

## BJARNE FIDJESTØL

The sudden death on February 9, 1994, of Bjarne Fidjestøl, Professor of Nordic Philology at the University of Bergen, at the age of 56, is a particularly sad blow to the Viking Society, of which, over the past few years, he had become an increasingly close friend. Many of the Society's members attended the Seventh Biennial Conference of Teachers of Scandinavian Studies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland held at University College London in March 1987, at which Bjarne gave, at the invitation of the Conference organisers (who have since published it in the Proceedings) a paper in Norwegian on scaldic poetry and the Conversion, with special reference to the kingship of Haraldr hárfagri. At the Society's centenary symposium in 1992 Bjarne also gave, at the Society's invitation, a paper in English on the contribution of scaldic studies to current scholarly engagement with the problem of the extent of the Christian impact on pagan beliefs in the Viking Age; this paper is published in Anthony Faulkes and Richard Perkins, eds, *Viking Revaluations* (1993), the volume in which the papers given at the symposium are collected. Bjarne's books *Sólarljóð: Tyding og tolkingsgrunnlag* (1979) and *Det norrøne fyrstediktet* (1982) are, as it happens, reviewed by the former and current Presidents of the Society in *Scandinavica* 20 (1981), 219, and 25 (1986), 74–76, respectively. Neither review does justice to the book with which it deals, but each at least offers a way into the book in question for readers whose *nynorsk* may not be entirely up to scratch.

At the Conference in 1987, mentioned above, Bjarne was asked by Michael Barnes in my hearing to make an after-dinner speech on behalf of the Norwegian delegates at the end of the Conference. He immediately replied: 'Oh, no; I can't possibly give a speech in English.' 'But we want you to do it in Norwegian,' said Michael. 'Oh; then I'll have to think of some other excuse,' Bjarne replied. Fortunately he was persuaded to give the speech in Norwegian, and did so to the great pleasure of his hosts and no doubt also to that of his fellow Norwegian guests. In addition to the unassuming modesty and gentle sense of humour that this story illustrates, Bjarne also had a moral courage and integrity that led him to risk making himself unpopular in order to stand up for what he believed in. Not everybody will have agreed with his position on the Seventh International Saga Conference at Spoleto in 1988, which included in its programme a contribution from a representative of the University of South Africa, but few can have failed to admire the openness and painstaking persistence with which Bjarne made his position clear, both at the Conference itself

and in letters written to many of its members beforehand. It is a particular sadness that he did not live to hear of the forming of the new government in South Africa; he would have rejoiced at the news.

Our deep sympathies go to his wife Eva, to his children Mari, Ragna, Alfred and Ane, and to his students and colleagues at the University of Bergen.

R. W. McT.

## PETER HALLBERG

January 25, 1916–March 4, 1995

It is a great sorrow to find oneself in the position of writing two obituaries in the same number of *Saga-Book*. Although Peter Hallberg was perhaps not as well known personally to members of the Viking Society as Bjarne Fidjestøl, his books on *The Icelandic Saga* and *Old Icelandic Poetry*, available in English from 1962 and 1975 respectively, must for many members of the Society have formed part of their basic introductory reading when they first encountered Old Icelandic literature. Peter attended one of the Society's meetings in London early in 1981, when on a lecturing visit to Leeds from Gothenburg; and in 1987 he gave a lecture on 'Recent Trends in Saga Research' at a plenary session of the Seventh Biennial Conference of Teachers of Scandinavian Studies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, held at University College London in March of that year, and attended by many of the Society's members; this paper is published in the Conference *Proceedings* (1987), 78–95. Perhaps the most significant of his visits to Britain for the advancement of Northern research, however, and certainly the most dramatic of them, was the one he made in 1944. In the previous year, as he explains in a lecture on Laxness published in Elín Bára Magnúsdóttir and Úlfar Bragason, eds, *Halldórsstefna* (1993), 11–19, he had been offered the post of Swedish lecturer at the University of Iceland, but had been prevented from taking it up by the sheer difficulty of reaching Iceland from Sweden in wartime. In order to do so, he had to travel first to Britain; but Swedish aeroplanes flying to Britain at that stage of the war were exposed to the risk of German attack. He managed eventually to fly to Edinburgh, however, and proceeded from there by train to Hull, where he boarded an Icelandic trawler for a six-day voyage to Iceland, arriving in time to take up the lecturing post just under a year late. On this journey he had with him a well-filled mailbag, 'about the size of myself', as he puts it, which he had been enjoined by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs never to let out of his sight and to deliver without fail to the Swedish diplomatic mission in Reykjavík. Although this was not Peter's first visit to Iceland, it was surely the one that was most important for the course his life was later to take. He remained in the lecturing post until 1947. In 1951 he became Docent in Literary History at the University of Gothenburg, and in 1975 Professor of Comparative Literature, also at Gothenburg. In 1945 he married Rannveig Kristjánsdóttir, from Dagverðareyri, just north of Akureyri, in northern Iceland; she died in 1952

at the tragically early age of thirty-five. They had two children, Kristján and Maria. In 1955 he married Rannveig's sister, Kristín, who died, also after an heroic struggle against illness, in 1985. Both marriages were, in their different ways, wonderfully happy ones, as was clear to anyone who knew Peter well.

It would need more than just a mailbag—even one of the size Peter describes—to contain all his publications on Old and Modern Icelandic literature and related subjects. Indeed, when introducing his lecture at the London conference in 1987, his namesake Peter Foote said that Peter Hallberg, with his tall, imposing figure, towered above most of us physically as well as academically, and that his list of publications was 'even longer than himself'. While some might think that his statistical investigations of saga authorship (set out most fully in his *Stilsignalement och författarskap i norrön sagalitteratur* (1968), and summarised in Ture Johannisson, ed., *Språkliga signalement* (1983), 81–102) have been largely superseded by the advent of the computer, he may be said to have prepared the way for the use of computers in Northern research by his wise assessment of the kind of information that needs to be fed into them; and it should be remembered that his statistical approach was by no means confined to problems of saga authorship, but touched on matters as widely different as sacral kingship in ancient Scandinavia and free indirect style in the novels of Halldór Laxness. Even if his methods and conclusions are questioned, his work will remain an inexhaustible source of valuable insights and observations. It is perhaps in his work on Laxness that he comes across, as a scholar, at his most humane. In his *Halldór Laxness* (1971), 128, he praises Laxness for 'placing Iceland in the midst of the world'. This is something that Peter Hallberg may be said to have done for Halldór Laxness, by providing in his books *Den store vävaren* (1954) and *Skaldens hus* (1956) an international context for the study of Laxness's work, which he discusses in relation to the work of writers as varied as André Breton, Dante Alighieri, Knut Hamsun, Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, August Strindberg and Lao-tse. For the magnificent example of the breadth and depth of his reading, and for his authoritative presence as a bastion of Northern research over many years, we thank him warmly, while sending our deep sympathies to his relatives in Iceland and Sweden.

R. W.  
McT.

## THE MILL IN NORSE AND FINNISH MYTHOLOGY

BY CLIVE TOLLEY

THE MILK ocean is churned, in Indian myth, with an outlier of the world mountain to produce the *soma* of immortality, as well as a host of other guarantors of the world's fertility and well-being, such as the sun and moon, along with destructive forces such as the poison Kālakūṭa and the goddess of misfortune.<sup>1</sup> No myth relating anything precisely comparable to this striking event appears to exist in Norse, yet the image of a cosmic mill, ambivalently churning out well-being or disaster, may be recognised in certain fragmentary myths.

The image of the cosmic mill is better developed by the neighbours of the Norsemen, the Finns. The tale of the *sampo* provides a poetically elaborated myth against which the Norse remains may be assessed; I shall also consider some of the possibilities of Norse/Finnish influence.

### The Sampo

The Finnish *sampo* is never described in detail, nor is its precise function determined; nonetheless, investigation reveals that it represents a highly developed expression of the image of the world mill: the cosmic turning regulates fertility, 'grinding out' well-being like a mill. At the same time, fertility is not perfect, and efforts are made to explain this fact in the *sampo* myths.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The myth is recounted in the *Mahābhārata*; I have consulted O'Flaherty's translation (1975, 274–80). She gives the passages translated as being from the *Mahābhārata* I.15.5–13; I.16.1–40; I.17.1–30; 7 lines after I.61.35; 3 lines after I.61.32; 3 lines after I.16.36; 3 lines after I.16.40; 3 lines after I.17.7. For a study of this myth alongside Scandinavian analogues (but not involving consideration of any cosmic mill aspects of the Scandinavian myths) see Dumézil 1924, esp. chs 2–3.

<sup>2</sup> Four versions of the Finnish *sampo* poems are given in *FFPE* nos 12–15; see also the commentary there (526). Kuusi has carried out a thorough analysis of the poem's variants elsewhere (Kuusi 1949). By the twelfth century three poems of different age (but going back at least to c. AD 800)—'The Creation of the World', 'The Forging of the *Sampo*' and 'The Theft of the *Sampo*'—had become established in a fixed sequence (Kuusi 1949, 350–52). This group of poems, forming the so called 'Sampo Epos', had three main redactions in different geographical areas (Häme, Pohjanmaa, Karelia).

In summary, the three main episodes of the epos were:

*The Creation of the World.*

Väinämöinen, the cosmic sage, is shot by an enemy and drifts wounded for several years at sea where he performs various acts of creation.<sup>3</sup>

*The Forging of the Sampo.*<sup>4</sup>

Finally, he is washed ashore at Pohjola, whose mistress undertakes to return him to his own people on condition that he forges<sup>5</sup> her a *sampo* (which is not defined). He promises that his fellow hero Ilmarinen will do this and is allowed to return home. Ilmarinen agrees to forge the *sampo*, in return for which he is told he will receive the daughter of the Mistress of Pohjola. Thus the *sampo* is made and provides the inhabitants of Pohjola with great wealth.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> 'The Creation of the World' was also sung as a separate poem: motifs vary in the different redactions (*FFPE* nos 2–5):

a. The common motif is that of the bird (duck, swallow, eagle) which lays its eggs, either on a hummock (Väinämöinen is not present in many versions of the myth), or on Väinämöinen's knee; the eggs are broken (e. g. by a storm) and from them are formed parts of the world (e. g. the sun from the yolk, the firmament from the upper half of the shell, the earth from the lower).

b. Another motif often found is that of the bird diving down to the sea-bottom to bring up mud, from which the world is formed (see Schier 1963 on this common Siberian mythologem, and its analogues in Norse). This motif can be combined with a; for example, in *FFPE* no. 2 the bird dives down to find pieces of the shattered eggs, which are used to create the world.

c. Only in some versions does Väinämöinen appear; he is presented floating on the ocean (often as a result of shooting by a Lapp, a motif introduced from another poem, *FFPE* 523), and his function (other than to offer his knee as a nesting place for the bird) is to fashion the sea-bottom (i. e. possibly a variant of b).

In surviving versions of the Sampo Epos Väinämöinen's creative activities are not usually stressed; for example, in *FFPE* no. 12 (one of the fullest versions), the only remaining sign of creative tasks is Väinämöinen's successful prayer to the god Ukko to raise lumps of black slime on the waters, which reflects the motif of b.

<sup>4</sup> In the Karelian redaction of the cycle 'The Forging of the Sampo' is replaced by a version of 'The Courtship' (*FFPE* nos 16, 17), in which Väinämöinen woos the daughter of the Mistress of Pohjola, and is set as his task the forging of the *sampo*.

<sup>5</sup> The *sampo* is not clearly of metal, but the Finnish word *takoa*, used for the fashioning of the *sampo*, is usually translated as 'forge'; its maker, Ilmarinen, is chiefly a metal-smith in Finnish mythology. In the folk poems vaguer phrases are often used to describe the forging, such as *saada sampo valmihiksi*, 'to get the *sampo* ready'.

<sup>6</sup> In some versions explicitly by grinding (*jauhaa*), e. g. *FFPE* no. 12, ll. 165–70.

*The Theft of the Sampo.*<sup>7</sup>

Jealous of this, Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen sail to Pohjola and steal the *sampo*. They are pursued and a furious battle takes place at sea, during which the Mistress of Pohjola changes into a *vaakalintu*, ‘griffon’, the *sampo* is smashed and the pieces are lost in the sea. These and some fragments that are washed ashore bring fertility to the land and sea.

The epos was sung in a rigid form for some time, for the poem had a ritual function, being sung at the spring sowing, before it began to fragment and diversify.<sup>8</sup>

The word *sampo* derives from an earlier \**sampo*, an adjectival formation from \**sampa*, a word of no obvious meaning, but which appears originally to have signified ‘pillar’ (Setälä 1932, 479).<sup>9</sup> This places the

<sup>7</sup> Kuusi and Branch (FFPE 527–28) regard the theft episode as showing clear signs of Norse influence; I consider this below.

<sup>8</sup> Other poems, such as *The Golden Bride* (FFPE nos 21, 22), became incorporated in the epos.

<sup>9</sup> Two main interpretations have been proposed—and have been so fiercely contested that it has been to the detriment of an understanding of the poetic significance of the *sampo*. A meaning ‘pillar’ for the base word *sampa*, as Harva argues (1944; 1943, 29; 1948, 47), seems more likely than Haavio’s ‘mill base’ (1967, 197–200). Lönnrot (1958 s. v. *sampa*) records a saying *eihän tuo toki eläne maasammaksi* which he glosses as ‘icke må denne lefva till jordstolpe, till Methusalems ålder’ (‘he cannot live to [be a] world pillar, to Methusalem’s age’); thus *maasampa* is used in the sense ‘world pillar’. Turunen (1979, s. v. *sampo*) notes that *sammas*, a derivative of *sampa*, is used in compounds such as *rajasammas* in the sense ‘(border) stone’ in Finnish, but in Vatica and Estonian the same word means ‘pillar’.

Lexical connexions with ‘mill’ words are to be viewed as secondary: the standard word for ‘mill-base’, *sammakko*, is itself to be viewed as a derivative of *sampa*, with the meaning ‘that which supports a *sampa* [i. e. the central axle]’; Haavio (1967, 199) points out that in Veps *samba* is equivalent to Finnish *sammakko*, and indeed *sampa* in this sense was recorded in Tyrvää in 1853; since *sammakko* is the standard word, however, *sampa* may be a back-formation; the evidence for *sampa* in this sense is outweighed by the evidence for the sense ‘pillar’.

*Sampo* is a formation with two possible significances, both of which could have been inferred by poets:

1. ‘Something fitted with a *sampa*’: Haavio (1967, 200) concludes ‘since *sampa* (cf. *sammakko*, *sammakka*) means that part of a rotating machine in which the vertical axle is supported and in which it turns without moving to the sides, *sampo(i)* is a rotating machine, of which the important part is the *sampa*’ (‘koska sampa (vrt. sammakko, sammakka) merkitsee rotaatiokoneen sitä

Finns in the well-documented class of peoples who realised the support of the world under this image (see Harva 1922–23, 9–33). Harva (1943, 42) points to sayings such as *seisoo kun taivaan pönkkä* ‘he stands like the pillar of heaven’ (from Vermland) to show that the world pillar was regarded as unmoving. Whilst the *sampo* itself may have been fixed, however, a mill-like motion is not precluded: with the *sampo* is closely associated the *kirjokansi*, ‘speckled lid’; *kansi*, ‘lid’, is used to mean ‘sky’ in folk poetry, and the *kirjokansi* most likely stands for the sky, speckled with stars and the other heavenly bodies (Harva 1943, 52); Harva (1943, 97; cf. 1922–23, 11) notes some evidence that the *sampo* was thought of as having a nail in its head, around which the heavens turned, the rotation being called *sammasjauho*, ‘pillar/*sampo*-grinding’. Indeed, poets have made full use of connexions of the word *sampa* with parts of the mill, so that the *sampo* was conceived as a mill, and is sometimes called *mylly* or *mellitisa*, ‘mill’, grinding out salt, wealth, and so forth (Harva 1943, 80),<sup>10</sup> perhaps increasingly so as the concept of the world pillar became blurred.

The world pillar and the firmament nailed to it act as an integral unit. The milling arises as a result of the turning of the firmament about the pillar, which produces the seasons, and is hence responsible for the fertility of the world. Whilst this idea is not explicit in any Finnish traditional poetry (Kettunen 1940–41, 38–39),<sup>11</sup> it may be surmised to have been the original mechanism, on the basis of pillars with coverings representing the heavens, i. e. equivalent to the *kirjokansi*, amongst other peoples (Harva 1922–23, 15).

The proper place for the *sampo* is clearly Pohjola; the Finns once called the North Star *pohjan naula*, ‘nail of the north’ (Harva 1922–23, 10). The *sampo*, as the world pillar, would be fixed to the firmament, the *kirjokansi*, at the North Nail [= Star]. The reason for the *sampo*’s presence in Pohjola is, as Setälä suggests (1932, 535), that Pohjola, ‘North Land’, was specifically the ‘land at the North Star’, where the world pillar is nailed to

osaa, johon vertikaalinen akseli tukeutuu ja jossa se sivuille liikkumatta pyörii, sampo(i) on rotaatiokone, jonka merkityksellinen osa on sampa’).

2. ‘Small *sampa*’. This is in line with Harva’s suggestion (1943, 101–04) that the Sampo Epos concerns a cult representation of the world pillar, rather than the pillar itself.

<sup>10</sup> For example SKVRI:1:34: *Laai sampu valmeheksi, / Laai laitah jauhomylly, / Toisell’ laiall’ suolamyly, / Kolmanelle rahamyly* (‘Get a *sampo* ready, a grain mill on one side, a salt mill on another side, and a money mill on a third’).

<sup>11</sup> Kettunen dismisses the evidence of Kaisa Vilhunen, a ‘forest Finn’ (i. e. a descendant of the seventeenth-century Finnish settlers of Vermland), as her talk of the sky ‘grinding’ was, he believes, prompted by her questioner.



the firmament. As the centre of cosmic rotation, it would be from Pohjola that fertility spread; the jolting of the *sampo* from its home resulted in the uneasy progression of the seasons along with a loss of unending fertility. Setälä (1932, 544–47) notes an obscure verse in which Väinämöinen went *nouva naula pohjolasta*, ‘to fetch the nail from the north’ (i. e. presumably the North Star), which could be equivalent to his fetching the *sampo* from Pohjola.

The fertility aspects are clearly fundamental to the *sampo*.<sup>12</sup> The *sampo* songs were originally sung as accompaniments to the ploughing and sowing of the land.<sup>13</sup> The myth of the theft and shattering of the *sampo* explained why the fertility of the land was not boundless. As Kuusi notes, the actual shattering of the *sampo* may be derived from the shattering of the egg in the myth of creation (*FFPE* 526);<sup>14</sup> the original conception may have been of a broken, but not shattered, world pillar; clearly there is still the seasonal return of fertility, but it is not as great as it may be imagined to have been originally, when the *sampo* was in place. The concept is one of a shattered ‘Golden Age’.

#### Grotti in *Grottasǫngr* and Snorri’s *Edda*

The myth of the mill Grotti is told by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* (*SnE* 135–38) and in the poem *Grottasǫngr*, which he quotes.<sup>15</sup> The elements of the myth may be summarised thus:

##### *The Mill of Wealth*

King Fróði of Denmark is renowned for his peace and his wealth (*SnE*). He buys two strong slave girls Fenja and Menja (*Grs*) from Sweden (*SnE*). The

<sup>12</sup> In rejecting any mill-like aspects of the *sampo*, Harva (1943, 101–04) caused himself unnecessary problems, for, confronted with the difficulty of explaining why the world pillar should be connected with fertility, he proposed that the *sampo* was a cult representation of the world pillar which was worshipped as the guarantor of well-being. In itself this idea is quite possible, for representations of the world pillar are found in all the peoples that have the concept at all; it is however unacceptable to propose that the cult representation was endowed with powers that its cosmic prototype was not.

<sup>13</sup> Thus Jyrkiini Iivana explained (*SKVR* I:1:88b): ‘when the spring sowing was done, first the ‘sowing words’ were sung and then the song of the forging and theft of the *sampo*, and of the driving back of the Mistress of Pohjola’ (‘Kevätkylvöjä tehtäessä laulettiin ensin kylvösanat ja sitten laulu Sammon taonnasta ja ryöstöstä, sekä Pohjolan emännän takaa-ajosta’). The ‘sowing words’ are recorded in *SKVR* I:4:1743.

<sup>14</sup> The creation myth is recounted in poems nos 2–5 in *FFPE*.

<sup>15</sup> There are brief mentions elsewhere (see Eiríkur Magnússon 1910, 11–13).

quernstones that are to form Grotti are found in Denmark and are given to Fróði by a man with a giant's name (Hengikjǫptr) (*SnE*). In *Grs* 10–12 Fenja and Menja claim to have discovered these millstones long ago. They caused earthquakes when they dislodged the stones from the earth. Grotti would produce whatever the grinder bade. No one but Fenja and Menja was strong enough to turn it. Fróði made the giantesses grind gold, peace and prosperity. He granted them almost no rest. They sang *Grottasǫngr* as they worked. Furious at Fróði's cruelty to them they ground out an army, and a sea-king Mýsingr came and slew Fróði (*SnE*); in *Grs* there is merely a foretelling of Fróði's overthrow. The quern breaks, and the milling must stop (*Grs*). The end of Fróði's reign is marked by thunderings and lightnings, earthquakes, the disappearance of the sun, and the upsetting of prognostications (*Skjöldunga saga* only, see *Danakonunga sǫgur* 1982, 39–40). Thus Fróði's peace came to an end.

#### *The Salt Mill*

Mýsingr takes Grotti, Fenja and Menja. He bids them grind salt. They grind until the excess of salt sinks the ship. This causes the sea's saltiness.

#### *The Whirlpool Mill*

There is now a whirlpool where the sea fell into the eye of the quern.<sup>16</sup> Comparable are traditions about the Mælström, which was regarded as a 'grinder of ships', if not a mill (see below).

Of the three motifs, the poem contains only the first; the salt mill and the whirlpool mill may be later additions of common folk tales to the myth. However, the poem focuses on the demise of Fróði after the cracking of the stone, and may have excluded these elements deliberately.

### **The Mælström**

Purportedly factual reports of the Mælström, the whirlpool off Lofoten in northern Norway, lie very close to the more imaginative concept of a mill in the depths, grinding everything in its stones, and causing a whirlpool with its circular motion, such as is found in the myth of Grotti. Traditions about this real whirlpool may reflect beliefs about Grotti; it is difficult to ascertain whether the myth of Grotti has influenced the picture of the Mælström, or conversely whether the traditions about the Mælström have influenced the depiction of Grotti.

The Mælström is first mentioned in the eighth century by Paulus Diaconus (1878, 55–56); he sites the 'navel of the ocean' near the Scritobini (northern Lapps), i. e. 'on the edge of the world', like Grotti in

<sup>16</sup> According to AM 748 I 4to and 757 a 4to (*SnE* 259) this is in the Pentland Firth; Snæbjörn (see below) places his whirlpool 'out on the rim of the world'.

Snæbjörn (see below), and says that the whirlpool sucks in and regurgitates the currents twice in a day, and ships are pulled down as fast as arrows, then cast back out again just as fast.

A similar description is given by Olaus Magnus (1555, 67), who notes that any ships returned from the eddy were whittled down by rocks. The cause of the phenomenon is assigned to a spirit bursting forth capriciously. Schönneböl (Storm 1895, 191) gives a similar report in 1591:<sup>17</sup>

But I am told by reliable people that there must be some sharp rocks concealed out in that same current, since it flows so terribly strongly, and everything that enters that current must go entirely under and to the bottom.

### Snæbjörn's Verse on Grotti

A *lausavísa* attributed to a certain Snæbjörn, perhaps, as Gollancz (1898, xvii) suggests, to be identified with Snæbjörn Hólmsteinsson, an Arctic adventurer of the late tenth century mentioned in *Landnámabók* (1968, 190–95), alludes to a mighty water-mill turned by nine women (*Skj* B I 201):<sup>18</sup>

Hvatt kveða hræra Grotta  
hergrimmastan skerja  
út fyr jarðar skauti  
eylúðrs níu brúðir,  
þær es, lungs, fyr lǫngu  
líðmeldr, skipa hlíðar  
baugskerðir rístr barði  
ból, Amlóða mólu.

They say

the nine brides of the island quern-frame [the ocean]	{the waves}
turn vigorously	
a most army-cruel Grotti [mill] of the skerries,	{whirlpool}
out at the rim of the earth [the ocean], they who long since have ground	
the meal of Amlóði's liquor [sea],	{sand}

<sup>17</sup> 'Men mig er berettet af trofaste folk, at der skall være nogle hemmelige skarpe klipper udi den samme strøm, efterdi han ber saa saare stærk, og alt det, som kommer udi den samme strøm, det maa alt under og til grunde'.

<sup>18</sup> The following prose word-order is suggested: *Kveða níu brúðir eylúðrs hræra hvatt hergrimmastan Grotta skerja út fyr jarðar skauti, þær er mólu fyr lǫngu líðmeldr Amlóða. Baugskerðir rístr barði lungs ból hlíðar skipa.*

The ring-diminisher [prince] cuts  
 with the prow of his vessel  
     the habitation  
 of the hillside of ships [the waves].     {the ocean}

‘The nine brides of the island quern-frame’ are the waves of the ocean (the daughters of Ægir); *lúðr* is the frame of a hand-mill;<sup>19</sup> that which frames islands is the sea (cf. *eyja hringr*, ‘ring of [i. e. around] islands’, in the same sense) (Meissner 1921, 94); the same sense is found in *jarðar skaut*, ‘rim of the earth’, i. e. the sea, but in this case there is the additional implication of the action taking place ‘out at the edge of the world’ where, it is to be surmised, the mythological ocean mill was to be encountered.

Snæbjörn makes his picture of the terrible (and supposedly real) whirlpool vivid by using the metaphor of the mill, identified by metonymy with the mythical Grotti. *Grotta hergrimmastan skerja* appears to identify Grotti as the grinder of the skerries:<sup>20</sup> ‘The most army-cruel Grotti [= mill, grinder] of skerries’.<sup>21</sup> *Grotta skerja*, ‘mill of skerries’, would then be parallel to *eylúðr*, ‘mill of islands’, if *lúðr* is taken as a synecdoche for ‘mill’.<sup>22</sup> The ‘mill’ which grinds up skerries, or at least is sited there, is a whirlpool (cf. the *Mælström*).<sup>23</sup> An allusion to the ‘grinding out’ by Grotti of the army which destroyed Fróði is also clear.

<sup>19</sup> Alternatively or additionally, *lúðr* could stand for the whole mill; that which grinds up islands is, again, the sea (cf. *Grotta skerja* below).

<sup>20</sup> *Skerja* is either an objective genitive following the verbal sense ‘grinder’ implied in *Grotti*; or a partitive genitive following *hergrimmastan*.

<sup>21</sup> It is possible, but less likely, that the ‘army’ could refer to the skerries: ‘Grotti, most cruel to the army of skerries’ (Krause 1969, 89).

<sup>22</sup> The same meaning is apparent in another verse, attributed to Þórðr Særeksson (*Skj* B I 304, retaining *snýtir*, see *Skj* A I 330):

Svát ór fitjar fjöttri,  
 flóðs ásynju blóði  
 (raust byrjask rømm systra),  
 rýtr, eymylvir snýtir.

The island-miller [sea, whirlpool] snorts out the blood of the flood-goddess [water], so that it bellows from the beach-fetter [sea]; a strong roaring of the sisters [waves] begins.

<sup>23</sup> Alternatively, Grotti may be seen as a skerry: ‘Grotti, most army-cruel of skerries’ (or ‘most cruel to an army’: *her*, ‘army’, may be either the root for use in a compound word; or the dative case, *grimmastan* then being taken as a separate word; or the intensive, ‘very’ (cf. *hermargr*). The masculine form, rather than the neuter, would stem from the word’s being in agreement with *Grotta*); this would be an allusion to the sunken rocks in the whirlpool (as with the *Mælström*),

*Líðmeldr Amlóða*, ‘the meal of the liquor of Amlóði’. ‘The liquor of Amlóði’ (*líð Amlóða*) must refer to the sea, the meal of which is sand.<sup>24</sup> The details of Amlóði’s connexion with the sea are now lost to us; that such a connexion existed however is witnessed by Saxo; Prince Amlethus, feigning madness, is walking with some companions along the beach (Saxo Grammaticus 1931, I 79 (III:vi:10)):

Arenarum quoque præteritis clivis, sabulam perinde ac farra aspicere jussus, eadem albicantibus maris procellis permolita esse respondit.

Also, as they pass the sand-dunes they bid him look at the meal, meaning the sand; he replies that it has been ground small by the white tempests of the ocean.

Krause (1969, 94) proposes that Amlóði began as a personification of the irrational tossing sea, which is suggested by his etymology of the name.

### Bergelmir

In answer to Óðinn’s question, who was the oldest of the Æsir or of Ymir’s descendants, the giant Vafþrúðnir replies that before the world was made, Bergelmir was born, son of Þrúðgelmir and grandson of Aurgelmir (*Vm* 29). He repeats the first half of his reply in *Vm* 35 in answer to the question of what he first remembered, and continues with more information on Bergelmir:

Ørófi vetra,	Countless winters
áðr væri iðrð um skopoð,	before the earth was fashioned
þá var Bergelmir borinn;	Bergelmir was born;
þat ek fyrst of man,	that is the first thing I remember,
er sá inn fróði iqtunn	when that wise giant
var á lúðr um lagiðr.	was laid on the mill-frame.

identified as the broken mill-stones of Grotti, which cause such havoc to any ship sucked down.

<sup>24</sup> Kock (1923–44, nos 572, 573, 1791, 3221) suggests a somewhat different reading of the second part of the stanza. He emends *lungs* to *lyngs*, ‘ling’ (‘the ling of the hillside of ships’ being sea-foam), and assumes the following prose word-order: *þær es fyr lǫngu mólu líðmeldr lyngs skipa hlíðar; baugskerðir rístr barði ból Amlóða*, ‘som för länge sedan malde böljeskummets mjödmäld; ringförödarn skär ijenom sjökungs bo med skeppets stam’. This reading does present a more straightforward word-order, but leaves the word *líð*, ‘liquor’ on its own as a designation of the sea, whereas it is more likely that the word was associated with Amlóði in reference to a now lost legend.

*Líð-* has also been read with a short vowel; whilst this reading could suggest further allusions to mills, it would necessitate taking *hlíð-* at the end of the line as being also short, where a trochee would be expected in *dróttkvætt*. *Líð-* would then

The earliest interpretation of this myth is the one offered by Snorri (*SnE* 14):<sup>25</sup>

Synir Bors drápu Ymi jötun; en er hann fell, þá hljóp svá mikit blóð ór sárum hans, at með því drekkðu þeir allri ætt hrímþursa, nema einn komsk undan með sínu hýski; þann kalla jötnar Bergelmi; hann fór upp á lúðr sinn ok kona hans ok helzk þar, ok eru af þeim komnar hrímþursa ættir.

The sons of Borr slew the giant Ymir; but when he fell, there flowed so much blood from his wounds that they drowned the whole race of frost giants with it, except that one escaped with his household; him the giants call Bergelmir; he went up onto his mill-frame along with his wife, and was saved there, and from them are descended the races of frost giants.

From Snorri's statements that the frost giants were drowned in Ymir's blood, and that Bergelmir and his family were the only ones to escape to re-establish the frost giants, it is evident that he is identifying Bergelmir's situation with that of Noah (Genesis 6–8), and probably relying on apocryphal accounts of the survival of the giants after the Flood (Og took refuge on the roof of Noah's ark in Rabbinic tradition). Such tales were known in Anglo-Saxon England and early medieval Ireland (James 1920, 40–41; Carney 1955, 102–14). In accordance with his interpretation of Bergelmir's situation, Snorri refers to the *lúðr* ('mill frame') as if it was already a possession of the giant (it is *sinn*, 'his'), into which he and his family could step, as if into a sea vessel which could surmount the waves of blood.<sup>26</sup> In following this tradition, Snorri has ignored the text of *Vm* 35,

have four meanings. 'Levy of men' and 'ship' would hark back to Grotti as a grinder up of sea-borne armies. *Liðr* means a 'joint', and hence could also refer to 'limbs'; whilst this could again be a reiteration of the whirlpool's role of grinding up the bodies of crewmen, there could also be an allusion to the myth of Bergelmir (see below). The primary meaning however would surely be that suggested by Johnston (1908–09, 298), 'notch in the upper quern stone', a sense recorded in Norn which developed out of the common meaning in Old Norse of 'joint'. By synecdoche *liðr* would stand for the whole quern: the 'meal of Amlóði's quern' would be 'sand'. This reading is in accord with Snorri's note (*SnE* 118) to Snæbjörn's verse that *hér er kallat hafit Amlóða kvern*, 'here the sea is called Amlóði's quern'. *Hliðar* would mean 'of the side (i. e. hull)'; 'the habitation of the hull of ships' would be an acceptable designation of the sea, but is less satisfactory poetically than 'the habitation of the hillside of ships'.

<sup>25</sup> For a synopsis of the various interpretations of the myth of Bergelmir, see Lorenz 1984, 152–57.

<sup>26</sup> The vivid identification of Ymir's blood with the roar of man-drowning waves in *Sonatorrek* 3 may well have influenced Snorri (*Skj* B I 34: *Jötuns háls undir þjóta Náins niðr fyr naustdurum* 'the wounds of the giant's throat [waves] roar down by the dwarf's boat-house doors [cliffs]').

which states that Bergelmir ‘was laid on a *lúðr*’. Snorri’s tale of Bergelmir therefore does not go far towards explaining the myth of *Vm*.

The word *lúðr* has, rather unnecessarily, given rise to a good many interpretations bearing at most a tenuous relation to the recorded meaning of the word in Old Norse, namely ‘mill-frame’.<sup>27</sup> If Bergelmir was placed on a mill-frame, he was clearly ground up: Rydberg (1886, I 431–32) long ago suggested that after the world was formed from the body of the first giant Ymir the act of creation continued with the milling up of Bergelmir to produce the soil and sand of the beaches (cf. the sand described as ‘meal’ by the companions of Amlethus in the citation from Saxo above); equally, Bergelmir might represent an alternative mode of creation, syncretised genealogically by making him the grandson of Aurgelmir (who is produced from the primeval waters and then engenders the race of giants according to *Vm* 31).

The name Bergelmir designates the third of a generation of giants with names formed with the element *-gelmir* (cf. *gjalla*, ‘roar’) mentioned in *Vm* 29. Aurgelmir is either ‘mud roarer’ or ‘ear [of corn] roarer’.<sup>28</sup> Þrúðgelmir is ‘power roarer’. Bergelmir appears to be ‘barley roarer’;<sup>29</sup> this would fit naturally with the theme of grinding (cf. *Byggvir* below).

<sup>27</sup> Christiansen (1952, 101–5) notes that in modern Norwegian *lur* (from ON *lúðr*) may mean ‘cradle’; such a meaning in *Vm* 35 is however inappropriate. *Vafþrúðnir* is establishing his credentials, as the next in line after the succession of primeval giants Aurgelmir, Þrúðgelmir and Bergelmir, whose babyhood he would thus hardly have remembered; moreover, the description of ‘wise giant’ would be unsuitable for a baby. Christiansen suggests that the meaning of *lúðr* is therefore ‘coffin’—*Vafþrúðnir* remembers back as far as the end of Bergelmir’s life. Holtsmark (1946, 53) points out that *ork* can mean either ‘coffin’ or ‘ark’, and suggests that if *lúðr* could mean coffin, Snorri could, by association with it of the two meanings of *ork*, have inferred the ark story he gives.

<sup>28</sup> Fulk (1989, 317) suggests that *aur* is cognate with English *ear* (and is also to be found in ON *aurfalr*, ‘iron spike at the butt end of a spear’). Fulk interprets *Vm* 33, where Aurgelmir begets a six-headed son, as presenting an image of an ear of corn. His further suggestion, that *-gelmir* is related to OE *gielm*, ‘handful of corn’, is less likely, in view of the lack of evidence for such a sense in ON.

<sup>29</sup> The ostensible sense is ‘bear/bare/berry-roarer’; but these interpretations offer no meaning in the context. Another possibility, assuming *-g-* is written for *-gg-*, is that *Berggelmir*, ‘mountain roarer’, is intended (perhaps suggesting a rock-crushing mill; cf. Grotti and the *Mælström*). Most likely however is that *ber-* is from *barr* ‘barley’; Fulk (1989, 317) shows that alternating forms of Germanic \**bariz-/baraz-* will explain the difference in vowels in *barr* and *ber-*. A less likely possibility is that *bar-* was changed to *ber-* by palatal umlaut before the *g* of *-gelmir* (see Noreen

The element *-gelmir* connects these names with waters. In *Rm* 4 the underworld river Vaðgelmir, ‘ford roarer’, is mentioned; and the primeval source of all rivers, existing before the creation of the world, was Hvergelmir, ‘cauldron roarer’. *Gelmir* is linked etymologically with Gjöll, the river round the underworld (*AR* §577).<sup>30</sup> A primordial oceanic connexion and an underworld river connexion are thus implied for the giants of *Vm* (as noted by de Vries, *AR* §577), which is in line with the chthonic powers later associated with giants; more strikingly the names betray their origin as names of roaring waters.

A connexion with fertility is also apparent. In Aurgelmir, *aur-* is either the fertile mud with which the world tree is sprinkled in *Vsp*,<sup>31</sup> or an ear of corn; in Þrúðgelmir, *þrúðr*, ‘power’, derives from *þróa*, ‘thrive’; in Bergelmir, *ber-* is probably ‘barley’, and the verse calls him specifically *fróðr*, which can mean ‘fertile’ as well as ‘wise’.

If the term *lúðr* is accepted as ‘mill’, then Bergelmir may emerge as a being who furthers the fecundity of the earth through being ground up in a mill. Such a mythological motif is not unique; a tenth-century survey of Muslim culture tells us the following about the fertility god Tammūz, worshipped among the pagans of Haran (Al-Nadim 1970, 758):

Tammūz (July). In the middle of the month there is the Feast of al-Bū-qāt, that is, of the weeping women. It is the Tā-ūz, a feast celebrated for the god Tā-ūz [i. e. Tammūz]. The women weep for him because his master slew him by grinding his bones under a millstone and winnowing them in the wind.

Presumably related to this is the much more ancient Ugaritic myth of the contest of Baal (a fertility god like Tammūz) and Môt, in which Môt is ground up, apparently in an act of bestowing fertility on the land (Gordon 1949, 47: Môt cries out ‘Because of thee, O Baal, I have experienced . . . grinding in the mill-stones’). In Norse too there is found the idea of a divinity, and moreover a divinity of barley, being ground: in *Ls* 44 Loki says to Byggvir (a *nomen agentis* from *bygg*, ‘barley’): *at eyrom Freys mundu æ vera ok und kvernom klaka*, ‘you shall ever be at Freyr’s ears and

1970, §73 on this umlaut; he cites the example (with a different vowel affected) *Þørger* for *Þorgeirr*, which parallels *Bergelmir* in being a compound word).

<sup>30</sup> AEW links several other words, see s. vv. *Aurgelmir*, *galmr* (‘sword’), *gjalla* (‘cry’), *gala* (‘sing’), *gjöll* (‘noise’).

<sup>31</sup> He could be a variant of the image of the first giant body (Snorri identifies him with Ymir (*SnE* 12), an identification suggesting a syncretism of traditions about creation from a giant’s body) conceived as a piece of *aurr* in the roaring primordial waters; cf. the ‘earth out of ocean’ creation motif of *Vsp* 3 with its Eurasian analogues (see Schier 1963).



twitter beneath the quern'. Since Byggvir is the god of barley, which is the basic ingredient of ale, the reference here is clearly to the grinding of the grain in the brewing process.

