haraldr Sigurðarson and Sveinn Úlfsson. The ‘reconstructed poems’—all almost entirely in the present tense—are ‘Torf-Einarr’s revenge’, ‘Egill’s duel with Ljótr’ and ‘Eiríkr viðsjá: a battle on the heath’. The poetry surveyed in the book thus represents the period from the early tenth century to the mid-eleventh, and, refreshingly, concentrates mainly on poems which do not fit the mould of royal panegyric. Space does not permit a detailed response to the treatment of each of these poems, but a few specific points may be made. The selection of the Nissa verses by Þjóðólfr Arnórsson as the first representative of the genre is initially disconcerting, since the reader is asked first to be persuaded that seven verses printed in *Skjaldedigtning* among Þjóðólfr’s *lausavísur* are actually part of *Sexstefja*, and then that they, together with six longer-established verses from *Sexstefja*, form a separate entity within the longer poem. The thirteen verses as printed certainly do form a satisfying unity, which is emphasised by Poole’s perceptive commentary on such features as lexical and phonological concatenation. However, how these relate to the rest of *Sexstefja* is an interesting question, and I cannot quite agree with Poole’s judgement that it is beyond the scope of the book (p. 72). His notion of (presumably) a poem within a poem is reminiscent of Fidjestøl’s suggestion that some verses with the appearance of *lausavísur* might have been loosely attached to panegyric poems, as a frame for example (1982, 84–85), both suggestions serving as a timely but uncomfortable reminder that much remains uncertain about the range of possible skaldic structures. This chapter contains substantially the same material as Poole’s ‘The cooperative principle in medieval interpretations of skaldic verse . . .’, *Journal of English and Germanic philology* 87 (1988), 159–78, not included in the Bibliography.

The chapters on *Liðsmannaflokkur* and *Darraðarljóð* are rich in historical interest. Some of the material could have been pruned somewhat, such as the

seven-page demonstration of Þorkell inn hávi's key role in Knútr's establishment of Danish rule in England in the second decade of the tenth century, pp. 100–07), fascinating though it is and fundamental for the argument that the dual focus on Knútr and Þorkell in the *Liðsmannaflokkur* does not betray its disparate origins but reflects the complex political situation of this time. On the other hand, some comment on the singular fact that this appears to be a very rare specimen of (Anglo-)Danish skaldic verse would have been welcome. The early tenth-century history surveyed in *Darraðarljóð* is similarly essential to the argument—that the poem may belong there rather than in the eleventh century as a memorial of Clontarf—but again is somewhat more detailed than strictly necessary.

In the three chapters on the 'reconstructed poems' Poole—who has been reconnecting *lausavísur* at least since 1973—shows that these have an aesthetic unity and narrative flow which were lost when the verses were separated by prose link passages; even the author of *Egils saga* proves inept in this respect (p. 181). Poole is not the first to propose the original unity of certain verses preserved as *lausavísur* (his predecessors include Klaus von See, Anne Holtmark and even Finnur Jónsson), but he makes a fuller case for it than others, and it is on the whole a strong one, for although one could envisage artistic unity in a series of *lausavísur* composed by the same skald on the same theme, one would not expect such a multiplicity of complex linkages as are described, in sometimes relentless detail, by Poole (e. g. pp. 191–94). The case of the five 'Torf-Einarr' verses is least convincing, since they are not characterised by elaborate concatenations, and their ordering is somewhat in doubt. Concerning authorship, Poole considers that the attributions to Eiríkr víðsjá may be correct, but, with others, that the Torf-Einarr and Egill verses might be the work of a now unknown poet (p. 197). His work thus confirms the direction of scholarly trends in which the heroes of the *skáldasögur* and other verse-speaking heroes have been seen as ever more literary constructs, and the evidence of prose works viewed with increasing scepticism. In the latter respect, his approach contrasts with that of Bjarne Fidjestøl, whose methodology involves trusting the evidence of prose works, albeit not uncritically (1982, 82). If right, Poole's suspicions about authorship undermine the traditional view of skaldic poetry as essentially not anonymous; and they invite us to wonder who these prodigiously talented twelfth-century makers of fake verses might have been. In theory, Poole's thesis could be taken to extremes and used to explain away almost any *lausavísa*; but in practice it is carefully argued and moderate (more moderate, I think, than in his Toronto doctoral dissertation, *Skaldic Poetry in the sagas . . .*, 1975). His position is summarised, 'When we consider the verses incorporated in prose works we should be . . . prepared to entertain the possibility that certain alleged *lausavísur* are in reality excerpts from extended poems' (p. 23).

A few general points: the book manages, on the whole, quite well without footnotes, but in some places one has to take on trust a claim that could have been documented in a note, or a translation that is not the most obvious one.

For example, it is said on p. 71 that the unusual word *furða*, used in the third verse quoted from Þjóðólfr Arnórsson together with the verb *undrask*, appears in ‘what seems to be a systematic use of a lexical set from the Christian religion’. The reference is presumably to the echo of v. 12 of Sigvatr’s *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga*, where *undr* and *furða* are used with reference to the solar eclipse which was believed to have accompanied Óláfr’s fall at Stiklarstaðir; but without this or any other information the claim of Christian associations is frustratingly cryptic. Similarly, I do not know why *svírar* is translated in the singular ‘stem’ (of a ship) on p. 59 (though Finnur Jónsson does the same in *Skjaldedigtning* B I 351). On p. 75 an absence of detail is misleading: it is noted that the title ‘Friðgerðarflokkur’ was devised in imitation of ‘Snorri’s “friðgerðarsaga”’, but without an explanatory note this could give the impression that the peace-making of Haraldr and Sveinn is so headed in *Heimskringla* manuscripts, whereas in fact it is applied to the dealings between Óláfr Haraldsson (inn helgi) and Óláfr Svíakonungr a few decades earlier. My other small complaint is that the parallel translations of the seven poems do less than full justice to the kennings, which are often treated as mere counters and rendered with bland generics such as ‘man’ or ‘warrior’, or with pronouns, whatever their individual semantics, though these are occasionally mentioned in the critical discussions. Thus *fleindöggar stafr* in v. 4 of the Ljótr sequence, literally ‘stave of shaft-dew’ i. e. ‘stave of battle’, hence ‘warrior’, is translated as ‘he’ (p. 174), which is a great loss, especially given the wittily ironic contrast between the ideal represented by the kenning—a warrior, sturdy and upright in battle—and the pathetic actuality of a berserk who pales and fails to stand firm in the fight (*stendrat fast*, the predicate to the kenning). This way of handling kennings is not unusual, but it is odd here, since the *heiti* are often given more precisely etymological renderings, as when *flæði* is translated ‘high tide’, not ‘sea’, and *dreki* ‘dragon [i. e. the longship]’ (both p. 59), and since the book contains so much fine observation of detail.

A book-length study from Russell Poole will be welcomed by those familiar with his many shorter publications on skaldic subjects or with his Toronto dissertation. The book is to a large extent based on both, but presents its case in an integrated and readable form. It is enriched by the application of certain general concepts to skaldic materials, such as narrativity and the (anti-)individualist ethos, without falling into the danger of jargon-tossing, and is sensitive to the possibility of changes of outlook between the Viking Age and the thirteenth century. Alternative interpretations are discussed throughout with discrimination, and the subtlety and wit of the skalds observed with evident enjoyment. Pleasingly produced, it is also a book which presents its ideas with vigour and clarity. Its chain of argument is, minor links excepted, strong, and it makes a substantial and stimulating contribution to contemporary skaldic studies.

DIANA WHALEY

YNGLINGATAL OG YNGLINGESAGA. EN STUDIE I HISTORISKE KILDER. By CLAUS KRAG. *Studia Humaniora 2. Rådet for humanistisk forskning, NAVF & Universitetsforlaget*. Oslo, 1991. 286 pp.

This important study of the Yngling tradition is divided into three parts. The first, containing two chapters, is devoted to the dating of *Ynglingatal*, the second comprises two chapters on the evolution of the Yngling legend in poetry, saga and genealogy, and the third, a single chapter though actually the most diverse of the five, offers 'pragmatiske konklusjoner', reviewing among other things aspects of the Yngling tradition as a historical source.

As is well known, the thirty-seven verses of *Ynglingatal* are preserved chiefly in Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga*, and are attributed there, as in *Skáldatal*, to Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, thus suggesting a date around or shortly before 900. With only a few dissenting voices, scholarly opinion has upheld this dating; but now Claus Krag, reviving old arguments and bringing new ones to bear on the problem, proposes origins in a learned milieu in twelfth-century Iceland.

It is, as Krag observes, hazardous to use metrical or stylistic criteria for dating in a medium so conservative as skaldic verse (though more discussion of these things would not have been out of place), and the kernel of his argument relates to content rather than style. There are, as Krag maintains, developing arguments brought forward by Bugge and Neckel, certain non-obvious views of the world in *Ynglingatal* which would have been impossible in the pre-conversion period. The first four royal deaths are by drowning in a mead-tub, immolation in a rock-cave, suffocation and burning, and this appears too programmatic, too close to the medieval four-element theory, which was known in Iceland from the late eleventh century, to be coincidental. The rare genealogical 'fire' kennings *sævar niðr* and *sonr Fornjóts* (vv. 4 and 29) seem to allude to a personified version of the same systematic view of the elements. Other likely cases of conceptual anachronism are invoked by Krag. He sees the often-noted fact that the earliest Yngling kings bear names elsewhere attached to Óðinn and Freyr as a late phenomenon, comparable with the euhemerisation of myth in the Prologue to *Snorra Edda*. Similarly, the demonic view of heathendom in evidence at some points in the poem seems to be a species of *interpretatio Christiana*, and the touch of erotic personification in the presentation of Hel in v. 7 would have been unlikely at a time when Hel was still taken seriously.

Arguments that *Ynglingatal* fits poorly in a late ninth-century context go hand in hand, as these examples show, with evidence that it fits well in the twelfth, and points relevant to dating inevitably spill out beyond the confines of the 'official' discussion in Part One. Among the strongest is the indisputable fact that the twelfth century is a fertile time for synoptic verse compositions on historical themes, among them *Íslendingadrápa* and *Háttalykill*, and above all *Nóregs konungatal*, which shares the *kviðuhátt* metre and many other features with *Ynglingatal*. Another poem, not, I think, mentioned by Krag, but favourable to his argument, is the twelfth-century *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*, preserved

only in Bergsbók and falsely attributed there to Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld. Also telling is the point that indications of temporal remoteness (*sás lǫngu vas*, v. 33, and *forðum*, v. 35) when speaking of kings no more than two generations before the time of Þjóðólfr ór Hvini are much more credible in a twelfth-century poem. The reference to *fróðir menn* in v. 6 also seems suspiciously pedantic.