Thus in the reference to Bergelmir being laid on the *lúðr* may possibly lie an allusion to a cosmic mill, associated with water. The Indian churning of the Milk Sea would present a parallel instance of the fertile 'milling' of water.

### Mundilfæri

The image of a cosmic mill may lie behind *Vm* 23:<sup>32</sup>

Mundilfæri heitir,	He is called Mundilfæri,
hann er Mána faðir	the father of Moon
ok svá Sólar it sama;	and also of Sun;
himin hverfa	they are to turn heaven
þau skulo hverian dag	every day
öldom at ártali.	for the reckoning of years for men.

The commonly accepted translation of *hverfa* as 'traverse' is unacceptable, since the use of *hverfa* without a preposition in this sense would be unparalleled;<sup>33</sup> the meaning must be transitive 'turn'. We may note that in *Vsp* 5:1–4 the sun moves her hand purposefully.

The name Mundilfæri occurs only here and in *SnE* 17–18 (based on this stanza). The majority reading of the manuscripts is *-færi*. Related to *færa*, 'move, carry', *-færi* could signify 'mover, carrier', or 'device, instrument, equipment designed for a special purpose' (see Fritzner 1886–96, s. v. *færi* 3); or as a weak adjective, 'effective, capable'. *Mundil-* may be related to *mund*, 'hand', or *mund*, 'time'; there may even be a play on both senses, accounting for the uniqueness of the name. Cleasby and Vigfusson (1957, s. v. *Mundil-föri*) suggest that the name is 'akin to *möndull* [mill-handle], referring to the veering round or revolution of the heavens'.

If Cleasby and Vigfusson are right, the name Mundilfæri has been designed to signify the mill-like device that turns the heavens by means of a 'handle'. Sun and Moon are, according to this genealogical fiction, his children who operate the device for him or by means of him. This turning of the cosmos, pictured as a mill, is the diurnal and yearly movement of the heavens.

<sup>32</sup> The interpretation of *Vm* 23 given here is based on that of Ursula Dronke, in her note to *Vsp* 5:1–4 in the forthcoming *Poetic Edda* vol. 2 (she points out that *Vsp* 5:5–10 shows every sign of being an interpolation).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Grm* 25:5 *þær* [the rivers] *hverfa um hodd goða*, 'they turn about the hoard (? temple) of the gods'.

In the Indian myth of the Milk Sea, the sun and moon arise as a result of the churning of the milk ocean, just as in Norse they are the children of the turner of the cosmos.

A very similar image to that suggested for the Mundilfæri myth occurs in a Mordvin mythological poem (text and German translation in Ahlqvist 1861, 133–34). Here, the sun, moon and stars are said to be on the handle of a ladle which rests in a honey drink at the foot of the world tree; as the sun wends across the sky, the handle of the ladle turns likewise. The ladle clearly represents the firmament, turning with the sun. No one seems to be responsible for the turning here, a feature shared with the Finnish *sampo*, but differing from the Norse myths of Mundilfæri and of Grotti.

### Comparison

Although the Norse seem to have been familiar with the image of the pillar sustaining the world,<sup>34</sup> the world support does not appear as the pivot of the cosmic mill, as it does in Finnish. If the myth of Mundilfæri is correctly interpreted as the turning of the sky by a handle-like device, then this would represent an adaptation of the cosmic mill, in this case to express a concept of time. The ‘handle’ could be a version of the world support.

The turning of the world like a mill is the subject of the (proposed interpretation of) the myth of Mundilfæri, which is therefore comparable with the turning of the heavens about the *sampo*. This feature is not apparent in the other Norse myths.

Grotti is supernaturally productive, but this productivity is not related by the sources to acts of cosmic creation, as in the Indian myth. Grotti produces both beneficent objects (gold) and maleficent (an army), as does the Indian churning (here may be seen the development of a concept of a ‘wheel of fortune’ out of the basic idea of the fertile mill); the Finnish *sampo* does not churn out maleficent produce. The myth of Bergelmir seems to involve creative activity (either as a continuation or as an alternative image of primal creation). The myth of Mundilfæri is not concerned with creation, but with the determining of time, the seasons.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The *ondvegissúlur*, ‘high-seat pillars’, dedicated to Þórr, may have been regarded as symbolising this pillar (Dronke 1992, 678–81); Þórr’s title *himinsjóli* in *Þórdrápa* is interpreted by Davidson (1983, 605) as ‘heaven pillar’: the god here represents the hypostatized world support. Various aspects of the god Heimdallr also suggest that he is a hypostasis of the world support (see Pipping 1925, 7–49; 1926, 24–64, 107–24).

<sup>35</sup> *Ártal*; *ár* implies primarily time, but can also mean ‘abundance’.

The concept of a 'Golden Age' is more stressed in the myth of Grotti than in the Finnish and Indian analogues (it does not appear in the other Norse myths). The time of earthly paradise under Fróði also mirrors the early time of the gods recounted in *Vsp*.<sup>36</sup>

Grotti is stolen, like the *sampo* and the *soma*; however, in Norse the millstone is not desired—its theft is presented as incidental to a viking attack, whereas in Finnish and Indian the possession of the *sampo* and *soma* respectively is the object of the attack. No theft is involved in the other Norse myths.

Grotti breaks (but, in *SnE*, causes the sea's saltiness); the *sampo* shatters (but its fragments endow earth and sea with fertility); no breaking of any 'mill' is indicated in the other Norse myths.<sup>37</sup>

According to *SnE* Grotti ends up in the sea, like the *sampo*; however, this is connected with the folk-tale motif of 'why the sea is salt' (Thompson A1115), not with fertility as in the Finnish and Indian analogues. By his name and family Bergelmir is closely connected with roaring waters and with fertility. The myth of Mundilfæri shows no connexion with fertile waters.

It is clear that the cosmic mill was not, in extant Norse sources, a widely developed mythologem. Nonetheless, the myth of Mundilfæri connects the turning of the cosmos via a 'mill-handle' with the regulation of seasons, and the myth of Bergelmir suggests the concept of a creative milling of a giant's body, associated in some way with the sea. Grotti was a legendary mill sunk in the depths, regarded as a one-time producer of a golden age: the myths about it allude to the concept of a milling on a supernatural scale, such as the Bergelmir myth may (in a different context) have exemplified.

### The Sampo and Norse Tales

It is clear that the *sampo* forms an integral part of traditional Finnish cosmology, whereas the mill in Norse occupies a peripheral place in

<sup>36</sup> In *Vsp* 7 the gods forged gold in plenty, and were happy (cf. Fróði creating gold with Grotti); three mighty giantesses arrive (cf. Fenja and Menja); it seems that the maidens deprive the gods of the game of chequers they have been playing, possibly by overturning it, and the pieces are lost (they turn up again in the new world in *Vsp* 61), signifying the loss of the prosperity that relied on gold (cf. the wrecking of Grotti by Fenja and Menja, and the loss of Grotti in the sea, signalling the end of Fróði's Golden Age). See van Hamel (1934, 220–21), whose interpretation I follow, on the 'golden age' of the gods in *Vsp*.

<sup>37</sup> The text of *Vm* implies at least that the grinding of Bergelmir was a past event rather than a continuing one.

mythology. It is strange then to find that two features of the *sampo* myth are regarded by the authors of *FFPE*, who reflect the generally accepted Finnish scholarly position, as influenced by Norse tales: the concept of the *sampo* as a wealth-producing mill, and the theft of it (*FFPE* 527–28).

### **The Wealth-Producing Mill**

The *sampo* and Grotti have some features in common; on the other hand, many points speak against any influence.

Grotti is a quern mill, and the *sampo* is often pictured as a mill, though its origins seem rather to be in the world pillar. As noted above, it is unnecessary to seek outside influence to explain the mill-like aspects of the *sampo*.

Grotti churns out whatever it is commanded to, in particular gold; the *sampo* grinds out meal, salt or wealth. The ability of Grotti to grind out ill-fortune (both physical, in the form of an army, and abstract, in the form of the fall of Fróði and Mýsingr) finds no parallel in the *sampo*, which never loses its fertile, positive effects even when shattered. The fertility-producing aspects of the *sampo* are integral to its mythological nature and no explanation involving foreign influence is required.

Grotti is turned by two giantesses; the *sampo* is not said to be turned by anyone.

Grotti is stolen by a sea-king; the *sampo* is stolen by mythical heroes arriving by sea. Grotti breaks and sinks into the ocean, together with all the salt it has ground; the *sampo* shatters and most of it ends up in the sea, producing salt and the riches of the ocean (see *FFPE* no. 13). The wealth-producing mill is an international folk-tale motif, often coupled with the motifs of the stealing of the mill and of its ending up in the ocean grinding salt.<sup>38</sup> There is no need to seek specifically Norse influence.

Grotti upon sinking produces a *svelgr*, ‘whirlpool’; the whirlpool (*merennieliu, kurimus*) is known to Finnish myth, borrowed, according to Harva (1948, 65), from elsewhere, since the Finns could have known no such phenomenon themselves, but it is not associated with the sunken *sampo*. The *sampo* could not have caused the whirlpool since, in the recorded version of the myth, it is shattered, not merely broken like Grotti.

Grotti, by the time it is represented in Norse tradition, plays a part in certain distinct mythological situations not represented in Finnish myth.

<sup>38</sup> Olrik (1903–10, I 290–96) gives several examples, e. g. a French tale of a sorcerer who had a mill that would grind out whatever was bidden; a Newfoundlander stole it, put it on a ship, and told it to mill salt: the mill would not stop when told to, and sank the ship, causing the sea to be salty.

The giants appear as antagonists of the gods or orderly society of men; the fall of the house of Fróði is presented; and Grotti is not an artefact (as is the *sampo*), but, being composed of rocks, is a part of the archaic chthonic world (with which giants are connected).

### The Theft of the Sampo

Branch writes (*FFPE* 527):

The theft [of the *sampo*] shows clear evidence of Scandinavian influence and the main motifs, although not the themes to which they are tied, appear to have been borrowed from medieval mythical-heroic *fornaldarsögur*.

Branch mentions specifically *Bósa saga*, noting some narrative parallels which he considers make influence seem likely. Unfortunately he merely leaves it to the reader to infer from the (not wholly adequate) summary of *Bósa saga* that he gives what is supposed to have been borrowed, so I offer my own analysis:

1. A magic egg, full of gold, must be stolen by the hero Bósi to avoid punishment (*FSN* III 296); the egg resembles the *sampo* in that it is a source of gold (and the temple where it is kept is sacked of its large amounts of treasure), as the *sampo* is a source of wealth.
2. The setting of the Norse tale is the northern (Finnic) realm of Bjarmaland (*FSN* III 296–97, 307); that of the Finnish tale is Pohjola, ‘North Land’. Little can be made of the fact that two journeys are made in the Norse, as in the Finnish (the original drifting there by Väinämöinen, and the subsequent military campaign to steal the *sampo*).
3. The egg is in the possession of a *gammr*, ‘vulture’, which attacks Bósi when he steals the egg, and uses its claws in the attack (*FSN* III 300–01); the *sampo* is guarded by the Mistress of Pohjola, who turns into a *vaakalintu*, ‘griffon’, and attacks, using her claws to seize parts of the *sampo*.
4. An abducted princess Hleiðr is living at the temple where the egg is kept, and is being trained to become a successor to the priestess there, and when Bósi captures the egg, he is able to free this princess and take her away with him (*FSN* III 299, 302–03); Ilmarinen is offered the daughter of the Mistress of Pohjola in exchange for providing a *sampo* (i. e. the opposite of the Norse motif, where the acquiring of the maid is associated with the theft of the magic object rather than with the making of it).
5. The hero Smiðr of the Norse (*FSN* III 284, 307 etc.) corresponds to Ilmarinen the smith of the Finnish, in that the name of the one is the profession of the other, and in that both acquire a girl on the expedition (see 6c).

6. *Bósa saga* involves a number of abductions of women:
- a. Hleiðr is rescued (the first time) and taken to Gautland (Bósi's land) (FSN III 303–04); the theft of the girl corresponds to that of the *sampo*.
  - b. She is rescued (a second time) from Gautland by her brother's friends and taken home to Glasir Plains (FSN III 305–06).
  - c. She is rescued (a third time) by Smiðr (Bósi's companion) (FSN III 313–14); cf. the winning of the daughter of Pohjola by Ilmarinen the smith.
  - d. A second princess is abducted, by the hero (FSN III 317).
7. Her brothers (one of whom was to wed the first princess) pursue and there is a sea-battle; the Mistress of Pohjola pursues the thieves as they flee by sea.
8. The hero and his friends win the battle with difficulty, since the enemy king (the father of the second princess) changes shape into a dragon and then a boar (and monstrous helpers, a bird and bitch, aid the heroes) (FSN III 319–20); cf. the Finnish Mistress of Pohjola becoming a griffon (*vaakalintu*) and fighting the stealers of the *sampo*.

The differences between the sources are great, making the tracing of any influence difficult. It emerges that Branch's 'clear evidence' is based on little more than a superficial reading of the Norse 'analogue'.

The events of *Bósa saga* form a startling narrative full of interlace with no more than arbitrary motivation for many of the exploits, the objects of which lack any significance comparable to that of the *sampo*. The Finnish tale of the *sampo* is coherent and well-constructed, and functions within a recognised mythological framework.

The *sampo* myth focuses on a central feature of the Finnish cosmology, whereas *Bósa saga* can by no means be seen as reflecting any central aspect of Norse religion or mythology. An example is the *vaakalintu*, which the Mistress of Pohjola transforms herself into, which is clearly a form of shamanic helping spirit (Oinas 1985, 151); this corresponds in the *Bósa saga* to grotesque fairy-tale monsters (the *gammr* and the dragon), with no part in Norse religious life.

It is difficult to see when and where the Finns could have borrowed from anything resembling *Bósa saga*, a fourteenth-century work, whereas we know Bjarmaland to have been a major trading centre for the Norse up to the twelfth century; they no doubt picked up more than merely the Finnish word for 'god',<sup>39</sup> and the saga's setting in Bjarmaland may witness to a tradition that it was from there that the story derived. If any influence was involved, it was no doubt from the Finns on the Norse.

<sup>39</sup> A tale recounted in *Heimskringla* II 230–32 records that the name of the Bjarmian's god was Jómali, which, as Ross (1981, 50) shows, derives from Finnish/Karelian *jumala* 'god'.

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## EGILL'S *HQFUÐLAUSN* IN TIME AND PLACE

BY JOHN HINES

### *Introduction*

THE EARLIEST extant long poem attributed to Egill Skalla-Grímsson, *Höfuðlausn*, remains seriously undervalued by both literary critics and cultural historians. If the account of the circumstances of the composition of the poem in *Egils saga* chs 59–61 contains any residual element of truth, Egill was lucky to have had a king either so exceptionally blessed with literary taste or so singularly devoid of it as Eiríkr Bloodaxe as the intended recipient of his panegyric peace offering. The poem has pleased no modern critics as much as the saga claims it satisfied Eiríkr. Sigurður Nordal epitomises a tradition of critical disquiet by summing *Höfuðlausn* up as ‘efnislítið og minna listaverk en bezti skáldskapur Egils annar’ (‘insubstantial, and a lesser work of art than the best of Egill’s other work’, Nordal 1933, xxi). For Stefán Einarsson (1957, 59) this is ‘a conventional praise poem’, only the ‘splendid form’ of which can lay claim to any lasting approbation, a point echoed by the usual interpretation of ambiguity in the saga narrative of Eiríkr’s reaction to Egill’s recitation—*Pá mælti konungr: ‘Bezta er kvæðit fram flutt’*—as a distinctly backhanded compliment: “‘The poem’s *delivery*,” he said, “could not be bettered” (Jones 1960, 165), rather than something along the lines of ‘This was a perfect poem’ or ‘The poem is best delivered (i. e. rather than left unheard)’. Even the form of the poem is not always acclaimed unreservedly. Gabriel Turville-Petre, for example, writing about our modern appreciation of the sound of skaldic poetry, remarked that we can hear, *even if we do not like them*, the insistent end-rhymes (Turville-Petre 1976, lxxvii; my italics).

On reflection, much of this antipathy to Egill’s *Höfuðlausn* seems to derive from considerations external to the poem itself. This poem has been passed down to us with an extraordinary range of contextual associations that all too readily distract attention from what it itself essentially is. From Snorri Sturluson (principally) we derive a strong sense that skaldic poetry subsists in a complex, finely-graded and above all definite set of metres and devices (for an exemplary discussion, see Anthony Faulkes’s edition of *Háttatal*, Faulkes 1991, xiv–xxi and 74–88). Egill’s *Höfuðlausn*, quite simply, is perceived to be very different from what a skaldic poem ought to be. While corresponding in strictly metrical terms to *fornyrðislag*, which

is generally characteristic of Eddic poetry rather than skaldic, it also presents us with an unusual—perhaps an unusually early—general use of end-rhyme (*runhenda*). It is probably significant that there are more references to *Hofuðlausn* in the index to Faulkes's edition of *Háttatal* than to any other poem except *Háttalykill*, principally because it can be used to illustrate several relatively rare or special devices, such as the *nykrat* development of imagery and the varying of the refrain in a poem; the concatenation of such features, of course, renders the poem yet more strange. If the content of the poem truly is predictable and slight, it is understandable that its startling form should be adjudged to be no more than the flashy gilding of a banal and valueless base.

The second great distraction in the study of this poem is its fictional context, the head-ransoming episode written around it in *Egils saga*. This is self-evidently a fanciful and implausible story; what is more, it occurs in a saga that contains some gross historical errors, not the least of which is having Eiríkr ruling in York at the same time as Æthelstan ruled south of the Humber. The narrative of *Egils saga* is practically useless as an historical document; but it may still preserve some genuine facts, and some genuine poems of a tenth-century, first-generation Icelandic *skáld*. There is actually nothing intrinsically implausible about such a poem having been used as a medium of reconciliation between the poet and King Eiríkr, although no reference to that is included in the poem itself. The earliest extant literary version of that story is probably that contained in verses 3–11 of Egill's elegy *Arinbjarnarkviða*, where the role attributed to the poem is clear:

Við Yggjar miði  
hattar staup  
af hilmi þák.

In exchange for Yggr's mead I received the hat's knob from the prince (*Arinbjarnarkviða* 7).

What, more significantly, Egill's *Hofuðlausn* explicitly does, is locate itself convincingly in time and place, and identify the ruler that it praises. These 'facts' are more important for this study than any truth lurking in the head-ransoming story. If this information is authentic, then the poem is historically unique, and invaluable, as the only complete, substantial poetic work from 'Viking' England of the tenth century and indeed as a panegyric from an area in which panegyrics are rare.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apart from narrative poems like the celebratory *Battle of Brunanburh* and a few pieces of clerical doggerel, there are no extant Old English panegyrics, nor any

What this essay seeks to offer is a new exploration of possible readings of the poem. It will propose that the interpretation and appreciation of the poem can be substantially enhanced by new insights into the actual historical context in which it is set and to which it can plausibly be regarded as belonging, mid-tenth-century Northumbria. Irrespective of the authenticity of this historical provenance, which is admittedly beyond total proof, the case can be made that the poetical richness of this text has never been properly brought out. If, however, the poem is accepted as a genuine piece from tenth-century York, then not only does the context imply yet more meaning within the poem, and in fact render it far less odd than many critics have thought it, but conversely the collocation of the poem and its original context can enrich our understanding of the cultural history of Viking-period England considerably.

#### *The text*

Such substantial claims as those just enunciated can be made for Egill's *Höfuðlausn* despite the fact that it is impossible to make a perfect reconstruction of an original text. Russell Poole, indeed, has recently (1993) undertaken a radical review of the principles that can be applied in editing this poem, arguing that we have to reckon with an 'inherent variability' in skaldic textuality and a 'flexible' rather than a 'complete' fixity for this text.

The earliest copies of *Höfuðlausn*, partial or whole, that we have date from 350–400 years after its purported date of composition, in manuscripts of Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* and the Wolfenbüttel manuscript of *Egils saga*, none of them earlier than the fourteenth century, though Snorri's text at least testifies to the existence of certain readings in the first half of the thirteenth century. The textual tradition is divided into two branches as far back as one can see. The first branch is represented in the Wolfenbüttel manuscript (c.1350) and a group of seventeenth-century copies such as Árni Magnússon's in AM 761 b 4to (the W-group), the second in the version printed by Ole Worm in 1636, apparently based on a manuscript now lost, and in fragment ε of AM 162 a fol., which seems also to have been

evidence that any ever existed. See Shippey 1972, 185–89. In Old Norse, and concerned with England, we also have fragments of an *Aðalsteinsdrápa*, again attributed to Egill Skalla-Grímsson, discussed further below, the memorial poem *Eiríksmál*, and somewhat later Þórleifr jarlsskáld's *drápa* on Sveinn Forkbeard, Gunnlaugr's *Aðalráðsdrápa* fragment, the anonymous *Liðsmannaflakkr* and others. For some slight Latin panegyrics on Æthelstan of Wessex, see Lapidge 1981.

similar to the version used by Snorri for *Skáldskaparmál* and which again appears in a number of important seventeenth-century copies (the  $\epsilon$ -group) (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, A I 35–39; Nordland 1956, 142–52). The most obvious difference between these two branches falls in verses 13–18, where the W-group has a few lines that the  $\epsilon$ -group does not and the order of verses is different. There are also differences in diction, some of which are discussed in more detail below.

All modern editions of the poem agree on its length and the order of the verses, following the Wolfenbüttel version in this. The differences between these editions are principally matters of individual words, very occasionally of phrases. It is, however, possible to vary the character of the poem quite significantly by the editorial choices that are made. Sigurður Nordal's edition in the Íslensk fornrit *Egils saga* (1933) is the clearest modern example of this. Characteristic is his acceptance of the relatively prosaic pronouns found in some sources where other modern editors accept richer (more figurative or pictorial) readings from other sources. In v.1,7–8, for instance, Nordal gives:

Hlóðk mæðar hlut  
míns knarrar skut,

I loaded the stern of my ship with a portion of praise,

where Ole Worm's text and Árni Magnússon had offered *min(n)is knarrar* (i. e. *minnis knarrar*, 'ship of memory', which, of course, is hypermetrical) and Finnur Jónsson (*inter alios*) emends to *munknarrar* ('mind-ship') in *Skjaldedigtning B* (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, B I 31). In v.17,5–6, Nordal follows what is the clear reading of the Wolfenbüttel manuscript in giving:

Mjök's hönnum fól  
haukstrandar mól,

The gravel of the hawk's shore is copiously available from him,

where most other modern editors prefer a reading of the  $\epsilon$ -group and give *mjök's hilmifól* ('is copiously available from the prince'). Nordal does not transgress sound editorial principles (in fact in v.1,8 he adopts the only reading supported by manuscript evidence that is metrically possible), though he does not accept the authority of the oldest manuscripts in every case, as, for instance, in his rejection of the phrase *brimils móði* in v.5,6.

There is no need for a new edition of the poem here, or for a re-evaluation of all the variant readings or of the emendations that have been proposed. Any significant cases will be discussed as they arise in the following analysis. There are several places where texts of the  $\epsilon$ -group provide particular readings that could be preferred on purely evaluative grounds.

In a select anthology, *Carmina scaldica*, published for university students' use (first in 1913), Finnur Jónsson published a critical edition of *Höfuðlausn* that is considerably closer to the  $\epsilon$ -version than that published in *Skjaldedigtning B* or in any other scholarly edition. Unless otherwise indicated, then, I quote from the second edition of this work (Finnur Jónsson 1929, 18–20); it can, of course, be assessed in the light of the variant readings published in *Skjaldedigtning A* and Finnur Jónsson's other critical edition in *Skjaldedigtning B*.

*The original date and provenance of the poem*

*Egils saga* records a tradition telling when, where and for whom *Höfuðlausn* was first performed. It was presented to King Eiríkr Bloodaxe, the exiled son of Haraldr Finehair, ruling in York in the mid-tenth century; he is imagined, mistakenly, to be ruling as a sub-king of Æthelstan of Wessex. Some details of this story are attested, as noted above, in a second and much more personal long skaldic poem attributed to Egill Skalla-Grímsson, *Arinbjarnarkviða*. This testifies to a poem being offered as a head-ransom—a minor but recurrent literary scene for which, according to the saga prose, there were precedents before Egill, and of which a number of further, eleventh-century examples are extant (Nordland 1956, 60–87). *Arinbjarnarkviða* also locates the event in York and identifies the recipient as a descendant of Hálfðan, Haraldr's father. Over the years, more than sufficient effort has been put into attempts to retrieve some real historical facts from the more sensational aspects of the story as told in *Egils saga*. Here I wish to concentrate on the story as implied by the poetry, and the factuality of its most basic contextual details: the date, the place and the identities of the recipient and the author.

*Höfuðlausn* has so far survived considerable efforts to identify serious anachronisms in the text, and consequently remains a plausible example of a mid-tenth-century poem. One would presumably have to identify some very persistent or deep-seated anachronisms to mount a decisive case that the original poem was not composed in the tenth century, it being already acknowledged that the course of textual transmission has rendered it impossible for us to reconstruct precisely what Egill supposedly composed. Jón Helgason thought he had identified a telling anachronism in the rhyming of *hjǫr* (sword) and *gjǫr*, which he took to be an historical variant of Modern Icelandic *ger* (a flock of birds), deriving from an earlier \**gǫr* and incapable of rhyming with *hjǫr* before the twelfth century (Jón Helgason 1969). His argument was answered by Dietrich Hofmann (1973), who pointed out a series of distinctly early-looking linguistic features in

the poem and proposed an alternative etymology and interpretation of *gjǫr* as a noun derived from an adjective *\*gerr*, with breaking of *e > jǫ*, which would be capable of rhyming with *hjǫr* in the tenth century and would mean ‘desire’.

The location of the poem in England is clearly specified, if not emphasised, in the opening verses of the poem:

Vestr fórk of ver

West I came over sea (1,1)

and

Berk Óðins mjǫð  
á Engla bjǫð.

I bear Óðinn’s mead to the lands of the English (2,3–4).

We shall return to the artistic use that is made of this detail in due course.

Even if a tenth-century date and an English provenance of the poem are accurate, one should not accept without question the traditional Icelandic identification of the *hilmir* in the text, an Eiríkr, as Eiríkr Bloodaxe. There unquestionably was an *Yric* who reigned in York, possibly for two periods of two to three years each, and one version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle identifies him as *Yric Haroldes sunu* (MS E, s. a. 952). Some coins of this king are known. Charles Plummer, however, once thought that the true identity of this king was given in the story Adam of Bremen told of a Danish *Hiringus*, a son of Haraldr Bluetooth, who conquered England but was deposed and killed by the people of Northumbria (Adam of Bremen 1959, II.xxv; Earle and Plummer 1892–99, II 148; cf. Jón Jónsson 1895, 193). Another Scandinavian Eiríkr ruling in England is often identified in the *Eo[h]ric*, king of the Danes, perhaps specifically in East Anglia, whose death is recorded in the Chronicle, MSS A and D, s. a. 905. A strong historical argument in favour of the reliability of the Norse–Icelandic tradition, however, is the importance of Eiríkr Bloodaxe’s sons in Norwegian history, deposing Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri around 960 and holding power for about a decade until deposed by Earl Hákon of Lade and his allies at the beginning of the 970s. The Eiríkr Bloodaxe of West Norse tradition is an intriguing character: a recurrent failure as a king yet indelibly eulogised in *Höfuðlausn* and *Eiríksmál*. At the very least the personal history of this temporary king of Northumbria did not provide an obviously well-suited character for historically false adoption as the father of kings of Norway; the tradition is therefore the more credible.

There is a literary argument too which concurrently supports the traditional identifications of date and provenance, author and subject. This calls

on the evidence of certain features common to the three extant long poems attributed to Egill to corroborate the more precise identification of the place (Jórvík) and the recipient in *Arinbjarnarkviða*. *Arinbjarnarkviða* and *Sonatorrek* are both composed in the *kviðuhátt* metre, which, as Faulkes notes, can be regarded as a variant of *fornyrðislag* (essentially the metre of *Höfuðlausn*, as noted above), but having three syllables in alternate lines. This metre too is rare in the tenth century (Faulkes 1991, 84). Special to *Höfuðlausn* and *Sonatorrek* is the conceit of *mærð* (praise) as a concrete building material for the poet to store, carry and shape:

Hlóðk mæðar hlut  
hugknarrar<sup>2</sup> skut.

I loaded the stern of the ship of thought with a portion of praise (*Höfuðlausn* 1,7–8).

Pat ber ek út  
úr orðhofi  
mæðar timbr  
máli laufgat

I bear this timber of praise, adorned with the foliage of speech, from the temple of words (*Sonatorrek* 5,5–8, after Turville-Petre 1976, 31).

Such parallels could indeed be written into poetry composed later for attribution to Egill Skalla-Grímsson. But that possibility is not demonstrably a probability so strong that it renders invalid a discussion based on a cautious acceptance of the truth of the traditional date, location, author and recipient of *Höfuðlausn*.

A separate literary tradition adding support to the authenticity of Egill's authorship of the poetry attributed to him is that which specifies a chain of transmission through Einarr skálaglamm, the young poet with whom, according to the saga, Egill had a virtually bardic tutelary relationship. Even this tradition, however, itself implies an important duality in the status of Egill as a literary figure from an early date: not only as the major poet and author he presumably really was, but also as a character within narrative, a legendary figure. He was able to represent the first-generation Icelander, the Viking, with still intimate but highly problematic connexions with Norway. If his poetry was genuinely preserved for such reasons, it provides a valuable insight into the evolution of the stock figure of the independent Icelander: an heroic exile—notably, just like Eiríkr, Haraldr Fairhair's son.

<sup>2</sup>Thus Finnur Jónsson 1929. The variants recorded in *Skjaldedigtning A* are *míns knarrar*, *minis knarrar* and *minnis knarrar*; *hugknarrar* is Finnur Jónsson's emendation.

*A reading of the poem*

The essential quality of Egill's *Hofuðlausn* lies not in spectacular but superficial displays of ingenuity in respect of form but rather in the steady maintenance and powerful development of a series of conceits, often paradoxical, that embody the real intellectual content of the poem much more than do the predictable elements in the praise of Eiríkr. This is especially the case if we allow for some rich exploration of the potential polysemy of language in this poem (cf. de Looze 1989). One of the most central of these paradoxes is that of the Norse poet performing, in Norse and for an appropriate audience, in England. This is underlined by images representing Norse poetry as an integral part of Norse pagan culture and its mythology, and their juxtaposition with the careful specification of location (noted above):

Vestr fórk of ver,  
en ek Viðris ber  
munstrandar mar,

West I came over sea, and I bear the sea of Viðrir's mind-shore (1,1–3),  
and:

Berk Óðins mjöð  
á Engla bjöð.

I bear Óðinn's mead to the lands of the English (2,3–4).

An important semantic field that is introduced to the poem in the first two stanzas is that of liquids: a variety of kinetic liquids, travelled over, like the sea, or vital and vivifying, like Óðinn's mead. Through a powerful trope, this symbolic liquid, the mead of poetry, becomes a microcosm of the large, external situation: it is the sea of the mind-shore (*munstrandar marr*) that is both carried by the poet and simultaneously carrying him, transformed in line 8 into a boat:

Hlóðk mæðar hlut  
hugknarrar skut.

I loaded the stern of the ship of thought with a portion of praise (1,7–8).

Battle and blood are subsequently merged with this cluster of imagery,  
with:

Þaut mækis ó

A river of sword surged (4,6)

and:



Par's í blóði  
í brimils móði  
völlr of þrumði

There where in blood the seal's plain [= the sea] resounded in fury (5,5–7),  
or alternatively, adopting the reading of Worm's text in line 6:

Par's í blóði  
enn brimlá-móði  
völlr of þrumði.

There where the sea-worn shoreline resounded bloodily.

This image in verse 5, however it is read, is the first indication in the poem that Eiríkr is being glorified for his achievement in a sea or coastal battle. The opportunities this situation offers are further explored. The couplet just before the first refrain (*stef*) of the poem,

Hné folk á fit  
við fleina hnit,

An army fell at the shoreline as the arrows struck (6,1–2),

contains an enriching range of possible concurrent images, including what could be a fine example of figurative amplification achieved by a metaphorical meaning—'men sank to the margin (of life)'—beyond the more mundane 'men fell at the shoreline' or '. . . on to the shore'. *Fit* has a diverse range of attested meanings that could only encourage this sort of polysemous interpretation: the land margin of an area of water; the edge or hem of a piece of textile; the web or skin of animals' or birds' feet. Poetically, however, the normal use of *fit* = 'land' is absolutely clear (*Lexicon poeticum*; de Vries 1961; Ásgeir B. Magnússon 1989, all s. v. *fit*).

An allegorisation of the passage through life and time as a passage through space, which essentially is what is suggested here as the richer potential of the image, is very rare in early Norse poetry. It seems, in fact, to be in the poetry of, or attributed to, Egill Skalla-Grimsson that this conceit, or related ones, are most widely developed. Imagery of the *land* recurs insistently in his *lausavísur*. In *Sonatorrek*, the end of his family line seems to be represented by the edge of a forest; his family was a *frændgarðr* (a kin-enclosure), broken by the sea (vv. 4–7, cf. also v. 21; de Looze 1989, 137–38).

These devices are being used in a eulogy of a prince. Genuinely or feignedly, the relationship between poet and prince that supposedly precedes this poem is one of division, antagonism and menace. This

situation does not appear within the poem beyond the poet's conventional worries about not being granted the silence he needs to present his work:

Ef þogn of get.

If I obtain silence (3,4).

The essence of paradox is the reconciliation of the supposedly incompatible, and this purely contextual hostility between poet and prince adds a paradoxical aspect to the intimate apposition of these two characters that *Hofuðlausn* presents. Poet and prince are made very similar in this poem. Just as the poet has carried his gift of poetry over the sea, Eiríkr has come from a battle across the sea, where he had provided the wolves with carrion,

Bauð ulfum hræ  
Eirekr of sæ,

Across the sea, Eiríkr provided wolves with carrion (12,3–4; 15,3–4), and sated *benmós granar* (the lips of the wound-gull, 11,4). The parallelism between poet and war-leader is emphasised particularly towards the end of the poem. In v.1, the mead of poetry is brought *Vestr . . . of ver*; in v.18 we hear, conversely:

Frétt's austr of mar  
Eireks of far.

Eiríkr's progress is heard of east across the sea (18,7–8).

To confirm the cyclical restatement of the opening themes, the poet reiterates the mythological image at the end of the poem:

Hrærðak munni  
af munar grunni  
Óðins ægi.

I stirred Óðinn's sea with my mouth, from the bottom of my mind (19,5–7).

This particular half-verse (*helmingr*) is concluded with an image that finally makes explicit the central and most important conceit deployed by the poet in this composition:

Of jöru fægi.

Concerning the polisher of battle (19,8).

Battle is a work of art, and Eiríkr an artist, just as the poem is a work of art and Egill an artist. The first hint of such linkage between warfare and verbal art comes in the mystifying evocation of imminent and incipient battle as an oppressive prophecy:

Malmhriðar spó  
sú's mest of lá.

Prophecy of metal-storm, which lay most oppressively over (4,7–8).

Possibly less bewildering is the image of the *vefr darraðar* (the weaving of the *darraðr*) in the next stanza (5,2). Important here is the question of whether one accepts the usual interpretation of *darraðr* as 'dart', or Anne Holtsmark's fully-argued case for *darraðr* as 'banner' (Holtsmark 1939; Poole 1991, 125–31). Snorri Sturluson clearly understood *darraðr* as a name for a spear, but no source before him is unambiguous (cf. *Lexicon poeticum* s. v. *darraðr*). With *darraðr* as 'dart', the image *vefr darraðar* becomes interestingly polysemous and kinetic, able to represent both the ordered forest of spears protruding above the shields and poised for battle (*fyr grams gløðum/geirvangs røðum*: before the leader's bright spear-plain [= shield] ranks (5,3–4)) and the interlacing shafts and points once the *mêlée* has begun. With *darraðr* as 'banner', the image seems instead to embody a vision of the final momentary state of pomp and poise—the banner standing still—before battle is joined and:

brimils . . .  
vøllr of þrumði,  
und véum glumði.

The seal's plain [sea] resounded and boomed beneath the standards (5,7–8).

With this reading, at this point, art and battle, though very closely associated, would still appear essentially to be contrasted.

The richest development of this now tantalising conceit of the art of battle may appear in verse 8, where the poet focuses upon the play of the sword:

Hlam heinsøðul  
við hjalmrøðul,  
beit bengrefill  
þat vas blóðrefill.

The saddle-of-the-whetstone [= sword] rang against the radiance of the helmet [= shield]; the wound-engraver bit: that was a *blóðrefill* (8,1–4).

The literal sense of the compound *hjalmrøðull* is 'helmet-sun'. The interpretation 'shield' is suggested by a number of other kennings in which *røðull* is clearly used as a base-word in a kenning for 'shield' together with the protective connotations of *hjalmr* as determinant. *Hjalmrøðull* could also be taken to mean 'sword'; cf. *hjalmdr* (*Húsdrápa* 11) and *hjalmsvell* (*Háttatal* 60) which both mean 'sword', and there are a few instances of

*røðull* as a base-word in kennings for ‘sword’ (see *Lexicon poeticum* s. v.). An alternative reading to *hjalmrøðul* in *Höfuðlausn* 8,2 —found, in fact, in ε—is *hjaldrøðul*, ‘battle-sun’, which Nordal (1933, 188) accepts and interprets as another kenning for ‘sword’. Whatever we find it more fitting to substitute for these terms in an English translation, a clear contrast is presented between the mundanity of the sword as first depicted, *heinsøðull*, metaphorically identified with a saddle and embracing the humble whetstone, and the image evoked of the artificial splendour of a helmet or sword represented as flaming like the sun. The shocking, and resonant, blow of the sword against this dazzlingly unfocused object is powerfully emphasised in the line by prosody (including rhyme). In turn, in the next line, the sword itself begins to transform, explicitly becoming a craftsman’s tool, a ‘wound-engraver’.

The last half-line—*þat vas blóðrefill*—is usually translated as an example of *tilsagt*, a gloss to a kenning which produces a rather limp conclusion to the *helmingr*: ‘that was a sword’. If so, it could be the fourth kenning for ‘sword’ in two lines. *Blóðrefill*, literally perhaps ‘blood-tearer’, is twice recorded elsewhere as a simple kenning for ‘sword’, in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs* (Ch.3),

hneit mér við hjarta  
hjórr Angantýs,  
hvass blóðrefill  
herðr í eitri,

Angantýr’s sword struck me to the heart, a keen *blóðrefill* hardened in venom, and in a *pula* in manuscripts of Snorri’s *Edda* (see *Lexicon poeticum* s. v. *blóðrefill*). The lexeme *refill*, however, had two meanings: besides ‘point’ or ‘piercer’ it could refer to a piece of textile, often a braid or piece of edging of some form. Neither of these elements is particularly frequent in Old Norse literature, and it is impossible to be sure of the precise conceptual or associative semantic value of the lexeme in the mid-tenth century. In the sense of ‘cutter’, *refill* appears only in compounds, such as, for instance, *tannrefill* (‘chisel?’), and probably the recurrent *refilstígr* (‘harsh path’) too, used by Þórleifr jarlsskáld in the late tenth century. The simplex *refill* is recorded only in the sense of a piece of textile, on several occasions in prose from the late twelfth century onwards, in medieval times mostly in non-literary documents (cf. Cleasby/Vigfússon or Fritzner, s. v. *refill*). Only in thirteenth-century poetry does the element appear in this sense in kennings, e. g. *refils grund* (a dressed field [= a woman]).

The etymology of this lexeme (or these lexemes) and thus the relationship between the two senses have always puzzled lexicographers. A

relationship with Indo-European \**rep*, which gives Norse *rafr* ('amber'; 'strip of dried fish [halibut]'; whence, perhaps, 'strip of cloth', 'thread'), is usually accepted. It is practically impossible, however, to dissociate *refill* ('piercer') from the verbs *rífa*, *rjúfa* ('tear') (Alexander Jóhannesson 1956, 721; Pokorny 1959–69, I 865; de Vries 1961, s. v. *ráf* and *refill*; Ásgeir B. Magnússon 1989, s. v. *refill*). Whatever the case may actually have been, there is no known or perceptible reason, linguistic or historical, why the sense *refill* = 'piece of textile' should not have been current at the time Egill's *Höfuðlausn* was composed. The normal use of a word in one, possibly archaic, sense in poetic diction, and the concomitant exclusion from poetry of what had in effect become a homonym with a very different sense, are perfectly familiar phenomena and mean that the lack of evidence for *refill*, 'a piece of textile', before the late twelfth century is of little significance. We now have evidence for the advanced development of the textile industry in Scandinavia, especially in Norway, before the Viking Age. While it is the diamond twill cloth known—apparently rather misleadingly—as the *Birka type* that forms the heart of the evidence for a well-established textile industry by the Viking Age, at a much earlier date it is specifically tablet-woven bands used as hems and cuffs that are most characteristic of a distinctive and influential western Scandinavian tradition (Jørgensen 1985, *passim*; 1992, esp. 122–52; cf. also Ingstad 1992). Returning to the *blóðrefill* in *Höfuðlausn*, a rather dull, primary sense of v.8,4, 'that was a sword', is indisputable. In the context of the conceit of battle as art, however, a concurrent metaphor 'that was a blood-braid', or 'that was a blood-tapestry', can quite justifiably be read here. This reading is not validated by any other poet or poem more clearly having used *refill* in this way. Such, however, is the nature of true poetic invention.

Eiríkr, the only auditor of the poem explicitly addressed in the text (3,1), may be the artist of battle, but he needs an artist to crystallise his glory, to perceive and express his martial splendour and so to raise a literary monument, *aere perennius*, not simply *about* his military prowess but rather growing out of it and thus actually embodying it. (All this when previously, according to the saga, Egill had raised a *níðstong*, a pole inscribed with a verse attacking Eiríkr, that was equally indelible from memory.) The poet, the maker, acts with the king, the breaker of gold (v.17), in transforming destructive battle into the creative process of art:

Orðstír of gat  
Eirekr at þat.

Eiríkr won (or begat) the glory of fame after this (6,3–4; 9,3–4).

In the words of the poet, we see precisely the *orðstírr* (literally ‘word-glory’), emphasised in the first refrain of the poem, that Eiríkr has won *and* begotten. The poet’s words breach and fill the silence that they themselves invoke at the start of the poem (vv.2–3), just as the battle, first heard of through verbal report and then announced by its noise, grows around the king:

Flestr maðr of frá,  
hvat fylkir vá,  
en Viðrir sá,  
hvar valr of lá.  
Óx hjörva glam  
við hlífar þrom,  
guðr óx of gram,  
gramr sótti fram.

Most men heard what the king won by fighting, and Viðrir saw where the dead bodies lay. The noise of swords against the shield-edge grew; battle grew around the king; the king advanced (3,5–4,4).

The intimate and creative union between poet and prince is a sort of mating between two wise, *horskir*, men, without any scandalous overtones. Where a king fights, wounds grow naturally, like plants:

Óxu<sup>3</sup> undir  
við jöfurs fundi

Wounds grew in the king’s presence (7,5–6)

—plants that are kissed by insects that kill rather than pollinate, directed, again, by the king, now more like a god of nature:

Jöfurr sveigði ý,  
flugu unda bý.

The king bent the yew; the wound-bees flew (15,1–2).

In these ways, various aspects of a mutual dependency between poet and king are made visible. The king needs the poet to immortalise his reputation; the poet is provided by the king with material with which to establish his own reputation, and so—as perhaps is symbolised by the dramatic context of the head-ransoming episode—depends on the king for his life. In more than one way, the king would deliver a mortal wound to his own glory by destroying the poet.

<sup>3</sup> *Sic* ε. W has *æstusk* (‘flowed’) here.

*The text as script and stage: 'enunciation'*

*Höfuðlausn* is a poem that meticulously sets the stage on which it is to be performed. We have seen, above, how the English setting is conspicuously evoked in the first two stanzas. There are two principal characters in this 'play': a first person *ek* who narrates the poem (1,1 etc.) and a second person listener implied most directly by the imperative *hygg* (3,1). These individuals, as we have just seen, enter into a reciprocal exchange relationship within which the two are mutually dependent (cf. de Looze 1989, 127–33). This play, then, subsumes a nexus of social relations (the relations of patronage and dependency) and certain ideological assumptions: criteria of what is valuable or praiseworthy, and why. In other words, the poem embodies substantial parts of a cultural system, and in this respect the contents of the poem are indeed highly conventional. Basic definitions of human culture usually represent it as a system composed of three primary subsystems: economic, social and ideological. The cultural system implied by this poem is an idealised and unambiguous one, in which in fact the economic subsystem appears only in a highly restricted form: gold, which is not won by the prince in any specified way, is broken and cast freely in many directions by him. Thus the same disdain that the king ought to have towards the possession of exchangeable treasure is shown by the poem towards basic economic processes. A single, telling exception is the firm grip the king places on his lands:

En jöfurr lönðum  
heldr hornklofi.

And the king holds the lands in horn-cleft grip (16,6–7).

Yet the poem also postulates the very antithesis of an intimate exchange between an artist and a king restricted to one unique and specific occasion. Poet and prince are not isolated, inhabiting a world entirely of their own. The text itself evokes an anonymous, surrounding group of men, in the *manna sjöt* ('dwellings of men', 20,4), a potential audience for the poem but also its potential destroyers if the poet does not succeed in obtaining the silence he needs. This group, of course, is not just the imagined company assembled in Eiríkr's hall but any potential audience, who could suffocate the poem, whatever its merits, by their indifference or their purposeless and valueless babble. A poem of praise is not meant to be a momentary thing. It is meant to be a monument that lasts. There is a profound tension in the concept of *orðstírr* ('word-glory', 'glorious reputation'). The spoken word, *orð*, which itself becomes a term for fame, is notoriously fugitive.

But real glory is lasting glory. When the poet speaks of Eiríkr's fame spreading through all lands (18,5–8), we can recognise a trope for Eiríkr's fame spreading through all future generations of men too. The poem is a monument available to all future generations to interpret and appreciate, and this must be done in the way that the poet and narrator intended; otherwise its monumentality must be threatened. The poem therefore needs to transcend the particular time and place in which it is rooted in order to fulfil its purpose. It can be claimed that, as a final paradox, the poem achieves this by successfully embodying the past time of Eiríkr's (and Egill's) glory for a future audience to recapture and admire. In this way, its 'conventionality' is truly vitalised.

The rich and sophisticated implications of this paradox can be appreciated particularly well by assessing it in the light of a linguistic conceptualisation of *enunciation* (Vance 1986, 86–110, esp. 88–89). This is a concept which highlights the features of a text that can function only in the context of the act of discourse in which they are located: for instance *I* and *you* may pronominally refer to persons existing independently of and outside the text that refers to them, but the occurrence of these terms requires a specific discursive context in which 'I' speaks to 'you'. This phenomenon is a structural characteristic of language that can be artistically exploited. It allows a text to appropriate external referents and at least to attempt to reposition them within itself. We have been exploring the ways in which, for a variety of purposes of his own, the poet uses the text to merge himself, Eiríkr and the text into a knot of interdependency. The process of relocation is nicely exemplified by the contrast between the *Vestr fórk* of v.1 and the *frétt's austr* of v.18. With the first-person form, the location, *vestr*, is the direction in which the poet, like the prince, has travelled; by v.18 this is the position they are both locked into, looking out now to observe what is happening—in the third person—in the other place, *austr*. With all the interpenetration of art and battle in this poem, the specific battle the poem refers to can even be felt to be superseded by the poem. It is finished; it can only exist in memory; and now that memory is irretrievably invaded by the poetical account.

#### *Poem and place*

As has been pointed out, Egill's *Höfuðlausn* represents, in a truncated but still sharply focused and idealised form, a coherent cultural system. This contains the traditional Germanic *princeps* (alias *dux*, *rex*)–*comitatus* relationship, articulated through the mutual exchanging of gifts and obligations. It is an ideal that lives on in the tenth century with real literary



vigour and coherence only in Scandinavian verse (cf. Hedeager 1993). Scandinavia is clearly identified as the home of this cultural system within the text, both Eiríkr and Egill having brought their ideals over the sea to Britain. Emphasised with this are the late pagan associations of this system within Viking culture: it is linked to an Odinic cult, the essence of which is captured by Óðinn/Viðrir's approving gaze at the product of war:

En Viðrir sá,  
hvar valr of lá.

And Viðrir saw where the dead bodies lay (3,7–8).

If we look at what otherwise was going on in England in the mid-tenth century, especially in the Scandinavian-settled areas and indeed quite specifically in Northumbria and York, these aspects of *Höfuðlausn* are very surprising. Both politically and culturally, assimilation between invader and native had been going on for several generations; in the middle of the tenth century this was a strong and continuing process, against which the uncompromisingly Viking character of Egill's poem stands in sharp contrast. The territorial reconquest of Scandinavian England by the English kings of Wessex of the first half of the tenth century reached a symbolic and celebrated climax with Æthelstan's victory at Brunanburh in 937 which variously established or confirmed his supremacy over several Welsh and Scottish kings and princes as well as over Northumbria (Dumville 1992). Northumbrian independence, however, proved to be resilient, and the political ties between Northumbria and the rest of England were to remain markedly fluid for 150 years yet. An important development in the concept of kingship embedded in the policy of the Wessex/English kings is a more ready and direct association of the king with a *territory* (i. e. as King of England) rather than, as was conventional earlier, with a people (King of the English). Æthelstan indeed had coins issued bearing the legend *rex totius Britanniae* (Dumville 1992, 170; cf. John 1966). It was precisely such a shift in Scandinavia that was perceived by Icelanders and 'mythologised' in historiographical accounts of Haraldr Finehair's role in the settlement of Iceland. That Icelandic attitude poses a set of problems for a conservative Icelandic poet eulogising a Scandinavian king ruling in England.

In fact this Eiríkr is hardly praised for anything he is or has been doing in England; rather for a previous victory over the Scots. Nor, indeed, is he especially eulogised as a *king*. In verses 16–18 he is described in the present tense, but in a stylised and statuesque pose, holding the land like a boar (*jofurr* is etymologically identical with Old English *eofor*, and this asso-

ciation could have attached to the word in Norse) and scattering treasure. It is striking that unambiguous social titles are very rarely used for Eiríkr. He is referred to as *gramr* and *jǫfurr* (four times each), *hilmir* (three times), *vísi* and *(-)skati* (twice each), *fylkir*, *folkhagi*, *hringbrjótr* and *þengill* (once each). These words are widely used in skaldic poetry as words standing for ‘king’ or ‘prince’. They are almost all of them, in some sense and to varying degrees, figurative terms. Arguably, even the grip the king realistically places on the land is modified by connotations of the resolute stand of the boar—perhaps at bay (e. g. 16,6–7; see above)? How different, in *Aðalsteinsdrápa*, is the perception by a Norse poet—perhaps Egill himself—of the steady and determined strategy behind Æthelstan’s glory after his victory at Brunanburh:

Nú hefr foldgnárr fellda  
—fellt jörð und nið Ellu—  
hjaldrsnerandi, harra  
höfuðaðmr, þría jöfra.

Now, towering over the land, the enhancer of battle, the king’s [or kings’] foremost scion, has felled three kings. Land falls under the kinsman of Ælla (from *Aðalsteinsdrápa*, Nordal 1933, 146).<sup>4</sup>

There are two, possibly concurrent, ways of interpreting this approach to the titles. As a style, it could represent the carefully measured and fitting handling of a *de facto* ruler whose legal and real position was far from definite. It could also be an ‘alternative’ representation of a hero: one currently in the position of a contemporary king but whose glory lay in his emulation of more ancient models.

Of all the aspects of the assimilation of Scandinavian colonist to native English that can be seen, the one that is most conspicuously represented in material culture and was therefore symbolically one of the most important aspects of the whole process was the conversion of Scandinavian England to Christianity. East Anglia, still firmly within the Danelaw, had produced coins commemorating its last English king, Eadmund, as a Christian martyr before the end of the ninth century, and by about 900 the coinage of York, under Scandinavian kings, was demonstrating assimilation in the use of Christian mottoes on the reverses of the coins and perhaps more subtle details too (cf. Hines 1991, 417–18). To this area of evidence we can

<sup>4</sup>For a defence of the authenticity of this fragment against the doubts expressed by Sigurður Nordal (1933, xv) see Nordland 1956, 101–03. Nordland’s case can indeed be strengthened, for instance by further exploration of the implications of an identification of Æthelstan as a kinsman of Ælla and of other artistic reflections of his annexation of Northumbria, but this is not the place to go into these in detail.

now add the very similar evidence of continuity in funerary inscriptions and stonecarving between late Anglian and 'Anglo-Scandinavian' York, which in itself is just part of a varied but persistent pattern of artistic hybridisation on the sculpture of eastern Yorkshire fully explored by James Lang (1991; cf. Hines 1993). There is no room here to go into any significant expansion of the arguments for and details of this process of assimilation that have been introduced and discussed, admittedly briefly, elsewhere (Hines 1989, 1991), and it would be otiose simply to repeat the surveys already published.

It is, however, worth going further into the state of affairs in York itself in the tenth century, as revealed by archaeological excavations; the substantial discoveries on the Coppergate site are well known, by name if not in detail. A very obvious question that the new insights into York pose for the cultural historian is to what extent late ninth- and tenth-century York can be regarded as a 'Scandinavian', or even a 'Viking', town. The informed and sensible answer is given by the term preferred by the York Archaeological Trust to designate this period: York grew into an 'Anglo-Scandinavian' town (cf. Hall 1984). At York, and indeed at Lincoln, archaeology reveals a clear coincidence between the Scandinavian settlement of post-867 recorded by history and the substantial redevelopment of urban areas including Coppergate and Flaxengate respectively. The connexion between the two events seems too close to be plausibly treated as mere coincidence, although it is true that urban development was gathering pace generally in England and Europe in the late ninth and early tenth centuries—for instance at Gloucester, certainly free from any direct Scandinavian involvement even if military responses to the Danish settlement were some factor in its redevelopment (Heighway 1984). Whether Scandinavian settlers really created urban growth in York in the late ninth and tenth centuries or just catalysed it, the process had very little in the way of distinctively Scandinavian models of township to follow, and in fact the particular character of York that was to emerge was a local one. The building styles found at Coppergate and Flaxengate are varied, and scarcely diagnostic of any specific group or culture. The high level of artistic fusion noted in the sculpture recurs both on individual items and in the whole range of metalwork that can be seen to have been in use and in production at Coppergate. The trading links evidenced by material found in York seem to be symptomatic. Trading links with the Continent were at least as important as those with Scandinavia, from where a limited range of commodities was imported: soapstone, stone for hones and whetstones, and amber. In the light of the range of imagery in *Höfuðlausn*, discussed

above, it is interesting to note that Lise Bender Jørgensen observes—apparently with some surprise—the virtual non-appearance of high-quality Scandinavian, and particularly Norwegian, textiles in York and Scandinavian England (Jørgensen 1992, 38–41).

If, then, Egill's *Höfuðlausn* was performed at Eiríkr's court in York in the middle of the tenth century, as we can reasonably believe it was, it would have evoked within the precincts of that court a familiar and only partly imaginary world constructed out of a material and ideological culture that was starkly different—perhaps painfully obviously so—from the very streets outside. How are we to interpret this sort of contradiction between what we have identified as opposed, normative cultural tendencies: the Viking, and the Anglo-Scandinavian? It does not simply mean that we have gone wrong in our characterisation of either tendency, as long as particular cultures can be constituted of *norms*, which enjoin conformity to a system of goals and values but also allow variation and opposition, not *rules*. The alternative stance of Egill's *Höfuðlausn* to generations of development in Scandinavian England grows, in this perspective, into an act of dissent. Fascinatingly, the confrontational aspect of this dissent is not focused on the anglicising Anglo-Scandinavians of the Danelaw or Northumbria—or at least is only very indirectly focused upon them—but rather upon the troubled figure of Eiríkr, the Viking war leader and born prince, a king unable to call any kingdom truly his own.

The text, as we have seen, functions by laying hold upon two historical figures and reshaping them as 'characters' to obey and fulfil the rules of its own fictional world. Paradoxically, this merger of two historical individuals and a literary text is still an embodiment of the individualist ethos that had such an important part to play in Viking cult and culture. It is only with the mating of the unique, creative capacities of the prince and poet that the poem and all that it involves can be born. A useful anthropological analogue is found in a cultural individualist finely evoked by Edward Sapir: the figure of Two Crows, an Omaha Indian who denies any and every generalisation about his and his tribe's culture in the teeth of the attestations of his fellow Indians (Sapir 1938). In Sapir's humane portrayal, Two Crows emerges as a figure of heroic pathos, not a comic maverick. The pose struck by the poet, and imposed upon Eiríkr here, is more active, and thus more defiant, heroic, impractical and tragic. In an astonishing way, this poem thus transposes a typically Viking praise of action into a meditative mode. The violence of Viking behaviour is too often and too easily explained away as a reversion to natural human savagery. Egill's *Höfuðlausn* could reassure the Viking, and can still warn the non-Viking reader,

that the Vikings, however barbaric their behaviour, were not *mindless* barbarians.

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## SKALDS, TROUBADOURS AND SAGAS

By ALISON FINLAY

### *I Love and sagas*

THE SPIRIT of the Sagas of Icelanders is notoriously inimical to the gentler emotions. Not only does saga prose, often described as terse or objective, avoid the direct expression of emotion, but love affairs and marriages, where they do enter into the narrative, are treated far from romantically. Theodore Andersson remarks that 'though we think of the sagas as being the least romantic literature imaginable, it remains a fact that love is the most frequent cause for conflict' (1967, 12–13). Where romantic or lyrical expression does occur in the sagas, often in verse contrasted in tone with the surrounding prose, it has seemed to critics to require explanation. From time to time the rather vague suggestion has been made that influences from southern Europe inspired the Icelanders' treatment of this unfamiliar narrative material (Andersson 1969, 7–8). Most recent and influential is the study by Bjarni Einarsson of the four poets' sagas sharing the theme of a poet's unhappy love for the wife of another man, in which he argues for the derivation of this story and its treatment from the romance of Tristan, and for the influence of Provençal troubadour lyrics on the accompanying verses (1961; 1971; 1976).

Renewed sympathy for Bjarni Einarsson's approach has been expressed in the context of the recent critical tendency to seek foreign influences, learned as well as secular, on saga literature. This arose, according to Carol Clover, as part of 'the dramatic reaction, in the mid-1960s, against the methodological and ideological conservatism of saga scholarship' (Clover 1985, 251). Herself the author of an attempt to derive the narrative structures of the *Íslendingasögur* from French romance (Clover 1982), Clover takes up a position similar to that of Bjarni Einarsson in asserting contacts with French culture not necessarily traceable through known surviving texts:

The methodology of the Icelandic school, despite its ostensible neutrality, has conditioned decisively the form and direction of scholarly research. The insistence on sources in the form of manuscripts known to have circulated in medieval Iceland has meant, in practice, the avoidance of those areas of the literature for which such 'material links' are scanty or absent . . . The reader of skaldic and troubadour poetry and biography cannot help being struck by both the formal and phenomenal parallels . . . and the same goes for the reader of saga

and prose romance . . . It comes down to the value of circumstantial evidence, which for many readers and scholars is at least strongly suggestive if not persuasive but which for the Icelandic school is no evidence at all (Clover 1985, 250).

The theory has implications for the composition of saga narrative; for if the verses of the skalds were influenced by troubadour verse, dating from the mid-twelfth century at the earliest, they cannot be the authentic creations of the tenth- and eleventh-century poets said by the sagas to have recited them. Bjarni Einarsson, in fact, argues that the verses were composed together with the accompanying saga prose by the saga authors themselves.

While the argument for troubadour influence is thinly argued and generally unconvincing, it is this compositional aspect, the relationship between saga prose and the verses it includes, which prompts me to reconsider the subject. The verses supposedly composed by Jarl Rǫgnvaldr Kali and his companions on a visit to the Holy Land in 1151, some of which seem likely to be following troubadour fashions, and the prose account in which they are embedded in *Orkneyinga saga*, probably written no more than fifty years later, give interesting insights into how such influence transmits itself into the body of a saga.

## II *Rǫgnvaldr Kali in Narbonne*

For the question of the possible influence of troubadour verse on skaldic verse, and the sagas incorporating it, the *locus classicus* is the episode in *Orkneyinga saga* in which the Orkney Jarl Rǫgnvaldr Kali and his Icelandic companions compose verses in honour of Viscountess Ermengarda of Narbonne. Rǫgnvaldr is said to have visited Ermengarda's court in the course of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, dated to 1151 (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 209–12). The saga names three poets accompanying the Jarl, two of whom, Ármóðr and Oddi inn litli Glúmsson, are said in some, but not all, manuscripts to be Icelandic (pp. 200–01; for an account of Rǫgnvaldr and his poets, see Bibire 1988). Ermengarda was the patroness of several troubadours.<sup>1</sup> According to the saga, Rǫgnvaldr follows prevailing local fashion by offering a verse in the lady's praise (verse 55). After leaving the

<sup>1</sup> Ermengarda, daughter of Aimeric IV of Narbonne (1143–97), held court in Narbonne after her father's death. The thirteenth-century *vida* of the poet Peire Rogier claims that

E venc s'en a Narbona, en la cort de ma domna Ermengarda, qu'era adoncs de gran valor e de gran pretz. Et ella l'acuilli fort e ill fetz grans bens. Et s'enamoret d'ella e fetz sos vers e sas cansos d'ella. Et ella los pres en grat . . .



court, Rognvaldr speaks a further verse, capped by one each from his companions Ármóðr and Oddi, all in different modes professing love for Ermengarda (vv. 56–58). Subsequent chapters include verses of a more familiar skaldic kind, recounting details of Rognvaldr's adventures but formally addressed to a woman, sometimes specifically called *Ermingerðr* or *vølska víf*, 'French woman' (pp. 215–31; verses 59, 61, 63, 64, 66, 69, 75).

Critics have followed the invitation of the prose narrative to find that these verses 'bear a clear troubadour imprint' (Andersson 1969, 13).<sup>2</sup> If this is so, the saga, written in Iceland c.1200, is an uncontroversial example of Provençal troubadour verse influencing Icelandic saga writing before the earliest *Íslendingasögur* were written. Since the *Orkneyinga saga* episode takes place in 1151, this does not raise the same chronological problems as suggesting troubadour influence on verses attributed to the tenth- and eleventh-century poets of the poets' sagas, which demands acceptance of Bjarni Einarsson's wholesale view that the verses were composed by thirteenth-century saga authors. Even the more moderate proposition, now accepted by many scholars, that at least some verses, and other narrative materials, were contributed at intermediate stages throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries,<sup>3</sup> allows little time for troubadour fashions to reach Icelandic material used as sources by saga authors in the early thirteenth century.

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Lonc temps estet ab ela en cort e si fo crezut qu'el agues joi d'amor d'ella.  
(*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 267)

He went to Narbonne, to the court of Lady Ermengarda, who was then of great worth and of great merit. And she greeted him well and gave him great favors. And he fell in love with her and composed his poems and his songs about her. And she welcomed them . . . He was at her court for a long time, and it was believed that he received the pleasures of love from her. (Egan 1984, 78)

For an account of Ermengarda's relationships with troubadours, and reference to arguments against identifying the Ermingerðr visited by Rognvaldr with Ermengarda, see Nicholson 1976, 160–64.

<sup>2</sup> *Orkneyinga saga* names Rognvaldr as joint author (with the Icelander, Hallr Þórarinnsson) of *Háttalykill inn forni* (p. 185). Rognvaldr's authorship (or equally, the saga author's belief in it) of this *clavis metrica*, a catalogue of skaldic metres itself following a Continental tradition of Latin verse catalogues, makes plausible the saga's suggestion of his interest in and willingness to experiment with unfamiliar poetic forms.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Jónas Kristjánsson: 'The suggestion would be that the suspect stanzas were composed neither by Kormákr nor by the author of the saga, but by a man of some learning who wanted to add spice to oral tales that were current about the tenth-century poet' (1988, 228).

The troubadour influence apparently discernible in the verses of Rognvaldr and his companions is partly suggested by their prose context. The early-thirteenth-century saga author presumably knew of the Provençal custom of composing verse homage to a patroness, and may have consciously constructed his episode to suggest this. This is particularly clear in the sequence placed after Rognvaldr and his companions leave Narbonne, in which, by way of entertainment (*sátu þeir þá ok drukku ok váru allkátir* (p. 211), ‘then they sat drinking and were very cheerful’), they exchange verse tributes to Ermengarda (verses 56–58). As Andersson comments, ‘the fact that three men, with an air of perfect sociability, celebrate the same lady shows that they are merely playing at the courtly game. This game is never played in the North; no lady in Iceland or Norway is the object of half-serious homage from several skalds’ (1969, 15).

But the singularity largely depends on the context. As Meissner noted (1925, 146–47), the situation of two or more skalds exchanging verses on the same subject as a *jeu d’esprit* is found elsewhere in sagas; in chapter 85 of *Orkneyinga saga*, for instance, Rognvaldr composes a verse about a man depicted on a wall-hanging, and challenges Oddi to produce another verse on the same subject without repeating any of his words (pp. 202–03). The saga author adapts this convention to the subject of praise of a lady, thus ensuring that these verses are read in the ‘half-serious’ spirit suggested by Andersson, and that they lose any narrative function they may once have had. Placed together in this way, they read as a sampler of different styles of love.

It is argued that the content of these three verses is unusual for skaldic verse, showing parallels with troubadour themes. Rognvaldr’s own contribution to the triad (verse 56) declares that Ermengarda has commanded his crusade:

Orð skal Ermingerðar  
ítr drengr muna lengi;  
brúðr vill rökk, at riðim  
Ránheim til Jórðánar.  
En er aptr fara runnar  
unnviggs of haf sunnan,  
rístum, heim at hausti,  
hvalfrón til Nerbónar. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 211)

Let the excellent man long remember Ermengarda’s words; the fine lady wishes us to sail to Jordan. But when seafarers come back across the sea from the south in autumn, we will come over the water to Narbonne.

Andersson considers the conception to be ‘of pure troubadour provenance’, and adds, ‘As far as I can see, the idea of an enterprise undertaken in the service of a lady is unparalleled in Norse poetry’ (1969, 19). In fact, comparable deference to a woman’s will, admittedly instructing the warrior how to fight, rather than directing his movements, is expressed in a verse spoken, according to *Heimskringla* and other Kings’ Sagas, by Haraldr harðráði before the battle of Stamford Bridge:

Krjúpum vér fyr vápna,  
valteigs, brøkun eigi,  
svá bauð Hildir, at hjaldri,  
haldorð, í bug skjaldar.  
Hótt bað mik, þars mættusk,  
menskoroð bera forðum,  
hlakkar íss ok hausar,  
hjalmstofn í gný malma.

(*Heimskringla* 1941–51, III 188)<sup>4</sup>

We will not creep in the presence of the din of weapons into battle in the shelter of the shield; so the faithful Hildir of the hawk’s land (woman) commanded; the necklace-bearer formerly bade me carry my helmet-support (head) high in the din of swords, where the ice of battle (weapons) and skulls met.

While the placing of verse 56 alongside those of Ármóðr and Oddi highlights its courtly deference, the reference to the pilgrimage associates it rather with the subsequent verses (59–75) describing Rognvaldr’s warlike exploits, which also refer to Ermengarda, in whose name, some verses imply, these deeds are done. The graceful suggestion that the enterprise is inspired by Ermengarda, and in particular the expectation aroused (though in the event unfulfilled) of a return to Narbonne, sets up a potential narrative frame for what follows, which is reinforced by the allusions to her in subsequent verses.

Rognvaldr’s first adulatory verse (55; see pp. 114–15) can also be linked with this sequence. Its incongruous periphrasis *átgjornum rauðk erni / ilka* ‘I reddened the hungry eagle’s claws’, often criticised as ridiculously inept, suggests that it, too, despite its apparently erotic focus, originated in a context dealing with warfare. Andersson calls it ‘a battle metaphor which is either comically inappropriate or, more likely, indicates that the stanza was composed à propos of a later battle, not at Ermengarde’s court, and was simply misplaced by the author of the saga’ (1969, 18).

Some have considered the assertiveness of Ármóðr’s verse 57, announcing his wish to sleep with Ermengarda, too crude to be acceptable in a

<sup>4</sup> For the context of the verse, see Finlay 1986, 27–28.

troubadour milieu, taking this as a mark of the skald's ineptitude in handling unfamiliar material:<sup>5</sup>

Ek mun Ermingerði,  
nema önnur sköp verði,  
margr elr sorg of svinna,  
síðan aldri finna.  
Værak sæll, ef ek svæfa,  
sýn væri þat gæfa,  
brúðr hefr allfagrt enni,  
eina nótt hjá henni. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 212)

I will never see Ermengarda again unless another fate is to be; many suffer sorrow because of the wise lady. I would be happy if I could sleep—that would be clear good fortune; the lady has a really beautiful brow—one night at her side.

But the directness can be paralleled in troubadour verse, especially since it is balanced within the stanza by the more familiar declaration of unsatisfied love. A stanza by Raimbaut d'Aurenga (works dated c.1162–73) includes explicit sexual reference alongside grandiose evaluation comparable with that of the following verse attributed to Oddi, demonstrating that the two postures are not irreconcilable:

Ben aurai, dompna, grand honor  
Si ja de vos m'es jugada  
Honranssa que sotz cobertor  
Vos tenga nud'embrassada;  
Car vos valetz las meillors cen,  
Qu'ieu non sui sobregabaire.  
Sol del pretz ai mon cor gauzen  
Plus que s'era emperaire!

I shall indeed, lady, have great honour if ever the privilege is adjudged me by you of holding you under the cover, naked in my arms, for you are worth the hundred best together, and in this praise I'm not exaggerating; in that merit alone does my heart rejoice more than if I were emperor. (Press 1971, 112–13)

Andersson gives further troubadour analogues (1969, 13 (n. 16) and 21); see pp. 123–27 below.

The unusual end-rhymed verse form of Oddi's verse may be a further indication of foreign influence. This type of end-rhyme (lines rhyming in

<sup>5</sup> Gerd Wolfgang Weber presumably has this verse in mind in commenting: 'The coarse and outspoken sexuality of the skaldic stanzas produced on the occasion has little to do with *amor cortois* (though it is "inspired" by the subject)' (1986, 436, n. 56).

pairs) is described by Snorri as *in minzta runhenda* (Snorri Sturluson 1991, 34–36, and Appendix, 86–88). But *runhenda* of the same type is also found in *Orkneyinga saga* in a verse attributed to Hallr Þórarinnsson (p. 183, v. 42) and in one attributed to Rognvaldr (p. 235, v. 80), neither verse associated with the visit to southern France.

It has been suggested that the submissive tone of verse 58, in which Oddi declares himself unworthy of Ermengarda, is an answer, and implied reproof, to Ármóðr. The poet's humble stance is unlike the usual skaldic self-assertion, and could be an imitation of a troubadour's submission to his lady:

Trautt erum vér, sem ek vætti,  
verðir Ermingerðar,  
veitk, at horsk má heita  
hlaðgrund konungr sprunda. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 212)

I am hardly, as I think, worthy of Ermengarda; I know that the wise lady may be called king among women.

Andersson drily remarks, 'This is of course true, but it would not have occurred to him to make the point at a Scandinavian court' (1969, 20). The reference to the lady as *konungr* enhances the parallel, since it could translate the masculine term *midons* 'lord', applied by troubadours to their ladies in token that their service in love was analogous to submission to a feudal lord. For example, from Bernart de Ventadorn (*fl. c. 1145–75*), who may have been one of the troubadours under the patronage of Ermengarda:<sup>6</sup>

Lo vers mi porta, Corona,  
Lai a midons a Narbona;  
Que tuih sei faih son enter,  
C'om no.n pot dire folatge.

Take for me the poem, Corona, there to my lady in Narbonne; for all her deeds are perfect, and one cannot speak folly of her. (Press 1971, 72–73)

But it should also be noted that the theme of 'worthiness' is echoed, and Oddi's humility seemingly contradicted, by a verse attributed to Rognvaldr in the next chapter of the saga (verse 63). In self-congratulatory mode, the poet anticipates an early reunion with a woman, celebrates the trouncing of a Spanish horde, and concludes that *therefore* they are (he is?), after all, worthy of Ermengarda:

<sup>6</sup> William D. Paden argues against the generally accepted view of *midons* as a masculine term implying feudal submission (1975, 33–36). Sarah Kay distinguishes between the troubadours' largely misogynist representation of the feminine, and the 'mixed', androgynous gender attributed to the *domna* (1990, 86–101).

Vǫn ák, út á Spáni  
 var skjótt rekinn flótti,  
 flýði margr af mœði  
 menlundr, konu fundar.  
 Því erum vér, at vǫru  
 væn hljóð kveðin þjóðum,  
 valr tók vǫll at hylja,  
 verðir Ermingerðar. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 219)

I expect to see the woman; those fleeing were speedily pursued in Spain; many a man fled in weariness. We are worthy of Ermengarda, because splendid noises (of battle) were made to people; corpses began to hide the battlefield.

The parallelism of this with verse 58 suggests that they both belong to the narrative sequence initiated by verse 56, said to be spoken earlier by Rognvaldr, in which he asserts Ermengarda to be the instigator of his journey south (considered above, pp. 108–09). Seen in this light, Oddi's tribute to Ermengarda loses much of its air of moral evaluation and extravagant devotion: having been set a task by the lady, the travellers are unworthy of her approval; once it is being achieved, Rognvaldr's verse asserts, they are worthy of her (and, he implies, expect a prompt reward). Once again, the relationship between these two verses forms a narrative link, attaching the anecdotal material about the travellers' adventures to the overarching theme of Ermengarda's patronage.

Andersson sees continuing, though reduced, troubadour influence in the subsequent verses:

These stanzas represent a contamination of *lausavísa* and troubadour traditions inasmuch as they are inspired by particular situations (usually battles), like the *lausavísa*, but at the same time extend the courtly fiction of the crusade stanza at Narbonne by suggesting that Rognvaldr is performing his exploits in the name of his lady (1969, 21).

But if the notion of Ermengarda as patroness of the pilgrimage is a 'courtly fiction', it is one built on an existing *dróttkvætt* type, in which a verse about battle is addressed to or refers in passing to a woman. Many stanzas describing masculine activity are addressed to or imply a female audience (Frank 1988). The use by Saxo Grammaticus of the theme of masculine activity undertaken to win female approval in what may be a paraphrase of a skaldic poem suggests that the idea was early and universal in Norse poetry:

Ergo leves totoque manus conamine nisi  
 rimemur mare, castra prius classemque petentes,  
 quam roseum liquidis Titan caput exserat undis,  
 ut, cum rem rumor vulgaverit atque Frogertha

noverit egregio partam conamine prædam,  
 blandior in nostrum moveat præcordia votum.  
 (*Saxonis Gesta Danorum* 1931, 148–49)

Let us speed then and churn the sea with all  
 the strength of our hands, seeking our ships and the camp  
 before the sun has pushed his rosy head  
 from the clear waves, so that when the story is known  
 and Frogerth hears of the plunder won through our gallant  
 attempt, she may turn her heart more sweetly to our prayers.  
 (Fisher 1979, 168)

In his discussion of Norse love poetry, Bjarni Einarsson himself quotes several examples of this motif, which he describes as

sá siður norskra og íslenzkra skálda að fornu að nefna konu í vísu þar sem skáldið lýsir þrekraunum sínum, oftast í vondu veðri á sjó eða þá í bardaga (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 36).

the practice of ancient Norse and Icelandic poets of naming a woman in a verse in which the poet describes his ordeals, most often in bad weather at sea or in battle.

But he allows no connexion between verses in this tradition, which he acknowledges to be old, and those he considers to be influenced by the new Provençal fashion for the expression of emotion:

Í vísium af þessu tagi verður ekki vart tilfinningasemi, ástarþráar eða harms, og á þessi kveðskapartízka því ekkert skylt við ástaskáldskapartízkuna frá Provence og er sennilega miklu eldri í norrænum skáldskap, en ekkert er því til fyrirstöðu að hvorritveggja hafi verið fylgt jöfnum höndum af sömu skáldum (1961, 37).

In verses of this kind there is no evidence of emotion, love-longing or grief, and thus this poetic fashion has no connexion with that of Provençal love poetry and is probably much older in northern poetry, but there is no reason why both fashions should not have been followed in equal measure by the same poets.

The arbitrariness of this distinction is well illustrated by the verses associated with Rognvaldr's crusade. While some, in traditional fashion, refer only perfunctorily to the woman, others seem to incorporate troubadour themes in their references to her, while retaining the conventional interweaving of these with 'masculine' themes. This demonstrates that any emotional expression borrowed from foreign sources was superimposed upon, rather than being completely separate from, the older tradition. But it remains, in any case, a matter of assertion that all expressions of emotion reveal foreign influence.

In verses 59 and 66 of *Orkneyinga saga*, mention of the woman is contrastive, according to a conventional opposition of seafaring or battle

to aspects of pleasure and comfort represented by the woman. In verses 69 and 75, deeds are done in the expectation that the lady will hear of them. Only verse 61, where the poet specifically claims to 'feed the eagle' because of his love for the lady, verse 63 (quoted above, pp. 111–12), and the vaguer reference of verse 64 suggest explicit deference to the lady's will.

It is likely that these verses originated as a sequence, whether composed by Rognvaldr or not, in which the existing skaldic convention of address or reference to a woman in poems about exclusively masculine activity was combined with and exaggerated by the troubadour conceit of deeds undertaken in a lady's service. The theme is used to inaugurate and link a narrative sequence describing three self-contained incidents: the siege of a castle said (in the prose) to be in Galicia; a stormy passage through the straits of Gibraltar; and an assault on an Arab ship. After this incident, references to Ermengarda and to Narbonne cease abruptly, signifying, presumably, not the notorious fickleness of sailors in love, but the abandonment or loss of the original series of source verses. From this point the verses assembled by the saga author are more diverse and miscellaneous in character.

In the case of the three verses uttered in Ermengarda's praise by Rognvaldr, Oddi and Ármóðr, it seems that the saga author, with the aim of creating an episode in which three skalds gracefully exchange verse tributes to a lady in troubadour fashion, has broken up and reassembled the sequence, cutting three of the verses loose from what was originally a narrative context, so that they appear to be primarily concerned with love.

That the theme of deference is literary convention and no more is suggested by the discrepancy between the actual content of Rognvaldr's verse 56 and the prose narrative. The assertion that Ermengarda instigated the pilgrimage is contradicted by the account of Rognvaldr's deciding to undertake it when in Norway long before (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 194), and the intention expressed in the verse of returning to Narbonne, though it is also recorded in the prose (p. 211), is never adhered to or attempted.