The less convincing points include the resemblance between v. 7 of *Ynglingatal* and v. 7 of *Glælognskviða*, by Þórarinn loftunga, hence early eleventh century. Krag thinks the *Ynglingatal* verse is later, an ironic reminiscence, but coincidence cannot be ruled out. *Beowulf*, whose set of Swedish kings, Ohtere, Eadgils and Onela matches the Óttarr, Aðils and Áli of *Ynglingatal*, has often been cited as evidence for the venerable age of the Yngling tradition. Krag, in my view, sets too much store by arguments for a possibly late dating of *Beowulf*, some of which do not stand up well to close scrutiny; but it is certainly true that the traditional dating of *Beowulf* to the earlier eighth century is not sufficiently secure to allow other arguments to be founded on it. As for the presumed poet of *Ynglingatal*, Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, Krag does not deny his existence, or his connection with the shadowy Rognvaldr heiðumhæri who is celebrated in v. 37; indeed this untypical verse is taken by Krag as possibly the only genuinely old verse of the poem. But clearly the sparse tradition we have about Þjóðólfr can neither support nor undermine any particular dating.

Krag's hypothesis certainly deserves to be taken seriously. The approach is purposeful but not blinkered, and one warms to an argument that begins with an admission that the materials for proof may be slender, but quietly asserts that once the insecure basis of the old view is recognised the new one may be accepted as having much in its favour (p. 5). My own inclination is more towards belief than disbelief in Krag's thesis, but it will need long and close scrutiny from many angles before being accepted as the new orthodoxy.

The evolution of the Yngling legend is the subject of the second part of the book, and it is the new light shed on this that Krag himself regards as the most valuable part of his study (p. 7). The central texts for consideration are *Ynglingatal*—now a twelfth-century poem and therefore no longer the principal ancient source for all the prose texts—, the *Ynglinga saga* in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, *Historia Norvegiæ*, *Af Upplendingakonungum* in *Hauksbók* (which covers the latter part of the Yngling line, from Óláfr trételgja onwards), and the genealogy appended to Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók*. The material in the first four of these texts, with its shifting patterns of similarity and difference, is usefully collated, king by king, in section 3 of Chapter III, and the results tabulated on pp. 144–45. The conclusions reached are many, and they are summarised in a stemma on p. 165, but the most important among them are: (i) that there is a single Yngling tradition (although not a single, simple line of descent from one text to another); (ii) that Ari's genealogy and his lost *konunga ævi* supplied material for *Historia Norvegiæ*, for a group of intermediate texts including *Ynglingatal* and *Af Upplendingakonungum* and for *Ynglinga saga*; (iii) that the author of *Historia Norvegiæ* did not have

access to *Ynglingatal*; (iv) that *Ynglingatal* may have been composed as poetic embellishment for a saga text; (v) that *Ynglinga saga* does—as has always been assumed—depend closely on *Ynglingatal*, which Snorri took in good faith as a probably ancient poem.

From the historical point of view, the single most significant point to emerge from all of this is that the attachment of the Yngling Upplendingakonungar to Vestfold, and hence the concept of Vestfold as the ancient cradle of Norwegian unification, is not part of the earliest tradition, but evolves through time. It is absent from *Historia Norvegiæ* (and presumably from its source in Ari), but in *Af Upplendingakonungum* the kings from Hálfðan Eysteinnsson onwards also hold power in Vestfold, and the linkage is taken two generations further back, to Hálfðan hvítbeinn, in *Ynglingatal*. It is above all Snorri, in *Ynglinga saga*, who emphasises this feature, not least by portraying the Ynglingar as losing their territories in Uppland, which are then recovered by Hálfðan svartir from a base in Vestfold. Snorri thus figures more clearly than ever as a creator, not merely a recorder or adapter, of historiographical tradition.

As well as exploring the existing texts, Krag ranges into the unknown hinterland of their antecedents. He rejects the old arguments that the original *Ynglingatal* either had fuller coverage of the kings represented or stretched farther back into the mythological past. (This involves taking Snorri's remarks in the Prologues to *Heimskringla* and the *Separate saga of Óláfr helgi* somewhat loosely, p. 87.) Also rejected is the opportunistic recourse to oral tradition exemplified by Beyschlag's theory of *Begleitprosa*. Instead, Krag postulates another early written stage in the Yngling tradition: 'den opphavelige ynglingesagaen' (p. II 0), which seems to be identified with Ari's lost *konunga ævi* (pp. 147 and 217). There is perhaps more confidence at some points than the scant evidence warrants, especially when Krag states, 'Hvorfor han [Ari] gjorde som han gjorde i det enkelte tilfellet, vil vi aldri kunne få vite' (p. 221); but we may never know what Ari did, let alone why he did it.

The original Yngling saga, as Krag argues in Chapter V, drew its being from raw materials akin to heroic poetry and *fornaldarsögur*. The sphere of activity of the early Ynglingar, for instance, is especially Gautland, Denmark, and southern Norway—very much *fornöld* territory; their conflicts and fates are characteristically presented as personal, in the style of the heroic age, rather than military or political; and the narratives feature women, animals, Finns, dwarves and the supernatural generally. In this connection, Krag rehearses the arguments for the very early casting of *fornaldarsaga* material in written, or at least highly developed oral, form.

The overall picture in all this is of an evolving Yngling tradition which represents a much systematised and historicised version of materials which were originally amorphous, fragmentary and essentially non-chronological, and which does not find its final political purpose of presenting Norway as the *óðal* of Haraldr hárfagri until well after his reign (an issue already addressed by Krag in an article of 1989, listed in his bibliography). That the Yngling genealogy is a post-conversion development is suggested by its likely dependence

on the Skjöldung genealogy, whose runs of fourteen generations are in turn reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon and biblical genealogies. There is transparent use of duplicated names (e. g. the two Fróðis in *Ynglingatal*) and of fictive names (e. g. Herleifus—Hunleifus—Aleifus etc. in the Skjöldung genealogy) in order to attain the required number of generations. Moreover, ‘Yngling’ appears not to be used as an ancient dynastic name in the early poetry, but only as the appellative *ynglingr* meaning ‘prince’. The evidence thus cumulatively supports Krag’s belief that the emergence of a systematic Yngling genealogy comes c.1100, supplying a male ancestry for Haraldr hárfagri just as the genealogy of the Skjöldungar supplied the female ancestry. *Ynglingatal* is then seen as depending on a pre-existing prose genealogy, just as *Nóregs konungatal* depends on the lost writings of Sæmundr Sigfússon inn fróði.

The most obvious result of Krag’s researches is that the removal of *Ynglingatal* to the twelfth century invalidates the only substantial literary source for Scandinavia’s legendary past, which has been treasured not only as a resource for the study of dynastic history but also as a repository for nuggets of information about early burial customs, sacral kingship and onomastic practices. As Krag says, doubts about the Yngling tradition, where it is scant or where it is full, must be virtually fundamental (p. 234 and cf. p. 239). In its place—meagre compensation, some might feel—we have greater insight into the historicising activities of learned Icelanders before and around 1200. Of course, few, if any, scholars have placed unquestioning faith in the details of *Ynglingatal*, but many have accepted the poem as partially, and broadly, true, at least insofar as the dominant Norwegian dynasty is named the Ynglingar and given Swedish origins. This, and the connection of the dynasty of Haraldr hárfagri with Vestfold, are among the points which historians will have to ponder at leisure in the light of Krag’s arguments. The archaeologists will have to review some of their assumptions about important sites in southern Norway. Krag rightly points out that the use of *Ynglingatal* on the one hand and sites such as the Borre mounds and the Oseberg and Gokstad ships on the other to validate interpretations of both has often been over-confident and circular, and strongly dependent on the dating of *Ynglingatal* to c.900. Meanwhile, the philologists too will have to experiment with a ‘map’ of the early Nordic literary world in which *Ynglingatal* is placed in twelfth-century Iceland instead of ninth-century Norway. The character of *Ynglingatal* itself, including its irregular strophe length and other metrical features, and its particular deployment of kennings, may be usefully reviewed, and the poem compared both with others attributed to Þjóðólfr and with others in the *kviðuhátt* metre, not least *Háleygjatal*, about which Krag glancingly intimates that probably only part of it is genuine (p. 201, n. 30). As the authority of the skaldic record as transmitted by Snorri Sturluson and others is increasingly challenged, the role of twelfth-century poets and scholars comes increasingly to the fore, and this century will doubtless be a fertile area for further research (a direction which the work of Russell Poole also suggests; see pp. 506–10 above). In particular, it will be necessary and fruitful to ask, if *Ynglingatal* is a twelfth-century poem, exactly when,

where, why, and by whom it could have been composed; and whatever theories are proposed will have to explain the fact that Snorri seems to have been taken in by this fabrication.

Throughout the book, arguments are on the whole presented lucidly, often with the help of charts and diagrams, and the writer is not afraid to reiterate points in the interest of clarity. The book is pleasant to the eye and has evidently been proof-read with care. The placing of notes and references (including the most exiguous) at the end of each chapter is a nuisance which only slightly detracts from the accessibility of the book, and the same can be said of the practice in the bibliography of obscuring the alphabetical ordering by putting forenames left of, rather than right of, surnames. Another minor grouse is that the translations of *Ynglingatal* in Chapter III give literal equivalents of kennings, but no indication of the presumed total meaning, e. g. *sævar niðr* in v. 4 rendered 'sjøens bror', where 'sjøens bror [ild]' would have been more useful. More important than any of these, as a useful bonus, is the provision of a summary, translated into English by Judith Jesch.

DIANA WHALEY

STUDIES IN RAGNARS SAGA LOÐBRÓKAR AND ITS MAJOR SCANDINAVIAN ANALOGUES. By RORY McTURK. *Medium ævum monographs, new series XV. The Society for the Study of Mediæval Languages and Literature*. Oxford, 1991. xi + 275 pp.

This is essentially Rory McTurk's doctoral thesis of 1985. In it, he discusses aspects of the network of traditions around Ragnarr loðbrók and his wife Áslaug, as they developed between the ninth century and the nineteenth. It is divided into three chapters. The first argues that Loðbróka was originally a woman, named after a fertility goddess with whom she was associated, and that she was mother of Ívarr the boneless, Sigurðr snake-in-the-eye and three other sons (real historical figures from the 870s)—Ragnarr himself (another historical figure, a Viking dead soon after 845) only coming into the story, and being linked to the nickname *loðbrók*, later. The second attaches eighteen different versions of the Ragnarr traditions to the spine narrative of the 'international heroic biography', and shows how Ragnarr's career, and those of his sons and his wife Áslaug, fit (or do not fit) that narrative. The third discusses how the separate Ragnarr and Áslaug traditions come together in the medieval versions of the story and, in particular, in early modern Norwegian versions. In addition to these core discussions, there are innumerable spin-off arguments about different aspects of the traditions, especially in Chapters 2 and 3 (at the end of Chapter 2 there is a list of the more important ones, pp. 145–47; a similar list does not, however, conclude Chapter 3). McTurk ranges across all the Scandinavian countries, Germany, France, Britain and Ireland, and occasionally as far as Greece and India, in fine style, arguing with Jan de Vries about every detail of the Ragnarr traditions. There is no doubt that he has the material in the palm of his hand, and can manipulate all his versions with total assurance. His

complex reconstructions of their transmission and mutual influence are very effective. I doubt that his stemma on p. 241 will be superseded in more than trivial detail.