Troubadour influence in the first 'erotic' verse attributed to Rognvaldr (verse 55) is also less obvious than has been claimed. Andersson finds it uncharacteristic of skaldic verse, according to his 'very tentative and sketchy suggestions toward a morphology of Norse love poetry' (Andersson 1969, 25), largely because the stanza progresses from generalised praise (in itself not characteristically skaldic) to the more concrete, recognisably Norse, detail of the second helming:

Víst 'r at frá berr flestu  
Fróða meldrs at góðu



vel skúfaðra vífa  
 vǫxtr þinn, konan svinna.  
 Skorð lætr hár á herðar  
 haukvallar sér falla,  
 átgjörnum rauðk erni  
 ilka, gult sem silki. (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 210)

It is certain, wise lady, that your hair (or stature) surpasses that of almost all women with locks of Fróði's meal (gold); the prop of the hawk's land (lady) lets her golden hair fall on her shoulders like silk; I reddened the ravenous eagle's claws.

This reverses what Andersson calls a 'consistent feature of Norse love poetry . . . the tendency to work from the immediate situation to an emotional expression' (1969, 22). But Roberta Frank's suggestion that the verse's unusual construction results from the combination of two helmings from originally diverse sources (Frank 1978, 167) casts doubt on Andersson's argument from 'morphology'. It strengthens, though, the probability that the saga author remodelled a sequence of verses primarily about battle, including the second helming of this verse, by superimposing on it a helming more appropriate to troubadour praise (though there is no distinct parallel). It is not out of the question that the saga author composed the helming himself to create this impression.

On the other hand, the saga takes over-seriously the troubadour pose of devotion to a lady by portraying Ermengarda as a young woman with whom Rognvaldr flirts, and whose advisers suggest a marriage with him, rather than, as in historical fact, a mature married (or perhaps widowed) lady (Meissner 1925, 163, n.). The troubadours usually (in Bjarni Einarsson's view, invariably) addressed their tributes to married women (see pp. 127–31 below).

Thus the episode, while including some verses apparently composed under troubadour influence, shows much stronger evidence of a saga author well versed in such poems and the contexts in which they were composed, shaping his material to reflect this interest. This process seems to have included giving prominence and a narrative context to the theme of praise for a woman, which may have been inspired by Provençal models. But it also involved the minimising and disruption of a characteristically Scandinavian convention: the interweaving of address or reference to a woman with martial or active narrative.

Rognvaldr's visit to Narbonne is a well-attested but isolated instance of cultural contact between Scandinavia (and, indirectly, Iceland) and southern France. Klaus von See points to the possible contribution to the shaping

of *Orkneyinga saga* made by men known to have had contact with southern France and/or its literature:

Selbst bei der endgültigen Redaktion der *Orkneyinga saga* haben vielleicht noch Impulse aus dieser Richtung mitgewirkt: Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, der einzige Nordmann, von dem wir wissen, daß er später—um 1200—noch einmal ins Land der Trobadors gelangt ist, hatte enge Beziehungen zu den Orkneyjar und ihrem Bischof Bjarni Kolbeinsson. Dieser Bjarni wiederum ist der Dichter der berühmten *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, die in ihrem Rahmenmotiv Spuren des Trobadorstils trägt. Und von beiden—Bjarni und Hrafn—ist in der Forschung gelegentlich vermutet worden, daß sie an der Abfassung der *Orkneyinga saga* beteiligt gewesen seien (Anne Holtmark, *Edda* 37, 1937, S.1 ff.). (von See 1978–79, 89)

Impulses in this direction were perhaps still at work even in the final redaction of *Orkneyinga saga*: Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, the only Norseman whom we know to have later—about 1200—revisited the land of the troubadours, had close connections with the Orkneys and their bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson. This same Bjarni, moreover, is the poet of the famous *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, which shows traces of troubadour style in its structural frame. And it has occasionally been conjectured by scholars of both—Bjarni and Hrafn—that they were involved in the compilation of *Orkneyinga saga*.

But the Icelander Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, who visited the shrine of St. Gilles near Arles before 1200, during a pilgrimage to Compostella and Rome, is the only other Norseman known to have been there in the relevant period (*Hrafn's saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* 1987, 4; Foote 1959, 32, n. 85).

Even if the region had been more commonly visited, it is unlikely that even a French-speaking viking would have had enough understanding of the Occitan language to appreciate complex troubadour verse forms. Ian McDougall has investigated the extent to which Norse pilgrims understood the vernacular languages of the countries they passed through and, for want of any substantial evidence, surmises that their linguistic competence was limited and functional (1987–88, 211–17). The fact that Rognvaldr took with him Bishop Vilhjálmr of Orkney, who had studied in Paris, to act as interpreter, does not inspire confidence (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 204); on the other hand, the saga narrative has the Galician lord Guðifreyr, infiltrating Rognvaldr's camp disguised as a beggar, address the Norsemen in French: *ok mælti á völsku; þat skilðu þeir helzt*, 'and spoke in French; they understood that best' (*Orkneyinga saga* 1965, 214).

Evidence of the contact of Icelanders with France as a whole, or rather the interpretation of this evidence, is controversial. In their debate in *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, Theodore Andersson and Bjarni Einarsson exchange anecdotes of medieval Icelanders visiting or studying in France. To

Andersson, the list is ‘quickly ticked off’ and ‘does not give the impression of a lively Franco-Icelandic intercourse during the period in question’ (1969, 14). But Bjarni rightly challenges this (1971, 31–33). In a cultural community as small and isolated as medieval Iceland, an educated and influential individual could have made more impact than the small number of instances might suggest. But the fact that most recorded contacts took place, not unexpectedly, in northern rather than southern France suggests that it would be more realistic to investigate the possible contacts of saga literature not with the troubadours themselves, but with their northern French followers and counterparts, the *trouvères*.

The implication of Bjarni Einarsson’s citing instances of northern French contact, and dealing with ‘troubadour’ themes in a very general way, is that he is using the term ‘troubadour’ loosely to cover northern as well as southern poets. While this is a convenient shorthand, it obscures the somewhat damaging point that *trouvère* poetry is generally dated from c.1150, some fifty years later than the earliest surviving troubadour poems, the fashion having taken some time to spread from the south. This narrows the chronological limits within which French love verse could have influenced the sagas of the early thirteenth century in Iceland. Bjarni insists, however, that he does envisage direct influence from Provence at a much earlier date:

Vi kan ikke med sikkerhed vide hvornår den franske—egentlig den provençalske—kærlighedsdigtning begyndte at blive kendt og få indflydelse i Norden. Det kan næppe afvises at det kan være sket så tidligt som ca. 1100 (1976, 18).

We cannot know for certain when the French—especially the Provençal—love poetry began to be known and to have influence in the North. It can hardly be ruled out that it could have been as early as c.1100.

### III *The troubadours and Norse love poetry*

Bjarni Einarsson’s argument for the derivation of love themes in skaldic verse from troubadour lyrics has been criticised for failing to locate compelling and detailed parallels in form and content (Andersson 1969, 16–17; Frank 1978, 168). The failure is not surprising, since in his exposition of love verse (excluding, for the moment, the verse in the poets’ sagas, to which he returns in later chapters), not a line of troubadour verse is cited or referred to specifically (1961, 7–10, 18–39; 1976, 13–16, 18–24).

Bjarni argues so generally because he believes that *any* verse expressing male emotion or love-longing is alien to Icelandic traditions and must,

therefore, have a foreign derivation, from ‘the strange new French literary fashion which generally made the *man* passionately in love, even languishing to the degree of becoming depressed and almost sick. What an amazing idea that must have seemed to most Icelanders about the year 1200!’ (1971, 41). The claim that such sentiments were unknown in earlier Icelandic verse is circular, dependent on his having rounded up as many such examples as possible and declared them, like the poets’ sagas, to be the inauthentic fruits of foreign influence.

In *Skáldasögur*, Bjarni cites some forty complete or fragmentary stanzas including love as a theme, attributed in the Kings’ Sagas, *Snorra Edda* or the *Third Grammatical Treatise* to eighteen named or anonymous poets. Bjarni is justified in his scepticism about the dating of these verses to the ninth, tenth or eleventh centuries, and in arguing that their placing in the mouths of such historical figures as Haraldr harðráði or Óláfr Haraldsson hardly guarantees their authenticity. He is on less firm ground in doubting the attribution of a verse *because* of its use of a theme supposedly characteristic of the troubadours, as in this example:

Illugi Bryndælaskáld er . . . með vissu elleftu aldar maður og verður því ekki trúað að hann hafi kveðið ástarvísubrotið sem honum er eignað . . . því að það má telja með sigildum dæmum ástarharmatízkunnar (1961, 38).

Illugi Bryndælaskáld was . . . undoubtedly a man of the eleventh century, and therefore it cannot be believed that he spoke the fragment of a love verse attributed to him . . . because it may be considered to be among the classic examples of the fashion of love-longing.

But the foreignness of love-longing as a theme, and indeed the assumption that it is characteristic of Provençal verse, is not closely examined either by Bjarni or by others seeking to establish a southern connection, such as Meissner, who ascribed the presence of the motif of unrequited longing in verses attributed to Haraldr harðráði to influence received during Haraldr’s early southern travels:

Es kann natürlich keinem zweifel unterliegen, dass diese Strophen schon unter dem einfluss fremder dichtung stehn, wie besonders das motiv des unbelohnten schmachtens zeigt. Da Harald in seiner jugend ein abenteuerleben geführt hat und weit in der welt umhergezogen ist, kann eine solche nachahmung grade bei ihm nicht auffallen (Meissner 1923, 240).

There can, of course, be no doubt that these strophes have already come under the influence of foreign poetry, as is shown especially by the motif of unfulfilled desire. Since Harald in his youth led an adventurous life and travelled widely in the world, such imitation is scarcely surprising in his case particularly.

Many of the verses quoted by Bjarni do reveal one or both of the themes which, he claims, derive from troubadour verse: the suffering caused by love, and love of a married woman. It is worth examining here the extent to which each of these themes is, in fact, characteristic of the troubadours, and comparing their treatment of each with that of the Norse verses cited.

#### A. Love-longing

One of Bjarni's propositions is that the fashion for importing the theme of unrequited love into the incongruous context of the generally historical Kings' Sagas was inspired by the Icelanders' knowledge of *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, believed to be written in the late twelfth century by Bjarni Kolbeinsson, Bishop of Orkney, which incorporates into its account of the deeds of the Jómsvíkings a refrain lamenting the grief caused to the poet by his love for a nobleman's wife. As in the verses attributed to Rognvaldr and his poets, this erotic theme is interwoven with the martial narrative, to the point, in *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, of baroque syntactical disruption, since the *stef* occupies lines 1, 4, 5 and 8 of the stanzas it appears in (vv. 15, 19, 23, 27, 31 and 35):

*Ein drepr fyr mér allri,  
ótrauðr á lög skeiðum  
orr þengill bað ýta,  
úrmanns kona teiti;  
góð ætt of kǫmr grimmu,  
gekk herr á skip, darra  
hinn 'r kunni gný gerva,  
gæðings at mér stríði. (Skj. B II 4, v. 15)*

One destroys all happiness for me—the bold prince willingly ordered the ship to be pushed out to sea—a nobleman's wife; the fair daughter of a lord brings cruel—the army, well-versed in battle, embarked—suffering to me.

The syntactical arrangement is that characterised by Snorri as *stælt*, 'inlaid', and exemplified in *Háttatal* 12 (Snorri Sturluson 1991, 10); Snorri's verse, however, does not juxtapose contrasting themes in the dramatic manner of *Jómsvíkingadrápa*.

Whatever the inspiration for the erotic element in *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, the interweaving of it, without narrative explanation, into the account of warlike deeds, as in Rognvaldr's verses, suggests at least a highly individualistic use of any troubadour influence. The lack of overt explanation for the erotic theme suggests that the inclusion of such contrasting material was either an established convention, or self-explanatory in the light of one. That is, it was developed from the more straightforward model already

described, in which a woman is invoked or referred to in verses describing male activity (see p. 112 above).

If, as Bjarni Einarsson claims, any expression of love-longing or other emotion in skaldic verse were evidence of a new romantic interest inspired by troubadour verse in the late twelfth century, we might expect a degree of variety and exploration in the emotions expressed. Instead, the examples he quotes reveal a remarkable uniformity in conception and phrasing, whether in anonymous fragments devoid of narrative context:

Aura stendr fyr órum  
eik fagrbúin leiki

(*Skáldskaparmál* 1952, 178; *Skj.* B I 175)

The finely dressed oak of gold (woman) prevents my happiness;

or in verses embedded in circumstantial accounts of the amorous affairs of kings, like the one attributed to Magnús berfættr (1093–1103) in *Morkinskinna* and elsewhere:

Sú's ein es mér meinar  
Maktildr ok vegr hildi  
(mór drekkur suðr ór sórum  
sveita) leik ok teiti;  
sá kennir mér svanni,  
sín lönd es verr röndu  
(sverð bitu Högna hurðir)  
hvítjarpr sofa lítit. (*Skj.* B I 402)

She, Maktildr, is the only one who hinders my pleasure and happiness and awakens strife; the gull of blood drinks from wounds in the south; the lady with light-brown hair(?), who defends her lands with a shield, teaches me to sleep little; swords cut Hogni's doors (shields).

In this verse and others, emotional suffering is baldly stated and interwoven with contrasted material; its use is plainly formulaic. Most common are variations on the formula 'the woman causes me grief / prevents my happiness'; we may also mention the type *alin erumk björk at bølvi / bands*, 'the birch tree of the ribbon was born to cause me grief' which occurs in a verse attributed to Óláfr Haraldsson (*Skj.* B I 210–11), and, arguably, in a verse attributed to King Magnús góði:

Margr kveðr sér at sorgum  
sverðrjóðr alin verða  
—uggik allitt seggja  
ótta—búkarls dóttur.  
Enn ef einhver bannar  
eld-Gefn fyr mér svefna,

víst veldr siklings systir  
svinn andvöku minni. (Kock 1946, I 155; 1923–44, §808)

Many a warrior declares a farmer's daughter to be born to cause him sorrows—  
I have no fear of men taking fright; but if any fire-Gefn prevents me from  
sleeping, it is the king's wise sister who causes my wakefulness.

The text here is that of E. A. Kock, with the emendation of MS *alin*, which Finnur Jónsson normalises as *alinn*, translating 'Mangen en kriger erklærer, at døtre af bønder volder dem (elskovs)bekymringer—jeg tvivler meget lidt om den af mændene nærede frygt' (*Skj. B I 304*). Kock's emendation is presumably based on the plausible assumption that the verse belongs to a familiar type in which *alin* referred to a woman. This recalls the verse attributed to Gunnlaugr ormstunga in *Gunnlaugs saga* and in *Skáldskaparmál*:

Alin vas rýgr at rógi,  
runnr olli því Gunnar,  
lóg vask auðs at eiga  
óðgjarn, fira börnum. (*Borgfirðinga sögur* 1938, 96, v. 19)

The lady was born to bring strife—the bush of Gunnr (warrior) caused that; I  
was madly eager to possess the log of wealth (woman)—to the sons of men.

Given that invocation of or reference to women seems to have been a deeply ingrained tradition in skaldic poetry, we cannot say when the theme of unhappy love was added to it. Bjarni Einarsson implies that the uniformity of these verses makes it likely that they are the products of one time and one literary fashion:

Ekki má taka það sem sagnfræðilegan sannleika þegar höfundar fornsagna leggja þessar vísur eða aðrar sem sama marki eru brenndar, í munn niundu, tíundu eða elleftu aldar manna, jafnvel þótt í hlut eigi menn sem með vissu hafa verið hin merkustu skáld (1961, 38).

It cannot be taken as historical truth when the authors of sagas place these verses, or others which are branded with the same mark, in the mouths of men of the ninth, tenth or eleventh centuries, even if men who were undoubtedly the most celebrated poets are involved.

But the formulaic nature of these allusions argues against, rather than for, their novelty in the late twelfth century. Their standardisation suggests that they belong to a long-standing poetic tradition. In a context where references to women provided a contrastive backdrop to the celebration of traditionally male activity, it would not be surprising if the negative aspects of men's relationships with women (love as a cause of grief, women born to create trouble for men) arose as a theme independently of foreign influence.

In any case, how characteristic of troubadour verse is the theme of love-longing? Bjarni singles it out as the distinguishing characteristic:

Skýrasta auðkenni hinnar suðrænu ástaskáldskapartísku sem á rætur sínar að rekja til Provence, er það að skáldið kveður um ástarharm sinn, söknuð og þrá út af konu (1961, 11).

The most distinctive feature of the southern style of love poetry whose roots are to be traced to Provence is that the poet speaks of his unhappy love, his sense of loss and his desire because of a woman.

As already noted, Bjarni fails to support this characterisation with references to particular poems (see p. 117 above), relying rather on generalisations such as that of C. S. Lewis: 'The lover is always abject. Obedience to his lady's lightest wish, however whimsical, and silent acquiescence in her rebukes, however unjust, are the only virtues he dares to claim' (Lewis 1936, 2). But a survey of troubadour verse reveals, as one might expect of a refined and subtle verse tradition which took love as its principal subject, a wide spectrum of attitudes. Among these, frustrated desire is indeed important but not universal, and is itself expressed in a variety of modes.

Over the nearly two hundred and fifty years in which the flourishing of troubadour love poetry is documented (though the earliest surviving poems presuppose an already well-established tradition), changes in style and treatment took place, as L. T. Topsfield outlines:

In the first half of the twelfth century we find a primarily experimental and seeking type of poetry . . . This early poetry . . . is often more abstract than worldly in intention and is concerned more with the personal quest for joy and the absolute ideal of an ultimate happiness than with conformity to social convention. In the second 'stage' from about 1150 to 1180 . . . there appears to be . . . a clash for some of the greatest and more individually minded troubadours between the demand from their noble audiences for poetry of 'courtly love' in the light, easy style and their own inclination towards the composition of more reflective poetry. This conflict appears to be resolved in the period from about 1180 to 1209, by the victory of the 'light', courtly type of poetry . . . and in the changed world of the late thirteenth century love for the courtly lady or *domna* is transformed into love for the Virgin (Topsfield 1975, 2–3).

Only the earlier stages of this evolution are relevant to the question of influence on saga literature. But the work of even a single poet may reveal a variety of attitudes to love, depending on the seriousness of the treatment in particular poems and, evidently, the specific audience addressed. Peter Dronke distinguishes two styles of address in the poems of the earliest known troubadour, Guilhem IX of Aquitaine:



While some of Guillaume's songs are intended for a mixed audience of lords and ladies, who laid claim to *cortezia*, others are explicitly addressed to his *companhos*—knights and soldiers, a company of men only, whose literary taste can hardly have been over-delicate (Dronke 1978, 110).

For this less fastidious audience, Guilhem produces bold and assertive parodies of the refined hyperbole apparently already characterising the love verse of his time, as in his light-hearted exaggeration of the conceit of *amor de lonh*, love for a distant, or even unseen, beloved:

Amigu' ai ieu, no sai qui s'es,  
 Qu'anc non la vi, si m'ajut fes! . . .  
 Anc non la vi et am la fort,  
 Anc no n'aic dreyt ni no.m fes tort;  
 Quan non la vey, be m'en deport,  
 No.m pretz un jau,  
 Qu'ie.n sai gensor et bellazor,  
 E que mais vau. (Press 1971, 16)

Who is my love? I can't conceive—  
 I've never seen her, I believe . . .  
 Never have seen, yet love her well:  
 She's never done me good or ill;  
 I haven't met her, so I feel  
 Quite free of care—  
 For I know a better lady still,  
 Surpassing fair! (Translated in Dronke 1978, 112)

Guilhem elsewhere more seriously celebrates a mutual, and consummated, physical love:

La nostr' amor vai enaissi  
 Com la branca de l'albespi  
 Qu'esta sobre l'arbre tremblan,  
 La nuoit, a la ploja ez al gel,  
 Tro l'endeman, que.l sols s'espan  
 Per las fueillas verz e.l ramel.  
 Enquer me membra d'un mati  
 Que nos fezem de guerra fi,  
 E que.m donet un don tan gran,  
 Sa drudari' e son anel:  
 Enquer me lais Dieus viure tan  
 C'aja mas manz soz so mantel! (Hill and Bergin 1973, I 8)

Our love together goes the way  
of the branch on the hawthorn-tree,  
trembling in the night, a prey  
to the hoar-frost and the showers,  
till next morning, when the sun  
enfolds the green leaves and the boughs.

One morning I remember still  
we put an end to skirmishing,  
and she gave me so great a gift:  
her loving body, and her ring.  
May God keep me alive until  
my hands again move in her mantle!

(Translated in Dronke 1978, 116)

The idea of unattainable love is most famously, yet mysteriously, expressed by Jaufre Rudel, whose repeated address to an *amor de lonh* 'distant love' has frequently been interpreted literally, as it was by his thirteenth-century biographer:

Jaufres Rudels de Blaia si fo molt gentils hom . . . et enamoret.se de la comtessa de Tripol ses vezer, per lo ben q'el n'auzi dir als pelegrins que vengron d'Antiochia; e fetz de lieis mains vers ab bons sons, ab paubres motz.

E, per voluntat de liei vezer, el se crozet e mes.se en mar; e pres.lo malautia en la nau, e fo condug a Tripol, en un alberc, per mort. E fo faich asaber a la comtessa, et ella venc ad el, al sieu lieich, e pres.lo entre sos bratz; et el saup q'ella era la comtessa, e recobret lo vezer e.l flazar, e lauzet Dieu e.l grazi qe.ill avia la vida sostenguda tro q'el l'ages vista; et enaissi el moric entre sos bratz. (Hill and Bergin 1973, I 31)

Jaufre Rudel de Blaia was a very noble man . . . and he fell in love with the Countess of Tripoli without seeing her, because of the good which he had heard tell of her by the pilgrims who returned from Antioch. And he composed many poems about her with good melodies but with poor words. And resolved to see her, he took the cross and sailed; and he was taken ill on board ship and was taken to Tripoli, to an inn, as if he were dead.

And it was made known to the countess, and she came to him, to his bedside, and took him in her arms. And he knew that she was the countess, and he immediately recovered his sight and his sense of smell and praised God who had sustained his life until he had seen her. And thus he died in her arms. (Egan 1984, 62)

The romantic idea of a love so exalted as not to depend on even the sight, let alone physical enjoyment, of its object seems the ultimate in idealised refinement. But in a less literal reading, this love can be seen as one side of a more complex polarisation: 'a low, furtive, adulterous and humiliating type of love' (Press 1971, 28) is rejected for the more spiritual 'distant

love'. The precise value of this concept is, however, deliberately left obscure. In any case, the poet does not suffer straightforwardly from frustrated physical desire, but voluntarily turns away towards a higher good:

Amors, alegre.m part de vos  
 Per so qu'ar vau mo mielhs queren;  
 E fuy en tant aventuros  
 Qu'enqueras n'ay mon cor jauzen.

Love, gaily I leave you because now I go seeking my highest good; yet by this much was I fortunate that my heart still rejoices for it. (Press 1971, 38–39)

The beloved woman, rather than imperiously rejecting the poet's desire, shares his lack of fulfilment:

Ben sai c'anc de lei no.m jauzi,  
 Ni ja de mi no.s jauzira.

I know well that I never had joy of her, nor will she ever have joy of me. (Press 1971, 36–37)

The stance of exaggerated humility commonly considered characteristic of the troubadours is found in the verse of Bernart de Ventadorn; but as Peter Dronke has argued, he artfully employs the pose to woo the beloved towards the goal of sexual fulfilment (Dronke 1978, 121). The poet's apparent timidity is expressed so as to give full weight to her sexuality:

Can eu vei midons ni l'esgar,  
 Li seu bel olh tan be l'estan  
 Per pauc me tenh car eu vas leis no cor.  
 Si feira eu, si no fos per päor,  
 C'anc no vi cors melhs talhatz ni depens  
 Ad ops d'amar s'ia tan greus ni lens.

When I see my lady and behold her, her lovely eyes so well become her that I can scarce hold back from running towards her. So would I, were it not for fear, for I never saw person more well-shaped and fashioned for love to be yet so slow and reluctant. (Press 1971, 80–81)

Bernart articulates the code of courtly behaviour which was probably evolved at the court of Eleanor of Poitou, and which elevated the *domna* or beloved lady to a plane above her suitor, whose service of her demanded courtly virtues of humility and patience (Topsfield 1975, 122). Yet even his expression of this distance from the lady has a sensual emphasis suggesting a more direct attitude to love than that of his predecessors:

Be la volgra sola trobar,  
 Que dormis, o.n fezes semblan,

Per qu'e.lh embles un doutz baizar,  
 Pus no valh tan qu'eu lo.lh deman.  
 Per Deu, domna, pauc esplecham d'amor!  
 Vai s'en lo tems e perdem lo melhor.  
 Parlar degram ab cubertz entresens  
 E, pus no.ns val arditz, valgues nos gens!

Well would I like to find her alone while she slept or pretended to, that I might steal from her a sweet kiss, since I'm not so worthy as to ask it of her. By God, lady, little of love do we achieve! Time goes by and we lose the best of it; we should speak with secret signs and, since boldness avails us not, may guile avail us! (Press 1971, 80–83)

Bernart's pose of unfulfilled desire is rooted in a sense of love's mutuality, set out manifesto-like in a lyric insisting on truthfulness in love:

En agradar et en voler  
 Es l'amors de dos fis amans.  
 Nula res no.i pot pro tener  
 Si.lh voluntatz non es egaus.

In accord and in assent is the love of two noble lovers. Nothing can be of profit in it if the will thereto is not mutual. (Press 1971, 66–67)

These examples from the lyrics of some early and well-known troubadours could be multiplied to illustrate further the diversity of the treatment of love in troubadour verse. The work of even the earliest known troubadour shows that the established convention of love from afar could be treated on more than one level; by parodying it, poets not only question the value of unattainable love, but undercut it with the hint of a more approachable love closer at hand ('For I know a better lady still, surpassing fair!'). Jaufre Rudel's more serious development of the theme gives *amors* a mystical value, such that, while of its nature it remains unfulfilled, experiencing it furnishes the poet with *joi*:

La dolors que per joi sana,  
 Don ja non vuelh qu'om m'en planha.

The pain which by joy is healed and for which I want no one ever to pity me. (Press 1971, 30–31)

Poets frequently echo this perception that unfulfilled love may be a positive and refining, rather than frustrating experience, an affirmation unparalleled in skaldic verse.

But as well as unfulfilled love, troubadours also, at times, celebrate a love which is reciprocated and physically experienced, even if only in fantasy. There are analogues to the formulaic lament of the Norse verses, 'the woman causes me grief', but this is one mood among many, often treated

ironically. Troubadour verse most evidently lacks the consistently negative tone of the skaldic references to the grief caused by women; the lyricism of the troubadours, and the emotional value given to even the unsuccessful pursuit of love, has no parallel in the skaldic verses cited by Bjarni Einarsson.

#### B. Love of a married woman

Bjarni also emphasises the prevalence of the theme of love for another man's wife in troubadour poetry:

Hið einkennilegasta við ástakvæði trobadora var þó að venjulega voru þau kveðin um og til *eiginkvenna annarra manna*; hrein undantekning var ef kveðið var lofkvæði um ógefna mey (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 9).

The strangest feature of troubadour love poems was that they were usually composed about, and for, *the wives of other men*; it was quite exceptional for a poem to be composed in praise of an unmarried girl.

He argues that this has inspired the *stef* of *Jómsvíkingadrápa* (*Ein drepr fyrir mér allri . . . ítrmanns kona teiti*; see p. 119 above), and other skaldic verses, which he cites. But the theme is less prevalent in these verses than that of 'love-longing', and in some cases fugitive. The poet of the so-called *Stríðkeravísur*, only one stanza of which is preserved, in the 1609 version of *Snorra Edda* made by Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás, represents himself sitting miserably, wishing to hear the name *Stríðkeri* used of the woman he addresses. Only the accompanying seventeenth-century prose, however, explains that the name means 'widow': *þess kuadzt hann a van (j von) sitia, ad menn mundu kalla hana konuna eda eckiu, þad kallade hann . . . kiera jardarinnar* (Faulkes 1979, 375).

A verse attributed to 'Óláfr' (Þórðarson hvítaskáld?) in the mid-thirteenth-century *Third Grammatical Treatise* exemplifies punning, playing on *eigi* (negative / part of the verb 'to possess'), with reference to a husband's relationship with his wife; he will either possess her for a long time or not enjoy her for long:

Kænn njóti vel vænnar  
vinr minn konu sinnar,  
víst erat dapr of drósir  
drengr, ok eigi lengi. (*Skj.* B II 110)

May my wise friend have pleasure with his beautiful wife, and possess her for a long time (or, and not for long). Indeed, the man (the poet?) is not downcast about women.

Neither of these verses is definitely old enough to be relevant, or is unambiguously about a love story. But if they do refer to a man's love for

a married woman, their focus is the husband's desired absence or death, as if only the woman's reverting to single status could validate the poet's love. This compares with the concentration in the poets' sagas on the dispossessed lover's aggression towards the woman's husband.

Like the *Stríðkeravísur*, two verses attributed to Óláfr Haraldsson in *Flateyjarbók* are interpreted as referring to a married woman in the accompanying prose explication (*Flateyjarbók* 1860–68, III 237). The beloved woman must stay behind to wither *við galla grjótolnis* (*Skj.* B I 210–11), apparently a kenning for winter, 'the flaw of the stone-bender (snake)'. But the prose explains *Galli* as the nickname of the woman's husband Þorvarðr (Kock 1923–44, §2773).

Bjarni's final example is a couplet attributed to Einarr (Skúlason?) in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* where it exemplifies *barbarismus* or *ofljóst*, 'excessively clear':

Víst erumk hermð á hesti  
hefr fljóð, ef vill, góðan.

(*Skj.* B I 456; *Third Grammatical Treatise* 174)

Indeed, I am angry with the horse; the woman has a good . . . if she wishes.

Once again, it is the prose commentary which interprets: *Víst hefi ek á Jóreiði þokka góðan, konu Mána*, 'I have taken a liking to Jóreið, Máni's wife'. It is striking that in all these cases, as in *Orkneyinga saga*, apparent similarity with a troubadour theme seems likely to have been superimposed on the verse by a prose author or commentator. I have argued elsewhere for a similar phenomenon in *Kormaks saga*, where the author of the prose at times seems to project a theme from the Tristan romance on a verse in which the theme cannot be detected (Finlay 1994, 333).

This evidence for the theme of love for a married woman in skaldic verse is so sparse that a detailed examination of its use by troubadour poets hardly seems necessary. However, it should be noted that this question of extra-marital love has been central in the critical debate on 'courtly love' since the first attempts, in the late nineteenth century, to relate the phenomenon to social and economic conditions of twelfth-century Europe. Gaston Paris, the first modern critic to use the term *amour courtois*, described it as 'l'amour tel que l'avaient présenté les troubadours, l'amour qui faisait le charme et le danger des réunions mondaines, l'amour illégitime et caché', stressing that it was a love essentially illicit, furtive and extra-conjugal (1883, 522). Violet Paget attributed the exaggerated veneration of women in 'medieval love' to the sex ratio in the medieval castle, envisaging

an enormous numerical preponderance of men over women; for only the chiefs in command, the overlord, and perhaps one or two of his principal kinsmen or adjutants, are permitted the luxury of a wife . . . a whole pack of men without wives, without homes, and usually without fortune. High above all this deferential male crowd, moves the lady of the castle. (Paget 1884, II 136–37)

Born of this elevation of the female was ‘a love all chivalry, fidelity, and adoration, but a love steeped in the poison of adultery’ (Paget 1884, II 216). C. S. Lewis perpetuated this highly-coloured language, arguing that the materialistic basis of medieval marriage inevitably made adultery one of the four mainstays of courtly love (‘Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love’): ‘Any idealization of sexual love, in a society where marriage is purely utilitarian, must begin by being an idealization of adultery’ (Lewis 1936, 2, 13).<sup>7</sup>

Love of a married woman, and, indeed, adulterous love, are of course central to the romances of Tristan and Lancelot; on the other hand, Chrétien’s *Erec et Énide* and Chaucer’s *Franklin’s Tale* at least attempt a reconciliation of married love with courtly ideals. But troubadour lyrics have little narrative or circumstantial content. Even where the lady addressed or celebrated is identifiable (from either the poetic context or known circumstances of the poet’s life) the poet rarely, if ever, mentions her married state or her husband. The intimacy shared by lovers may be threatened by jealousy or hostility, not from the husband, but from rival lovers or the soulless and spying *lozengiers*, ‘liars’, and love sometimes gains intimacy through a need for secrecy, presumably, but rarely explicitly, dictated by the lady’s married state.

Raimon de Miraval (composing 1185–1213), a troubadour knight rebuked in verse by Uc de Mataplana for abandoning his wife, composed a defence elevating a man’s devotion to his *domna* above that due to his wife:

Que cavalliers q’en pretz se fi  
 Deu laissar, so.ns mostra Jovens,  
 Moiller que pren per enfanssa;  
 Mas si sa dompna l’enanssa  
 Tant qe.l prenda, estre deu estacatz  
 D’un certan homenatge,  
 Qe ja nuill temps non seg’autre viatge.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Boase points out the inappropriateness of the term adultery: ‘This argument is obviously fallacious. If love was not normally connected with marriage, we must conclude that love was extra-conjugal, which is not to say that it was necessarily adulterous’ (1977, 92).

For a knight whose trust is in courtly renown must leave, as 'Youth' (the courtly code) tells us, a wife whom he marries lightly. But if his lady does him such honour that she accepts him, he must be bound by such constant homage that he will never at any time take another path. (Topsfield 1975, 222)

But this literally cavalier view of marriage is expressed not in a love lyric but in a polemic; the emphasis throughout the poets' exchange is on the enhancing of public honour through service of the lady, not personal or sexual fulfilment.

The reputation of the troubadours as celebrators of adulterous love was partly constructed by the authors of their thirteenth-century *vidas*, who supplied a narrative context for their subjects' lyrics, sometimes over-literally interpreting the poems themselves, sometimes deploying frequently-occurring and presumably fictional motifs (see p. 143 below). For instance, Bernart de Ventadorn, about whom almost nothing can be historically verified, figures in his *vida* as protagonist of a story of secret love for his patron's wife:

E lo vescons, lo seus seingner, de Ventadorn, s'abelli mout de lui e de son trobar e de son cantar e fez li gran honor. E.l vescons de Ventadorn si avia moiller, joven e gentil e gaia. E si s'abelli d'En Bernart e de soas chansos e s'enamora de lui et el de la dompna, si qu'el fetz sas chansos e sos vers d'ella, de l'amor qu'el avia ad ella e de la valor de leis. Lonc temps duret lor amors anz que.l vescons ni l'autra gens s'em aperceubes. E quant lo vescons s'en aperceup, si s'estranjet de lui, e la moillier fetz serar e gardar. (*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 20)

And the Viscount of Ventadour, his lord, grew very fond of him and of his inventing and his singing, and greatly honored him. And the Viscount of Ventadour had a wife who was young, noble, and lively. And she also grew fond of Bernart and of his songs, and fell in love with him. And he fell in love with the lady, and composed his songs and his poems about her, about the love which he had for her, and about her merit. Their love lasted a long time before the viscount or other people became aware of it. And when the viscount perceived it, he banished Bernart from him and had his wife locked up and guarded. (Egan 1984, 11–12)

As in the case of the Norse poetry cited above, the theme of adulterous love attributed to these poets is to some extent superimposed on the verse by a later prose narrative.

It might be considered appropriate to question, not the degree of similarity in content and style between troubadour verse and its supposed Norse derivatives, but what the Norse poets, working from possibly garbled, partially understood models, believed troubadour poetry to be



about. According to this argument, a Norse poet might be inspired simply by the externalities of the troubadours' situation: that they composed lyrics celebrating love, often unfulfilled, for ladies forever unattainable because married to other men. The result might be verse stressing themes such as 'the wife of a nobleman causes me grief', though it is questionable whether this would constitute significant influence. But in any case, the *Orkneyinga saga* account of Rognvaldr's encounter with Ermengarda of Narbonne gives a clue to Norse ignorance of the troubadour's courtly role. Apparently desiring to cast Rognvaldr's visit in the mould of courtly homage, the saga writer nevertheless portrays the ruling lady as a young girl, whom Rognvaldr brazenly takes on his knee, and whose advisers start promising negotiations for a betrothal with him. Though they used frustration as a narrative theme, Norse writers seemed automatically to assume that the ideal outcome of relations between men and women, in terms both of the honour it conferred on the hero, and (often subsidiarily) of emotional fulfilment, was marriage.

#### IV *The troubadours and the poets' sagas*

The only poet's saga in which Bjarni Einarsson claims influence from troubadour verses is *Kormaks saga*. This is readily accounted for by the unusually high proportion of verse to prose in *Kormaks saga*, and the unusually high proportion of that verse that can be called lyrical; Andersson estimates that 'Kormakr's twenty-four stanzas [of love poetry] comprise about half the corpus' (1969, 22). But the claimed influence extends to all four poets' sagas by way of Bjarni's conviction that *Kormaks saga* is the earliest and the channel through which European influence reached the group (1961, 52):

Kormáks saga er elzt þeirra ástarsagna sem kveðskapur fylgir, og um leið að ýmsu leyti fyrirmynd þeirra sem á eftir koma.

*Kormaks saga* is the oldest of the sagas of love accompanied by poetry, and thereby in various ways the model for those which followed.

I have argued elsewhere that the thematic relationships among the poets' sagas are too complex to be explained by the derivation of their material from *Kormaks saga* (Finlay 1994). The unusual concentration of verse, especially love verse, in *Kormaks saga* raises the question whether this particular emphasis owes something to foreign influence, possibly from the troubadour tradition. But even if this could be demonstrated, it is clearly not an influence that extended beyond this saga.

Theodore Andersson (1969) has assessed Bjarni Einarsson's claims of troubadour influence in the verses attributed to Kormakr. His arguments are considered and some further points added here.

**1. Verses 2–4: Love penetrates the eyes (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 67–69; 1976, 42–45)**

The sequence of verses expressing Kormakr's 'love at first sight' for Steingerðr repeatedly stresses the effect of her eyes. In verse 2,

Brunnu beggja kinna  
björt ljós á mik drósar (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 209)

The lady's bright lights of both cheeks burned on me;  
in verse 3 (also in *Gunnlaugs saga*, where it is attributed to Gunnlaugr),

Brámáni skein brúna  
brims und ljósum himni  
Hristar hqrvi glæstrar  
haufránn á mik lauka (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 209)

The hawk-keen eyelash-moon of the linen-clad Hrist of ale (woman) shone on me under the bright sky of the brows;  
and in verse 4,

Hófat lind, né ek leynda,  
líðs, hyrjar því stríði,  
bands mank beiða Rindi,  
baugsæm af mér augu. (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 210)

The ring-seemly ale-tree did not take her eyes off me; nor did I conceal my fiery anguish on that account; I remember the (entreating?-)Rind of the ribbon.

Of these verses Bjarni Einarsson remarks,

Þessi ríka áherzla sem söguhöfundur leggur á að lýsa því hve hugfangið skáldið verður er hann kemur auga á meyna í fyrsta skipti, er engin tilviljun eða uppáfinning hans sjálfs, heldur er hún skírgetið afkvæmi hinnar próvensku ástaskáldskapartízkú. Nefna mætti fjölda dæma um svipaðan kveðskap frakkneskra skálda og þeirra sem eftir þeim hermdu um þennan hlut (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 68–69).

This powerful emphasis placed by the saga author on describing how enraptured the poet becomes when he lays eyes on the girl for the first time is no accident or invention of his own; rather it is a genuine product of the Provençal style of love poetry. Many examples could be named of similar poetry by French poets and those who imitated them in this respect.

There are many instances of the literary phenomenon of love at first sight in medieval French poetry, but few in troubadour verse specifically,

because of its avoidance of narrative detail. Instead of offering examples, however, Bjarni particularises the comparison by quoting Joseph Anglade:

Les 'yeux' jouent un grand rôle dans la poésie provençale: c'est par eux que commence le phénomène un peu mystique de l'*enamorament*. La vue de l'objet aimé frappe les yeux et produit souvent l'extase; une sorte de fluide mystérieux va de là au cœur et y éveille l'amour (Anglade 1908, 84; Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 69).

The 'eyes' play an important part in Provençal poetry; it is by means of them that the slightly mystical phenomenon of falling in love begins. The sight of the beloved object strikes the eyes and often produces ecstasy; a sort of mysterious fluid passes from there to the heart and awakens love there.

Anglade is referring to something rather different from the powerful effect on the poet of Steingerðr's intent and brilliant gaze. He is describing the figure common in courtly literature, of the observer who, on sight of the beloved, is struck through the eye by the wounding dart of love, and subjected to what Andreas Capellanus defined as 'an inborn suffering which results from the sight of, and uncontrolled thinking about, the beauty of the other sex' (Walsh 1982, 32 and 33). The theme, apparently derived from classical antiquity, exploits 'the paradox that the one who looks is wounded by what the eye receives, whether or not that is itself a look returned by its object' (Spearing 1993, 10).

While the suffering gazer is most often male, a woman might also be smitten in the same way, like Lavine in the anonymous romance *Eneas* (c.1150):

N'avra Amors de moi merci?  
 Il me navra an un esgart,  
 en l'oïl me feri de son dart,  
 de celui d'or, qui fet amer;  
 tot lo me fist el cuer coler. (*Eneas* 1925–29, II 68)

Will Love not have mercy on me? He has wounded me with a glance. He has struck me in the eye with his dart, the golden one which causes love. He has struck me to the heart.

But this is not the situation in *Kormaks saga*. Steingerðr's feelings may be suggested by the fixity of her gaze, but the powerful effects of love and intimations of tragedy belong to the poet's consciousness. A. C. Spearing quotes a ballade by Charles d'Orleans (?1394–1465), representing the male as passive before a penetrating female glance:

How may he him diffende þe pouer hert  
 Ageyn two eyen when they vpon him light

Which naked is withouten cloth or shert  
 Where in plesere the eyen are armyd bright.  
 (Spearing 1993, 24; Steele 1941, 11)

This relationship between transfixing female gaze and apprehensive male observer corresponds roughly to that in *Kormaks saga*, but the imagery of the saga verses is of light and fire, not the courtly warfare, sickness and the personification of Love (and, in the last example, of eyes and heart).

Referring to eyes in terms of light is a convention in skaldic poetry, as *Skáldskaparmál* indicates: *Augu . . . má svá kenna at kalla sól eða tungl, skjöldu ok gler eða gimsteina eða stein brá eða brúna, hvarma eða ennis*, ‘Eyes . . . may be referred to by calling them sun or moon, shields and glass or jewels or stone of eyelashes or brows, eyelids or forehead’ (*Skáldskaparmál* 1952, 224–25). Other examples (such as *brátungl* ‘eyelash-moon’ in *Pórsdrápa* 14, referring to giantesses killed by Þórr) have no erotic connotation.

## 2. Verses 7 and 8: Evaluation of the beloved (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 70–71)

Reference to Steingerðr’s eyes recurs in the pair of verses in which Kormakr puts a financial value on a single eye, her hair, and, in verse 8, her whole person. The extravagance of the praise has led others besides Bjarni Einarsson to detect foreign influence. Einar Ól. Sveinsson likened the verses to Petrarch’s sonnet XVIII, which professes the impossibility of describing the beloved lady (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, xci). And Theodore Andersson is impressed by the parallel located by Bjarni in a verse of Peire Vidal (*fl.* 1180–1205):

E plagra.m mais de Castella  
 Una pauca jovensella  
 Que d’aur cargat un camel  
 Ab l’emperi Manuel. (Peire Vidal 1960, II 315)

A little lass of Castille would please me more than a camel laden with gold and the empire of Manuel.

But, as Andersson notes, Kormakr’s formula of evaluation, a series of sentences beginning *metk*, ‘I value’, and assigning a commercial value to each itemised feature, differs from that of Peire Vidal and other Provençal analogues, which declare unwillingness to exchange the lady for possession of land (usually kingdoms) or goods (1969, 28). Heather O’Donoghue’s point that Kormakr’s two verses differ in tone—the first perhaps ironically pedantic, the second expansive—suggests that they may have had diverse origins (O’Donoghue 1991, 31–32). Once again, the similarity in theme is not specific enough to prove derivation from troubadour models.

**3. Verse 19: Rivers run uphill (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 79–80)**

In verse 19, the poet declares that he will never give up the lady:

því at upp skulu allar,  
 ǫlstafrs, áðr ek þér hafna,  
 lýsigrund, í landi,  
 linns, þjóðáar rinna. (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 222)

For all the great rivers in the land shall flow backwards, bright ground of the alecup's fire, before I give you up.

Several have noted this use of what appears to be the classical figure of *adynaton*. Specifically, the image of rivers running uphill is widespread in classical and later verse (Schröder 1952, 123–33). There are examples in Ovid:

Cum Paris Oenone poterit spirare relicta,  
 ad fontem Xanthi versa recurret aqua. (*Heroides* V, 29–30)

When Paris can breathe after abandoning Oenone, the water of Xanthus will turn and run back to its source.

The famous anecdote in *Jóns saga helga* about Bishop Jón reproving the young Klængr Þorsteinsson for reading the *Ars amatoria* demonstrates Icelandic familiarity with some of the works of Ovid, though it may reflect conditions when the saga was composed (c.1200) rather than in Jón's day. The author's outline of the work's content (*En í þeirri bók talar meistari Ovidius um kvenna ástir . . .*), suggests that it was not universally known (*Biskupa sögur* 1858–78, I 237–38).

The classical parallel was first remarked upon by Alexander Bugge, who speculated that Kormakr himself encountered the idea on his travels:

Med Romerne, Europas største Kulturbærere, er Billedet vandret videre til Vest-Europa, hvor det findes i Middelalderens kristne Litteratur. Der maa Kormakr eller en af hans Landsmænd ha lært det at kjende, og saa har Skaldedigtningen optaget Billedet. (Bugge 1904–06, I 299)

The image was spread by the Romans, the greatest bearers of culture in Europe, further into Western Europe, where it is found in the Christian literature of the Middle Ages. There Kormakr or one of his compatriots could have learned of it, and skaldic poetry could have adopted the image by this means.

Bjarni Einarsson agrees that the image's origin is classical, but rightly doubts whether a tenth-century skald could have had the access to it that Bugge suggests (1961, 80). However, it is so prevalent in classical and Christian writings that any educated man in the Christian period could have encountered it, more probably through schoolroom reading of classical texts than from a European secular genre. In classical texts, the image is not

confined to erotic subjects, and no specific analogues in troubadour verse have been proposed.

Theodore Andersson hesitates to attribute the verse to a later skald because of its use of two archaic forms, *þjóðáar* and *rinna*, concluding, ‘Perhaps we should compromise on the twelfth century’ (1969, 31). This suggests that it was contributed to the saga’s materials after the lifetime of the poet himself, but composed earlier than the saga; but the argument is inconclusive since, as Bjarni Einarsson argues, the author could have reconstructed the archaic form *þjóðáar*, or copied the metrical irregularity of the younger *þjóðár*, from its similar use in *Þórsdrápa* 5. *Þjóðár* is one of several contracted forms in *Háttatal* 7, offered by Snorri to demonstrate licence for a light line of fewer than the regular six syllables (Snorri Sturluson 1991, 7 and 50). This indicates that, by the thirteenth century, the origin of these contracted forms was forgotten; but equally, that their use in positions metrically requiring the longer forms remained conventional.

Two further *adynata* occur in verse 61, where Kormakr declares that *Heitask hellur fljóta*, ‘stones will begin floating’ and *færask fjöll en stóru / fræg í djúpan ægi*, ‘the great glorious mountains will move into the deep sea’ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 274) before another woman as beautiful as Steingerðr is born. Again, the source, if any, is likely to be a classical one. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1966, 46–51) argues against imitation of Horace’s *Epode* XVI, 25–29; Theodore Andersson (1969, 31–32) considers the occurrence together of the two motifs in both Horace’s and Kormakr’s verse significant, and speculates that this text may also have been encountered in a schoolbook context, though there is no other evidence that Horace was known in Iceland.

#### 4. Verses 20–21: Question and answer (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 81–82)

Bjarni proposes that the exchange of helmings in which Kormakr asks Steingerðr whom she would choose as husband, and she replies, also in verse, choosing the ‘brother of Fróði’ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 222–23), has a French parallel:

Hér skal á það minnt að viðræður ungra elskenda eða ávarp ástfangins karlmanns og svar konu voru algengir og alkunnir hlutir í ástaskáldskap Frakka á tólftu öld og síðan þeirra sem fóru að dæmi hinna frakknesku skálda. (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 81)

Here it may be pointed out that dialogues between young lovers, or the speech of a young man in love and the woman’s reply, were common and well-known elements in the love poetry of the French in the twelfth century, and afterwards that of those who followed the example of the French poets.

Bjarni again names no particular poems or even genres of French poetry, but appears to have in mind the Provençal genres of *alba* and *pastorela*. These poems frequently take the form of a dialogue about love between a man and a woman. Peter Dronke's definition suggests another potential parallel with saga verse: these are songs that 'have a more objective, narrative or dramatic, frame, songs that grow out of imagined events rather than an imagined state' (Dronke 1978, 167). But the narrative themes of both genres are unusually specific; the *alba* dramatises the ending at dawn of a secret meeting between lovers, the *pastorela*, a knight encountering and trying to seduce a girl, usually a peasant. The situation in *Kormaks saga* is not similar; in particular, the focus on marriage, as the poet asks the girl whom she would choose *þér at ver*, 'as your husband', tells against locating the verse in the context of French love poetry. Bjarni's emphasis on this poetry's preoccupation with adulterous love has been shown to be over-rigid; it is more accurate to see in these two genres an idealised or playful escapism, which is equally inimical to marriage. This is described by Peter Dronke in his account of dance songs as set 'in Arcadia—not in a world of arranged marriages, social barriers and feudal laws, but in that enchanted forest or countryside where the only law is love. In Arcadia love is not complicated by social pressures or by guilt' (Dronke 1978, 199).

Bjarni's proposal that verse 21 has a French source is less than whole-hearted, since he simultaneously finds similar wording in Brynhildr's speech in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 58; and more tellingly, a pair of dialogue helmingings in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 29 parallels, as he notes, not only the dialogue structure but also the content: a question and answer in which the woman affirms her love:

Þá grét Sigrún. Hann qvað:

'Huggastu, Sigrún! Hildir hefir þú oss verið;  
vinnat sciöldungar scöpom.'

'Lifna mynda ec nú kíosa, er liðnir ero,  
oc knætta ec þér þó í faðmi felaz.' (*Edda* 1962, 155)

Then Sigrún wept. He said, 'Take comfort, Sigrún! You have been our shield-maiden; warriors cannot defeat the fates.'

'Now I would choose that those who are dead should live, if I could still hide in your embrace.'

Bjarni adduces further thematic links between this poem and *Kormaks saga*. But it seems unnecessary to press for a specific parallel with this poem when the ubiquity of dialogue throughout the *Poetic Edda*, including the catechism form of mythological poems such as *Vafþrúðnismál*, pro-

vides an obvious model for the verse in *Kormaks saga*. The admittedly less common sharing of a single stanza between two speakers is found in, for instance, *Reginsmál* 10:

Hreiðmarr kallaði á dætr sínar:  
‘Lyngheiðr oc Lofnheiðr, vitið míno lífi farit!  
mart er, þat er þorð þíar.’

Lyngheiðr svaraði:  
‘Fá mun systir, þótt föður missi,  
hefna hlýra harms.’ (*Edda* 1962, 175)

Hreiðmarr called to his daughters: ‘Lyngheiðr and Lofnheiðr, know that my life is gone! There are many things to which need constrains one.’

Lyngheiðr answered: ‘Few sisters, if they lose their father, will avenge their misfortune on a brother.’

*Atlamál* 78 (*Edda* 1962, 259), and 87:

*Atli*: ‘Brend mundu á báli oc barið grióti áðr,  
þá hefir þú árnat, þaztu æ beiðiz.’  
*Guðrún*: ‘Seg þér slícar sorgir ár morgin!  
fríðra vil ec dauða fara í líós annat.’ (*Edda* 1962, 260)

*Atli*: ‘You will be burned on a pyre, and pelted with stones before that; then you will have gained what you have always asked for.’

*Guðrún*: ‘Tell yourself such sorrows early in the morning! By a fairer death I will pass into the other light.’

A skaldic example consisting of question and answer, without erotic reference, is verses 5–6 in *Hallfreðar saga*, an exchange between Hallfreðr and *Akkerisfrakki* (said to be King Óláfr Tryggvason) (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 153).

##### 5. Verse 56: Nature prelude (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 124–27)

In this much-discussed verse, the poet juxtaposes the pounding of waves on cliffs with the sleeplessness and longing induced by separation from his beloved:

Brim gnýr, brattir hamrar  
blálands Haka strandar,  
allt gjalfr eyja þjalfa  
út líðr í stað víðis.  
Mér kveðk heldr of Hildi  
hrannbliks an þér miklu  
svefnfátt; sörva Gefnar  
sakna mank, ef ek vakna. (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, 269–70)

The surf roars, the steep cliffs of the shore of Haki’s blue land; all the resounding sea of the band of islands flows out into the sea’s abode. I declare



that I am much more sleepless than you because of the Hildr of the billow's gleam (woman); I will miss the Gefn of the necklace if I waken.

The conjunction prompts Bjarni to propose another southern European model, this time one that he concedes could predate the troubadours. He quotes Fredrik Paasche's claim that Kormakr made use of the convention, already found in Latin verse by eleventh-century wandering scholars, of prefacing a love poem with an evocation of nature (Paasche 1957, 506). The theme was popular throughout the twelfth century and later, among German lyric poets as well as the troubadours.

The nature prelude in medieval poetry is typically an invocation of spring, the burgeoning of nature offering a rich range of parallels for the disturbance and restlessness, but also, potentially, joy and fruitfulness, brought to the human sphere by love. This theme, though conventional, is teasingly varied and given metaphoric strength by subtle troubadours:

Ar resplan la flors enversa  
 Pels trecans rancx e pels tertres.  
 Cals flors? Neus, gels e conglapis  
 Que cotz e destrenh e trenca;  
 Don vey morz quilz, critz, brays, siscles  
 En fuelhs, en rams e en giscles.  
 Mas mi ten vert e jauzen joys  
 Er quan vey sexx los dolens croys. (Raimbaut d'Aurenga)

Now is resplendent the inverted flower along the cutting crags and in the hills. What flower? Snow, ice, and frost which stings and hurts and cuts, and by which I see perished calls, cries, birdsongs and whistles among leaves, among branches and among switches; but joy keeps me green and jovial now, when I see dried up the wretched base ones. (Press 1971, 106–07)

While troubadours, as this example shows, do exploit contrast in treating the theme, a closer parallel to Kormakr's use of the syntactical break between helmings to create a strong juxtaposition is found in shorter, less developed lyric forms such as that of this English lyric of c.1250:

Foweles in þe frith,  
 Þe fisses in þe flod—  
 And I mon waxe wod!  
 Mulch sorw I walke with,  
 For beste of bon and blod.  
 (Bennett and Smithers 1968, 111)

Peter Dronke comments that the compressed, alliterative form implies rather than states the conjunction of the lover's languishing, dislocated state with the serene contentment of the birds and fish in their natural

elements: ‘the poet intended the opening and close of his stanza to react on each other and to release associations of unhappy love’ (Dronke 1978, 145).

Kormakr’s verse uses a comparable technique of juxtaposition, though the turbulent sea echoes rather than contrasts with the poet’s mental disturbance: ‘The strong tidal currents of the sea reflect the emotional pull which Steingerðr exerts on Kormakr, and the paradoxical kenning for waves as the cliffs of Haki’s land suggests the turmoil of Kormakr’s thoughts’ (O’Donoghue 1991, 122). The theme of the sea’s turbulence as an index of mental disturbance is shared by the Old English poem *The Seafarer* (*The Exeter Book* 1936, 143–47); however, the unlikeness of Kormakr’s maritime landscape to the fields and groves of European poetry more probably reflects the distinctive viking way of life than a Germanic tradition shared with or derived from Anglo-Saxon poets.

The proposed parallel with the nature prelude is not specific enough to be convincing. While natural description is uncommon in skaldic poetry, its use as an image of the poet’s feelings could readily have arisen independently of European models, particularly since the bipartite structure of the skaldic stanza, and the technique fundamental to skaldic diction of describing one thing in terms of another, invite juxtaposition and contrast of apparently unrelated material.

#### 6. Verse 77: The poem as messenger (Bjarni Einarsson 1961, 152)

Einar Ól. Sveinsson likens verse 77, in which the poet proposes to send the verse itself to his beloved in farewell before going abroad, to verses sent by Dante and other courtly poets to their ladies (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939, xc–xci). He further suspects on metrical grounds that the verse is later than others in the saga. Heather O’Donoghue, too, sees nothing against the view that it could have been composed to fit its saga context: ‘It may well be that, as Bjarni Einarsson would have it, the verse was originally contemporary with the saga prose, and has come under the influence of a later poetic sensibility’ (1991, 154).

The verse messages referred to, however, are not closely parallel to Kormakr’s verse. They are structurally dissimilar, usually operating as *envois*, identifying poet or lady, and sometimes the messenger as well, at the end of a poem. This use of the *envoi*, at an almost prosaic remove from the body of the poem, is well illustrated by Bernart de Ventadorn, who follows a passionate, direct address to the lady in the poem’s last full stanza with an anticlimactic apology for failing to visit her in person:

Bona domna, re no.us deman  
mas que.m prendatz per servidor,

qu'e.us servirai com bo senhor,  
 cossi que del gazardo m'an.  
 ve.us m'al vostre comandamen,  
 francs cors umils, gais e cortes!  
 ors ni leos non etz vos ges,  
 que.m aucizatz, s'a vos me ren.

A Mo Cortes, lai on ilh es,  
 tramet lo vers, e ja no.lh pes  
 car n'ai estat tan lonjamen. (Hill and Bergin 1973, I 40)

Good lady, I ask nothing of you but that you take me as your servant, to serve you as I would a good lord, whatever reward I may have. See me at your command, noble and modest, gay and courtly one! You are no bear or lion to kill me if I give myself up to you.

To my Courtly One, there where she is, I send the verse, and may it not distress her that I have not been there for such a long time.

Some troubadours, and Dante, personify the verse itself, romantically suggesting the power of poetry (or love) to transcend physical distance, in the same spirit as the theme of *amor de lonh*:

'Vai t'en, chansos,  
 Denan lieis ti presenta.'  
 Que s'ill no fos,  
 No.i meir'Arnautz s'ententa. (Arnaut Daniel)

'Be off, my song, and present yourself to her.' Were it not for her, Arnaut would not have put his mind to it. (Press 1971, 182–83)

Kormakr's more literal sending of the verse (presumably by a messenger) does have parallels in troubadour verse. There, poets bring out the tension between public and private, and the artificiality of declaring love through an intermediary:

Mos vers an, qu'aissi l'enverse  
 Que no.l tenhon bosc ni tertre,  
 Lai on hom non sen conglapi,  
 Ni a freitz poder que.y trenque.  
 A midons lo chant e.l sisle  
 Clar, qu'el cor l'en intro.l gisclé,  
 Selh que sap gen chantar ab joy,  
 Que no tanh a chantador croy. (Raimbaut d'Aurenga)

May my verse go, for I so invert it that neither woods nor hills might hinder it, to there where one feels no frost, where the cold has no power to cut. To my mistress may he sing and whistle it—clearly, that its switches enter her heart—who can sing nobly, with joy, for it befits no base singer. (Press 1971, 108–09)

The example of the Old English poem, *The Husband's Message*, warns against the assumption that the theme must have a literary source. There the poem itself (or rather, the personified rune-stick bearing the message) addresses an affirmation of love to the woman:

Ðær mec mondryhten min [. . . . .]  
 ofer heah hofu; eom nu her cumen  
 on ceolþele, and nu cunnan scealt  
 hu þu ymb modlufan mines frean  
 on hyge hycge. Ic gehatan dear  
 þæt þu þær tirfæste treowe findest.  
 Hwæt, þec þonne biddan het se þisne beam agrof  
 þæt þu sinchroden sylf gemunde . . .

(*The Exeter Book* 1936, 226).

There my lord [. . .] me over the deep sea; now I have come here by ship, and you are to find out what you feel in your heart about my lord's love. I dare to promise that you will find glorious fidelity in him. Lo, he who carved this wood has commanded that you should be told that you, adorned with treasure, must remember . . .

It is not likely that this poem influenced Kormakr or any other Norse poet, but the parallel is as close as that with troubadour verse.

All in all, the parallels assembled by Bjarni Einarsson are too vague to be convincing. He relies heavily on critical generalisations about troubadour and other European traditions of love poetry which, on close examination, are often overstated or inaccurate, or offer only superficial similarities to the features he singles out in verses attributed to Kormakr. In only one case can he refer to a specific poem. Moreover, even if all the suggested parallels were convincing, they are comparatively few, as Andersson remarks:

This list is disappointing; when Kormakr's verse turns up one case of eyes described as a vehicle of love, one case of hyperbolic metaphors used to exalt a lady's worth, one stanza distributed as a dialogue between lover and lady, one stanza with something akin to a *Natureingang*, and one stanza sent to a lady from afar, the case for troubadour influence does not appear to be substantially strengthened (1969, 16).

In two cases, classical models have probably been used. This suggests that these verses, at least, were composed after Kormakr's lifetime, but does not require a thirteenth-century dating. The kind of parallel offered by the figure of *adynton* is more specific than most of those proposed with the troubadours, and the fact that this figure, like others from classical rhetoric, would be encountered in the schoolroom divorced from its literary contexts explains its piecemeal adoption into verse essentially alien in kind.

### V Troubadour *vidas* and poet's saga narrative

Klaus von See finds, in the prose *vidas* 'lives' and *razos* 'explanations' which in the thirteenth century began to accompany collections of troubadour poetry, an analogue to the skalds' sagas, which quote and form a narrative frame for their verses (von See 1978–79, 87–91). The idea has recently been echoed by Carol Clover: 'Indeed, the *skáldasögur*, as prose biographies studded with the highly technical poems of their heroes, invite comparison with the *vidas* of the troubadours, but no evidence for direct influence has yet been adduced' (1993, 263). This apparently exciting analogy is not necessarily fruitful, since the genesis and early textual history of the Provençal prose works are as obscure as those of the poets' sagas.

#### A. *Vidas*

The *vidas*, short prose biographies of the troubadours, are used from the thirteenth century in Italian manuscripts (*chansonniers*) as preludes to each poet's works. The evidence suggests that the prose form grew gradually more substantial, until, by the fourteenth century, it became a genre in its own right, rather than merely offering contextual support for the poems. But the beginnings of this evolution are uncertain, though it may have arisen from the poets' own habit of self-promotion within their lifetimes: 'Even before the *vidas*, no doubt, the troubadours were cult figures, a status which it seems they courted, to judge from the repeated self-references in their poetry' (O'Donoghue 1982, 97).

Of the one hundred and ten extant *vidas*, two claim to be by named authors. That of the mid-twelfth-century troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn announces its author as Uc de Saint Circ, himself a poet composing a century later; like some other authors, he claims to have had information from an oral source, in his case the viscount Ebles de Ventadorn, son of the patroness said in the *vida* to be loved by Bernart (Egan 1984, 12–13).

Miquel de la Tor, otherwise known as compiler of a now lost collection of poems, claims authorship of the biography of the mid-thirteenth-century troubadour Peire Cardenal, describing himself as *escrivan* 'writer' rather than poet. As this *vida* exists in thirteenth-century manuscripts, in this case the interval between the subject's lifetime and the writing of the biography virtually disappears, particularly if the *vida* is reliable in claiming that the poet lived to be almost a hundred years old.

The circumstances of composition of all other *vidas* are obscure. However, the existence of biographies of even the earliest troubadours (Egan lists *vidas* of twelve 'earliest troubadours' who lived before the

middle of the twelfth century), and their inclusion of at least some historically verifiable information independent of the poems, suggest that the *vidas* may have had some oral existence before they were written down, although there is no way of knowing how close a resemblance any orally circulating accounts of the troubadours bore to the surviving literary form (Egan 1984, xxii–xxiii). Linguistic evidence in some suggests oral performance, and it has been suggested that the briefest *vidas* represent an early stage of written text which was fleshed out with impromptu details as it was read aloud (Egan 1984, xxvii–xxviii; Schutz 1939).

The subsidiary role of *vidas* as introductions to collections of their subjects' poems is evident in some texts, in formulas like *Et aici son escritas gran ren de las soas chansos* (*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 40), 'And here are written a large number of his songs', or, suggesting a blend of oral and written traditions, *E fetz aquestas chansos que vos auziretz aissi de sotz escritas* (*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 21), 'He composed these songs which you will hear, and which are written below'. It seems probable, too, that those *vidas* of only two or three sentences had no existence independent of the poems they introduce. Margarita Egan compares the *vidas* in this respect to the learned Latin tradition of *vitae poetarum*, written to introduce glosses on classical texts used in schools. This tradition of commentary was current throughout the Middle Ages, incorporating works by ancient writers themselves with those of later compilers (Egan 1983–84; Quain 1945). This prefatory function allows her to speculate that 'scholars commissioned to compile anthologies of troubadour songs composed some of the *vidas* at the same time they were transcribing the verses' (Egan 1984, xxv).

But other *vidas* are more elaborate. Their material can often be shown to derive from the subjects' poems (or those of other poets, as in the *vida* of Bernart de Ventadorn, quoted below). A famous example of a *vida* based on the subject's poems is that of Jaufre Rudel (quoted above, p. 124), which transposes into biographical mode the poet's theme of *amor de lonh*.

Two versions of the *vida* of Bernart de Ventadorn show this process in action. One gives an apparently circumstantial account of his origins:

Hom fo de paubra generacion, fils d'un sirven qu'era forniers, qu'esqu audava lo forn a coszer lo pan del castel. (*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 20)

He came from a humble background, son of a servant who was a baker, and who heated the oven to bake the bread of the castle.

The other reveals the source of this information in another poet's mockery of his rivals; he was

de paubra generation, fils d'un sirven e d'una fornegeira, si con dis Peire d'Alvergne de lui en son chantar, qan dis mal de totz los trobadors:

Lo terz Bernartz de Ventador[n],  
 Q'es meindre d'un Borneil un dorn;  
 En son paire ac bon sirven  
 Qe portav'ades arc d'alborn,  
 E sa mair' escaudava.l forn,  
 E.l pair' dusia l'essermen.

(*Biographies des Troubadours* 1964, 26)

of poor family, son of a servant and of a woman baker, as Peire d'Alvernhe says of him in the song where he speaks ill of all the troubadours:

The third, Bernart de Ventadorn,  
 Who is shorter than Bornelh by the width of a palm,  
 His father was a good servant  
 Who always carried a laburnum bow,  
 And his mother tended the oven,  
 And the father brought the firewood.

Other *vidas* similarly quote verse as if for authentication, perhaps revealing a stage in the evolution of the form into a self-contained genre. The poems are fragmented to serve the needs of the *vida*, which originally existed only to support the poems.

Margarita Egan's analysis of the largely stereotyped narrative material of the *vidas* demonstrates that their story patterns depend on the interweaving of the two predominant themes of love and patronage, which, of course, are also central preoccupations of troubadour poetry. She also notes that

those *vidas* which develop non-romantic themes center on poets who did not sing of love . . . It is not surprising that [the *vidas* of Bertran de Born and Marcabru] neglect to speak of love and courtliness, patrons or erotic intrigues. The verses of Bertran de Born and Marcabru have little to do with ladies and courtship (Egan 1984, xx–xxi).

Within these common formulaic structures, however, authors might incorporate material unrelated to either troubadour songs or historical fact. The *vida* of Guillem de Cabestaing, a troubadour of the early thirteenth century, embellishes a typical narrative situation, the poet's love for another man's wife, with a highly-coloured account of the jealous husband killing the poet, cooking and peppering his heart, and giving it to his wife to eat. Ezra Pound (1975, 13–14; Canto IV) saw in the story a parallel to the eating of Itys's body in the myth of Tereus, Procne and Philomela (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 6). Its source could have been either popular narrative or direct influence from the classics.

### B. Razos

In arguing for parallels between the poets' sagas and Provençal 'biographies', von See emphasises

besonders die *razos* (< *rationes*), in denen die 'raison d'être' eines einzelnen Gedichts erzählt wird, also die Umstände, unter denen der Troubadour seine Strophen gedichtet haben soll. (von See 1978–79, 87)

especially the *razos*, in which the *raison d'être* of a particular poem is recounted, that is, the circumstances in which the troubadour is supposed to have composed his verses.

This suggests a working definition of the *razo*, but in fact it is not clearly functionally distinct from the *vida*:

The prose *razos*, composed at the same time as the *vidas*, provide fanciful explanations of the lyrics . . . But 'lives' and 'explanations' are not always distinct genres: sometimes *razos* are biographical, *vidas* exegetic (Egan 1983–84, 37, n. 7).

Manuscript evidence might suggest that the *razo* was a development secondary to the *vida*, for there are fewer of them, only one group of which, a collection of commentaries on the *sirventes* 'satirical poems' of Bertran de Born, is found in early (thirteenth-century) *chansonniers*. But critics generally agree that they evolved alongside the *vidas*, and in particular, that if the *vidas* had a pre-literary existence as accompaniment to the performance of troubadour poems, the same was probably true of the *razos*; indeed, there was likely to be more call for explanation of obscurities in particular poems than for a biographical account of the poet. Examination of the formulae used for concluding the *razo* and introducing the subsequent verses (Schutz 1939), and analysis of the narrative structures of the *razos*, both demonstrate their essential orality and inseparability from the subsequent lyric:

*Razos* invent stories to present the subtle poetic language of troubadours' *cansos* in concrete terms. Though prose and poem often mirror one another in language and theme, they are distinct units of one text (one part was recited, the other perhaps sung). Originally *razo* and lyric were inseparable: explanation anticipated recitation. Since the *razo* directs the reader to another text, it should not surprise us to find in it sketchily traced, one-dimensional protagonists and repeated narrative motifs (Egan 1979, 311).

Von See's assertion that the *razos* are more closely parallel to the poets' sagas than the *vidas* is presumably because of their apparently more specifically narrative function, and the attachment of each prose text to the specific poem it purports to explain. But my present exposition makes it



clear that the narrative techniques of the *razo* and the *vida* do not differ essentially. Both kinds function as prefaces, introducing poems which are usually quoted in full at the end of the prose text, not split up into individual stanzas interspersed with prose explication.

As von See does not analyse the procedures of the Provençal prose texts in deriving their narrative from verse sources, there seems no need to discuss this further here, since there are no close parallels. Von See applies the analogy with the poets' sagas to support his argument

daß die Mischform von Strophe und Prosa erst in der schriftlichen Abfassung der Sagas entstanden ist. (von See 1978–79, 87)

that the mixed verse and prose form first developed in the written composition of the saga.

He implies that the deployment in troubadour biographies of over-literal interpretation of poetic language, and other attempts to find narrative bases for allusions in the verses, comparable to those in saga prose, demonstrate that both forms originate in the writing down of bodies of oral poetry, an activity which, he claims, generated the impulse to set them within a frame of narrative explanation. But the account of the *vidas* and *razos* given here shows that the uncertainty of their origins offers no firm basis of comparison for the genesis of the poets' sagas. If anything, it suggests the opposite of von See's thesis. That is, it may have been the practice of oral recitation of the poetry which prompted the desire for explication of the verse, and some form of prose narrative may have accompanied the verses before they were committed to writing.

Not content with urging the parallel structure and function of *vidas* and sagas, von See actually speculates that knowledge of the troubadour form may have reached Iceland in time to inspire the poets' sagas, and hence the whole genre of *Íslendingasögur*. Once again, Rognvaldr Kali is invoked as forger of the cultural link:

Bedenkenswert ist aber, daß der Bericht, den die Orkneyinga saga von der Pilgerfahrt des Jarls Rögnvald und seinem Aufenthalt am Trobadorhof von Narbonne gibt, zugleich eines der ältesten Zeugnisse für die künstlerisch gelungene Vereinigung von Sagaprosa und Skaldenstrophen ist . . . Könnte es sein, daß diese Beziehungen zur Trobadordichtung dazu beigetragen haben, den Skaldenstrophen ihre bedeutende Rolle in den Sagatexten zu geben? (von See 1978–79, 89–90)

It is worth considering, however, that the account which *Orkneyinga saga* gives of Jarl Rognvaldr's pilgrimage and his stay at the troubadour court of Narbonne represents at the same time one of the oldest witnesses to the artistically achieved combination of saga prose and skaldic verses . . . Could it

be that these links with troubadour poetry have contributed to the important role of skaldic verses in saga texts?

The suggestion depends on the supposition that the texts of the Provençal biographies, surviving in thirteenth-century and later Italian manuscripts, had forerunners written in Provence (Schutz 1938), and on the belief that oral transmission played little part in Provençal literature (von See 1978–79, 90). If so, von See there argues,

könnte die schriftliche Fixierung der *vidas* und *razos* schon im 12. Jahrhundert begonnen haben.

the fixing of the *vidas* and *razos* in written form could already have begun in the twelfth century.

But as outlined above, recent research suggests that oral performance, at least, was significant in troubadour culture; for oral transmission there is no evidence one way or the other. Von See's suggestion (1978–79, 90) that

schon Jarl Rögnvaldr—als Mitverfasser des *Háttalykill* ein poetologisch versierter Mann—könnte von der Existenz solcher Kommentare erfahren haben

Jarl Rögnvaldr—as joint author of the *Háttalykill*, a man well-versed in poetic commentary—could already have had knowledge of the existence of such commentaries

pushes chronological possibility to its limit, as he acknowledges in proposing Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, half a century later, as perhaps a likelier candidate.

Such a tenuous argument is difficult to pursue further. The only evidence for Rögnvaldr's acquaintance with troubadour literature is the *Orkneyinga saga* account of his visit to Ermengarda and the few traces of apparent troubadour influence in the verses apparently composed there. There is no evidence that Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson learned anything of the secular culture of southern France. The suggestion that the account of Rögnvaldr's travels formed a prototype, presumably intended by the Jarl himself, for the mixing of prose and verse in saga narrative, ignores the fact that, although the interval between composition of the verses and their incorporation in prose narrative was no more than fifty years, the author of the prose clearly deployed his verse sources in ways other than those originally intended. Von See (1978–79, 90) concedes that

selbstverständlich wird die Anregung, die der Norden hier empfing, nur von sehr allgemeiner Art gewesen sein.

it goes without saying that the stimulus which the North received in this way would only have been of the most general nature.

Presumably, it would have consisted solely of the impulse to maintain and extend interest in the works of famous past poets by composing biographical and anecdotal accounts of their lives, explaining the context in which their poems were produced. The limitations of this explanation for the origin of the poets' sagas are, firstly, that as I have argued (Finlay 1994, 15–80), the poets' sagas pay surprisingly little attention to the role of the poet as public performer. In some cases the poets whose lives are narrated are not known as performers of public poetry (for example, Björn Hítðœlakappi); in other cases, the poet's public role plays no part in the saga (as in *Kormaks saga*). *Egils saga* is an obvious exception, and shares with the troubadour biographies the fact that important poems are alluded to, but not quoted extensively in early manuscripts. But this is not true of the *lausavísur*. *Gunnlaugs saga*, too, treats the role of the poet as public performer as an important theme, but as I have argued elsewhere (Finlay 1994, 48–49), this gives the impression of being superimposed on an earlier kind of narrative.

Secondly, the theory fails to explain the large proportion of narrative in the poets' sagas which is either unaccompanied by verse, or in which verse plays a subsidiary role. Von See argues that verses cited in saga prose were originally part of longer, self-contained poems, and only need narrative explanation because prose writers have separated them from their original context (von See 1960 and 1977). Russell Poole puts a similar case (Poole 1991), and suggests this origin for a group of verses in *Gunnlaugs saga* (Poole 1981).

There are models for this practice of dismembering longer poems in the Kings' Sagas (though these often identify the source poem, as the *Íslendingasögur* rarely do). This is a persuasive explanation of some, rather unusual, groups of saga verses; a form of it was adopted earlier in this paper for the verses accompanying the account of Jarl Røgnvaldr's pilgrimage. But it fails to account for the bulk of the verses quoted in poets' sagas and other *Íslendingasögur*, most of which show no sign of being abstracted from longer poems. We also know too little about what structure we should assume for such poems. While the structure of the *drápa* was evidently elaborate and clearly defined, a poem often includes *vísur* 'verses' as an element in its name, or is referred to as a *flokkr* 'group (of verses)'. Both terms imply a looser body of verse, and may merely define a number of pieces on the same subject, without any particular structural unity or sense that all were to be recited sequentially on the same occasion. They may, indeed, have been interspersed with prose (as are many poems in the *Poetic Edda*).

VI *Conclusions*

The poets' sagas resemble the troubadour *vidas* and *razos* only in owing their origins to the conversion into written form of a body of diverse material previously existing orally: part verse expressing the sensibility of individual poets, part history, part popular narrative. While both forms betray, to different degrees, their narrative dependence on their accompanying poetry, the actual preoccupations of this poetry are not closely similar and do not seem to be related.

Only in *Kormaks saga* is the theme of frustrated love significantly supported by verse; this theme, supposedly anomalous in skaldic poetry, is one likely to arise in any culture (Dronke 1968, I 2). In some verses it seems to develop (possibly under courtly influence) the contrastive convention of referring to or addressing a woman in the course of describing male activity. Frustrated and 'adulterous' love are, in any case, not as overwhelmingly characteristic of troubadour poetry as was once claimed.

It is possible to detect a tendency for thirteenth-century saga prose to superimpose what could be traces of courtly influence on apparently older materials. This was found, in this paper, in the presentation of Rognvaldr Kali's verses in *Orkneyinga saga*, and in interpretations of some verses in Kings' Sagas and poetic treatises which suggest that their subject is love for a married woman; it could also explain possible allusions to the Tristan romance in *Kormaks saga* and *Bjarnar saga* (Finlay 1994, 393–94). This suggests that the fixing of saga narrative in written form early in the thirteenth century, though it may have broadened the range of materials from which it drew influence, did not destroy its essential fluidity or, on the other hand, its willingness to preserve earlier kinds of material, even where this involved conflict with the author's immediate purpose.

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## REVIEWS

### NEW RUNOLOGICAL RESEARCH

BY MICHAEL P. BARNES

BLANDADE RUNSTUDIER 1 (various authors). *Runrön 6. Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet*. Uppsala, 1992. 201 pp.

RUNOR OCH REGIONALITET: STUDIER AV VARIATION I DE NORDISKA MINNESINSKRIFTERNA. BY RUNE PALM. *Runrön 7. Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet*. Uppsala, 1992. 290 pp.

The Uppsala series *Runrön*, although a very recent arrival on the runological scene, now has seven volumes to its credit, and more are in preparation. Of the two volumes to be considered here, one is a collection of essays which deal with a wide variety of topics, the other a doctoral thesis which examines certain types of regional variation in memorial inscriptions. The title of *Runrön 6, Blandade runstudier*, is well chosen. The eight essays are mixed as regards not only topic but also quality.

Lars-Erik Ahlsson's 'Lånord i svenska runinskrifter' is a brief piece which reveals little that could not be gleaned from a perusal of *Svenskt runordsregister* (Peterson 1989) and relevant etymological dictionaries. The author's chief contribution is to challenge the notion that any of the fourteen loan-words he discusses are of Frisian origin.