That said, however, there are problems in both form and content, which I shall take in turn. I doubt I have ever read a book whose major arguments are harder to work out. It opens in mid-air with a brief reference to a previous article by the same author, and closes in mid-air with a brief characterisation of his debt to de Vries. Arguments are based on documentation that can appear dozens of pages later, if ever. We never get any systematic account of what the widely-varying Ragnarr texts actually contain, so it is only possible to get any sense of them by following the author down every byway (of which there are hundreds) and crossing one's fingers. I am not an Old Norse specialist, and perhaps I should be, but even specialists might have liked some help through the content of Faroese and Norwegian ballads, some of them not published since the mid-nineteenth century. It seems to me to have been a strategic error to tie so much detail to the heroic-biography argument in Chapter 2; it spoils the focus of, for example, the arguments about *Krákumál* on pp. 125–36. Nor will anyone be very grateful for the absence of conclusions that characterises the entire text (what, for example, does the use of the heroic-biography template really tell us?). This book is a doctoral thesis, and as far as I can tell is almost wholly unrevised (except possibly for the perplexing decision to bring all the footnotes into the text). I regret having to give so much space to the issue of form; but it will get in the way of the usefulness of the work.

As to content, there are certainly some points where I do not entirely follow the writer, as is inevitable in a work as complex as this. I am convinced by McTurk that Loðbróka was originally a female goddess, but do not see why her 'sons' need be the physical sons of her priestess (pp. 25–26), rather than men devoted to her cult. I can see why Ívarr, Sigurðr, Ubba and Halfdan can be seen as brothers, but it seems to me too much to claim that Björn ironside was as well, just on the basis of William of Jumièges (pp. 43–45), when Björn never had any documented link to the others at all, and his 'father' Loðbrók was a well-known legendary king by the late eleventh century. I think it a pity that the writer should link the heroic biography so tightly to rather vaguely-formulated ideas about fertility rituals (e. g. pp. 35–36, 52, 95–97), and in that context I wish he had read more anthropology—one minor article by Edmund Leach is not enough. I would have liked some defence for using the Áslaug tradition to fill in the early sections of the heroic biography where the Ragnarr tradition is lacking (e. g. pp. 62–68), especially as he shows subsequently that the two traditions only joined together at all fairly late. It seems to me also that McTurk is on occasion over-literal in his interpretations of texts. One example is the physical descent of Ívarr *et al.* from Loðbróka, already mentioned; another is the contortions he goes through to explain why one of the conditions of Áslaug's appearance before Ragnarr has apparently changed from 'neither on foot nor on horseback' in the standard Aarne-Thompson tale-type to 'neither alone nor accompanied by man' (pp. 204–11), when such substitutions are

utterly normal in the folktale tradition—any teller worth his or her salt should have known both and several others. (McTurk only uses Aarne-Thompson, not Stith Thompson's own motif-index, which gives a better idea of the flexibility of tale detail.)

I must end, however, by reiterating that this book is both complex and assured. It will be the new basis for all future study of Ragnarr loðbrók. I hope indeed that the author himself will use its raw material for a definitive synthetic study, which he himself is better equipped than anyone else to carry out.

CHRIS WICKHAM

BACKGROUND TO DYLAN THOMAS AND OTHER EXPLORATIONS. By GWYN JONES. *Oxford University Press*. Oxford, 1992. x + 210 pp.

The sight of this title among the reviews of *Saga-Book* may momentarily surprise. But the Gwyn Jones who is the literary critic and explorer implied by the title is also Gwyn Jones the novelist, short story writer, reteller of folktales and legends, compiler and editor, and (more relevantly here) translator and historian and Honorary Life Member of the Viking Society, whose *Norse Atlantic saga* and *History of the Vikings* at least will be familiar to many, along with some of his saga translations. And of the twelve lectures, essays and addresses in this book, one is substantially relevant to Norse studies and two others are on entirely Norse topics.

In 'Here be dragons: a view of the nature and function of heroic poetry' (pp. 139–61), the author uses chiefly the Welsh *Gododdin* and the Poets of the Princes, but also the English *Maldon* and the Norse *Rígsþula* and *Bjarkamál*, to set forth the distinctive characteristics of the old heroic poetry narrowly considered, a loud clear voice from an age which saw war between men as the richest flower of human experience, a voice clamant, magnificent and unshamed, but today unthinkable. How unthinkable he shows us in a postscript. There are heroes enough, but we know too much, the appropriate rhetoric is out of fashion and the heroic lay with it. Witness Wilfred Owen, whose conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty won him the Military Cross, and who shared death in a classic heroic situation with a hero of the old mould (a Major J. H. Marshall, often wounded, often decorated; called by Owen in ancient fashion 'Marshall of the Ten Wounds'). But Owen with his deep thought and sensitivity was from a different mould, and in his poetry of War and the pity of War, the poetry is in the pity; meeting the new requirements of a new age, he provided a different voice for his time and ours, and one antithetical to the glory-ridden heroic celebrations of the past.

'The legendary history of Olaf Tryggvason' (pp. 162–85) was a W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture delivered in Glasgow in 1968. In its preliminaries, after a quick description of the many well-known sources, the lecture usefully brought to the awareness of a wider public the devastating examination of northern historical sources that had taken place in Scandinavia, and set the scene with

an explanation of the nature of Olaf's Norwegian kingdom in the tenth century, summed up as a personal aggrandisement of territory and wealth, limited in scope, unstable in nature and uncertain of duration, and dependent on sea-power. The main part then retells with discernment and delight the wealth of story that the medieval historians and poets have bequeathed to us, and at the same time demolishes it as history—which is sometimes literature's gain.

'The Viking world' (pp. 186–203) is of more recent vintage, having been first delivered at a conference in Maine in 1988, and appearing here in a version modified for Cambridge in 1989. It is the master's graphic short description of vikings moving and settling both East and West, with a look at causes, means and limitations. It concludes with a thumbnail appreciation of our sources of knowledge and the providers of them, and in this the assessor of documents is not short in gratitude to the archaeologist and the palaeo-scientist.

Other items in the book, though not Norse, will surely also be of interest to readers of *Saga-Book*. Only one will be mentioned here. Many medievalists are familiar with the Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones translation of the *Mabinogion* in the Everyman edition, and some may have been so fortunate as to see it in its superb original Golden Cockerel form. The making of that book is here recounted, from its modest beginning in Gwyn's attempt to redress a previous rendering, through the raising of his ambition on meeting Christopher Sandford of the Golden Cockerel Press, the move up to a joint translation with Thomas Jones, the foremost young Welsh medievalist of the day, the collaboration with Sandford and the artist Dorothea Braby, the difficulties and vicissitudes they overcame together, with the generous aid of Helping Companions, to its triumphant appearance; it is an enthralling account.

DESMOND SLAY

THE ANGLO MAN: ÞORLEIFUR REPP, PHILOLOGY AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN. By ANDREW WAWN. *Studia Islandica, Íslensk fræði*, 49. *Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs*. Reykjavík, 1991. iii + 270 pp.

Þorleifur Guðmundsson Repp (1794–1857), an energetic and brilliant graduate of the Latin School at Bessastaðir, left his native Iceland to study in Copenhagen from 1814 to 1821, fulfilling there his early promise, particularly as a philologist. He mastered some two dozen languages, ancient and modern, and was so enthralled by British history and the English language that he was known in Denmark as the 'Anglo man'. He lived in London during 1821–22 and then returned to Copenhagen, completing a Master's Dissertation there in 1826, just before accepting a post at the National Library in Edinburgh, where he lived from 1826 to 1837. He spent the last 20 years of his life in Copenhagen, eking out a living as teacher, translator and journalist. Repp's books, articles, critical reviews, letters and essays, all ensured that he was well known in his time; and his work was esteemed by even the likes of Rasmus Rask. But he died in near

obscurity, and he remained there for 135 years. Andrew Wawn has now resurrected this 'Anglo man'. Why? Why did he decide to devote several years to a study of Repp's life and writings? At the outset, Wawn offers three reasons, and they become the central and unifying themes of this interesting and valuable book.

First, 'Repp's career offers a vivid insight from a quite unfamiliar perspective into the halting reception of the then new linguistic science of comparative philology in a major British intellectual centre [Enlightenment Edinburgh], at a time when the work of Rasmus Rask and the brothers Grimm was enjoying significant exposure in Europe' (p. 17). On a series of fronts, Repp promoted the new science, pointing out its importance to cultural and linguistic studies and to pedagogy generally, trying to alert British scholars to the treasure trove of manuscripts—full of prime data—mouldering away in archives awaiting another Thorkelín, while they myopically pursued their studies of Greek and Latin.

'A second theme illuminated by any investigation of Repp's years in Britain is that of Anglo-Icelandic literary and cultural relations in the first half of the nineteenth century, viewed for once from an Icelandic rather than a British perspective' (p. 20). In several earlier publications, Wawn has discussed those British perspectives. (See his *The Iceland journal of Henry Holland, 1810* (Hakluyt Society, 1987), and references therein to articles on other British travellers to Iceland.) Explorers like Banks and Hooker had argued—around the time of Iceland's short-lived 'revolution' in 1809—that if England should annex Iceland, both countries would profit. Repp would probably have agreed. Throughout his life he argued that independence-seeking Icelanders (many then at work in Copenhagen) had more to learn from the British than from the Danes; or from the Germans or the French, particularly with regard to judicial reform. Furthermore, the most positive aspects of British law, Repp argued, had parallels in the laws of the medieval Icelanders. So the network of associations between Iceland and Britain, past and present, Repp saw as potentially rich and productive; and he was distressed that few of his contemporaries, particularly in Britain, understood this. And so he took every opportunity to educate them.

'The third theme . . . must be the relationship between [Repp's] academic work and his life and temperament' (p. 22). Wawn carefully traces and illustrates how Repp's writings were shaped not only by controversies about philology and politics and education, but also by anxieties about money and advancement, and by convictions that small-minded and penurious employers and editors did not appreciate his true worth. His stubborn and quirkily brilliant personality heightened all such influences and made objectivity impossible. Though scholarly detachment might be for all of us a contradiction in terms, it certainly was so for Repp. When he writes, for instance, about King Alfred, he stresses (in Wawn's words) the king's 'linguistic facility and enthusiasms, the high priority accorded to pedagogy, the travel, the importance for a nation of welcoming and encouraging foreign scholars' (p. 23), all points linked to Repp's own interests and career. Wawn also notes this 'self-referential impulse' in Repp's descriptions

of problems faced by luminaries as varied as Lord Byron and Edward the Confessor and James Bothwell, the sixteenth-century adventurer and lover of Mary Queen of Scots. In a retelling of *Færeyinga saga*, Repp went so far as to interpolate into the tale a ‘rather poignant self-portrait’ (p. 146) of a resplendently attired, immensely polished and learned Icelandic scholar-skald who has stopped off at the Faroes on his way home from Constantinople. And all the Faroese—unlike the Scots Repp lived among—realised the importance and weight of this traveller. His name was Thorleif.