Lennart Elmevik writes on 'Runsvenskt **ak** "och"'. He offers a critical summary of the different ways in which scholars have sought to explain this not infrequent spelling, and finally comes down in favour of Sophus Bugge's belief that it represents '\**o* *k*', an intermediate form, according to Elmevik, between *auk* and *ok*. Given the clear evidence that **a** could sometimes be used to denote /*o*/, it may well be that he (and Bugge) are right.

Henry Freij's paper 'Viking ristade och Grimulv' is a brief but valuable study which compares the grooves of the runes with those of the ornament on twenty-five stones from Uppland. On the basis of minutely detailed measurements analysed by 'computerized [*sic*] statistical methods' (p. 35), it is shown that runes and ornament must, in some cases at least, have been carved by different people. Freij is unable to resolve the question whether Viseti, a named carver whose stones show particularly consistent variation between the two, was responsible for the one or the other, and wonders whether he may in fact simply have sketched a design and left it to local stonemasons to cut the grooves of both runes and ornament.

Freij's investigation exemplifies the increasing interest being shown by runologists in the processes which led to the production of inscriptions. Such an interest is clearly what motivates Jan Meijer, who contributes a lengthy piece to *Blandade runstudier* on 'Planning in Runic Inscriptions'. Interest is not of itself enough, however, and Meijer's article is poor in conception, disposition and execution. The corpus on which he bases his survey is nowhere defined, and could, for all I know, include every extant runic inscription. Superimposed on this cloudy vagueness is

what passes for an analytical structure, with sections headed ‘Crowding’, ‘Runes outside the Text-band’, ‘Short-branched Runes’, ‘Special Cases’, ‘Wide Spacing’, ‘Design Made before the Inscription’, etc. Little thought has gone into the analysis, however, for we find that certain features appear under more than one category, and while ‘Short-branched runes’ are a category on their own, ‘Hälsingerunor’ form a sub-section of ‘Miscellaneous omissions [*sic*]’ under ‘Special Cases’. The presentation is weak, and both wildly faulty English (‘Jansson gives some speaking numbers’ (p. 41)—presumably *sprekende aantallen* ‘significant figures’) and feebleness of argument are to be found (‘It should be realized that in all the following cases the word “possibly” or “probably” ought to be added, but I left these out since circumstantial evidence is pretty convincing in most instances’ (p. 39)). Much of the paper consists of quotations from volumes of *Sveriges runinskrifter* and similar manuals, with a minimum of comment, and the only conclusions seem to be (a) that carvers often did not plan their inscriptions well, and (b) that we should take more interest in ‘the man behind the stone’. It is interesting to note that whereas Freij in his article thinks the runes were cut more carefully than the ornament because the principal task of a rune stone was to transmit the runic text, Meijer finds that the text was subordinated to the overall design. I think we have to follow Freij here. His conclusions are based on painstaking original research, Meijer’s on superficial speculation.

Bengt Odenstedt’s contribution ‘Om uppkomsten av den yngre futharken’ holds a special interest for me since it offers detailed and sustained criticism of a paper I gave on the same subject to The Second International Symposium on Runes and Runic Inscriptions (Barnes 1987). I tried to offer a total interpretation of the development of the younger *futhark*, based on Liestøl’s view (1981) that the chief impetus lay in the way sound changes of the Syncope period affected the names of the runes. In the course of my paper I argued that only the short-twig runes showed signs of a conscious reform, and that if that point were accepted, it followed that this variant of the younger *futhark* could be viewed as the original since the long-branch runes must then be seen as products of a gradual evolution, moulded into their final shape in the light of knowledge of the short-twig alphabet. Odenstedt thinks otherwise. He believes with Harry Andersen that the younger *futhark* arose from a desire to simplify the shapes of the runes, and he also brings several arguments to bear against the notion that the short-twig runes are older than the long-branch.

Academic controversy is a good thing, for often it is only through the demolishing of hypotheses and their replacement by better ones that understanding progresses. For controversy to be fruitful, however, the protagonists must agree what it is they are discussing, otherwise the critic may well end up shooting down figments of his own imagination. Between Odenstedt and me, alas, there is no such agreement. I know what I was trying to say, but Odenstedt does not—whether this be due to a lack of clarity on my part or dullness of wit on his. The central argument about the part played by the rune names in the change from the older to the younger *futhark* ought, I think, to be reasonably clear. The names were in virtually all cases acrophonic, and there is considerable evidence from the history of runic writing in

Scandinavia that when the initial sound in a name altered, the sound value of the rune altered—or might alter—with it. We have the following examples: (1) the original twelfth rune (name: \*/ja:ra/ > /a:r/, value: /j/ > /a/); (2) the fourth rune (name: \*/ansuz/ > /ã:s:/ > /o:s:/, value: /a/ > /ã/ > /o/); (3) the original fifteenth rune which, as well as denoting /z/, may stand not only for /y/ (because its name in many parts of the Scandinavian world came to be /y:r/), but also for /e/ and /æ/ (apparently because in certain areas it was known as \*/ælgz/); (4) the younger seventh rune, /hagal:/, which seems to be used occasionally to denote /a/ in those areas of Sweden where loss of initial /h/ was common (cf., for example, the Sälna stone, U 323). In the light of these data it is not implausible that the sound values of other runes changed as a result of phonetic developments during the Syncope period, and several of the runes which went out of use around this time appear to be prime candidates. Odenstedt argues that one has to ascribe to rune carvers a considerable degree of naivety to believe they would abolish a rune just because the initial sound in its name had changed and there was therefore a mismatch between that sound and the one which the rune denoted. He dismisses Liestøl's and my insistence on the importance of the rune names as a mnemonic tool as 'aningen löjeväckande' ('slightly ridiculous', p. 73). We are certainly free to speculate about what was going on in the minds of seventh-century rune writers—and our freedom is all the greater for our want of knowledge—but such speculation cannot be a substitute for the discussion of evidence of the kind I have just quoted. In my 1987 paper I tried to draw a sharp distinction between facts and speculation, and I naturally stressed the primacy of the former. The crucial nature of that distinction does not seem to have impinged on Odenstedt at all.

The lack of understanding shown in the above case turns out to be minor, however, compared with the chasm of incomprehension that opens up when our disputatious runologist begins to discuss the relative ages of the two principal variants of the younger *futhorc*. He begins by ascribing to me the view that the short-twig runes were created before the long-branch, and this allows him to criticise as absurd developments I have never suggested took place (e. g.,  $\text{h} > \text{l} > \text{h}$ ). His attack continues with an involuntary admission that he does not understand basic graphemic theory—a failing which is amply confirmed by his claim that the many minimal contrasts of the short-twig alphabet (e. g.,  $\text{t}$  with  $\text{t}$ ) 'återfinns ju i den "danska" futharken i en något annan, dessutom grafiskt tydligare, form: jfr  $\text{f}$  med  $\text{l}$ ,  $\text{*}$  med  $\text{t}$ ,  $\text{t}$  med  $\text{t}$ ,  $\text{t}$  med  $\text{t}$ ' ('are of course found in the "Danish" *futhorc* in a somewhat different, and also graphically clearer, form' (p. 75)). What I actually say is (1987, 42): 'The answer to the question which of the younger runic alphabets is primary is therefore probably neither "the long-branch" nor "the short-twig", but that "it is a question of definition".' This is a view I still hold, and the reason is that the long-branch runes look to me, as I say above, like products of a gradual evolution. What, after all, do we mean when we speak of 'long-branch' runes—the Gørlev *futhorc* (DR 239), the Helnæs runes (DR 190), the characters on the Sölvesborg stone (DR 356) or those on the Ribe cranium (Moltke 1985, 151, 161–62, 346–49)? Our dating of the artefacts that bear these symbols and our view of whether the symbols are to be classed as 'long-branch' or not must clearly affect

the judgement we come to about the relative ages of the two main variants of the younger *fuþark*. This crucial and to me fairly obvious point would appear to have eluded Odenstedt completely. His failure to grasp it renders a central part of his article at best valueless and at worst misleading.

Lena Peterson's piece, 'Hogastenen på Orust', casts welcome light on an enigmatic inscription from Bohuslän, an area much neglected by runologists, who have perhaps found its change of political status in the seventeenth century and distance from centres of administration something of a disincentive. Peterson discusses two earlier interpretations of the inscription and deems them both linguistically unsatisfactory. She presents the results she came to on the basis of an independent reading of the runes in 1986, and then shows that these are in need of revision following the cleaning of the stone in 1989 when even the weakest of the runes became clearly visible. Whatever one thinks of her final reading and interpretation (her edited text and English translation is: *HQ UR/HQR/IāUR/IōR īĀm* [s]tæin vann iār ā mūla 'HQ UR/HQR/IāUR/IōR (man's name) in Ām (farm name) executed the stone here on the muzzle' ['muzzle' = mull]), Peterson deserves credit for the thorough and careful treatment she gives the inscription and the cautious way in which she expresses her conclusions.

I retain an open mind both about the reading and the interpretation. Clearly, if the Hoga stone is of early Viking-Age date, as is suggested, it is of considerable importance for the history of runic writing since it combines both short-twig and long-branch forms. The same appears to be true of the famous (ninth-century?) Sparlösa stone (Vg 119), which stands little more than 100 kilometres distant from Hoga—although it is not entirely clear how we are to decide whether the non-short-twig runes on Sparlösa are to be taken as long-branch or merely as 'transitional' (cf. the remarks on Odenstedt's contribution above). If, as is further suggested, Hoga contains an example of þ and a botched ḥ, it begins to look typologically even more like Sparlösa, which exhibits older ḥ and transitional \* (A—the latter in abundance). The problem is that what some read as **w** may in fact be **þ**, and the putative older **h** consists simply of two parallel vertical lines. Take away these 'older runes', and Hoga's age becomes a more difficult factor to determine—and the appearance of short-twig forms among long-branch runes that much less interesting. On the other hand, the layout of the inscription and the opaqueness of its message certainly point towards the earlier part of the Viking Age. For my own part, I find it surprising to see **w** in the company of short-twig forms, though the Rävsa stone (Krause 80), likewise from Bohuslän, exhibits a character which may be either **þ** or **w** alongside ḥ—and the latter is in my belief in origin a short-twig variant (cf. Barnes 1987, 42). Whatever our view of this complex of problems, it behoves us to recall that scholars have had no qualms about reading three examples of þ on Sparlösa as **þ**. Regarding Peterson's interpretation of Hoga, I wonder a little about *vinna stæin*. To accept it, one would, I think, need to understand *stæin* as 'inscription' or 'monument'—not impossible perhaps, but is it likely at an early Viking-Age date—long before the phrase *ræisa stæin* became formulaic?

The longest contribution to *Blandade runstudier* is Per Stille's "'Gunnarsstenarna"—en kritisk granskning av en mellansvensk runstensgrupp'. Stille shows reasonably convincingly that the term 'Gunnar's stones', coined by Erik Brate, is

not a useful concept since the inscriptions that have gone under that heading are far too diverse in respect of such important factors as ornamentation, carving techniques, rune forms, orthography etc., to be the work of a single carver or school of carvers. Some inscriptions that have been attributed to Gunnar are dismissed from the discussion altogether, but two groups of Uppland rune stones (including some not previously associated with this carver) are distinguished: one group is said to be the work of Gunnar, the other that of an anonymous runographer whom Stille calls the Skederid carver.

I have two major criticisms of this article. First, it is extremely hard to follow in places (this is especially true of some of the 25 tables)—indeed, certain details are incomprehensible unless one has access to a copy of Thompson 1975. Second, it is based not, as one might expect, on a careful examination of stones and inscriptions, but on the account of them given in *Upplands runinskrifter* (Wessén and Jansson 1940–58). I find such reliance on a secondary source hard to understand. More than once the author refers to difficulty in providing a satisfactory analysis because of the lack of requisite information in *Upplands runinskrifter*—but then why not go and visit the stones themselves? They are not widely scattered about, after all. No reason is given for this reluctance to undertake fieldwork; we are simply told that it was not possible for the author to go and examine the stones. Rightly or wrongly, I get the feeling from this article, as from *Runor och regionalitet* to be discussed below, that the principal factor governing the research of a number of my fellow runologists is the availability of computer technology. That which the scholar can deal with by tapping away at his keyboard seems to be a welcome topic—not least when the results can be plotted on diagrams and listed in tables. That which involves the examination of original sources, be they runic inscriptions on wind-blown hillsides or obscure volumes in out-of-the-way libraries, is eschewed.

The final article in *Blandade runstudier*, ‘Drömmen om Runverket’ by Lars Wollin, is a descriptive piece which deals with Johannes Bureus—‘the undisputed founder of runological research’ (p. 200)—and his work in publishing, or in some cases attempting to publish, the Swedish runic inscriptions that were known in his day. Wollin’s article is solid and interesting—though large parts of it, as he himself makes clear, are based on secondary sources. The availability of such material notwithstanding, Wollin emphasises the lack of a proper history of runology and calls for research into the origins and development of the discipline.

As I hope the above survey has made clear, *Blandade runstudier* is a book which contains much of interest not only for the runologist, but for the philologist, the historian and the antiquarian as well. One or two of the articles might have been better omitted, but in general the high standard achieved by the earlier volumes in the Runrön series has been maintained.

Runrön 7, *Runor och regionalitet*, presents a much harder task for the reviewer. It is positively bursting with information—and almost a third longer than *Blandade runstudier*, despite the fact that it is the work of a single scholar. I will start by offering a general impression of the book, and then focus on what I consider the more interesting points of detail.

As its title suggests, Rune Palm's study concerns runes in space rather than time. He does not ignore the diachronic aspect, but concentrates on synchronic variation, which is a matter he feels earlier scholars have tended to disregard. 'Regionalitet', oddly enough, seems nowhere to be defined, but can be understood to mean something like 'local practices', and occasionally 'cultural spheres'. The material investigated is limited to memorial inscriptions. The reason for this is not given, but must presumably be the impracticality of trying to include all types of runic inscription in a single study. The author's aim is to analyse a number of variables in memorial inscriptions and in the monuments themselves with a view to facilitating discussion both of the spread of the rune-stone fashion and of the economic, social and political forces that may have given rise to the fashion in the first place. To begin with, the monuments are divided into three groups: pre-Viking-Age, Viking-Age and medieval. Areas are then identified according to which variation is to be judged: rune-stone areas, rune-stone centres, *härader*, *hundaren* (or comparable geographical units outside Sweden) and parishes. Thereafter what are called the obligatory and facultative formulas of runic memorial inscriptions are analysed and followed by analysis of the wording of 'the sponsor formula' (the main subtype of the obligatory formula, i. e. that part of the inscription which tells who raised or commissioned the stone, made the memorial etc.—up to and including the preposition *eptir*, *ept*, *at*). A final discussion attempts to make sense of the data presented in the course of the many analyses.

It was with a feeling of lively but constantly frustrated curiosity that I worked my way through *Runor och regionalitet*. Many questions of interest are posed by the author, and others arise in the reader's mind, but little or no space is allotted to their discussion. One set of figures succeeds another, and the intervening text often does little more than summarise the numerical message. Given that many of the messages that emerge from the fifty-six Tables are scarcely more exciting than the revelation 'There are more trees in the countryside than in town centres', it is not surprising that one's frustration can sometimes become total. I started to entertain a vision of an author whose delight lay not in trying to make sense of the past, but simply in manipulating figures, and I was led to wonder whether the book's chief value might not be as a cautionary example of what can happen when computer technology is allowed to run riot. And yet Palm surely deserves our thanks for bringing to the fore so many fundamental questions pertaining to runological variation, and the final discussion, though only seventeen pages long, does briefly address many of the issues that arise from the numerical analyses. Not only that, but the book will have considerable value as a work of reference—and as the starting point of further investigations.

There is much, very much with which one could take issue in the myriad of details that make up this study, and it is important to stress that the few matters I now go on to discuss are those which held a particular interest for me. A review should not tax the reader's patience unduly, and I have therefore resisted the temptation to expand more than an absolute minimum of the terse comments that decorate the margins of my copy of *Runor och regionalitet*.

In common with various other contributors to Runrön, Palm demonstrates less than complete familiarity with some of the basic concepts of linguistics. On p. 58

the 'ljudvärde' ('sound value') of a rune is given phonemic notation. The phoneme, as I have tried to point out before, is an abstract concept; sounds are realisations of phonemes. The idea (p. 64) that the medieval runes which Palm transliterates **d**, **v**, **ð**, **æ** can be considered allographs of the graphemes <t, f, þ, a, o> is incompatible with normal graphemic theory. An allograph can be a combinatory variant (e. g. *T* versus *t*, depending on such factors as sentence initial position, proper noun, etc.) or a free variant (as in different styles of handwriting), but **d**, **v**, **ð**, **æ** fit into neither of these categories. From the start, dotted runes marked something different from their undotted counterparts—that, after all, seems to have been the reason for their use—and in the high Middle Ages they and the new vowel runes such as **and** and **o** regularly denote different phonemes or sounds from the runes of which it is claimed by the author they are allographs.

The distinction pre-Viking-Age, Viking-Age and medieval has obviously caused Palm considerable unease (cf., for example, p. 66), and that is perhaps not surprising given that the division of the Scandinavian memorial inscriptions into watertight groups is almost certainly an impossibility. Unfortunately, his restless musings seem in the end to have demanded the sacrifice of clarity. Having opted for a distinction on typological grounds, the author would have been well advised to have found or invented terms suitable to his purpose. Instead, he invests familiar chronological labels with novel typological meanings. So entrenched are the traditional meanings, however, that it proves very difficult to keep the two separate, and the way to confusion is thus open. Initially, pre-Viking-Age inscriptions are defined as those which are written in the older runic alphabet (for Palm apparently synonymous with inclusion in Krause 1966—but what does it mean, I wonder, to say that inscriptions such as Rävsaal and Tveito (Krause 80 and 94) are written in the older alphabet?), Viking-Age as wayside inscriptions in the younger alphabet carved on raised stones and rocks, and medieval as inscriptions likewise in the younger alphabet, but in contrast to the Viking-Age type to be found on sepulchres and ledgers in churchyards. As a result of what emerges from his analyses, however, Palm redefines the terms: Viking-Age memorial inscriptions are now those with a 'sponsor formula', which gives prominence to the living, while pre-Viking-Age and medieval inscriptions have other obligatory formulas, each of which in its own way focuses attention on the deceased. This second attempt to wrestle with the problems of definition appears initially more promising than the first. The London St Paul's stone (DR 412), for example—for several reasons likely to be from the time of Canute the Great—can now be classed as Viking-Age rather than medieval. However, the idea that a memorial inscription which fails to mention the sponsor in its obligatory formula is either pre-Viking-Age or medieval seems destined to confuse. Where, for example, does the Kilbar cross from the Hebrides belong? Since it is found in the British Isles, it would seem to have the Viking Age as its prerequisite. On the other hand, it almost certainly says *Eftir Þorgerðu Steinars dóttur es kors sjá reistr*, and thus shares its obligatory formula with such indubitably early inscriptions as Rök (Ög 136), Oddernes I (NIyR 209), and Flemløse I (DR 192)—all of which are ultimately classed by Palm as pre-Viking-Age. Looking at the matter from a slightly different angle, one wonders, if the presence of the 'sponsor formula' is to be taken as synonymous with Viking-

Age status, what the need is for both terms. We could simply have ‘pre-sponsor formula’, ‘sponsor formula’ and ‘post-sponsor formula’ types, and thus avoid both terminological redundancy and a great deal of muddle (Kilbar would clearly be a ‘pre-sponsor formula’ type). I do not think I am splitting hairs here, or raising objections just for the fun of it. A close reading of the book reveals that Palm himself has difficulty in maintaining a clear and constant distinction between the chronological and typological senses of his terms. Thus on p. 49 we read of the three big chronological groups, the Primitive Norse, the Viking-Age, and the medieval, while on p. 64 we are told that the terms pre-Viking-Age, Viking-Age and medieval are to be applied to groupings that will not primarily be considered as chronologically distinct. By the time we arrive at p. 129 and learn that: ‘Monumenttypen rest sten har således använts från äldsta tid in i medeltid’ (‘the raised stone is thus a type of monument that was in use from the oldest times to the Middle Ages’), we can be forgiven for wondering whether ‘medeltid’ is being used in its chronological, typological, or not primarily chronological sense. Perhaps in the end none of this matters. Acknowledging on p. 247 that whatever criteria you use it can be difficult to draw a dividing line between Viking-Age and medieval monuments and inscriptions, and noting that this (not unsurprisingly, one must say) suggests a continuous development, the author concludes that from a common European point of view both groups might as well be considered medieval.

It is possible that initially Palm had intended to include the runic inscriptions from the British Isles in his study. On p. 48 we are informed that Table 4 lists the material which is to be the subject of the investigation—and there in Table 4 the British material appears, both Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon. However, p. 48 also tells us that the British inscriptions will only be included where the author considers this necessary. Patently the necessity never arose, for following a brief enumeration of the British corpus on p. 50 and a reference on p. 56 to the excerpting of material from Olsen 1954 not a word more is said of runic writing in Britain or Ireland—except for the dubious suggestion in the ‘Final Discussion’ that the Viking-Age rune-stone fashion in Scandinavia owes its origin chiefly to the emulation of similar practices in Anglo-Saxon England (see further below). The omission of the British material is a great pity, for it contains evidence relevant to several of the fundamental questions Palm raises. Above I have drawn attention to the part it should play in discussion of the three-way typological division of the memorial inscriptions, and in connection with this to the existence on the Kilbar cross of the very rare ‘memorial formula’—only three certain examples of which, according to Palm, are to be found (two Swedish and one Danish (p. 143), one Danish, one Swedish and one Norwegian (p. 248)). Apart from this, there are such matters as the prevalence of other ‘monument markers’ than *steinn* in the British Isles, the use of the verb *leggja* in (what are chronologically, at least) Viking-Age inscriptions, and the appearance of the otherwise unknown ‘monument marker’ *yfirlag* on the Thurso cross. Moving from the specific to the more general, I note that Palm considers the density of memorial inscriptions to be a function primarily of the agricultural and commercial potential of particular areas. If this is so, it is odd that Man has some thirty Scandinavian memorial inscriptions and England and Ireland but one or two apiece. The British material clearly indicates (as I suspect the



Scandinavian proper might too, if more carefully analysed) that one has to reckon with other factors than the purely economic, and that locally some of these factors may have been of far greater importance.

The dearth of Scandinavian memorial inscriptions in England makes me doubt Palm's suggestion that the impulse which started the Viking-Age rune-stone fashion in Scandinavia came from across the North Sea. If he were right, one would have expected to see at least some evidence of a thriving rune-stone culture in the Danelaw or the North-West. It is certainly hard to think that the few, mostly very brief Anglo-Saxon memorial inscriptions that survive (not quite the 30 plus implied by Palm) can reflect a practice vital and high-profile enough to have caused Viking eyes to open wide in admiration and Viking lips to utter the Norse equivalent of: 'So ein Ding müssen wir auch haben!' If the suggestion of Anglo-Saxon influence is to be dignified with the title of theory and to be taken seriously, it will need to be accompanied by far wider and deeper consideration of the cultural context in which such influence might have come about. As a start I would recommend careful reading of Hines 1991.

The two volumes I have reviewed here show the current vigour of runological studies—the new paths that are being explored and the fresh insights that are being offered into old problems. But they also show, I think, that the discipline can still be affected by a certain amateurishness, and that one or two practitioners are in danger of letting their enthusiasm for information technology override their scholarly prudence.

#### Bibliography and abbreviations

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HARÐAR SAGA. BÁRÐAR SAGA. ÞORSKFIRÐINGA SAGA. FLÓAMANNA SAGA. ÞÓRARINS ÞÁTR NEFJÓLFSSONAR. ÞORSTEINS ÞÁTR UXAFÓTS. EGILS ÞÁTR SÍÐU-HALLSSONAR. ORMS ÞÁTR STÓRÓLFSSONAR. ÞORSTEINS ÞÁTR TJALDSTÆÐINGS. ÞORSTEINS ÞÁTR FORVITNA. BERGBÚA ÞÁTR. KUMLBÚA ÞÁTR. STJÖRNUNU-ODDA DRAUMR. Edited by ÞÓRHALLUR VILMUNDARSON and BJARNI VILJHÁLMSSON. *Íslensk fornrit*, XIII. *Hið íslenska fornritafélag*. Reykjavík, 1991. ccxxviii + 528 pp.

The publication of this book brings to twenty the total number of volumes so far edited in the *Íslensk fornrit* series, which means that the series now covers *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* (vol. I); all the Family Sagas (vols II–XIV; for a review in *Saga-Book* of vols II, IV and V, see *Saga-Book* XI: 3 (1936), 287–90; and for reviews of vols VII and XII see respectively *Saga-Book* XII: 1 (1937), 45–46, and XIV: 3 (1955–56), 244–47); *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum* (vol. XXIX; reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXII: 2 (1987), 120–21); *Orkneyinga saga* (vol. XXIV); and *Danakonunga sögur* (vol. XXXV; reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXI: 3–4 (1984–85), 293–96). In its published form the book now under review is to all intents and purposes the work of Þórhallur Vilmundarson, although, as he points out on pp. cviii and ccxxvi, much of the work on the text of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* as edited here had been completed by Bjarni Vilhjálmsón at the time of his death in 1987; and Bjarni's notes to the text of *Bárðar saga*, included among the footnotes to the text as printed on pp. 101–72, are enclosed in each case in quotation marks and followed by Bjarni's initials in brackets. The introduction to *Bárðar saga* in the present edition (pp. lxix–cix) must be regarded as Þórhallur's, except where he indicates otherwise.

This is a mammoth work, longer than any single volume so far published in the series. The four sagas edited here take up 327 pages of text, and the nine *þættir* a further 153, followed by nine pages of genealogies, a 35-page index, and five fold-out maps. Other maps and illustrations also appear in the volume; these are listed on p. 526. 168 pages of the 228-page introduction are devoted to the four sagas, and the remainder to the nine *þættir*, the individual works being introduced in the order in which their texts subsequently appear. Apart from two of the *þættir*, *Bergbúa þátr* and *Kumlbúa þátr*, which are treated together, each of the works is introduced separately, and whereas the *þátr* introductions are not sub-divided, each of the introductions to the sagas consists, with occasional exceptions, of seven sections, as follows: (1) preservation; (2) verse(s) (except in the case of *Þorskfirðinga saga*, which contains no verses in its preserved form); (3) relationships of content and wording (to other works); (4) oral tradition, place-names, folk customs, antiquities (this last item being included only in the cases of *Harðar saga* and *Þorskfirðinga saga*); (5) chronology; (6) age, place of origin, author; and (7) manuscripts and editions. Preparation of this work for publication, which has understandably taken many years, has been in two main stages, begun respectively (as Þórhallur explains, pp. ccxxv–ccxxvi) in 1956 and 1983, the second being delayed partly by the compelling nature of the arguments offered in 1970 (mainly by John McKinnell in *Opuscula* 4 (Bibliotheca Arnarnagana 30), 304–37, but cf. also Stefán Karlsson's remarks in the same number, esp. pp. 286–87) for the existence of the so-called *Pseudo-Vatnsþyrna* codex, posing problems relevant in particular to the editing of

*Harðar saga*, *Bárðar saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Bergbúa þáttur* and *Kumbúa þáttur* (see pp. v–xviii, lxix–lxxiv, cxxxiv–cxlii, and cciii–cciv of Þórhallur’s edition); and partly by the development of Þórhallur’s view in the course of his work not only on this edition, but also as Director (from its inception in 1969) of the Place-name Institute of the National Museum of Iceland, that the traditional understanding of the origins and meanings of many of the place-names occurring in the works edited here needs to be thoroughly questioned and revised (see pp. ccxxv–ccxxvi).

*Harðar saga* is here edited from AM 556 a, 4to, in which it is preserved in its entirety, and from the leaf in AM 564 a, 4to, that preserves part of a manifestly shorter redaction of the saga, the part corresponding to chs 1–7 and the greater part of ch. 8 in the longer, 556 a redaction. The text of 564 a is printed below that of 556 a on pp. 4–22. Þórhallur argues that 564 a represents a shortened version of a longer one underlying, though not identical with, the one preserved in 556 a, and that this underlying longer version was close or identical to the original one, which was written by Styrmir Kárason (d. 1245) in response to certain events of his lifetime, including Sturla Sighvatsson’s bid in 1235 to bring Iceland under the Norwegian king, his defeat at Örlygsstaðir in 1238, and Snorri Sturluson’s slaying in 1241 (Þórhallur makes much of the fact that Hörðr, the hero of the saga, lives for a time on the island of Geirshólmr in Hvalfjörður, as did Sturla Sighvatsson in 1238; see further below). Þórhallur says little about the date or circumstances of the saga’s shortening as reflected in 564 a, but implies (p. xviii; cf. p. cxiii) that it took place in the fourteenth century as part of a twofold tendency to reduce the *fornaldarsaga* elements in thirteenth-century Family Sagas and to save manuscript space. As for the form in which the longer version is preserved in 556 a, Þórhallur follows Sture Hast in suggesting that Einarr Hafliðason á Breiðabólstað í Vesturhópi (d. 1393) may have been responsible for it.

The text of *Bárðar saga* as edited here is based on four manuscripts which in different ways reflect the three main branches of the saga’s manuscript tradition as summarised in the stemma on p. lxxii; cf. p. cviii. Of these four, AM 158, fol., representing one of the three branches, preserves the saga in its entirety; AM 564 a, 4to, representing another, preserves what corresponds in Þórhallur’s edition to a section of the text extending from nearly halfway through ch. 5 to near the end of ch. 8; and AM 162 h, fol. and AM 489, 4to, representing the third branch, preserve what correspond respectively to sections of Þórhallur’s text extending from two-thirds of the way through ch. 8 to just over halfway through ch. 13, and from one third of the way through ch. 10 to just after the beginning of the final chapter, 22. As explained on p. cviii, Þórhallur’s text, which differs slightly from that originally planned for this edition by Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, is based at the beginning of the saga (for the first four and a half chapters) and at the end (for the greater part of the final chapter) on 158. Chs 5–8 are edited from 564 a for as far as its text extends (see above); the end of ch. 8 and subsequent chapters up to 13 are edited from 162 h to the point in ch. 13 where the text of 162 h breaks off (see above); and the remainder of the saga, up to just after the beginning of ch. 22, is edited from 489. Variants are also given from five other manuscripts listed on p. 100 together with those discussed here; their places in the tradition are indicated on p. lxii. Þórhallur

tentatively argues that the saga was written by one or more of the monks of Helgafellsklaustr shortly after the middle of the fourteenth century.

*Porskfirðinga saga* is here edited from the one vellum manuscript in which it is preserved, AM 561, 4to, and from which all its paper manuscripts descend. The state of this manuscript is such that parts of chs 10 and 12, all but the title of ch. 11, and parts of the final chapter, 20, are missing from the text. Þórhallur argues that the surviving *Porskfirðinga saga* is one of two versions, the other being the one referred to by Sturla Þórðarson in his redaction of *Landnámabok*, i. e. *Sturlubók*, completed in 1275–80, which presents certain events differently from the way they are presented in the surviving version of the saga. This latter version, Þórhallur maintains, made use of *Sturlubók* as well as of the older version to which *Sturlubók* refers; the older and the younger version must therefore pre-date and post-date *Sturlubók* respectively. The older version, he argues, was written in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, perhaps in the environment of Sturla Þórðarson, and the younger version in the first half of the fourteenth.

*Flóamanna saga* also existed in two versions. The longer one survives only fragmentarily in two manuscripts, AM 445 b, 4to and AM 515, 4to, of which the latter preserves a copy of the former, made (by Einar Eyjólfsson, d. 1695) at a time when 445 b contained rather more of the longer version's text than it does in its present form. The longer version is thought to be the one closer to the original. The shorter, or shortened version, is preserved in its entirety in a large number of paper manuscripts, of which AM 516, 4to, is used as the basis for Þórhallur's edition, with variants given from manuscripts believed to represent the two other main branches of the shortened version's descent, as outlined in the stemma on p. cxxxviii. The text of 515, representing the longer version, is printed below that of 516 for as far as it can confidently be said to have independent value, i. e. from near the end of ch. 18 to halfway through the first sentence of ch. 24; and the text of 445 b is also printed below that of 516 for as far as it extends, i. e. from that point onwards to nearly halfway into ch. 25, and from the beginning of ch. 33 to the end of the saga's final chapter, 35. Ch. 24 in the longer version, it may be noted, contains a verse found only in the longer version which Richard Perkins has argued (in *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 2 (1969), 92–101) is a rowing chant, as Þórhallur notes on pp. cxlii–cxliii. Þórhallur is indeed heavily indebted to Perkins's work on *Flóamanna saga*, as he acknowledges with frequent references to his various writings, published and unpublished, on the subject, not least his Oxford D. Phil. thesis of 1971 and his *Flóamanna saga, Gaulverjabær and Haukr Erlendsson*, *Studia Islandica* 36 (1978). He appears to agree with Perkins that the original version of *Flóamanna saga* was written for Haukr Erlendsson (d. not later than 1334), and the shortened version before 1380. As the original version's place of composition, however, he suggests Viðeyjarklaustr as a possible alternative to Gaulverjabær, suggested by Perkins.

What is distinctive about this volume is the great emphasis given, mainly in the introduction, to the editor's theory of the origins of Icelandic place-names, which seems at times to come close to being a theory of the origins of Icelandic sagas as well, though nowhere in this edition, as far as I can discover, does Þórhallur explicitly present his theory as one of saga origins, or discuss it in relation to earlier

saga origin theories. The first stage of the theory's exposition, briefly summarised, is as follows: places in Iceland were originally named by the earliest settlers after physical or natural features of the landscape. For instance, if an islet (ON *hólmr*) or a spit of land (ON *tangi*) looked in shape like a spear (ON *geirr*) it would be likely to be named *Geirshólmr* or *Geirstangi*; if a bay or cove (ON *vík*), or part of it, was covered with bird-droppings (ON *drit*), it might well be called *Dritvík*. The process is not as simple as I am perhaps making it sound, however; if it were objected that an island called *Geirshólmr*, for instance the one in Hvalfjörður referred to in *Harðar saga* (depicted opposite p. 64 of Þórhallur's edition, and also on the dust jacket), looked nothing whatever like a spear or a spearhead, Þórhallur would reply (cf. p. xxxvii) that its naming was influenced partly by the frequency of the element *Geir(s)*- in Icelandic island names generally (which was itself due to some of the islands in question showing the resemblance), and partly by the proximity of this particular island to Geirstangi, which, according to Þórhallur at least, does resemble a spearhead.

As so far described, the theory is purely one of place-name, as opposed to saga, origins. So far, so good, though it may be pointed out even at this stage that in order to uphold this theory it would be necessary to check carefully in each case that the settlers would indeed have perceived the places in question in the way the theory requires; on p. 112 of his edition Þórhallur refers to a discussion by him in *Grímnir* (1980), 138–39, of the place-name *Þistilsfjörður* (now *Þistilfjörður*), which he derives from the thistle-like shape of a headland (named *Langanes*) in the fjord in question. It is true that the headland looks (something) like a thistle (ON *þistill*) in the aerial photograph accompanying the discussion in *Grímnir*, but the question must arise as to whether it would have done so to the original settlers, who, according to the theory, gave it the name, and who did not have the benefit of aerial photography. Here it is up to the potential critic to visit Þistilfjörður to see for himself.

The theory begins to look like a theory of saga origins when Þórhallur moves on to the next stage of its exposition. Here he argues that place-names themselves often outlived the memory of their derivation from features of the landscape, with the result that they were frequently reinterpreted—indeed misinterpreted, according to the theory—as deriving from personal names, and/or from events assumed to have taken place in the area, which meant that not only persons, but also information about them which might well take narrative form, had to be invented in order to explain the attachment of the name to the place. Thus in *Harðar saga* as edited here, p. 65, Geirshólmr is so named because Hörðr's foster-brother Geirr lived there; and Geirstangi (p. 85) derives its name from Geirr's dead body being washed ashore there. According to *Bárðar saga* (see p. 111), Dritvík derives its name from the fact that it was contaminated by the excrement of Bárðr and his followers on their arrival there from Norway. Thirdly, according to *Landnámabók* (see *Grímnir* (1980), 139), Þistilsfjörður was settled by Ketill þistill, whose nickname by implication explains the fjord's name. It was details such as these, Þórhallur seems to imply, that provided the stimulus for saga-composition, though he is of course well aware that by no means all saga-characters can have been invented, and that events described in the sagas were often modelled on historical ones. Although in the case

of *Harðar saga* he derives the hero's name, *Hörðr*, from a place-name recorded in the neighbourhood of Geirstangi and containing what Þórhallur sees (pp. xl–xli) as originally the element *harð-* (from the adjective *harðr*, 'hard'; he takes it as descriptive of the landscape), he also argues, as indicated above, that certain events of the saga—notably Hörðr's sojourn with Geirr and others on Geirshólmr—were influenced by events of Styrmir Kárason's lifetime, not least Sturla Sighvatsson's sojourn there in 1238, referred to in ch. 132 of Sturla Þórðarson's *Íslendinga saga* (for a critical discussion of this argument, see Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir's review in *Skírnir* 166 (1992), 451–62).

Þórhallur's theory has been presented here as involving two stages of exposition. If Stage One was all there was to it, one would expect it to appear in this edition mainly in the footnotes to the texts, explaining individual place-names as and when they occur. The fact that it bulks so large in the introduction (where it comes up mainly in the introductions to the sagas, though also in some of the *þátrr* introductions, notably those to *Þorsteins þátrr tjaldstæðings* and *Bergbúa þátrr*), strongly suggests, however, that there is a Stage Two element in Þórhallur's purpose, i. e. that he is tentatively offering the place-name theory as a theory of saga origins as well, even if he does not say so directly. It may then be useful to examine the theory critically with this possible dimension of it in mind.

The two stages in the exposition of Þórhallur's theory correspond, of course, to two stages in the semantic development (as he sees it) of each place-name for which, in his view, the theory works. It seems to me that a place-name thus accounted for is only likely to be helpful in the context of saga origins if the meaning it is supposed to have acquired at the second stage of its semantic development can be thought to have the potential for constituting a *motif*, either on its own or in combination with one or more neighbouring place-names viewed as having undergone, or as capable of undergoing, the same process of semantic development. A motif may be defined, with the help of Alan Bruford's *Gaelic Folktales and Mediaeval Romances* (1969), 6, n. 1, as an item of information 'sufficient to be the basis of a story in itself (given explanations of the circumstances)'. This is perhaps another way of saying, as Laurits Bødker does in his dictionary of *Folk Literature (Germanic)* (1965), 201–02, that in order to qualify as a motif, an item of information 'must have something about it that will make people remember and repeat it; it must be more than a *commonplace*. A mother as such is not a m[otif]. A cruel mother becomes one because she is at least thought to be unusual'. Thus the island name *Geirshólmr*, thought of as indicating that someone called Geirr lived on the island in question, might not qualify as a motif unless it could be shown (as it very likely can in the case of Geirshólmr in Hvalfjörðr) that it was an unusual place for anyone to live; but taken together with the neighbouring mainland place-name *Geirstangi*, thought of as indicating where Geirr's body was washed ashore, it would certainly do so, raising the questions of how Geirr died, what he was doing on the island in the first place, and so on. If this is considered insufficient material to form the basis of a story whose main character is called not Geirr, but Hörðr (a reservation that Þórhallur himself seems to have, to judge from his remarks on pp. xxxvi–xxxvii and xl), it may be replied that Geirr is not as much of an

*aukapersóna* in *Harðar saga* as Þórhallur seems to suggest; he is presented as a close friend of Hörðr, and in many ways as a foil to him, and the index references to Geirr in Þórhallur's edition are not in fact that many fewer than those to Hörðr. As for *Dritvík*, as explained at the second of the two stages outlined above, it is easy to see how the contamination of a bay by human excrement might be regarded as a sufficiently memorable incident to constitute a motif, not least as it is described in *Bárðar saga*, which at the relevant point (p. 111 of the edition) uses the phrase *ganga á borð at álfreka* ('to defecate overboard, thus driving away the elves'), indicating that it was thought of as an act of defiance against the supernatural inhabitants of the region, in a context to be explained more fully below. Similarly, Ketill Þistill's supposed unique status as the initial settler of Þistilfjörður would no doubt be enough to make his arrival there qualify as a motif, raising questions about where he came from and what happened to him and his descendants after he arrived.

If Þórhallur were to offer his theory as one of saga as well as place-name origins, it seems to me that, of the sagas edited here, *Bárðar saga* would be the one best suited to support his case. Here he offers place-names as an explanation not only of the name and byname of the saga's main character, Bárðr Snæfellsáss, but also of two centrally important events in the saga: Bárðr's arrival in Iceland from Norway in ch. 4, and his disappearance, apparently into Snæfellsjökull (see p. 119 of the edition), in ch. 6. This explanation centres on the bay named *Dritvík*, which, as can be seen from the map on p. lxxxviii (cf. also the photograph on p. xc), is enclosed by two cliffs, now named respectively *Norður-* and *Suðurbarði*. Here the *Norður-* and *Suður-* elements mean of course 'North' and 'South'; the *-barði* element means 'ship with iron prow', and the cliffs were so named presumably because of their resemblance to ships or to ships' prows. In the bay itself, mainly in the sea but partly on the foreshore, is a large rock which itself resembles a ship (and is indeed now called *Bárðarskip*, though this name has probably arisen as a result of the saga's influence). On this rock may be discerned the shape of a face looking towards the glacier-topped mountain Snjófell, some three to four miles inland. According to Þórhallur, the names of the cliffs have combined with the actual features of the landscape just described to give rise to the idea of a man named *Bárðr* (not *Barði*, since *Bárðr* was commoner as a personal name than *Barði*, which itself was common in the region as a place-name, see p. lxxxvii, n. 37) arriving by ship at *Dritvík* and disappearing into Snjófell. The idea of his disappearing into the mountain, which it might be too much to expect to have been stimulated solely by the shape of the nearby rock, could have been assisted by the notion of Bárðr's driving away the mountain's supernatural inhabitants, the elves, in the manner suggested by the place-name *Dritvík* as the saga explains it (see above). Once established, the idea of his disappearance would have marked Bárðr himself as a supernatural being, an elf or *álfr*, and at first, Þórhallur suggests, he was known as *Bárðr Snjófellsálfr*; but later, as his reputation for protecting people in the area developed—partly, Þórhallur believes, under the influence of stories of St Michael the Archangel—he was promoted from *álfr* to *áss* (i. e. 'god' or '(patron) deity'), and came to be known as *Bárðr Snjófellsáss* or *Snæfellsáss*. The circumstances of his name's origin are reflected, Þórhallur also believes, in the saga's references to

the two-pronged stick (*klafakerling* or *klafastafr*) which Bárðr is more than once represented as holding (see pp. 129, 133, 135 and 139 of the edition), and which may be thought to resemble in shape the two cliffs or *barðar* enclosing Drítvík.

Here one begins to see how an entire saga might develop from a place-name as accounted for by Þórhallur. Once the commonplace, 'man arrives by ship', had combined with the potential motif, 'man disappears into mountain', and the man in question had been identified as Bárðr on the basis of the place-name Barði, people would ask what manner of being this Bárðr was, where did he come from and what were his origins, what happened to him after his disappearance, did he have any descendants, and so on. In this way something like the surviving *Bárðar saga* might develop; the saga indeed describes in its opening chapters Bárðr's partly giant origins, his daughters by his two marriages and his departure for Iceland from Norway with King Haraldr hárfagri's rise to power; and later goes on to tell how, after his disappearance, he was 'seen by rare glimpses', gave protection to people in the area, and in due course became the father, by the daughter of one of his hosts, of a son, Gestr, who on a smaller scale carried on his good work.

This, then, or something like it, is the theory of saga origins that Þórhallur comes near to enunciating in his introduction, even though he never actually does so. He need not have been deterred by the obvious fact that by no means all Icelandic sagas can have originated in the way that *Bárðar saga*, to judge from the information he provides, may have done. After all, as he himself would admit (cf. p. xxxvii), by no means all islands with the element *Geir-* in their names can have been so named because they looked like spears or spearheads; part at least of his argument is that once islands that *did* show the resemblance had been given such names, the way was open for other islands which did not do so to be given them. Similarly, one could presumably argue that once sagas had begun to develop in the manner suggested by the information assembled by Þórhallur in the case of *Bárðar saga*, other sagas could originate in circumstances and for reasons altogether different from those pertaining in that case. I am not saying that, if Þórhallur were to offer such a theory, I would necessarily accept it; but I am indicating that his apparent reluctance to commit himself in this matter makes for a somewhat uneven quality in the edition under review, where the work of the place-name specialist does not always combine easily with that of the saga editor. One wonders at times what all the references to place-names are doing in an introduction to so many works of literature, and feels the need for these references to be placed within a theoretical framework that would clarify their relevance to the study of the sagas as part of literary history. A 'place-name theory' of saga origins would not necessarily supplant the Book Prose theory, with which the *Íslensk fornrit* series has long been deservedly associated; but it would add an interesting dimension to the study of the complex question of how the sagas came into being.

Apart from this, there is in my view very little to which exception can be taken in this edition. One's own particular interests are bound to make one feel from time to time, in reading it, that certain aspects of the works edited here could have been commented on otherwise than they have been, perhaps most especially in the footnotes. I personally would like to have seen references to Gert Kreuzer's



*Kindheit und Jugend in der altnordischen Literatur, Teil I* (1987) in the footnotes dealing with child-exposure as referred to in *Harðar saga*, ch. 8 (p. 20), *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts*, ch. 4 (pp. 348–49), and *Þorsteins þátr tjaldstæðings*, ch. 1 (p. 425) (cf. my review of Kreutzer's book in *Scandinavica* 29 (1990), 102–06). I should also like to have seen, both in these footnotes and in those dealing with the motif of the hero performing his first major deed at the age of twelve (in relation to *Harðar saga*, ch. 11, on p. 32, *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts*, ch. 8, on p. 356, and *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, ch. 3, on p. 463), some indication of the relevance of this motif, as well as of that of child-exposure, to the international heroic biography discussed by Jan de Vries in his *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend* (1959; Eng. trans. 1963), ch. 11. The footnotes on pp. 77 and 350, dealing with references to polar bears in ch. 31 of *Harðar saga* and ch. 5 of *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* respectively, could usefully have referred to Niels Lukman's article, 'Ragnarr loðbrók, Sigifrid, and the Saints of Flanders', in *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 9 (1976), 7–50, which includes a discussion (on pp. 36–37; cf. also pp. 34–35) of an account in the thirteenth-century *Annales Lundenses* of the metamorphosis into a polar bear of one Ywar, possibly identifiable with Ívarr, son of Ragnarr loðbrók; it may be significant that, in *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts*, ch. 5 (p. 350), the bear is referred to in the context of a discussion of Þorsteinn's parentage, and that Ívarr is the name of Þorsteinn's father. The possibility of a connection between the revenant king Raknarr of chs 18–21 of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* and Reginheri, the leader of the Viking attack on Paris in 845, treated sceptically by Þórhallur in a footnote on pp. 161–62, might gain support from further delving into the sources for this event than Þórhallur seems to have undertaken; the account in the anonymous ninth-century Frankish Latin *Miracula Sancti Germani*, ch. 30, of the arrival from Paris of Reginheri (here called Ragenarius) at the court of the Danish king Horic bears a striking resemblance to the account in *Bárðar saga*, ch. 18, of the arrival of Raknarr at the court of Óláfr Tryggvason (see Niels Skyum-Nielsen, *Vikingerne i Paris* (2nd ed., 1967), 38–40). Since they appeared in the same year as his book, Þórhallur could not be expected to refer to my discussions of the cow Sibilja described in chs 10 and 12 of *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (see my *Studies in Ragnars saga loðbrókar and its Major Scandinavian Analogues* (1991), 114–17, and 'Loðbróka og Gunnlöð', *Skírnir* 165 (1991), 343–59, esp. 357–58), which might have given him something to take issue with in his own discussion of that cow in his footnote on the sacred bull of ch. 14 of *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* on p. 367. But he could have referred, and perhaps should have done in his footnote on the slaying of the giant Brúsi by Ormr in ch. 9 of *Orms þátr Stórolfssonar* (on p. 418), to Roberta Frank's dismissal of the blood-eagle method of killing (the one here used) as wholly unhistorical (see Frank's 'Viking Atrocity and Skaldic Verse: the Rite of the Blood-Eagle', *English Historical Review* 99 (1984), 332–43); Þórhallur certainly does not deny its historicity in the footnote in question (I may add that I have since followed up Frank's argument in a short article, 'Blóðörn eða blóðormur?' in Gísli Sigurðsson, *et al.*, eds, *Sagnaþing helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni sjötugum 10. apríl 1994* (1994), II, 539–41). This method of killing, as is well known and as Þórhallur's note indicates, also occurs in traditions relating to Ragnarr loðbrók. Finally on the last-named topic, it is not

strictly correct to say, as Þórhallur seems to do on p. ccxiii of his introduction, that according to *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, Áslaug Sigurðardóttir Fáfnisbana invaded Sweden with ten ships; what the relevant chapter (11) of *Ragnars saga* (as edited by Magnus Olsen: *Völsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (1906–08), 146–47) actually says is that Áslaug assembled ten ships in preparation for a hostile visit, with four of her sons by Ragnarr, to Sweden, and then, after a discussion with one of these sons, Ívarr, agreed to lead part of the army there by land.

As D. A. H. Evans, reviewing Hermann Pálsson's edition of *Hávamál*, notes elsewhere in this issue of *Saga-Book*, it is interesting and sometimes surprising for non-Icelanders reading Old Icelandic texts as edited for present-day Icelanders to see what the latter need, and do not need, to have explained to them. I was interested, for example, to see that, in the edition here under review, the adjective *ósýniligr* in the phrase 'hann var mjök ósýniligr' (in ch. 9 of *Þorskfirðinga saga*) was glossed in a footnote (on p. 197) as 'óásjálegur' (i. e. 'unsightly'); the modern Icelandic would presumably be in danger of taking *ósýniligr* to mean 'invisible' (though the intensive adverb *mjök* might give him pause). On the other hand, I was surprised that no comment was made on the neuter form *eitt* in a sentence in the final chapter (15) of *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts*: 'Um daginn eptir . . . sá þeir þrettán menn á skóginum, ok var eitt kona í' (p. 368.) Since the woman in question is described a few lines further on (on p. 369) as 'it mesta flagð', this is presumably an example of the tendency in some Germanic languages, as indicated by Fr. Klaeber in his edition of *Beowulf* (*Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (3rd ed., 1950), 180, note to line 1260), for the genders of supernatural beings to be indeterminate. As a barbarophone (to use David Evans's term), I would have liked an explanation of this in a footnote, and am impressed to see that Icelandic readers apparently do not need one.

The relatively minor points raised in the last two paragraphs are intended to underline rather than detract from the immense value of this edition, by giving an idea of the connections and comparisons it has stimulated just one reader to make. While this book, as I suggested earlier in this review, is not quite as much of a pioneer work as it seems at times to want (and deserve) to become, it is nevertheless greatly to be welcomed.

RORY McTURK

THE NORSE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC. Edited by G. F. BIGELOW. *Acta Archaeologica*, 61: 1990. *Munksgaard International Publishers Ltd.* Copenhagen, 1991. 291 pp. NORDATLANTISK ARKAEOLOGI—VIKINGETID OG MIDDELALDER: BEBYGGELSE OG ØKONOMI. *hikuin*, 15. *Forlaget Hikuin*. Højbjerg, 1989. 237 pp.

NORSE AND LATER SETTLEMENT AND SUBSISTENCE IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC. Edited by C. D. MORRIS and D. J. RACKHAM. *Occasional Paper Series*, 1. *Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow*. Glasgow, 1992. x + 230 pp.

If the three volumes under review collectively provide something of a benchmark for Norse Atlantic studies c.1990, the bench is occupied mainly by various biologists, and the principal mark is that left by ancient environmental remains. Yet

the study of palaeoecology does not totally dominate any of the three; each contains a range of approaches, whether encapsulated in site-specific reports or in more generalising summaries. There is a certain amount of academic recycling by authors between the various volumes, which one can charitably ascribe to the hope of reaching different audiences; more questionable is the presentation in some papers of a considerable amount of only partially digested or uncertainly dated evidence. Linguistically challenged readers of *hikuin* on either side of the North Sea will benefit from summaries in Danish or English; both the other works are wholly in English.

Each collection encompasses virtually the whole Norse North Atlantic area, although any satisfaction that some common new approaches are yielding fresh insights must not blind us to the difficulties of precisely defining what the term Norse North Atlantic really signifies. Its implications are touched upon in more or less detail by several authors; Bertelsen (in *Acta Archaeologica*; henceforth *AA*) suggests that both Southern Scandinavia and the British Isles should be omitted from the classification as both were in relatively close contact with urbanised societies; Amorosi (*AA*) makes an east-west distinction on the basis of animal bone ‘signatures’; Arneborg (in *Norse and Later Settlement and Subsistence in the North Atlantic*; henceforth *NLSS*) emphasises the independence of the Greenlanders; Bigelow (in *NLSS*) notes that even Orkney and Shetland settlement histories may not necessarily be identical. Diversity, both national and regional within the broader study area, is a key theme.

Each collection also ranges widely through time, with much emphasis on later medieval and even some post-medieval to early modern evidence; for example, Buckland, Sadler and Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir (*NLSS*) deal with Reykholt, Iceland, not in relation to Snorri Sturluson’s farm, but to demonstrate palaeo-environmental insights into a seventeenth- to eighteenth-century house.

Overall, Iceland receives by far the most coverage. In addition to a clutch of interim excavation reports and palaeoecological studies, Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson deals with fundamentals in discussing Icelandic chronology generally (*AA*), rightly highlighting weaknesses in the interlinking of tephrochronology, documentary evidence and ice core dating, but affirming faith in Icelandic carbon-14 dates; elsewhere (in *Nordatlantisk arkaeologi—vikingetid og middelalder*; henceforth *NAA*) he offers a redating of the well-known ‘Commonwealth farm’ site of Stöng; the supposed *skyr* production at that site is also reinterpreted by Buckland and Perry (*NAA*).

Shieling studies are in the ascendant and geographically widespread. Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir’s possible Icelandic sites are believed to be medieval or early modern (*AA/NAA*), while Buckland and Sadler (*AA*) cannot supply any conclusive environmental distinction between farm and shieling; Mahler offers new evidence for Viking-Age shielings on the Faroes (*NAA/AA*), and Christensen discusses the Greenland evidence (*NLSS*).

Settlement (*landnám*) is another ever-present topic. Bigelow (in *NLSS*) weighs various scenarios for Shetland; Arge (*NAA*) ponders the reliability of the presently available Faroese evidence, dismissing en route any pre-Norse settlement; Hansen’s excavation of a Viking farm at Toftanes (*NAA/AA*) provides complementary data.

Buckland *et al.* (AA) apply palaeoecological methods to the study of the *landnám* horizon at Holt, Iceland; Bjarni F. Einarsson (NAA) offers a hypothesis of much greater heterogeneity in the settlement of Iceland; Wallace (AA) proffers an important reinterpretation of L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland.

Christensen discusses Greenland *landnám* with a focus on the smaller farms and pasture resources (NAA/NLSS), in synthetic essays which are typical of all the contributions concerning Greenland. Keller's 'Model of Norse Greenlandic Medieval Society' and Arneborg's 'The Roman Church in Norse Greenland' (both in AA) ponder the significance of ecclesiastical links and holdings; Berglund, drawing upon data from the Eastern settlement, suggests that most of the known church sites are relatively late in date. McGovern (NLSS, building on his article in AA) stresses this point in an impressive general survey which emphasises new approaches and interpretations.

Closest to home, Batey (AA) provides a useful summary of evidence from Caithness; articles concerning work there at Freswick (AA, NAA, NLSS) are richer on method than on results, and of them the general reader may most enjoy Jones's palaeoscatology (AA) for an insight into scientific endeavour. Orkney is represented by a study of the environment and resources of Birsay Bay which draws largely on post-medieval to early modern references (NAA), and by Batey's preliminary note on the discovery of what is interpreted as a Norse mill at Earl's Bu, Orphir (NLSS). Shetland studies include Crawford's update on excavation of the settlement at Da Biggins, Papa Stour (AA), Butler on steatite (NAA; see also his wide-ranging survey in AA), and Bigelow's (NAA/NLSS) overviews of research potential, both of them salutary and stimulating.

The varying circumstances and emphases of archaeological study on each of the North Atlantic land masses, coupled with how archaeology relates on each to other fields of investigation, may account for the absence of Faroese and Icelandic syntheses, which are sorely missed. Among the more welcome trends represented, it is good to see that appropriate care is now being accorded to later evidence, and to have an introduction to some of the new insights provided by palaeoecology. If all three of these valuable collections emphasise that the quest for an understanding of the Viking Age and Norse settlement of the North Atlantic still urgently requires a more representative set of data, they jointly and individually are worth the attention of any student of the Viking Age and its consequences, both to light upon particular new discoveries or reinterpretations of famous sites and to gain an overview of recent trends in this academic area.

R. A. HALL

VIKING TREASURE FROM THE NORTH WEST: THE CUERDALE HOARD IN ITS CONTEXT. Edited by JAMES GRAHAM-CAMPBELL. Selected Papers from The Vikings of the Irish Sea Conference, Liverpool, 18–20 May 1990. *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, Occasional Papers, Liverpool Museum, 5. Liverpool Museum*. Liverpool, 1992. viii + 115 pp.

DE HÆRGER OG DE BRÆNDER: DANMARK OG ENGLAND I VIKINGETIDEN. By NIELS LUND. *Gyldendal*. Copenhagen, 1993. 212 pp.

*Viking Treasure from the North West* is the second book to be published in connection with the exhibition organised by Liverpool Museum to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Cuerdale hoard's find. It is a collection of papers, providing an inter-disciplinary survey of the context of the hoard. The book focuses on the predominantly Norse areas of influence and settlement, not only in the north-west of England, but also, as the title of the conference suggests, the Irish Sea region as a whole. The ordering of the papers is thematic, moving from the specific—the Cuerdale hoard itself—to the broader framework—historical, place-name and archaeological evidence. Three further papers look at the local economy into which the Cuerdale hoard fits, with essays on the monetary economy, coastal trading ports and sources of silver in the Irish Sea region. The final paper returns to Cuerdale, surveying comparable hoards from the British Isles.

As Nick Higham writes, there is very little written evidence for the north-west at this time. Higham's attempt to reconstruct the historical background is, in his own words, 'highly speculative' (p. 29), an apology he makes at both the beginning and end of his paper, arguing that such conjecture must be preferable to complete silence. The article is ambitious, thought-provoking and imaginative, but marred by a number of points. Apart from straightforward errors, such as the refortification of Chester in 907 being attributed to Ethelred rather than Æthelflæd (p. 25), several of the references given do not back up points made in the text. Higham cites the Chronicle entries for 829 and 942 in support of his statement that the southern border of Northumbria ran along the Mersey, Dore, Whitwell Gate and Humber (p. 21), but the relevant entries do not mention the Mersey. On the same page he writes: 'Despite views to the contrary (e. g. Hill 1981, 148), there seems no reason to suppose that southern Lancashire had been lost to the Mercians prior to the Viking Age.' The point is not expanded or justified and, going to Hill's *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*, we find only a map of dioceses for the years AD 850–1035. Some guidance on the speculative elements in the text might have been useful, as facts, possible facts and conjecture go largely undistinguished. One could be forgiven for thinking that there is a general consensus on the location of Brunanburh: 'a full scale battle probably fought on the very boundary between English Mercia and south-west Northumbria, at Bromborough—*Brunanburh* (Dodgson 1953–7, passim)' (p. 28). In spite of this, some interesting suggestions emerge, such as the use of the Ribble as a base for Ragnald and the expelled Dublin Norse, and the tentative identification of Preston as a Norse base.

While the title of the book refers to 'Viking treasure', and the conference title to the 'Vikings of the Irish Sea', vikings as such do not feature strongly in this book. This is partly due to the limitations of the source material. Edwards's paper

highlights the difficulty of identifying vikings in the archaeological record, particularly as so many finds were made in the nineteenth century. The vikings are instead traced through hoards of mixed coin and bullion, like the Cuerdale hoard, through continental and other foreign coins, and through the peck marks on this silver. A complex picture of Scandinavian settlement can also be traced through place-names. However, the word ‘context’, rather than ‘viking’, is the key to this book, and most of the papers are surveys of a particular source material, with a more or less elastic geographical and chronological span. Fellows-Jensen and Metcalf set the Irish Sea evidence against the wider background of the British Isles, and both Metcalf and Griffiths also include pre-Viking-Age material in their respective topics of the monetary economy and trading ports of the Irish Sea region. The vikings played an important role in this context but by no means the only role.

While the Cuerdale book is very much aimed at the interested and informed academic reader, Lund styles his book as being written for anyone who is interested in the events of Viking-Age England (and who can understand Danish!). This fact is reflected in the absence of footnotes and detailed bibliography. There are suggestions for further reading, which reveal an apparent lack of similar surveys in Danish. By summarising the historical evidence and previous research on the subject, this book may therefore fill a gap in the Danish market. The title of the book implies a joint focus on Denmark and England, but the précis on the dustcover reveals that it actually concentrates on the events of Viking-Age England, with the Danish situation viewed in the light of these. Lund’s book is a straightforward historical account, centring on southern and eastern England—on Danes and the Danelaw—as one might expect from a book written in Danish and including Denmark in its title. However, this emphasis on events in the south and east also partly results from Lund’s dependence on written sources.

*De hærger og de brænder* is divided into three main sections: the ninth century; the Danelaw in the tenth century; and England’s second Viking Age. This chronological sequence is sometimes disguised by the chapter headings which seem to concentrate on topics, illustrated by quotations such as ‘Hvor er de kristnes gud?’ (‘Where is the god of the Christians?’) and ‘De lovede dem penge for fred’ (‘They promised them money for peace’), or on individuals such as Thorkell the Tall and Sven Forkbeard.

There is little new material in the book, but the Danish perspective does enliven it, and Lund’s discussions of old and new theories breaks up the straightforward narrative account. Among the more unusual items included for discussion are Eric Kroman’s theory that the Danish king Gorm the Old was the grandson of Guthrum, leader of the East Anglian Danes, and Arup’s extrapolation of a predominantly peasant society in Denmark, and hence in the Danelaw, from the problematic runestone at Sønder Vinge (both theories being duly given short shrift). The book is liberally peppered with a selection of excerpts from a refreshingly wide range of primary sources from England, Denmark, Ireland, Frankia and Sweden. There is also a large number of plates and illustrations, although sometimes their relevance is not clear; for example, on page 185 there is a distribution map of rune-stones from central eastern Sweden that mention Ingvar. Ingvar’s expedition to the East is not

mentioned in the text, and the map seems to have no relation to the subject-matter of the book.

In the section on the Danelaw, the absence of documentary evidence forces Lund to look to other disciplines. There is a detailed discussion of place-name evidence in chapter six, which is on the Danish settlement. He takes a minimalist approach to the question of the density of settlement, concluding with the controversial statement that even if Danish linguistic influence on English is massive, it cannot be translated into a large or peasant migration. Dismissing the large numbers of freemen in the Danelaw as products of the Danish settlement, Lund follows Peter Sawyer's argument that Domesday Book's commissioners classified the population on different principles in eastern England. This overlooks the fact that the Domesday administrative area (circuit four) which covered Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire has great anomalies in the number of freemen on either side of Watling Street, in spite of the fact that this circuit was treated as an administrative whole.

When surveying the history of the Five Boroughs, Lund writes: 'Vort bedste kildemateriale til de indre forhold i Danelagen i denne periode [877–910] er atter mønterne. De fleste af dem stammer fra det meget store skattefund fra Cuerdale' ('Our best source material for the internal situation in the Danelaw in this period [877–910] is again the coins. Most of these come from the very large find of treasure at Cuerdale') (p. 100). This, with the photograph of the Cuerdale hoard on the back cover of the book, brings us back to *Viking Treasure from the North West*. These are two very different studies of vikings and the Viking Age in England. The difference in their arrangement and approach is, of course, partly due to the difference in their format and aims, but also follows from the evidence for their subject matter. In the absence of detailed written sources for the north-west, it is necessary to turn to other disciplines to build up a picture of the context of the Cuerdale hoard. Lund only uses these disciplines to fill gaps in the relatively abundant written evidence for events in southern and eastern England.

Vikings from east and west come together in the Cuerdale hoard, which contains Anglo-Scandinavian issues from East Anglia and York, as well as Anglo-Saxon, Kufic, Carolingian, and Scandinavian coins, together with a large amount of Hiberno-Viking hack-silver and bullion. The hoard must testify to both the 'plundering and burning' described in Lund's book and the more peaceful activities covered by some of the papers in *Viking Treasure from the North West*.

KATHERINE HOLMAN

WESSEX AND ENGLAND FROM ALFRED TO EDGAR: SIX ESSAYS ON POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND ECCLESIASTICAL REVIVAL. By DAVID N. DUMVILLE. *Studies in Anglo-Saxon History*, 3. The Boydell Press. Woodbridge, 1992. xiv + 234 pp.

This book is a collection of six essays which differ in theme and approach but which all concentrate on the consolidation of royal government in Wessex in the late ninth and the tenth centuries, and more especially on the impetus given by the

Wessex dynasty to the revival of education, literacy and Christian culture. The opening essay puts forward a radical reinterpretation of the text of the treaty of Alfred and Guthrum, which argues that the Danes controlled Buckinghamshire and the extreme west of Bedfordshire, in other words land to the west of the boundary line rather than just that to the east, as all previous commentators have assumed. This is not a view which will be accepted by all, though Dumville makes an interesting case for the persistence of Wessex dominance in western Essex. The main problem with his thesis (as he himself admits) is that it gives no explanation of the northern end of the boundary, but in fairness the older consensus had no fully satisfying solution to this either. Following this Dumville proceeds to attack Robin Fleming's theory ('Monastic lands and England's defence in the Viking Age', *English Historical Review*, 100 (1985)), that the Wessex monarchy enriched itself with alienated monastic property. Here Dumville is on surer ground. Fleming had based her case on unreliable, indeed tendentious, twelfth-century sources and had in any case failed to face up to the fact that both monastic endowments and royal estates were much more heavily concentrated in Wessex than in the Danelaw. A more discursive approach is taken in the third and longest essay, an intricate palaeographical study of the Parker manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The remaining three essays are studies of the activities of three of the kings of the period, Athelstan, Edmund and, slightly out of chronological order, Alfred. These are all wide-ranging and thorough analyses, with many subtle reinterpretations, but they are curiously old-fashioned, as though written by a Whiggish historian who looks out for a king's 'achievements' and for whom Wessex's conquest of the rest of England was a Good Thing and a logical necessity. (The Danes are naturally presented throughout as the villains of the piece.) The author claims that Alfred and his successors had a clear programme of monastic reform in view. Clearly Alfred must have believed strongly in the need for a radical change in ecclesiastical institutions, and must surely have been influenced by Carolingian policies in this as he was in so much else, but Dumville's tone is too deterministic—even a ruler with a highly developed ideology, like Alfred, could bow to events. A minor cavil: the essay on Athelstan would have been greatly enriched if fuller use had been made of Karl Leyser's major study, 'Die Ottonen und Wessex' (*Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 17 (1983), 73–97).

JULIA BARROW

WOMEN IN THE VIKING AGE. By JUDITH JESCH. *Boydell and Brewer Ltd.* Woodbridge, 1991. viii + 239 pp.

FOKUS PÅ KVINNER I MIDDELALDERKILDER. Edited by BERIT JANSEN SELLEVOLD, ELSE MUNDAL and GRO STEINSLAND. *Viktoria Bokförlag.* Skara, 1992. 111 pp.

Both these books provide discussion of women as they are depicted in the surviving sources; the former presents a new perspective extracted from familiar materials on the Viking Age and the latter is a *rapport* from a conference held at Isegran in 1990 and is a set of discrete papers on subjects mostly from after the Viking period. Jesch's book makes an excellent sister volume to C. M. Fell's



*Women in Anglo-Saxon England* and a complement to P. G. Foote and D. M. Wilson's *The Viking Achievement*. Although a survey work, it resists the pull into Viking-Age history in general and succeeds in giving sufficient orientation to the events and sources and providing the appropriate caveats to warn of the pitfalls of interpretation. There are interesting sections on female Viking-Age poets, women in the Frankish sources and female sponsors of runic inscriptions (a theme also taken up by Birgit Sawyer in the second book under review here); more might have been provided, however, on marriage, rituals, children and violence against women. Our knowledge of Viking-Age history will always be at best a patchwork but Jesch has made a valuable contribution in her attempt to reconstruct unchronicled events. The overall impression she gives is that it is the vicissitudes of everyday life and economic and domestic circumstances that dictated the way women ran their lives and it is to a large extent this that explains the diffuse and diverse range in their roles in the source materials. Even if their traditional role was to run the home and mind the children while their menfolk were engaged in warlike activities, when necessary these roles could be modified (as is aptly illustrated by the retired Viking warrior Hólmǫngu-Bersi whom we see in the role of helpless baby minder during the haymaking season in *Laxdæla saga*, ch. 28).

In the first article of *Fokus på kvinner i middelalderkilder*, on men and women in *Heimskringla* (a subject Jesch does not explore), Sverre Bagge argues that the blurred distinction between the public and private domains enabled women—especially those of high birth—to wield power in marriage alliances, and, in the moral sphere, to demonstrate their authority by reminding their male kinsmen of their revenge responsibilities. The economic position of women as a reflection of their power in society recurs in other essays. H. Gunneng shows how the Swedish charters and legal documents can be used as case-studies of applied law, and G. Bjarne Larsson finds that the laws of inheritance were restricted to the *frälse* and remained silent on the *bönder* and *landbor*. The point that the social status of women was of significance is also made by L. Peterson in her survey of metonymics in Scandinavia. Another view of women is glimpsed through wall paintings which depict familiar devotional figures in popular guise: Eve spinning and surrounded by as many as eight children; Joseph stirring the cooking pot immediately after the Virgin has given birth—a scene which M. Kempff argues is less a token of male equality than a sign of a newly-delivered woman not being allowed to touch food before she had been churched.

The book offers a snapshot of current work in progress and some articles give promise of more exhaustive studies. Many of its contributors imply, as Jesch and Bagge state directly, that women cannot be ignored; but they cannot be isolated either.

BRIDGET MORRIS

A STORE OF COMMON SENSE: GNOMIC THEME AND STYLE IN OLD ICELANDIC AND OLD ENGLISH WISDOM POETRY. By CAROLYNE LARRINGTON. *Clarendon Press*. Oxford, 1993. xi + 243 pp.

This Oxford dissertation contains seven chapters embedded in a brief Introduction and Conclusion. The first three treat of Norse matters, discussing respectively *Hávamál* (this occupies about a quarter of the entire volume), the ‘Poems of Sigurðr’s Youth’ (i. e. *Gripisspá*, *Reginismál*, *Fáfnismál* and *Sigrdrífumál*) and ‘Christian Wisdom Poetry: *Hugsvinnsmál*’. Then comes a chapter on six Old English wisdom poems in the Exeter Book and elsewhere, followed by a brief chapter on nature imagery in the poems, nearly all Old English and not all of them gnomic (*Beowulf* is quoted several times). Chapter Six, ‘Gnomes in Elegy’, takes us through *Sonatorrek* and *Hákonarmál* on the Norse side and then turns to five much-trampled elegiac pieces, such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, from the Exeter Book. The final chapter, ‘Gnomes in Narrative Verse’, hunts down ‘gnomic material outside the recognized “wisdom poems”’ (see p. 200); Norse proves unrewarding here, and the discussion revolves almost wholly around Old English matter, especially *Beowulf*.

Finding faults, Housman once observed, is the most useful sort of criticism and, since a great deal of what follows will be very useful indeed, let me state at once that there is much in this book that evinces wide reading, a sincere devotion to the subject and exemplary sobriety of judgement. The English is generally crisp and pregnant, though disfigured by sporadic oddities: we are living in an age when a fellow of an Oxford college can write, and the Clarendon Press will print, ‘Let he who has learned, profit!’ (p. 65) and ‘let he who can achieve renown’ (p. 203). On p. 67 ‘post-Christian’ seems to mean ‘post-Conversion’, ‘enthral’ is nowadays only metaphorical (p. 71, n. 78), ‘named for’ is an Americanism (p. 158, n. 39), ‘efficiency’ (p. 110) should rather be ‘effectiveness’, ‘exorably’ (p. 155) is obsolete and gives the wrong sense and, if we believe the *OED*, Dr Larrington is the first person to use the verb ‘to overcome’ in the sense ‘happen to, befall’ (p. 28) since the middle of the eleventh century.

It is impossible to discuss the book’s thesis, since it does not have one, unless indeed the implied claim that these poems are not primitive or rambling but subtle and well constructed counts as such. Like many writers who adopt a ‘literary’ approach, what Dr Larrington mostly does is take us through the poems one by one, with much quotation, translation, paraphrase and summary, interwoven with judicious comments, generally sensible if unexciting. The standpoints taken up are not such as I, at least, have any wish to quarrel with: *Hávamál* is ‘a composite poem, the work of a number of poets and editors over a long period of time’ (p. 15), very likely, in the form we now have it, no younger than ‘the late pagan period’ (p. 19); expediency and utility, wisdom and folly, are the terms of its ethics, so that sts 127–28, where “‘Good” and “Evil” as moral abstractions’ meet us for the first time, ‘suggest orientation by a different morality from the rest of the poem’ (p. 56). Verses from Scripture are adduced at times, but as analogues only, not as sources; that Dr Larrington takes a definitely ‘nativist’ view of *Hávamál* was already made clear in her lucid and cogent article on some alleged extra-Nordic sources of the

poem in *Saga-Book* XXIII: 3 (1991), 141–57, and this attitude is now reinforced by the well-argued contrast she draws with the heavily Christian *Hugsvinnsmál*, ‘colourless in comparison with the poems which spring from the native Germanic tradition’, with no ‘spirit of “Icelandicness” breathed into’ its verses, which are of course loosely translated from the *Disticha Catonis* (p. 222); von See’s view that *Hávamál* is dependent both on *Hugsvinnsmál* and directly on the *Disticha* is effectively rebutted in detail. Complex though its origins were, *Hávamál* is a coherent work (p. 65); at times, indeed, Dr Larrington speaks of ‘contradictions’ (p. 25) in its train of thought (though I see no contradiction, as she does, between st. 84, which says that women are untrustworthy, and st. 91, which says that men are untrustworthy), at st. 58 there is a ‘sharp break’ (p. 37), while sts 63–65 are ‘relatively unstructured and disconnected’ (p. 38), but this kind of thing (she goes on) is characteristic of wisdom poetry in all cultures; those who have found *Hávamál* incoherent have simply approached it with faulty preconceptions (p. 65). Occasionally the details of her argument do not stand scrutiny: as a glance at the dictionaries will show, it is not true, as stated at p. 70, n. 57, that *niðr* ‘kinsman, descendant’ is a rare word, and on p. 57 she cites three lines identified as st. 31, ll. 1–3 and goes on ‘Stanza 31 continues with a general observation about mankind: that the mocker is not aware that he himself is not perfect—“hann era vamma vanr”’. But the three lines are in fact the *second* half of st. 31, which therefore does not continue at all, and the four words then quoted are actually from st. 22.

The blurb calls this book ‘the first comparative study in English of Old Icelandic and Old English wisdom poetry’, yet *comparison* is in fact little in evidence: the Norse and the Old English poems are treated in distinct chapters or (in ch. 6) in distinct sections of the same chapter. But why do these appear between the same pair of covers? That the early Germanic literatures show some similarities (not only in wisdom poetry) is long acknowledged, but *why* this should be so is controversial. The old view was that these various surviving literatures were but local manifestations of an ancient Common Germanic culture, pre-Conversion and pre-literate; at one time an orthodoxy, this has so far fallen from favour that my suggestion (in my edition of *Hávamál* (1986), 112) that the alliterating pair OE *feoh–freond* / ON *fé–frændr* went back to early Germanic caused a volcanic eruption in Frankfurt (see *Skandinavistik* 17 (1987), 137). Another explanation (sometimes combined with the preceding) is that ‘early’ literature in its various genres (gnomic, epic, elegiac etc.) was the spontaneous production of societies at a similar, relatively early, stage of social evolution; this is the dominant notion that informs H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature* (1932–40), and C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (1952), and also some of the writings of the Chadwicks’ pupil, the Celticist Kenneth Jackson. Today not a few scholars are more inclined to argue for an extensive dependence by the early Germanic-speaking cultures on classical and medieval Latin material and on Scripture; resemblances between Norse and Old English might then be explained as independent borrowings from the same source. Yet another hypothesis postulates Norse borrowings from Old English poems (assumed to be older); thus, von See explained *fé–frændr* in *Hákonarmál* as taken from line 108 of the Old English *Wanderer*. I find it strange that Dr Larrington has so little

to say on this matter; occasional passing references to ‘Germanic wisdom literature’ (p. 67), ‘Germanic wisdom poetry’ (p. 220), ‘the native Germanic tradition’ (p. 222) suggest that she inclines to the first of the four hypotheses listed above and, while I do not criticise her for taking this view, her study could have done with a more explicit treatment of the debate.