That northern tale, like so much of Repp’s output, remains unpublished. Wawn has pored over it all—a mountain of paper, in nine large boxes in Iceland’s National Library—and he has of course digested all the published works. In these writings Wawn detects ‘characteristic features of tone and style, notably an instinctive, peppery combativeness towards other scholars’ (p. 24), features that are sometimes to be observed in Wawn’s own prose, particularly when he alludes to some of the more fashionable inanities in contemporary academe. Wawn announces, for instance, that his study of Repp will necessarily deal with linguistic and literary theory but not with the ‘self-indulgent and self-defeating private codes and political correctness [the /p/ /k/ alliteration punctuates Wawn’s scorn] of far too much contemporary “literary theory”, particularly as currently practised with ludicrous earnestness in the universities of Repp’s beloved Britain’. Wawn goes on, becoming more caustic as he points out that ‘throughout his adult life, Repp wrestled with real problems, intellectual, political and personal—his victim status was genuine, not a product of the berserk fury of the ageing *blómabarn*, the robotic indignation of the tenured radical with an inflation-proof pension, a benefit which Repp so conspicuously lacked in his impoverished latter years. The Icelander also had a sense of humour’ (p. 11). As that passage indicates, Wawn has one too, and it serves throughout to enliven his discussions of Repp’s life and the significance of his work.

Repp’s first philological essay, on the ways that poetic metre affects meaning, was submitted in 1818 for an aesthetics prize at the University of Copenhagen. Although his effort—a 44-page treatise in Latin—won no laurels, the judges were evidently impressed by Repp’s learning: he cited authorities from Aristotle and Catullus to Egill Skallagrímsson, and he explicated poems from a host of contemporary European writers. Repp’s first translations—extracts from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* into Danish—appeared in 1818–19; and during this period he also worked for the Arnamagnæan Commission, translating *Laxdæla saga* into Latin for the 1826 edition of the saga. In 1823 Repp submitted another prize essay, this one on poetic structures and translation; he argued for the importance and utility of the new philology, suggesting that the ‘natural laws’ of language could be applied to other intellectual disciplines. The essay, published in 1824 as *En undersøgelse henhørende til metriken og den empiriske sprogphilosophie*, won the gold. In 1826, in *De sermone tentamen*—which he had every reason to assume would earn him a Master’s Degree—Repp again turned to comparative philology and to specific points about differing intonation

patterns in Indo-European languages. Wawn's discussion of the dissertation is excellent, as is his recounting of a brother's revenge (replete with pertinent saga references) that kept Repp from receiving the degree.

Repp then moved to Edinburgh where his 'scholarly output as an essayist and projector was prodigious. He wrote books, pamphlets, papers for learned societies, translations, reviews, letters to newspapers; he also wrote masses of pieces which never saw the light of day . . . [He] projected histories of etymology, of comparative religion, and of Norse mythology' (p. 86). He also devised plans to reorganise the university system in Scotland, to build a 'Caledonian Museum' (p. 87), to inaugurate geographical and literary societies, to launch periodicals, and so forth. Wawn's deft commentaries upon the major works from the Edinburgh period are set against prevailing theoretical controversies about language and race, as with those ignited by John Pinkerton in his 1789 *Enquiry into the history of Scotland*. Wawn also carefully charts the reasons for and the effects upon his writings of Repp's problems with his superiors at the Advocates' Library, problems that led to his dismissal in 1834. Among the works discussed is the following: *An historical treatise on trial by jury, wager of law, and other co-ordinate forensic institutions formerly in use in Scandinavia and in Iceland*. This study, commissioned by the British Home Secretary, was published in 1832. In it Repp celebrates the achievements in both literature and law of his Icelandic ancestors, while reminding his British readers of their debts to Old Norse culture. Repp's learned explications of 'Hogmanay and Trollalay' (a Scottish Yuletide greeting), of etymological secrets in *Havelok the Dane*, of the meaning of the runes on the Hunterston brooch (unearthed in Ayrshire in 1830) and upon the Ruthwell Cross, all receive close attention. Even when Repp was wrong, egregiously so with the Ruthwell runes, seeing 'Christbason' (i. e. 'baptismal font') in the runes for *Krist wæs on [rode]*, his contentious mistakes provoked British scholars like Kemble to pay attention to British artifacts like the Dumfriesshire cross and thus 'to stand on Icelandic shoulders and come much closer to the truth' (p. 131).

In his final years in Copenhagen, Repp wrote *A brief view of the Old Norse grammar* (a completed manuscript of 151 pages, never published); he revised an English translation of a Danish grammar by Rask; he co-authored a Danish dictionary; he translated into Danish the English *Book of Common Prayer* and put together for his Danish students two English language readers — a collection of fiction, *English stories*, and another of poetry: *Udsøgte engelske digte for damer, for skoler og for studerende*. 'In this collection, Repp was able to indulge his admiration for Byron the poet and to hint at his identification with aspects of Byron the man' (p. 195). And he translated into Danish other British books on topics as diverse as economic theory and diseases of the blood; he founded and edited a newspaper, *Tiden*, which displayed a 'generosity of coverage of all things British' (p. 201). He also wrote copiously on Icelandic politics, and politics was the motive for his translation of *The Saga of King Edward the Confessor* as well as his edition of *Saga Oswalds konungs hins*

helga. In a fascinating chapter sub-titled ‘The politics of saga’, Wawn places Repp among the ‘politicised philologists of the emergent Icelandic nation state. Alongside a celebration of the native roots of saga, there developed a renewed eagerness to highlight Iceland’s European cultural affiliations’ (p. 211), and thus these Icelandic narratives of non-Icelanders received new attention after 1848.

Wawn’s attempts in this book to reveal the importance and relevance of Repp’s life and works are a complete success. Always returning to the three themes he announced at the outset, Wawn brings to life both the man and the times. His hard work and patient scholarship must be applauded. A few months back I peered into one of those nine boxes of Repp’s papers in Landsbókasafn. Literally hundreds of documents, in differing sizes, languages, conditions, glowered back at me. That Wawn has carefully sifted and read the papers in all nine boxes strikes me as heroic. He does philology the old-fashioned way.

Wawn is apparently assuming an audience as familiar with Scandinavian languages as he is, since none of the many titles and passages quoted in Danish and Icelandic are translated. That might be a minor inconvenience for some readers. There are a few mistakes and typos that should be noted. In his discussion of Repp’s contribution (a facing-page Latin translation) to the 1826 edition of *Laxdæla saga*, Wawn asserts that the Icelandic text is ‘based on Flateyjarbók’ (p. 57), rather than—as is the case—on *Möðruvallabók*. In his extensive bibliography (eleven pages of titles, 26 of them by Repp), Wawn places a recent publication of an 1833 travel book, *A Journal of an Expedition to the Faroe and Westman Islands and Iceland*, under ‘Seaton, A. V’. Seaton was the editor, George Atkinson the author. In a footnote, Wawn refers to Atkinson as a ‘Newcastle scientist’ (p. 246, n. 387). He was in fact a wealthy industrialist who conducted some important investigations on the effects of industry on the environment. At times the cross-references in those footnotes (there are 484 of them, 182 to the contents of those large boxes in Landsbókasafn) will crease a few brows. In an allusion to a Reppian fiction about an Oxford student named Wanhope, Wawn laments that ‘Repp’s readers [will be] frustrated . . . by the author’s chronic inability to finish what he had started’ (p. 39). But there will certainly be few such ‘readers’ since the story in question is in one of those large boxes in Reykjavík. I noticed the following typos: ‘a’ for ‘an’ on p. 32, 8 lines up; ‘an’ for ‘a’ on p. 37, l. 3; ‘and and’ for ‘and’ on p. 148, l. 17; ‘Edingurgh’ for ‘Edinburgh’ on p. 254, 15 lines up. Finally, an article by Mackenzie is dated ‘1814’ in the bibliography (p. 258, l. 14), but ‘1815’ in footnote 303, p. 242.

ÚR DÓLUM TIL DALA: GUÐBRANDUR VIGFÚSSON CENTENARY ESSAYS. Edited by RORY MCTURK and ANDREW WAWN. *Leeds texts and monographs, new series 11. Leeds studies in English*. Leeds, 1989. x + 327 pp.

This volume's playful title refers to the fact that it is a collection of essays edited and published in the Yorkshire dales and dedicated to the memory of Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1827–89), a native of Dalasýsla, on the one-hundredth anniversary of his death. In the words of the editors, 'The essays . . . seek either to address the nature and influence of Guðbrandur's scholarly achievement and influence, or to add twentieth-century perspectives to important questions concerning Icelandic literary tradition, many of which were first formulated in Guðbrandur's writings, and which still challenge scholars a hundred years later' (p. vii). It is an impressive and interesting collection, carefully and thoughtfully edited, reflecting the continued good health and high standards of Vigfússon's field of study—at least at its solid, familiar centre. The volume remains largely free, as far as I can tell, of the taint of French philosophy or of literary theory post-Guðbrandur. Indeed, it is instructive to note how canny the editors have been in their awareness that the major figures in contemporary Old Norse-Icelandic scholarship continue to focus their thought on the questions that interested Vigfússon, especially his concern with the dating and chronological ordering of texts. Peter Hallberg begins his essay in this volume by saying 'Chronology is a major problem—or, rather, the major problem—in establishing the development of Old Icelandic literature' (p. 113). Roughly half of the essays in this volume bear out the validity of Hallberg's perception of the field.

The essays are arranged alphabetically by author and begin with Theodore M. Andersson's review of 'Guðbrandur Vigfússon's saga chronology: the case of *Ljósvetninga saga*'. His conclusion is that Vigfússon's advocacy of a date of composition early in the thirteenth century is not without merit still. Andersson rejects, however, Vigfússon's reliance on the statement in one text of the so-called prologue to *Sturlunga saga* (situated between *Sturla saga* and *Prests saga Guðmundar Arasonar*) that 'those sagas which had taken place in Iceland had been written before the death of Bishop Brandur' (1201), preferring the usually accepted wording of AM 122b fol.: 'all the sagas that had taken place in Iceland before the death of Bishop Brandur had been written down' (i. e. by the time Sturla Þórðarson composed *Íslendinga saga*). What Andersson does find persuasive in arguing for the early date is the mention in both *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Reykðæla saga* of Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson, a well known Icелander who was born in 1140. It is rare that a contemporary person is mentioned in an *Íslendingasaga* at all, and Andersson finds it easier to believe that it would happen sooner after the man had died than later.

Coming second is an especially well-written biographical sketch by B. S. Benedikz that provides a good framework in which to place Vigfússon's accomplishments. It includes a just and detailed analysis and evaluation of his career, which might appropriately have begun the volume, albeit slightly out of alphabetical order, immediately following the handsome frontispiece, a photograph of the portrait by H. M. Paget. Especially informative is the

description of the school at Bessastaðir, which moved into Reykjavík while Guðbrandur was still a student, and three remarkable teachers there, who influenced not only Guðbrandur Vigfússon but a whole generation of learned Icelanders. Vigfússon had a complex personality that is only partially explained by the form of his education and subsequent career, most of it spent far from the nation he loved so intensely and whose culture he did so much to spread in the English-speaking world. There was no degree programme in Old Norse-Icelandic studies in Vigfússon's day and hence no possibility for him *að taka próf* in this field, a fact which led eventually and pathetically to his losing the only girl to whom he ever paid serious attention. While his Oxford students, a very distinguished group, unanimously spoke of him with affection, the University was not on the whole generous to him, and the absence of worthy collaborators prevented him, notwithstanding his large editorial and lexicographical achievements, from making the fullest scholarly contribution of which he might have been capable.

Michael Chesnutt's contribution, 'The beguiling of Þórr', begins with an allusion to Vigfússon's idea that *eddukvæði* originated in the British Isles. His main purpose, however, is narrower, to examine the Celtic influence on the three episodes of the story in *Gylfaginning* of 'the beguiling of Þórr'—Þórr's slaughter of the goats, the Skrímir episode, and the visit to Útgarðr—and, more briefly, the *Hjaðningavíg* episode in *Skáldskaparmál*. His case depends upon a great deal of learning, some of it involving the construction of chronological chains of relationship and influence among poems and stories that did not actually appear in written form until two or three centuries after they are thought to have been composed. If we leave aside specific surviving texts, the general principle of Celtic-Norse interchanges, more likely in the Orkneys and the 'Western Isles' than in Ireland, earns our consent and heightens our desire to learn more. But a sceptical reader is left with a strong sense of how little we can actually know about the verbal art of ninth- and tenth-century Scandinavians.

It is tempting when we have more than one version of an *Íslendingasaga* to speculate about which of them is the older, original version, or at least closer to the original. Robert Cook raises this question when he discusses 'The ordering of the wooing episodes in *Hallfreðar saga*'. The question he asks is not which is the 'better' order of events, but which one is closer to the 'original'. In *Möðruvallabók* (M) there are two episodes which occur in one sequence, while in the versions of a group of MSS of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (Ó) the sequence of these two episodes is reversed. The statement and solution of the problem is more subtle and detailed than can be indicated here. Because the stemma of the manuscripts has two branches, Cook cannot resolve the question of primacy on the genetic relationships among them. Instead he must attempt to answer the question: what might have motivated one of the two scribes to *reverse* the order of the text as he found it in his original? Elaborating on a suggestion of Björn M. Ólsen's, Cook concludes that the most compelling reason in this case for *changing* the order of events in *Hallfreðar saga* would be to adhere to their order in *Vatnsdæla saga*, where the sequence is required

by the context. The same motivation (i. e. to bring the order into agreement with an influential analogue) does not exist for the scribes of the Ó MSS, which must therefore be the original version of the saga. When, at the end of his essay, Cook's discussion turns to variations between *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Hallfreðar saga*, one wonders whether here the concept of an 'original' version is equally valid. Often between these two sagas the variant texts seem to depend on variant points of view that were developed (in oral tales) toward what may have been the same 'original' events. In other words, the saga as *fabula* (story) may have an original version but not the saga as *sjúzet* (discourse).

Ursula Dronke begins her essay on 'The scope of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*' by noting a paradox: the infinite suggestiveness of Vigfússon and Powell's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* and its notorious unreliability. Nevertheless, she thinks that it remains a good idea to review our own conflicting ideas about dates and 'originality' by reviewing their work, and she does support in general their proposition that 'best is earliest', or in her words, 'that the poetic qualities of a work—its intellectual content and style of verbal skill—should lead us to its correct dating'. What follows is an interesting and learned essay on the dating of *Lokasenna*. I was especially struck by the analysis of the accusation that Iðunn embraced her *bróðurbani* (st. 17) and how this human situation can be understood as a displacement of older mythic ideas. Throughout the poem Dronke sees serious mythic features of the gods being translated into essentially modern sexual and scatological terms. Such a satire, she believes, would be more or less pointless to a Christian audience, outside of the culture in which the gods are worshipped, since it is a form of 'ritual reversal' at certain 'licensed moments' within a pagan culture. My objections to dating *Lokasenna*, or any poem, to a time centuries before the advent of literacy in Scandinavia on such grounds is that doing so depends on our believing that we (and the ancient heathens) can see the point to a satire that went over the heads of the thirteenth-century scribes who wrote them down. Neither the scribes nor performers in an oral tradition would continue to transmit material that was essentially meaningless to them. It is important to remember how lost we would be in our studies without the help of such thirteenth-century students of antiquity as the compiler of Codex Regius 2365, 4to. This essay may be the best example of any in the collection of how distracting Vigfússon's sort of concern with dating can be from the sensitivity and learning of such first-rate modern scholarship as Dronke's.

Peter Hallberg reports on research that affirms the conventional dating of nine genres of Icelandic prose texts by studying the relative distribution of *fyrir sakir* (the older form) and *sakir* (the more recent), together with *fyrir skyld*, *fyrir grein*, *fyrir sök*, *sökum*, which reflect generic as well as chronological distributions. He notes that in these texts, the modern *vegna* is extremely rare.

In an essay on the novelist Gunnar Gunnarsson, Sveinn Skorri Höskuldsson reminds us of Guðbrandur Vigfússon's contribution to the study of Icelandic folktales, specifically his role in overseeing the printing of the first major folktale collection, Jón Árnason's *Íslenskar þjóðsögur og æfintýri* (Leipzig,

1862–64) and writing a substantial introduction to that work. This reference to Guðbrandur, however, exists primarily as a context for describing the seminal role of Icelandic folktales in the development of Gunnar Gunnarsson's narrative art. The essay ends with a quite beautiful account of the novelist's conversion of the theme of the conventional medieval *danse macabre* (a rare motif, by the way, in Icelandic folktales) into a Christian *danse vivante* in his symbolic novel *Vikivaki*.

O. D. Macrae-Gibson's essay 'Sagas, Snorri, and the literary criticism of scaldic verse' reviews what recent writers on *dróttkvæði* have had to say about the poems as works of art—especially from the point of view of their saga contexts. Such ideas as the following, which manage to get beyond the constraints imposed by old arguments over dating and authorship, are welcome:

In considering the literary merits of scaldic verses as placed in a saga the question of their 'authenticity' matters little. If we allow that a saga as we have it had in some sense 'an author', then whether he treated the verses as a source and built the saga round them, or structured the saga fitting in or writing appropriate verses where they seemed called for, the fact is that he left a work of which they formed part, and can be presumed to have intended them to contribute to the total effect the work was to make. (pp. 166–67)

The verses, he goes on to show, can be used—as prose rarely is—to reveal inner feelings. In the sagas that have verses, the two forms enhance each other. To understand fully how the verses enhance the larger narrative, Macrae-Gibson believes it is necessary to pay attention to what Snorri has to say about the way verses work: character is revealed not only in the expression of feelings but also in the risks the poet has been willing to take in the technical details of composition.

Vésteinn Ólason, too, sets aside questions of the 'authenticity' of the saga verses when he considers the topic of authorship and tradition in the 'Máhlíðingamál' episode in *Eyrbyggja saga*, although he does in a sense continue into the present the old debate as to the oral and/or literary composition of the sagas. He is interested in the subtle interplay between the particular and the conventional in the episode. He sees the particular story of the struggle between the two sorcerers Geirríðr and Katla as a type of the conventional *landhreinsun*, cleansing of the land of sorcerers and thieves. He notes separate male (social) and female (mythic) aspects of the episode, in which men are powerless against the evil Katla, whose crimes can only be revealed by Geirríðr. And these women, too, constitute a polarity between Geirríðr's knowledge and Katla's sexuality. The conclusion of Vésteinn's discussion of tradition and authorship in this episode of *Eyrbyggja* is so subtle that I cannot resist quoting it:

In spite of, or perhaps because of its thoroughgoing traditionality, the tale of Máhlíðingamál is a unique story. Although Þórarinn svarti has many typical features, there is no other character in the sagas, or in world literature for that matter, who is exactly like him. Katla is a typical witch but also a particular witch. And the most memorable images of the text—Auðr's hand lying in the grass, Nagli and the slaves running around in the mountains mad with fear—are unique and extremely real at

the same time. It is in the unique details of the story that I imagine I feel most strongly the presence of oral tradition; but it is in the totally traditional craftsmanship of the story-teller that I sense the presence of a great writer. (p. 198)

In order for Vésteinn to have these impressions of the orality and the literacy of this episode, he assumes that an author learned his story-telling conventions through books and his local details through oral transmission. In neither case does this formulation leave room for a saga authorship dependent upon the striking idiosyncrasies of individual genius, and that may be the move that we have been waiting to make. Without an author in the modern sense the tension between oral and literary is considerably lessened.

P. R. Orton approaches the obscure Old English poem *The wife's lament* by studying its parallels with *Skírnismál*. He begins with a very detailed consideration of the English poem's literal meaning and the various fictional/mythic contexts that have been proposed for interpreting what is apparently the miserable subterranean situation of a woman who is complaining. He then notices that the threats delivered by Skírnir to Gerðr in *Skírnismál* describe a similar fate, which awaits her if she does not yield to Freyr's desire. The common image is *under actreo* in the English description of the woman's dwelling and *á víðar rötum* in the Icelandic. This is rich and stimulating material (comparable to Dronke's in her *Lokasenna* article) when it is considered in the light of the Scandinavian temple as microcosm, as in Adam of Bremen's description of the temple at Uppsala. The woman's subterranean abode becomes a temple at the centre of the earth, furthest from her lord at the edge. Also in accordance with Dronke's method of understanding the mythic imagery of *Lokasenna*, Orton speculates that the mythic material underlying *The wife's lament* has been displaced, or 'deritualized', to represent, if not an identifiable group of persons, at least a generalised humanity. We do not know enough to be able to prove any of it, but I find this parallel with Scandinavian myth provides as satisfactory and memorable a fictional context in which to imagine the events of *The wife's lament* as any I know.

Richard Perkins's contribution to the volume is a theoretical article on 'Objects and oral tradition in medieval Iceland'. I cannot do justice here to the denseness and interest of its argument. After disavowing an allegiance to 'Free-prose' theory, Perkins nevertheless observes (in much the spirit of Vésteinn Ólason's view of *Eyrbyggja*)

that in the Iceland of the *ritöld* . . . there existed a vigorous and dynamic oral tradition which consisted not only in *metrical* compositions but also found its expression in *prose*. And . . . this prose oral tradition would also have included stories about persons said to have lived in the Iceland of the *söguöld* . . . There seems to me little doubt that the written sagas we have had such prose oral stories as their *sources*. (p. 241)

He then postulates that various phenomena served as 'kernels' round which oral traditions grew. Among these phenomena, literary and physical, are included concrete objects, and it is primarily these that Perkins categorises and illustrates. He cites the Icelandic proverb *sjón er sögu ríkari* to remind us of the function

of physical imagery not only in oral tradition but possibly also as a source for the earliest writers who attempted to recount ancient events: mythological iconography on rune stones which Snorri might have seen in Sweden and Norway, the *bjöllur* and *baglar* Ari Þorgilsson says were left behind by the *papar*, grave-mounds described in Haukr Erlendsson's version of *Landnámabók*. Finally, Perkins makes clear that the centring of oral traditions around physical objects does not mean that such stories, even in the *Íslendingasögur*, are historically true nor, alas, that the hundreds of objects mentioned in them have survived. I might only observe that Perkins's article might help to explain why we regard those objects and places, like Þingvellir, that do still survive as holy.

Margaret Clunies Ross's contribution, 'The cognitive approach to scaldic poetics, from Snorri to Vigfússon and beyond', is one of the few essays in this volume to break genuinely new ground, and at the same time it leans more heavily than any of the others, from beginning to end, on the work of Vigfússon, especially the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*. She intends her line of inquiry to remedy the lack she finds in current scholarship of 'a definitive study of the deeper structures of Old Norse scaldic poetics which focuses on the cultural categories and cognitive models that underlie the groupings of kenning types into like and unlike sets. It is the grouping of the concepts that are in play in scaldic verse into basic categories, linked to others either through similarities or through differences, that determines the operation of this kind of poetry, for both poet and audience.' It was not immediately clear to me as I read these words that the cognitive domains involved are not those of the referent or the base word alone but of the relationship the kenning stipulates between the two, which can, through the operation of 'proportional metaphor', both narrow the semantic field of the base word and also categorise the social or experiential domain of the referent. Frequently, as in the kenning 'yoke-bear' (*okbjörn*) for ox, there is what Clunies Ross calls a 'baroque dissonance' between the contrastive qualities of the two terms, in this case 'wild' versus 'domesticated', that is a cultivated quality of skaldic verse. There is much to ponder and to learn in this fine study. For example, my own thoughts turned, in response to Clunies Ross's discussion of the analogies between houses and the natural world that are implicit in a number of kennings with the base word *hús*, to the appropriateness in *Beowulf* of singing a song of creation to celebrate the building of a house.

Guðbrandur Vigfússon's huge and fatiguing labour of compiling the monumental *Icelandic-English Dictionary* that had been initiated by Richard Cleasby is well documented in a series of his letters brought together by Svavar Sigmundsson. The work of the lexicographer was not in every respect uncongenial, but it is a story of increasing isolation and servitude to the challenges and drudgery of the great task.

This pleasing and instructive volume concludes with Sverrir Tómasson's discussion of Snorri's attitude toward the function of poetry, especially in the context of its credibility as a record of *res factae* and a source for historiographical research and writing. He quite usefully cites all the allusions to the problem in

relation to the writing of Scandinavian history that are earlier than Snorri's Prologue to *Heimskringla*, as well as a few others from a slightly later time. Among Snorri's several attitudes toward poetry (*soğuljóð*, *skrök*, *háð*) was an acknowledgment of its vatic function, of poetry as a divine gift whose beauty was the best indication of its truth.

ROBERT KELLOGG

PEOPLE AND PLACES IN NORTHERN EUROPE 500–1600. ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF PETER HAYES SAWYER. Edited by IAN WOOD and NIELS LUND. *Boydell Press*. Woodbridge, 1991. xxii + 248 pp.

For over thirty years Peter Sawyer has been the *enfant terrible* of Viking studies. Thirty years is a long time to remain an *enfant*, but in some eyes Professor Sawyer remains as *terrible* as ever. In her contribution to this volume in his honour Gillian Fellows-Jensen speaks of Sawyer's early study of the density of Danish settlement in England (and by extension one can add parts of his *The age of the Vikings* of 1962); its impact, she claims, was that of a 'hungry cat let loose among the pigeons', and certainly this harmless, perhaps necessary, cat fluttered those innocent pigeons who were more worried by the unorthodoxy than the inadequacy of his arguments.

Professor Sawyer's contribution to medieval studies has been extensive and wide-ranging, as the bibliography printed here reveals. In his appreciation of Sawyer's achievement Ian Wood picks out for special praise his reference works, noting in particular *Anglo-Saxon charters: an annotated list and bibliography* of 1968. Every Anglo-Saxon scholar must agree on the supreme usefulness of such work as this. Wood also comments on Sawyer's 'other writings' which have 'served dramatically to push debates forward', though his added comment makes clear how loosely he uses the word 'forward'. There is no doubt that Sawyer turned his hand to 'creating new vistas'. So did many a Renaissance landskip painter and Baroque designer of stage effects, but their vistas were often artful assemblages of materials from a variety of sources and owed nothing to careful record of fact. Some years ago I wrote of Sawyer's 'kaleidoscopically changing opinions', but I have since wondered if I did not overestimate the capabilities of the kaleidoscope.

This excellent (for the most part) collection is an interesting reflection of the range of Sawyer's published work—possibly also of its limitations. It opens with a group of five essays on aspects of Frankish and Anglo-Saxon history, by Ian Wood, Richard Morris, Patrick Wormald, Janet L. Nelson and Simon Keynes. Richard Hall writes on 'Sources for pre-Conquest York', largely pointing to the way recent archaeological work has illuminated, or failed to illuminate, scanty historical and topographical sources. There is one essay on Old English literature, a typically learned and sprightly work by Roberta Frank: 'The ideal of men dying with their lord in *The Battle of Maldon*:

anachronism or *nouvelle vague*', which also takes in material from Old Norse and early French.

Elsewhere in the book Alexander R. Rumble gives an austere palaeographical 'A Domesday postscript and the earliest surviving Pipe Roll' which only a specialist in that discipline can assess. 'Women and justice in Norway c.1300–1600' by Grethe Authén Blom has a more general interest. It reports a group of legal cases involving women, in which 'they themselves appear to have taken the initiative to have their case heard in court, and judgements were without exception to their advantage'. The purpose, fully carried out, is to show that the legal system of Norway did not discriminate against women, who 'got as fair a deal as men did'. Hans Andersson's 'Ancient monuments act—exploitation—medieval archaeology—research: thoughts on manifest connections' is a short summary of the effects of the 1942 Ancient Monuments Act on archaeological research in Sweden, as it affects the general organisation of archaeology and as it has allowed scholars to exploit the opportunities produced by modern urban development.

There remain nine pieces of particular interest to Vikings. Gillian Fellows-Jensen's 'Of Danes—and thanes—and Domesday Book' is a formidably learned and closely argued discussion of some of the problems of place-name dating in the eleventh and later centuries. She begins with Sawyer on the density of Danish settlement in England (1958), pointing out that onomastic scholars were unwise to reject his arguments for a late dating of many Norse place-names in England merely because they were based on false premises. This leads her to a detailed re-examination of some Yorkshire place-names which contain Danish personal names, notably those in *-ketill* or the contracted *-kell*. Fellows-Jensen discusses in detail the relationship between these variants of the element in an attempt to define what dating limits apply to each. She ably anticipates a number of objections that could be brought against her argumentation (though I do not think she demonstrates that *-ketill* names in combination with a place-name element necessarily followed the same phonological path as those in free use). Her conclusion, modestly enough, is that 'there is still much that we do not understand about the significance of the Scandinavian settlement names in England', a somewhat more reticent statement than Sawyer's 'the main period of Scandinavian name production was in the early years of the tenth century'. Perhaps the difference between these two assessments indicates something of the difference of confidence between philologist and historian working from the same evidence.

In 'Norse settlement in the Hebrides: what happened to the natives and what happened to the Norse immigrants?' Per Sveaas Andersen produces fascinating information but no clear argument. He admits the impenetrable darkness of Hebridean history in the early Middle Ages and tries to penetrate it with the tools of archaeology and onomastics. He asks pertinent questions—for instance, if Norse place-names indicate the presence of Norse speakers, does an absence of Norse place-names necessarily demonstrate there was no Norse immigration?—but does not stay for an answer. He gives some splendid statistics for place-

names in *staðir*, *setr*, *bólstaðir* (these derived from the work of D. K. Olson) and *bær/býr*. They indicate a clear dichotomy between the southern and inner Hebrides and the Scots western littoral on the one hand, and the northern Hebrides and Northern Isles on the other. Some of the distribution maps imply strong Celtic influence on the more southerly and westerly areas of Norse settlement, but I am not clear that they answer either of Andersen's questions or allow him to dispose, as easily as he would, of Iain Crawford's interpretation, of one site only, as a demonstration of 'sudden and total obliteration' of local Celtic material culture.

In 'Jelling from Iron Age to Viking Age' Steen Hvass sums up the great engineering achievements of Haraldr Bluetooth's later years (the Jelling mounds, the Raving Enge bridge and roadworks, and the Trelleborg-type fortresses) and links them to finds of material of an earlier date in the region south of Jelling. He defines an important cluster of settlements of the early Roman Iron Age, and then discusses the excavations at Vorbasse (c.25 km south-west of Jelling) which enabled archaeologists to trace the shifting site of this village community from the first century BC to the eleventh AD. Thus the Jelling monuments 'are no longer isolated in the local environment'. The total finds indicate that this area 'constituted a powerful local centre of gravity', and Jelling itself shows the continuation or re-emergence of a centre of political power. This is a fascinating example of the way archaeology illuminates a Dark Age of the Vikings.

Tinna Damgaard-Sørensen writes on 'Danes and Wends: a study of the Danish attitude towards the Wends', a subject which I for one have shamefully ignored hitherto in considering the Vikings. The point of departure is material from archaeological excavation at Fribrødre Brook, North Falster, which reveals a ship-building and repair site of the eleventh century, with clear indications of Slavonic/Wendish influence on building techniques and on associated pottery and miscellaneous objects. From this arise such questions as: 'Did the Wends settle in Denmark?', 'Would it be possible for Wends to find a home on Danish territory?', 'Were there any reasons for the Wends to leave their country in favour of foreign lands?' Damgaard-Sørensen examines historical sources from the tenth to the twelfth century, draws the not surprising conclusion that the factual situation was more complex than many historians have believed up to now, and ends with a stirring call to them 'to mobilize the written sources, in readiness for future discussions'.

Brita Malmer writes 'On the early coinage of Lund'. She begins 'Coins arguably form the most important source for the history of Scandinavia in the Viking and early Medieval periods', and then neglects to argue it. In favour of coinage as a historical source she claims: 'The coins are *contemporary*, they are *written*, and they appear in *very great quantity*'; which could also be said of late twentieth-century tabloid newspapers in Great Britain, but few would claim they are important historical sources for anything but the vulgarity of tabloid newspapers in late twentieth-century Britain—and I suppose of the readers they attract. That a source is written is not so important if what is

written there is of so limited a range. Certainly the legends on the coins that Dr Malmer treats here are not particularly illuminating of Viking history in the reigns of Sveinn Forkbeard and Cnut the Great, particularly if the place-name form *Lund* can be equally applicable to Lund in Skåne and London, as she reports.

Thorsten Andersson's 'The origin of the *tuna*-names reconsidered' summarises the discussion of Scandinavian place-names containing the plural form of the element *tun* over a period of eighty years or so, and in particular during the last twenty of these. There are two main lines of explanation: one involving Celtic influence from *-dūnum* names, the other assuming a development from the indigenous *tun*, 'fence, enclosure, and so perhaps farm, enclosed cult place'. Andersson aims at airing the problem rather than presenting a solution, and this he does ably and in detail. To the non-specialist the Celtic hypothesis looks unnecessarily cumbersome in view of the common occurrence of the simplex *tun* in place-names from a number of Germanic regions—and Karl Axel Holmberg's monograph on *tuna*-names apparently accepted that they have 'no special meaning but . . . only meant "fence" and "enclosure" in general'. But a number of distinguished scholars have spent their time trying to demonstrate otherwise, and Andersson is perhaps wise in calling for a further airing not only of the answers but of the questions.

Åke Hyenstrand presents a paper of four pages on 'Iconography and rune stones: the example of Sparlösa', but I do not know why, or why the editors accepted it.

Birgit Sawyer entitles her paper 'Women as bridge-builders: the role of women in Viking-Age Scandinavia', but this is a diminution of its content. She deals with a variety of topics here, including the right of women to inherit, their right to hold property (and so to be able to afford a rune-stone), the circumstances under which a woman erected a stone on her own or in collaboration with another woman or in collaboration with a man; and she provides a number of statistics and notes geographical variations between them. Mrs Sawyer interprets rune-stones as documents of inheritance, claiming that we can identify inheritance patterns by a study of relationships between the people who put up stones and the dead they commemorate. Only at this point does she get to the subject of rune-stones that refer to bridge-building, 'considered a meritorious act, earning Divine favour'. Women are, she claims 'over-represented' on such stones, and this is consonant with 'many other signs of women's interest in Christianity and their readiness to obey exhortations to support the church and give alms'.

I have left to the end Niels Lund's "'Denemearc", "tanmarkar but" and "tanmaurk ala"' not because it is the least important of the papers—far from it—but because in a way it reflects the strength and weakness of the contribution Peter Sawyer has made to Viking studies. A strength is his willingness to engage a wide range of material, some of it, like the archaeological and numismatic, often ignored by historians; a weakness his readiness to use sources in languages he cannot adequately command. Lund begins with the Jelling monuments and discusses the dating of Haraldr Bluetooth's reign, and then the significance of the latter's claims on the greater Jelling rune-stone.

This leads him to ponder—like others before him—what ‘all Denmark’ can mean; what overlordship was Haraldr asserting in the inscription? This in turn brings in the ninth-century account of Scandinavia by the man whom Anglo-Saxonists call Ohthere and Norse historians Ottar.

Speaking of Ohthere’s description of his voyage to Hedeby, Lund asserts that he ‘makes a curious distinction between *Denemearcan* and “lands belonging to the Danes” and this distinction corresponds to the one made between North-Danes and South-Danes in the description of northern Europe appended to the Old English Orosius’. The point is worth examining, but it is surely worth examining in more detail than Lund finds necessary—and this will require some philological discussion which Lund avoids. Ohthere was a Norwegian; what language he spoke to Alfred is unknown. How precisely the Old English version represents the detail of what Ohthere wished to say is equally unknown, so the sensible are cautious in making precise and subtle distinctions from the recorded text. What Ohthere is reported as saying is that Hedeby *hyrð in on Dene*. Sailing there from Kaupang he had *Denemearc* to port for three days. Two days before he came to Hedeby there were to port *þa igland þe in Denemearce hyrað*. (I do not know that anywhere Ohthere spoke of ‘lands belonging to the Danes’—nor, as for that, does the form *Denemearcan* occur in his account.) There is an apparent distinction between these islands and *Gotland ond Sillende ond iglanda fela* which were to starboard, and on whose allegiances Ohthere made no comment, though someone (?he or the secretary who took down his statement) added that these were the lands of the Angles before they came to England.

Here *Denemearc* seems to mean the present-day Norwegian and Swedish coastlands south of Kaupang and any islands to port as Ohthere made his journey through straits to South Jutland. Modern translators may blur distinctions which the original may have had: thus they may be satisfied with ‘Hedeby . . . belongs to the Danes’ and ‘those islands which belong to Denmark’ (cf. *Two voyagers at the court of King Alfred* . . . ed. N. Lund (1984), 22, the text quoted by Lund in his article). The Old English text, for what it is worth, uses distinctive idioms: Hedeby *hyrð in on Dene*, the islands *in Denemearce hyrað*. Lund very properly enquires whether ‘belonging to Denmark’ is the same as ‘belonging to the Danes’. What he does not ask is whether the two idioms *hyrð in on* and *hyrað in* have the same meaning. Does the adverb/preposition *in* in the phrase used of Hedeby imply that the town was outside the general territory of Denmark but yet owed allegiance to a central power associated with the Danes? (There is a further complication: Janet Bately’s edition *The Old English Orosius* (1980), has a plate of the primary manuscript here (opposite p. 16), and that shows that the text reads ‘þaigland l þe indene mearce hyrað’ with a later hand (?how late) adding ‘to’ in between ‘in’ and ‘dene’.) What is the implication of the fact that Ohthere gave no details of the overlordship of *Gotland* and *Sillende*? That these were not part of Denmark proper? That there was no point in commenting on them since every educated man, even in England, knew they were the heartland of Denmark? Or did Alfred forget to ask?

Ohthere's fellow-voyager Wulfstan uses a different idiom again. He was, if his name is anything to go by, an Englishman, so his report would need no translator. He tells of the regions identified as Langeland, Lolland, Falster and Skåne: *þas land eall hyrað to Denemearcan*; that the Bornholmers had their own king; but that Blekinge, Møre, Öland and Gotland *hyrað to Sweon*. Again, is any distinction intended by Wulfstan's different usages and those attributed to Ohthere? Does *hyrað to* have a different significance from *hyrað in*? If, as Lund is, you are noting 'curious distinctions' you might well note them all rather than only some. It *may* be that *hyran to* implies allegiance but not identity, *hyran in* identity. Does *hyran to* + a people mean the same thing as *hyran to* + a country? I can well see that after the destruction of the power of the Gautar an inhabitant of southern Sweden might admit he owed allegiance to the Svár without regarding himself as a Swede (as, I suspect, many a modern inhabitant of Göteborg would confirm).

The surviving material which might help us answer some of these questions is available in the Toronto Microfiche Concordance to Old English. A conscientious search through its citations of the verb *hyran* might be useful, though it might also be tedious and fruitless. A brief run through shows that charters have numerous examples of the verb *hyran* . . . where one piece of property 'belongs to' an estate. Here the common usages are *hyran to* and, rather less common, *hyran into/in to* (which may render the addition of 'to' in the Orosius manuscript of importance). There are also a couple of examples of *hyran* + the adverb *in*, which may well refer to outlying parts of estates—local knowledge is needed here. Charter S713 (bounds edited in M. Gelling, *The place-names of Berkshire* (1973–76), III, 691–92) has the phrase *per hyrð in an hyrde wic æt baþalacing . . . and an myln æt hyrde grafe*, which Gelling identifies as 'appurtenances of the estate'. Another case which might be comparable occurs in the bounds of property *æt pidwyllan* (charter S901; bounds traced in D. Hooke, *Worcestershire Anglo-Saxon charter-bounds* (1990), 351–53, where *ðeder hyrð inn an haga on port* is translated 'to it belongs a messuage in town'); this is not part of the boundary clause proper but looks like an addition, perhaps defining a piece of land separate from the main estate but belonging to it. It is possible that, to Wulfstan, Langeland etc. were integral parts of Denmark (*hyrað to Denemearcan*); Blekinge etc. were not part of Sweden but had come under the Swedes' control (*hyrað to Sweon*). In that case Hedeby might also be under Danish control but not part of Denmark proper (*hyrð . . . on Dene*). And the adverb (if that is what it is) *in* implies a central authority whose power extended as far as Hedeby. What I have said here does not conflict with Lund's conclusions, but it might add to them. My complaint is not that Lund has not made a careful enough examination of a primary text to support his study, but that there is no evidence he realises the need for it. Prepositions are small words, but this does not mean they have little importance. How long will philologists have to continue asking historians to learn how language works before they try to use texts as evidence?

Ian Wood's introduction to this book includes a number of merry anecdotes about Peter Sawyer showing him as 'one of the most convivial of academics'.

May I add one of my own in which Peter takes but a walk-on part, and which illustrates him in another capacity, one always likely to provoke his fellow scholars. In 1972 I wrote a joint review of Gwyn Jones's *A history of the Vikings* and Peter Foote and David M. Wilson's *The Viking achievement* (*Medium ævum* 41 (1972), 89–94). Commenting on the difficulties they (and earlier scholars) encountered with the evidence for this period, I adduced the salutary example of *The age of the Vikings*. When the review was published I met Dorothy Whitelock, then my Head of Department. 'I liked your review of those two Viking books,' she said. 'I agreed with nearly every word of it.' There was a pause before she added, in her quiet 'smiler with the knife under the cloak' voice: 'Only one thing. You were too kind to Peter Sawyer.' I mention this to put on record that, not only have I been kind to Peter Sawyer in my time; I have even been, in the opinion of one qualified judge, too kind.

R. I. PAGE

VIKING ALE: STUDIES ON FOLKLORE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE NORTHERN AND THE WESTERN WORLDS. By BO ALMQVIST. Presented to the author on the occasion of his 60th birthday. Edited by ÉILÍS NÍ DHUIBHNE-ALMQVIST and SÉAMAS Ó CATHÁIN. Aberystwyth, 1991. xxx + 305 pp.

A certain amount of discussion has taken place, not least in the pages of the present journal (e. g. Christine E. Fell, *Saga-Book* XXII:2 (1987), 11–9), as to the respective merits, as congratulatory volumes, of *Festschriften* and of republications of the dedicatee's own *kleine Schriften*. The editors of the present volume, while choosing the latter course, cannot totally disapprove of the former: of the nine studies by Almqvist they chose for reprinting, three originally appeared in *Festschriften*. Three of the articles appear for the first time in English.

Almqvist's formative years, at Uppsala and Reykjavík, coincided with what might be termed an Irish Period in Icelandic studies. The immediate post-war decades saw an increase of interest in Icelandic-Irish relations, proceeding on the one hand possibly from the position of both nations after the War as emergent republics, on the other from the personal contacts of such scholars as Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, Dag Strömbäck and Séamus Ó Duilearga, all three of them formative influences on Almqvist's future studies. It is thus no wonder that the question of Norse-Irish motif-borrowings took an increasingly important place in Almqvist's research interests. His first article on the subject is that which gives the present volume its title.

The nine studies reprinted typify Almqvist's general approach to folklore studies; he is primarily concerned with the establishment of motifs and the tracking of their geographical and chronological distribution. Tales are collected and compared as texts, with aspects of performance and social context being given subsidiary treatment. This prominence of the tale as text ensures that his work is likely to be congenial to folklorist and philologist alike, especially if

the latter inclines to Almqvist's opinion that 'many of the strands in the magnificent weft of saga-writing are likely to have been borrowed from folklore and that these strands give the sagas much of their specific appeal' (p. 64).

Four of the studies are concerned with specific sagas. 'The death forebodings of Saint Óláfr, King of Norway' centres on an episode in *Orkneyinga saga* and its parallel in the Legendary *Óláfs saga helga* in which slips of the tongue are regarded as omens of death. This Almqvist attributes to a general folk-belief in the ominous nature of the *lapsus linguae*, though his arguments are by his own admission circumstantial. The concluding section, essentially a plea for the establishment of a Folklore Institute in Reykjavík, has lost something of its urgency now that the need is being catered for under the auspices of the Arnarnáttúla Institute. Forebodings of death are also examined in the study 'Some folklore motifs in *Færeyinga saga*', in which it is suggested that the saga-writer drew consciously upon a stratum of folk beliefs, as well as on a corpus of folk-narrative, in order to heighten the literary effectiveness of his work. A similar treatment is to be found in 'The uglier foot', in which an episode in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga* is isolated as being derived from a migratory folk-tale element. The differences between Snorri's version and the common ground of the collected folk-tale versions permit a degree of insight as to the processes by which such a motif might be rendered 'literary'. The fourth of these studies, 'The mare of the people of Midfirth', on the other hand, draws on Almqvist's researches into *níð* to find an explanation for the curious episode in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 33, in which five natives of Miðfjörðr are described as forming a mare, with the satirical poet Tannr Bjarnason as its anus.

The remaining essays in the volume, apart from the concluding obituary notice for Dag Strömbäck, deal more specifically with folk-tale and belief. 'The Viking ale and the Rhine gold' re-examines the *Atlamál* motif of a secret shared by two alone; in the Irish versions, it is a Viking's son who is executed so that the father can be sure that the secret, a recipe for heather ale, dies with him. Two further essays concentrate on specific motifs, study of 'child-ghost' traditions in Scotland and Man ('Norwegian dead-child legends westward bound') revealing traces of borrowing from Norse, whereas Irish parallels for the expression *fjörfiskur* ('fish of life') elucidate the significance of the term but cannot be conclusively regarded as borrowing. Three appendices give further versions for the motifs of the heather ale, the uglier foot and the child ghost, with accompanying translations where appropriate. The first essay of the collection, a survey of contacts in the Orkney earldom ('Scandinavian and Celtic folklore contacts') serves to some degree as an introduction to the whole, sketching in areas of profitable research and arguing for philology to be complemented in these fields by folklore scholarship.

Editors of volumes such as these are inevitably placed in a quandary. It is generally the scholar's earlier work which is least accessible and thus most rewarding in reprint; on the other hand, this early work may mark stages in a discussion now overtaken by further research. This problem has to some extent

been overcome by the inclusion of copious notes—it is I suppose an unavoidable evil of the times that these have to be relegated to the rear of the volume—in which Almqvist supplements and sometimes retracts views expressed in the body of the text. A particularly sensitive term in this respect is *saga-writer*. It is indicative that Almqvist (p. 126), assessing the literary merits of the ‘writer’ of *Færeyinga saga*, quotes Foote’s comments from 1965: ‘. . . he himself was a skilful teller of stories . . . and not only a writer of stories.’ Almqvist himself, a student of Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, never directly questions the concept of the sagas as products of a single, all-controlling author. In view of the critical scrutiny given the strict *Buchprosaehre* in the light of orality studies, beginning with D. Hofmann in 1962 and T. M. Andersson in 1964 and continuing in subsequent decades, it would have been interesting to have had a more recent statement from Almqvist on this question.

The presentation of the volume is admirable. One slight slip may cause disproportionate confusion: p. 199, n. 1 should read ‘cf. above p. 93 . . .’ and not ‘. . . p. 13’; I have found no other significant errors. In an age where we are generally at the mercy of the computer-thesaurus, it is a delight to read a book in which word-splitting at the line-end is eschewed completely, and this without the slightest impression of artificiality in the spacings. Boethius Press are likewise to be congratulated on the clarity of the type, the high quality of the paper, and the robust but attractive binding.

STEPHEN N. TRANTER

STUDIENBIBLIOGRAPHIE ZUR ÄLTEREN SKANDINAVISTIK. By STEFAN GIPPERT, BRITTA LAURSEN, HARTMUT RÖHN. *Berliner Beiträge zur Skandinavistik, Band 1. Literaturverlag Norden. Leverkusen, 1991. 112 pp.*

The work under review is a kind of ‘do-it-by-yourself’ bibliographical guide to Old Norse–Icelandic studies, based upon the experience of the Free University, Berlin, containing works published up to 1988. It is the first volume in a series on Scandinavian Studies from the Free University, edited by Hartmut Röhn, who is one of the co-compilers of the present volume, along with Stefan Gippert and Britta Laursen.

The bibliography contains 410 numbered items, but a number of these are repeated where they are cited under more than one topic. The material is divided into seventeen chapters: 1. Subject bibliographies; 2. Manuscript catalogues; 3. Reference works; 4. Grammars and linguistic history; 5. Dictionaries; 6. Runes; 7. Subject periodicals; 8. Facsimile editions of manuscripts; 9. Texts series; 10. Literary histories; 11. Literary criticism; 12. Literary genres; 13. Heroic literature; 14. History; 15. Religion and mythology; 16. The conversion and church history; 17. Law. Each chapter is prefaced by a brief summary and there are helpful commentaries on the individual works listed. Section 12 (Literary genres) is subdivided into Eddic poetry, Skaldic verse, and prose—the last being further subdivided into the usual groups of sagas so familiar to

us all. Details include editions, translations and critical works. Periodicals are arranged under four broad groupings, namely 'philological', 'philol.-hist.', 'historical' and 'archaeological'. Basic works are marked with an asterisk and the compilers have consciously listed as many bibliographies and handbooks as possible that will steer the student towards further reading. The scope of the work, as hinted above, covers the language, literature, history and culture of medieval Iceland and Norway; thus the chapter on manuscript facsimiles (8) includes *corpora codicum medii aevi Islandicorum* and *Norvegicorum*, but not *Danicorum* or *Suecicorum*.

The work concludes with an index of authors and editors, along with 'important' titles and catch-words. The last involves the repetition, in this index, of a number of the chapter headings already listed in the table of contents, such as 'Fachbibliographien' and 'Textreihen' (but not 'Runenkunde' or 'Rechtsgeschichte'), among others. This repetition appears a trifle unnecessary and the selectivity seems rather invidious; either all should have been included or none. Some idiosyncrasies of the index should be mentioned. Icelandic persons are indexed under their forenames rather than their patronymics or surnames. This follows current library cataloguing practice but it is not the practice, commonly, of published indexes and bibliographies over here. (*Saga-Book* follows both customs.) In listing even those Icelanders with surnames—such as Sigurður Nordal—under their forenames the bibliography follows Landsbókasafn rather than AACR2. One exception is Zoëga, who is indexed under his surname. Guðbrandur Vigfússon is entered under both 'Guðbrandur' and 'Vigfusson, Gudbrand'—presumably as an aid to those students who may not have recognised an Icelander in the form of his name which would be most familiar to them (though only his dictionary finds a place in this work). Texts of Snorri's *Edda* occupy two pages (89–90) of the bibliography but they are indexed separately under 'Edda Snorra Sturlusonar' (89) and 'Snorri Sturluson' (90). The first must be a title entry, but Snorri should have had an entry for the texts on p. 89 as well.

Some random remarks on the main body of the text follow. One of the disadvantages of computer cataloguing is thrown up by certain entries in the bibliography, namely the over-abbreviation of some series citations. Antonsen's runic grammar (item 70) is given as the third volume in a certain 'Reihe A'—but Reihe A of what? Similarly, Jónas Kristjánsson's *Um Fóstbræðrasögu* (227 and 260) is 'Rit I'—but whose 'Rit'? I am not too sure of the value of the chapter on 'Subject' periodicals, which contains, as the compilers acknowledge, a number which carry very little medieval material. Possibly it is useful to direct the attention of students to journals for the sake of the reviews as much as for the articles—reviews of *medievalia* are often commoner than articles of medieval interest—but perhaps it may be better to encourage students to come to periodicals through their own reading rather than to tantalise them with a list of titles which may contain little of interest or relevance. The collection of essays on the *Elder Edda* published by the University of Manitoba in 1983 is cited for one article only (180), though the collection as a whole is not given

an entry. Are we to suppose that there is only one worthwhile piece in it (under the relevant criteria)?

The reviewer is disarmed from the start when faced by a bibliography of limited scope or audience. It is difficult to know what to say. What to one person may seem important, to another may not be really relevant. Why has this been included? Why has that been omitted? Only the judgement of the compiler(s) can say, and who can put his hand on his heart and assert that their judgement was wrong? What can one say about this bibliography, apart from the nit-picking remarks above? It is designed for those studying by themselves and is intended to fill an observed gap in the provision of aids for this class of student. Two obvious qualifications come to mind. The first concerns the scope of the particular course, or courses, upon which the bibliography is based. The second, the language group at which it is aimed. To take the second point first, this work is obviously aimed at a German-speaking readership with a knowledge of at least one Scandinavian language. The text translations cited are mostly German, with some Danish and Norwegian. English translations are never mentioned, except for Anthony Faulkes's *Snorra Edda* in the Everyman edition (364), though students are encouraged to use bibliographies to locate them. Yet, despite this, no reference is made to Donald K. Fry's useful bibliography of *Norse sagas translated into English* (1981). This factor alone would limit the usefulness of the bibliography for English-speaking students.

With regard to the first point, there are a few observations which could be made. The section on the family sagas which lists works on individual sagas contains eight entries which only concern six separate sagas. These do include all-time greats like *Njáls saga* and *Hrafnkels saga* but they do not, for instance, include *Gunnlaugs saga* which is, I believe, a popular text for university syllabuses, at least in this country. The chapter on law, too, is very thin. Seven entries only and no mention either of Halldór Hermannsson's law bibliography in *Islandica* 4 (1910) or of editions and translations of *Grágas*, which would be a disadvantage for any student who wished to take the legal texts seriously. There are no separate sections for *Íslendingabók* or for *Landnámabók*—the former appears in the index under its title but not under Ari. Nor does *Konungs skuggsjá* find a place anywhere in the bibliography.

To sum up then. Though this bibliography has many merits and could go a long way towards providing a solid basis for private study, its usefulness will obviously be limited according to the student's interests and needs and how far he or she would find helpful translations which are largely German, rather than English or even a selection of both. Teachers, when considering whether to recommend it to students, will have to calculate how far it really suits their purposes, bearing in mind the qualifications outlined above—though it is hard to imagine that any could really unreservedly recommend a work that does not mention *The Viking achievement!*

J. A. B. TOWNSEND

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