I now turn to what I regret must be called the most striking feature of this book: its quite extraordinary inaccuracy. Misprints, false references, misquotations, misspellings and mistranslations from seven languages abound. At the very start, on one page of the list of abbreviations (p. x), the initials of no fewer than four journals or series—*MGH*, *PMLA*, *SP* and *STUAGNL*—are incorrectly expanded, as also are *AM* and *HMS* on the preceding page where, too, *BGDSL* appears once correctly and twice wrongly. True, many of the errors, taken in isolation, are venial enough: it may not matter greatly in itself that the initials of the German Anglist Grein and the Harvard Latinist Thomas are misstated (pp. ix, 225 and 237), or that Grein is at one point credited with an *Ordbog* instead of a *Sprachschatz* (p. 198, n. 30), or that a Swedish-spelt *lexikon* has intruded itself into the Danish version of *KLNM*’s title and the place of publication is misspelt Mälmo (p. 225), or that the neo-Latin title of the *Festschrift* for B. Karlgren has *Bernardo* for *Bernhardo* (p. 238), or that the book entitled *A Collection of Papers with Emphasis on Old English Literature* is not *edited* by E. G. Stanley, since he wrote the whole of it (p. 12, n. 3 and p. 237), or that, according to *Hákonar saga góða* (not *góðar*, as at p. 198, n. 22), Hákon did not die ‘in battle’ (p. 181) but subsequently, of his wounds, or that Ramsundsberg in Sweden, with its famous Sigurd carving, has lost its second *s* (p. 95, n. 43), or that *accommodating* and *paronomasia* should be spelt thus and not as at p. 96, n. 52 and p. 158, n. 33 respectively, or that J. Fleck offered us a ‘new interpretation’ and not a ‘new re-interpretation’ of Óðinn’s self-sacrifice (p. 71, n. 90), or that *Egils saga* is vol. ii and not vol. iii and *Heimskringla* vols. xxvi–xxviii and not vols. xxxvi–xxxviii in the *Íslenzk fornrit* series (p. 198, n. 17, and p. 227), or that T. Möbius could hardly have been called Möbius, since he was a German (p. 96, n. 62); it is the cumulative effect of this continual blundering that is so damaging to the book. Far more serious, though, is the treatment of the Norse quotations. First, there are many discrepancies between the texts printed here and the editions cited: for instance, *Hávamál* is said (p. 226) to be quoted from Jón Helgason, ed., *Eddadigte I* (1955), yet at st. 53, l. 4, where Jón has *því at allir menn*, Dr Larrington prints *því allir men* (p. 36); at st. 84, l. 5, where Jón has *vóru þeim hiortu skopuð*, we have here *váru þeim hiortu skopu* (p. 43); both occurrences of *leitaði* in st. 141 appear here as *leita* (p. 61), and on p. 211 the end of st. 16 is quoted with four errors in nine words. *Hákonarmál* is said (p. 198, n. 20) to be ‘cited from *Heimskringla*’ (presumably Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson’s edition in *Íslenzk fornrit* (1941–51), the only one in the Bibliography), yet in the last line of the poem, where Bjarni (*ÍF XXVI 197*) prints *morg es þjóð of þeuð*, Dr Larrington (p. 184) gives us the mangled *morg es þjóðum þjeuð*, plainly corrupted from a text which had modernised the particle *of* to *um*. (Not surprisingly, she finds some difficulty in translating her text and renders *morg* ‘greatly’.) Then there are the very numerous misquotations and misspellings, most of them immediately obvious as involving

bad grammar or non-existent words: *augabragði* for *augabragð* (p. 31), *geðs* . . . *blanda* (p. 32, read *geði*), *eldr heitari* (p. 34, read *eldi*), *lítill geðs* (p. 35), *ganga* for *gengr* (p. 42), *hverfandi hvél* (p. 43, read *hverfanda*, as *hvél* is neuter), *orð* . . . *trúa* (p. 44, read *orðum*), *lostr* and *flærðr* (p. 47, read *lostr* and *flærð*), *Síða-Hallssonr* for *Síðu-Hallsson* (p. 51), *munþú* . . . *vanar* for *mundu* . . . *vanr* (p. 64), *harðræði* for *harðráði* (p. 71, n. 75), acc. pl. *margra hluti* (p. 74), *sagst at ætla* for *sagðist þat ætla* (p. 75), *megintír* for *megintírr* (p. 87), *aflr* for *afl* (p. 101, twice), acc. sg. *fríðr* (p. 104), *siálfræða* for *siálfráða* (p. 106), acc. sg. *góðo kono* (p. 106, read *góða*), *brigð er* . . . *orð* (p. 114, read *eru*), *tryggðr* for *tryggr* (p. 115), *ek betra* for *et betra* (p. 177), *kostr ro* (p. 202, read *kostir*), *miklis* for *mikils* (p. 209), *Átrúnaðar* for *Átrúnaður* (p. 235, under Nordal), *nafn* for *nafns* (p. 235, under Ólafur [sic]). The adverb *fagrt* appears as *fægrr* (p. 102) and as *fagr* (p. 117, n. 5). A writer with a feel for the language would not speak of ‘the “ráðsnotra” man’ (p. 39), since the adj. is gen. pl., nor, at p. 71, n. 89, cite the proverb *Hafa skal góð ráð, þó at ór refsbelg komi* with *þat* for *at* and *koma* for *komi*, where both errors are in breach of grammar. A remarkable sentence on p. 89 speaks of the tradition behind *Sigrdrífumál* ‘in which liquid aspects predominate, “leki” and “helgi mið”’. The latter ungrammatical phrase presumably reflects the accusative *inn helga mið* in st. 18 of the poem; what *leki* is I cannot say, though st. 13 contains the words *af þeim legi er lekit hafði*. The titles of Norse works cause repeated trouble, especially in the genitive of nicknames: thus we read of *Ragnars saga Lóðbrókar* (p. 69, n. 44, for *loðbrókar*), *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoði* (p. 70, n. 53; at p. 226 this becomes *Freysgóa*), *Haralds saga ins hárfagri* (p. 71, n. 78) and *Eiríks saga inn rauða* (p. 226), while *Brot af Sigurðarkviða* appears thus throughout (e. g. twice on p. 202). There is a great deal of error in accents and other diacritics, usually through omission though occasionally by false addition, as *gúðs* (p. 71, n. 87), *Sígr-* (p. 86 and p. 95, n. 43), *tregrofr* (p. 175) and *lifir* (p. 176). Then there are the mistranslations and ambiguities. It is careless to render the sg. nouns *fiáll* (pp. 21 and 30), dat. *bana* (pp. 83 and 91) and gen. sg. *unnar* (p. 136) as pl.; among verbs, *vito* (p. 36) is 3 pl., not 3 sg., *hefik* (p. 47), *kann* (p. 65) and *áttat* (p. 79) are present not past, and *namt* (p. 89) is past not present; *óðælla* (p. 23) does not mean ‘very difficult’, *verra* (p. 24, para. 2, l. 5) does not mean ‘worst’, *eino sinni* (p. 80) means ‘at some time or other’, not ‘on one occasion only’, *lærifaðir* (p. 100) is ‘teacher’, not ‘learned father’, *sællífi* (p. 100) is ‘voluptuousness’, not ‘eternal life’, *öld* (p. 101) does not mean ‘man’, *kaldráð kona* (p. 114) is not ‘cold counsels of women’, *dyggr* (p. 115) is ‘faithful’, not ‘effective’, and *tregt* (p. 176) is ‘laborious’, not ‘grievous’. *Fornjósna*r is not well rendered ‘to spy out the way ahead, look ahead’ (p. 96, n. 57), since it is gen. sg. of a noun; *veita* ‘he knows’ (p. 40) misses the negative suffix; the famous *Hávamál* line *deyr siálfr it sama*, acceptably rendered ‘the self dies likewise’ on p. 41, becomes ‘the self itself must die’ on p. 106 and ‘the very self must die’ on p. 183, which are wrong; and ‘brushwood and tall grasses grow’ (p. 53) is a strange rendering of *hrísi vex ok hávo grasi* at *Hávamál* st. 119, ll. 8–9, since the subject of *vex* is *vegr* in line 10. Some of the errors suggest a writer totally at sea in Icelandic: there is no phrase *siálfr um* meaning ‘by oneself, by one’s own efforts’ (p. 23; *Hávamál* st. 9, l. 2 has been misconstrued here); Dr Larrington

thinks that *sigr* is a verb meaning ‘conquers’ (p. 84) and, common though it is, she evidently does not know that *alls* (*allz*) can be a conjunction ‘as, since’, as in *Fáfnismál* st. 12, l. 2 (rendered ‘in all things’, p. 81). Resisting von See’s belief that *dugnaðr* is a late formation, she states that it occurs ‘in *Fornmanna sögur* and *Íslendinga Þjóðsaga*’ (p. 99). But *Fornmanna sögur* (spelt thus) is the title under which a diverse collection of Kings’ Sagas was published in Copenhagen between 1825 and 1837, in twelve volumes; to say that a word is found therein is as if a classicist were to say that a Greek word is found ‘in *Oxford Classical Texts*’. The other title adduced does not, of course, exist, and in fact *þjóðsaga* is not a linguistically possible formation. In taking *viðhlæiendr vini* together as ‘the friend (*sic*) who laughs with you’ (pp. 27 and 40), the writer shows she has misunderstood *Hávamál* st. 25, ll. 1–3, which means ‘the foolish man thinks that all who laugh with him are his friends’. To render *Fáfnismál* st. 20, ll. 1–2 *Ræð ek þér nú, Sigurðr, / en þú ráð nemir* ‘Now I advise you, Sigurðr, and you take that advice’ (p. 83) hardly makes clear that the first verb is indicative and the second subjunctive with imperative force; on the same page *en þú, Fáfnir, ligg / í fiorbrotum* from the following strophe is rendered ‘and you, Fáfnir, lie in life-fragments’, which similarly fails to bring out that the verb is imperative, and *fiorbrot* n. pl. are not ‘life-fragments’ (whatever they may be), but ‘death-struggles’. At times, the text translated is not that printed. In citing part of *Hávamál* st. 135 on p. 58, Jón’s *né á grind hrækir* is kept, but ‘nor drive him from the gate’ renders an emended text with *hrekir* or *hrökkvir* (for *hrækja* means ‘to spit’. And how can *á grind* mean *from* the gate?). At *Fáfnismál* st. 24, l. 6 the author (p. 84) prints *er hiqr ne ryfr* [recte *rýfr*], but ‘who does not redden his sword’ renders the emendation *rýðr*. At *Sigrdrífumál* st. 28, l. 4 *sifia silfr* is certainly puzzling, but it is hard to see how it could mean ‘silver-decked women’ (p. 92), which sounds more like a translation of Bugge’s suggestion *sifjar silfrs*.

The Old English is not as bad as this, though I notice *naca* for *nacan* (p. 138), *feþað* for *feþað* (p. 140), *word* for *worda* (p. 146), *dæda* for *deada* (p. 157, n. 17), *forste* for *forstes* (p. 166), *nefre* and *earme* for *næfre* and *earmne* (p. 186), *onge* for *longe* (p. 192), *forbærnedene* for *forbærnedne* (p. 196), *eorlum* for *eorla* (p. 204), and *þæs* for *þæs ðe* (p. 207); *mist hleoþum* (p. 133) is one word, as is *þeoden gedal* (p. 208). When, as is usually the case, the author cites editions which do not mark vowel-length (omitted from this review), she has tempted providence by seeking to add this; innumerable errors result, usually through omission, though macra have been wrongly imposed on the root vowels of *weorþan* (p. 142), *mæge* (p. 142, pres. subj. of *magan*), dat. sg. *gesprecan* (p. 145), acc. sg. *lufan* (p. 145) and *wæg* ‘way’ (p. 157, n. 17). There are also mistranslations: *gerisan* does not mean ‘it is fitting’ (p. 6), *weaxendum* is not ‘grown’ (p. 140), *frode fæder lare* is not ‘the teaching of your wise father’ (p. 147), *soðfæstra sawle* is not ‘a truth-fast soul’ (p. 208), *inwitsorh* is not ‘inner sorrow’ (p. 211), and *Beowulf* l. 2030 *æfter leodhryre lytle hwile* does not mean ‘a little while after the fall of a prince’ (p. 216); the long sentence which runs from 1002 to 1008 in that poem is perhaps somewhat loose, but it can be translated and need not be reduced to the partly unintelligible muddle that appears on p. 214.

Latin, too, comes off badly: the *Breves Sententiae*, the brief maxims prefaced to the *Disticha* (or *Dicta*) *Catonis*, are referred to four times; twice (pp. 105 and 109) the adj. appears as *Breve*, twice (p. 110) as *Breva*. (They are referred to again, on p. 147, but now under another name, *monosticha*, though that in fact is the heading of a *different* part of the *Dicta*). At p. 148 Virgil's *ignaros agrestis* is cited with *ignoros* and translated as singular. The rendering of *malo* as 'I suppose' (misprint for 'I propose'?) makes p. 96, n. 60 obscure and, at p. 235, under Plummer, Bede is credited with a work called *Historiam Ecclesiam* (further, a Latin title should not be listed in the accusative without explanation). Other languages too go wrong: in German we have *Strophefolge* for *Strophenfolge* twice (p. 68, n. 14 and p. 118, n. 25), an ungrammatical *Englischen* for *Englische* twice (p. 93, n. 2 and p. 233 under Kleineke), and *Spruchs-wissen* for *Spruchwissen* (p. 180); in Swedish, *årsskrift* is usually misspelt (e. g. at pp. 228 and 235), at p. 8 *för* should read *får*, at p. 234, under Lindquist, *tolkingar* should read *tolkningar*, and at p. 235, under Ohlmarks, *Eddan Gudesånger* should read *Eddans gudasånger*. In (Dano-)Norwegian, a sentence of Fritzner is quoted and then mistranslated (p. 95, n. 45), and in two Danish titles *norske-* should read *norsk-* (p. 117, n. 2) and *der* should read *det* (p. 227 s. v. *Grágás*).

Without doing any checking, I noticed twenty false references as I read: for example, it was st. 53, not the innocuous st. 62, that I said contained 'one of the most notorious cruces in *Hávamál*' (p. 118, n. 24) and, at p. 70, n. 70, the reference should be to p. 119, not p. 110, of my edition; at p. 68, n. 14, for 292–313 read 195–222; at p. 70, n. 56, for *Sigvatr* 37 read *Sigvatr* 3, 7; at p. 70, n. 66, for Proverbs 30 read Proverbs 31 (in the next note the references to Proverbs become very confused indeed); at p. 71, n. 87 the abbreviation *Hom.* is unexplained (it is *not* Wisén's *Homiliubók* (1872), listed in the Bibliography); the first quotation from *Hávamál* on p. 91 is from st. 1, ll. 5–7, not sts 15–17; at p. 218, n. 6, for *Reginsmál* 137–8 read *Reginsmál* st. 13, ll. 7–8; and at p. 218, n. 14 read *Hamðismál* st. 27, ll. 3–4 (not 273–4). Again without doing any checking, I have noticed some sixty errors or inadequacies in the Bibliography, of which I will mention two only. First: the entry under *Völsunga saga* (p. 227) muddles together two distinct editions of the *Fornaldar sögur*, one in three vols. edited by Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson and published 1943–44, and the other in four vols., by Guðni alone, published in the *Íslendingasagnaútgáfan* series in 1954. Second: in 1934 J. Wight Duff and his son A. M. Duff jointly produced a volume in the Loeb series entitled *Minor Latin Poets*, in which they included the *Dicta Catonis* (as they call it). In Dr Larrington's alphabetical list (p. 238) this book appears between Whitelock and Williams, as follows: Wight J. and Duff, A. M. ed., *Disticha Catonis*, (Loeb Classical Library; London, 1934).

'The academic standards in your subject seem to be extremely low,' a classical colleague recently remarked to me. Now this is not just any book, where discredit might attach to the author alone: it is an Oxford doctoral thesis, which means that it had a supervisor and was passed by examiners, and it has been published by the Clarendon Press, the 'academic imprint' of Oxford University Press, in a series devoted to the publication of particularly distinguished theses and over which no

fewer than five General Editors preside with toothless geniality. But the series is *Oxford English Monographs*, and here we see a clue to what has gone wrong: four of the five general editors are experts in English literature from the sixteenth century onwards, which leaves the whole of the medieval and philological areas to Professor Douglas Gray, a specialist in Late Middle English literature. The ultimate source of the trouble is the quirk of academic history whereby Icelandic is not learnt as such, like Italian or Russian or Welsh, but as if it were not a real language at all, rather some kind of broken-down patois which can be adequately mastered in odd moments snatched from musing on *Piers Plowman*. The young C. S. Lewis, newly translated from *Literae Humaniores* to the Oxford English School, detected 'a certain amateurishness' in the people by whom he now found himself surrounded (*Letters* (1988), 173), and amateurish is perhaps the best epithet for this volume, not just its contents but the whole academic and publishing machinery that lies behind it. A classicist who has a book published by the Clarendon Press is likely to find that the very proof-reader is Dr Leofranc Holford-Strevens, one of the most formidably learned classical scholars now living. A reviewer of the previous Icelandic volume in this series, which is similarly shot through with elementary blunders, voiced her wonderment (*JEGP* 91 (1992), 617) 'that this book got past the readers at Clarendon Press'. The present volume supplies the answer: in the poor Cinderella-subject Icelandic the Press evidently employs no readers at all.

D. A. H. EVANS

HÁVAMÁL MED FORMÁLA OG SKÝRINGUM. Edited by HERMANN PÁLSSON. *Háskólaútgáfan*. Reykjavík, 1992. xiii + 86 pp.

Hermann Pálsson has complemented his study of the origins of *Hávamál*, which appeared in 1990 under the title *Heimur Hávamála (HH)* and was reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXIII: 3 (1992), 414–16, with a pocket-sized 'popular' edition of the poem intended for pupils in Icelandic schools and interested general readers. The text, in modern spelling (retained here), is preceded by a *Formáli* of 13 (small) pages and followed by some 30 pages of notes, *Skýringar*. Archaic suffixes and inflectional forms are necessarily kept; these, or some of them, are explained in a footnote on p. vii, but somewhat cursorily and not (to my mind) always correctly, for I do not believe that *ráðumk* in the Loddfáfnir formula is a reflexive form: see the notes on sts 108 and 112 in my edition of *Hávamál* (1986). And can one feel confident that all Hermann's not especially learned readers will grasp for themselves (for it is nowhere stated) that, for instance, *bjargig-a-g* in st. 152 is 1 pers. pres. subj. plus suffixed subject plus suffixed negative plus repeated suffixed subject? Admittedly, this is a point which it is difficult for a foreigner to judge, and indeed, as with all annotated editions of Old Icelandic texts for native users, there is an adventitious interest for us barbarophones in seeing (sometimes to our surprise) what present-day Icelanders need to have explained and what they can be assumed to know. Among words they apparently need to have explained are *aldinn*, *ey* ('ever'), *firar*, *fleinn* (though only on its second occurrence), *fljóð*, *geir*, *gumi*,



*hár* ('grey-haired'), *heift*, *horskur*, *höldur*, *kvikur*, *mar* ('horse'), *mar* ('sea'), *meiður*, *móður* ('weary'), *nár*, *nauður*, *nýtur*, *snotur* (meaning 'wise'), *unda* ('to wound'), *vega* ('to carry'), *vígðjarfur* and *þjóðann*. This list depressingly suggests that the Icelandic literary tradition is not much cultivated today among general readers and the young (the second edition of Árni Böðvarsson's *Íslensk orðabók* (1983) marks only *ey*, *þjóðann* and *snotur* ('wise') as archaic, and only *fljóð*, *gumi*, *höldur* and the two kinds of *mar* as poetic), but Hermann is evidently correct in his judgement, since all these words except *móður*, *nýtur*, *vígðjarfur* and *þjóðann* are also glossed by Ólafur Briem in his *Eddukvæði* (1968), clearly aimed at much the same readership. On the other hand, Hermann (unlike Ólafur) does not gloss *glíkur* ('like') in st. 46, *jór* ('horse') in st. 89, *gangandi* ('tramp') in st. 132 or *einugi* ('for nothing') in st. 133, though all four are marked by Árni Böðvarsson as either archaic or poetic; nor does Hermann provide any help with the last line of st. 128 *en lát þér að góðu getið*, thought to require explanation not only by Ólafur ('lát þér líka vel hið góða') but also by Guðni Jónsson in 1936 for the more sophisticated Icelandic readers of *Grettis saga* in the *Íslenzk fornrit* series, where the same idiom occurs in ch. 64 (*ÍF* VII 210).

In the printing of the text there is no indication where the Codex Regius has been emended, giving us, for instance, st. 12 *sonum*, st. 21 *mál*, st. 50 *Hlýr-at*, st. 75 *af aurum*, st. 107 *vé* and st. 125 *við þér*, where the MS has respectively *sona*, *mals*, *hlyrar*, *aflaðrom*, *vés* and *þer við*; an exception is however made at st. 39, ll. 5–6, printed as *svo gj[afa fúsan] að . . .* (MS *svagi at*), perhaps because this emendation originates (I believe) with Hermann. In st. 32 MS *recaz* appears as *vrekast* (not deemed to need explanation), suggesting a sensitivity to alliteration not much in evidence elsewhere, cf. *litið* sts. 36 and 37, *rás* (interpreted as *hrás*) st. 151, and *sællifðum* st. 70, which neither alliterates nor gives much sense. In st. 155 MS *þeir villir*, referring to feminine *túnriður*, has been retained, though *HH* 256 emended to *þær villar*.

In an edition on this small scale there is naturally no scope in the *Skýringar* for discussion of difficulties or citation of variant views; articles by other scholars are alluded to only thrice, though the note on almost every strophe contains page-references to *HH* (thus incidentally making good the absence of an index in the earlier work). Not a few much-debated problems in the text are in fact passed over with no explanation at all. In st. 14 *því er öldur best*, does the noun mean 'ale' or 'ale-party', and what is the force of *því*? Does the last line of st. 18 *sá er vitandi er vits* modify *sá einn* or *gumna hver*? In st. 52 *með höllu keru*, what is the point of 'slanting'? In st. 54, to render *vel margt* as 'mátulega mikið' certainly removes the apparent contradiction with the first half of the strophe, but how is such a rendering to be defended? In st. 107, what does Óðinn mean by describing his *litar* as *vel keypts*? In st. 137 *höll við hýrógi* the two nouns are explained respectively as 'yllitré' and 'úlfúð á heimili'; but how is an elder-tree a remedy for domestic strife? In st. 140, is *ausinn* nom. with *eg* or acc. with *drykk*? Hermann is not the first to believe that st. 39 *að ei væri þiggja þegið* means 'að hann þægi ekki laun fyrir', but I agree with Finnur Jónsson (*Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 4 (1888), 47) that such a sense cannot be deduced from the text, and I am still more puzzled by Hermann's view that the picture in the second half of st. 67 is of a host so poor that he cannot

invite again a guest who has already eaten half the meat in the house; the text surely says the opposite of this. It will not do to claim that elucidation can be found by turning up the references to *HH*, because, by and large, it cannot, and in any case a 'popular' edition should be self-contained. Curiously enough, some of the interpretations offered in the notes differ from those advanced in *HH* a mere two years earlier: given Hermann's strong proclivity to see Norse gnomes as reflexes of classical and medieval Latin matter, it is surprising that he has abandoned the view (*HH* 111) that st. 73 *Tveir eru eins herjar* mirrors *duo sunt exercitus uni* (found in the 12th-century *Ysengrimus*); he now (p. 69) takes it to mean 'Tveir eru í sama her' (that is, with *herjar* as gen. sg. instead of nom. pl.). The opening words of the poem, *Gáttir allar*, are now seen as acc. object of *gangi fram*, whereas at *HH* 139 the punctuation imposes the alternative view that they are nom. subject of *skyli*. The much-debated *á bröndum* of st. 2, taken at *HH* 141 to mean 'on the pile of unkindled firewood' (*viðarhlaði við eldinn*) is now given the novel interpretation 'on the floor' (*á gólfi*), a sense that Hermann alleges is also present in *Grettis saga*, ch. 66, *var þar eldr mikill á bröndum*, though the saga's editor, Guðni Jónsson, was surely right to gloss it there (*ÍF* VII 215) 'logandi viðarkubbur, eldibrandur'.

There is a fair sprinkling of slips and misprints, beginning with the publication date, which appears as 1992 on the cover and 1991 on the title-page. In the text itself I notice only the omission of *hann* from the last line of st. 138 *hvers hann af rötum renn*, while section *VI* of the text has been misprinted *IV*; elsewhere the first word of st. 141, l. 4 *orð mér af orði* twice appears as *orðs* (pp. v and 82), the reference on p. vi to the *third* section of the poem (*þriðji bálkur*) must be a slip for *fjórði*; st. 15, ll. 5–6 *skyli gumna hver uns sinn biður bana* is misquoted on p. ix with *skyldi* and *sins*; at the end of the note on st. 4 '112' should read 'HH 112'; in the quotation from the Preface to *Heimskringla* on p. 69 *bautarsteina* should read *bautasteina*; in the note on st. 78 the last word in the phrase *Fitjungur og synir þeirra* should be *hans*; in the quotation from *Sturlunga* on p. 75 *þótt* should read *þótti*; in the note on st. 102 *fékk* should presumably be *ég fékk*; in the note on st. 116 the *fástu* of the text has mysteriously been archaised to *fásktu*; on p. 79 the abbreviation 'HP 1988' seems to be nowhere explained, and the reference to 'Írská tökuorðið *gjalt*' is not quite accurate, since it is found in Norse only as dat. *gjalti*; finally, in the note on st. 137 *beitir* should read *beiti* (an error repeated from *HH* 85).

D. A. H. EVANS

THE RHYTHMS OF DRÓTTKVÆTT AND OTHER OLD ICELANDIC METRES. By KRISTJÁN ÁRNASON. *Institute of Linguistics, University of Iceland*. Reykjavík, 1991. 182 pp.

In this brief handbook Kristján Árnason's aim is to present *dróttkvætt* as it relates to a continuous development within Icelandic metrics, rather than as an isolated phenomenon. Despite the title, the analysis is not restricted to rhythm, though this is the primary concern, but includes all the phonetic equivalences to be found as structural components of the form. In effect, Kristján attempts to find the common ground between philological and linguistic concerns, between Kuhn and Keyser as it were. In his preface he mentions that in doing so he might please neither, and,

though I consider this fear unjustified, it is clear that the reader from the one discipline will require tolerance for the other.

The parameters of analysis are set out in a first chapter which is in effect a survey of current trends in metrical linguistics relevant to *dróttkvætt*. In accordance with the principles of generative metricists such as Halle and Keyser, Kristján Árnason is concerned with establishing the correspondence rules according to which a so-called 'metrical filter' operates when mapping linguistic structures onto an abstract metrical pattern. This, however, only becomes clear after a discussion of relevant metrical theories in terms of their own sometimes conflicting terminologies; it is perhaps unduly modest of Kristján not to establish his own terms of reference at the very beginning. Treatment of metrical theories tends at times to be allusive; in particular the diagram on p. 27 will be incomprehensible to a reader not conversant with the Halle-Keyser notation.

In dealing with rhythm, Kristján assumes direct affinity between *dróttkvætt* and the *altgermanische Langzeile*. He distinguishes between two schools of analysis, intensity-based (Sievers) and duration-based (Heusler). Whilst regarding it as axiomatic that duration cannot be disregarded as a relevant feature, he quite rightly dismisses Heusler's *Taktmetrik* as an aberration. There is no discussion of J. C. Pope's use of a modified system of *Taktmetrik* for Old English, though this might have been relevant.

Historically, in terms of Kristján's analysis, *dróttkvætt* does not represent a radical new departure from the principles of the *altgermanische Langzeile* as found in the Eddic metres, but rather an increase in the stringency with which these principles were applied. Isosyllabicity is accidental, a concomitant of the basically trochaic pattern of the metre. This trochaic pattern establishes itself most regularly at the line-ending, hence the cadence-pattern, and can be varied by reversal or syncopation (in the musical sense) in the preceding metrical positions. The only feature of the metre that cannot be explained directly in this analysis is what Kristján calls 'inrhyme' (i. e. rhyme within the line, see further below). Here, Kristján makes his only concession to the Irish origin theory; his caveat that 'the similarities between Irish rhyme and Old Icelandic hendingar are not as great as is sometimes implied' (p. 109) is apposite and understated.

Ruling out any isosyllabic principle, Kristján determines stress as the central prosodic feature of the metrical set upon which *dróttkvætt* depends, and this stress is for him ultimately dynamic. However, there is considerable interdependence between dynamic stress and mora count, as is clear from the structure of the cadence which characterises *dróttkvætt*, in which the first position must be both stressed and bimoraic. A further characteristic of the metre, internal rhyme (Kristján distinguishes between 'internal rhyme', i. e. interlinear rhyme, and 'inrhyme', i. e. intralinear rhyme, Icel. *innrím*), is shown to be independent of syllabification. This suggests, though Kristján does not emphasise the fact, that the metre is not ultimately susceptible to analysis in terms of syllables, a form of analysis which I would contend was imposed on the metre by Snorri and others conditioned by Latinity.

Phonetic recurrences are discussed in terms of equivalence classes, and Kristján rightly expends considerable effort in examining the underlying principles of these

and the attempts of previous theorists to account for them. It becomes evident that there is no single overall explanation for the various equivalence classes in *dróttkvætt*, whether for such well-known phenomena as the acceptance of all vowels as alliterants or the non-equivalence of /s/, /sp/, /sk/, /st/, or for such relative rarities as the rhyme of /a/ with /o/ irrespective of whether the latter was developed by u-Umlaut of /a/. He notes that Irish, though similar in the extensive use it makes of broad-based equivalence classes, defines these classes in a manner quite unlike that of Icelandic, a fact often unremarked by those who wish to see common origin. In particular, he alludes to the complications caused in the Irish system by initial consonantal mutations. Here he is faced with the dilemma that the problem is one that cannot be dealt with in a single paragraph but is too peripheral for full treatment. His solution is to offer a possibly over-simplified account; I would have been tempted to leave the whole can of worms unopened.

The relevance of phonetic equivalence-groups in an account of metre based on the stress principle lies in their relationship to stress-patterning, and this, Kristján points out, is complex. A metrical position occupied by alliteration must be stressed, but the converse is not the case, and lack of alliteration in no way weakens stressed positions. The relationship between alliteration and rhyme is particularly complex in the odd-numbered lines, where rhyme is more strictly regulated towards the line-ending, whereas alliteration is more strictly regulated towards the beginning. This means in practice that the fifth position *must* carry rhyme and *may* carry alliteration, while the second position *may* carry rhyme but *may not* carry alliteration. One wonders, though Kristján does not discuss the point, whether this disparity derives ultimately from the nature of alliteration as a word-initial marker and of rhyme as a word-final marker. What is clear is that alliteration is more closely tied to stress than is any form of rhyme in *dróttkvætt*.

It is not Kristján's prime concern to discuss the origin of the metre. In an earlier publication (*Íslenskt mál* 3 (1981), 101–11) he asks the question 'Did *Dróttkvætt* Borrow its Rhythm from Irish?', concluding that 'it was far from unlikely that something of this sort happened' (p. 110). It seems from the present study that Kristján is less ready to endorse the Irish hypothesis; in the light of my investigations of metrical tracts in both countries I would consider this more cautious approach justified.

Non-adoption of the foreign-origin hypothesis removes one main objection to Kristján's conclusion that *dróttkvætt* was a member of the same metrical set that had produced the Eddic metres and was to produce the *ferskeytt*. Unlike the Eddic metres, however, *dróttkvætt* is apparently isosyllabic. Even so, Kristján rejects the primacy of the hexasyllabic form; the basic concept is that of the three-stressed line, from which, given the morphology of Old Icelandic, a series of three trochees is statistically the most likely line-form to be generated. His rejection of the strict syllable-based analysis is further justified by the fact that *dróttkvætt* developed before the introduction of syllabic analysis on the basis of Latin; Irish stanzaic forms, introduced after Latinity, show much greater identity of syllable and metrical position than does *dróttkvætt*. We must therefore assume that Snorri's syllable-based analysis was a product of familiarity with Latin metrics.

The book is designed to be read as one continuous argument rather than to be used as a work of reference, and this presumably explains the lack of an index, which I nonetheless consider a serious disadvantage for which the presence of a detailed table of contents does not compensate. Apart from this, the presentation of the book is pleasing; there are a number of misprints, a puzzlingly Germanic use of the spelling 'Keltic' throughout, and some fluctuations of terminology, e. g. 'disyllabic' stress, p. 131, 'bisyllabic' stress, p. 133, but none of these should severely impair understanding.

Clearly Hans Kuhn has not had the last word on the subject of *dróttkvætt*; it is to be hoped that every bookshelf on which *Das Dróttkvætt* stands will soon have Kristján Árnason's *The Rhythms of Dróttkvætt* somewhere close by.

STEPHEN N. TRANTER

GLOSSARY TO THE POETIC EDDA, BASED ON HANS KUHN'S KURZES WÖRTERBUCH. BY BEATRICE LA FARGE and JOHN TUCKER. *Skandinavistische Arbeiten herausgegeben von Klaus von See*, 15. Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, Heidelberg, 1992. xxiii + 321 pp.

The aim of La Farge and Tucker's *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* is to facilitate the reading of the Eddic poems in the original for English-speaking students 'with a limited knowledge of German or of modern Scandinavian languages' (p. vii). The book thus fills a gap that has long needed filling, and starts out with a premise that many beginners will find reassuring, namely that it is not necessary for students to know German before proceeding to study Icelandic. Works such as *Hávamál*, *Völuspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Brymskviða* and some of the heroic poems such as *Atlakviða*, *Atlamál in grœnlensku*, *Guðrúnarhvöt*, and *Hamðismál* are of course available with notes in English and limited, relevant glossaries. The present work, however, paves the way for the English-speaking student with some basic knowledge of Icelandic to read other works of no less interest, but less frequently dealt with, such as *Skírnismál*, *Lokasenna*, and the *Helgakviður*, without having to resort to the far more bulky and often unreliable *Icelandic-English Dictionary* compiled by Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon.

It should be emphasised before proceeding any further that the *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* is essentially a translation and revision of Hans Kuhn's *Kurzes Wörterbuch* rather than an independent work. Indeed, it is so heavily 'based on' Kuhn's book that it is somewhat surprising to see La Farge and Tucker credited as authors rather than translators, revisers or editors. Most surprising of all is the notable absence of Kuhn's name from the front cover of the book despite the fact that all the groundwork for it is his. (The words 'based on Hans Kuhn's Kurzes Wörterbuch' first appear on the title page inside the book.)

In spite of this, the *Glossary* can be hailed as a clear improvement on the original for several reasons. First of all, the *Glossary* is more wide-ranging than its original in that it has been extended to include words drawn from *Grógaldr* and *Fjölsvinnsmál* which are not included in the Neckel-Kuhn edition on which Kuhn's *Kurzes Wörterbuch* was based. La Farge and Tucker have also gone out of their way to

make the Glossary easy for the reader to use. The spacing, lay-out and use of bold print for Icelandic and etymologically related words and expressions in Gothic, Old High German, High German, Old Saxon, Old English and so on make reference and reading a much simpler process. Another welcome improvement is the decision to normalise the spellings of headwords on the model of Finnur Jónsson's *Lexicon Poeticum* (1931) and Jón Helgason's (1971) and Ursula Dronke's (1969) unfinished editions of the Eddic poems, rather than keeping solely to Kuhn's orthography. Headwords are also given in Kuhn's orthography, but now with cross-references to forms in the alternative normalisation, under which the main information appears—in most cases (one notes, for example, that in spite of this system *þicc-a-c* retains a fuller reference than appears under *þikk-a-k* on pp. 308–09). The book can thus now be used with all the main available editions of the Eddic poems. The only minor irregularity here is that all quotations are still given in Kuhn's orthography (based on Neckel and Kuhn's edition), something that is likely to make this glossary seem rapidly outdated when the new *Íslensk fornrit* edition of the Eddic poems (currently being prepared by Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason) appears in some years' time.

Another new feature of this book is the marking of definite *hapax legomena* and the classification of conjectured words (those marked as such by Kuhn) into those that are attested and unattested in other sources. References to etymologically related words in other languages have also been extended, especially to those found in Old English, and a number of proper names (such as *Burr*, *Byleiptir* and *Hræsvelgr*) and place names (such as *Vaðgelmir* and *Pund*) have been added where their meaning is not clear from the contexts in which they occur. Additional references have also been made to certain mutated verb forms found in Eddic poetry that were not included in Kuhn's *Wörterbuch*: here, for example, one finds new references to *téð*, *ter*, and *tét* in addition to the infinitive *tiá*.

The main new feature of the book, however, is the decision to add references to the suggestions of other scholars, especially concerning those words Kuhn found uncertain or unclear. The majority of these references are drawn from Hugo Gering's *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, edited by Barent Sijmons, 2 vols (1927–31), Hugo Gering's *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zu den Liedern der Edda* (1903), Finnur Jónsson's *Lexicon Poeticum* (1931), the work of Ernst Albin Kock (especially *Notationes Norræne* (1923–44)), and Ursula Dronke's *The Poetic Edda*, vol. I (1969). The most recent works consulted are David Evans's edition of *Hávamál* (1986), and Anthony Faulkes's accompanying *Glossary and Index* (1987). These bring Kuhn's work largely up to date, although reference could usefully have been made also to even more recent editions such as Tim William Machan's of *Vafþrúðnismál* (1988) and Gísli Sigurðsson's recent Icelandic editions of *Hávamál* and *Völuspá* (2nd ed., revised (1987)), and of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* and *Atlakviða* (in *Sigild kvæði*, I (1986)). Gísli, for example, offers some logical suggestions about the words *himinodýr/himinjódyr* (*Vsp.* 5) and *sælliför* (*Háv.* 70) which deserve to have been included in the *Glossary*, and would have saved La Farge and Tucker from merely echoing Kuhn's statements that the words are 'obscure' (p. 112) or 'corrupt' (p. 257).

In general, the *Glossary* displays a great deal of care and accuracy. One might, however, question the over-dependence on Kuhn's *Wörterbuch*. It would seem that the work under review began first as a translation of Kuhn, and then, not altogether decisively, moved on to the stage of revision. This becomes apparent the moment one begins a careful comparison of the two books, and particularly when one encounters such directly translated statements as the following: 'Generally the dat. and acc. are not distributed differently after *í* than after German *in*' (p. 134, cf. Kuhn, p. 111); this will have little meaning for the students the present book is said to be intended for. The close dependence on Kuhn has also resulted in the repetition of certain minor inconsistencies found in the original, such as the all too irregular use of 'e. g.' and 'etc.' to indicate when a word or expression is commonly used: one is thus never quite sure whether all the references to the word have been given or not. Another minor example of the same thing is found in the irregular classification of sub-headings into a) and b) in the entry for *því* (pp. 314–16; cf. Kuhn, p. 244) when numbered sub-headings are used elsewhere in both books.

As might be expected in a revision of this kind, there are few major errors, but those which do occur tend to derive from too close and slavish a following of Kuhn. For example, one notes the mistaken reference (in the entry for *gaman*) to *unna gamni* (p. 78) as coming from *Skírnismál*, sts 39 and 41 (where the text reads 'unna gamans' in both the relevant manuscripts). This mistake obviously stems from Kuhn (p. 69), where the *Skírnismál* references are grouped alongside another to *Hárbarðsljóð*, st. 30, where the line reads 'gamni mæ'r unði' (from 'una' rather than 'unna'). In La Farge and Tucker's edition, the reference to *Hárbarðsljóð* has been dropped, but the incorrect quotation remains. The expression *unna gamans* is correctly handled, however, on p. 272, in the entry for *unna*.

With a book of this kind, one could naturally go on for ever searching for and complaining about minor differences in interpretation, or bemoaning the fact that a particular article on an individual word or expression has not been cited. This would have little point, however, and would be unfairly destructive. It is not the object of the *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* to provide a detailed bibliography of interpretations of the Eddic poems. It is aimed primarily at helping students, and making the original poems available to a wider audience than they have had in the past. It serves these purposes well. One can see this book becoming a worthy tool of the trade, along with Neckel and Kuhn's, Jón Helgason's and Dronke's editions of the Eddic poems, and Robert Kellogg's *A Concordance to Eddic Poetry* (1988). It is certainly already being put to good use by foreign visitors to Árnastofnun in Iceland.

My only real complaint is with La Farge and Tucker's suggestion that the book is 'affordable and portable' (p. vii). There is no doubt that the book is 'portable'. 'Affordable' for the average English student is another question. Any teacher of an introductory course in Icelandic is bound to balk at demanding that students should buy a paperback costing £20 (48 DM) along with their other main textbooks. The hardback edition costs £31.25. In Iceland, interested English-speaking students studying the Eddic poems would have to pay the equivalent of £30 for the paperback. Such a price is likely to send such students back from the bookshop to

the library, and to copies of Cleasby–Vigfússon whenever the library copy of the *Glossary* reviewed here is not available. Publishers be warned.

TERRY GUNNELL

MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA, AN ENCYCLOPEDIA. Edited by PHILLIP PULSIANO and KIRSTEN WOLF, with PAUL ACKER and DONALD K. FRY. Garland Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages, 1. *Garland Publishing*. London and New York, 1993. xx + 768 pp.

Volumes such as this present a problem for reviewers, worthy of mention only because it is also a problem for readers. How do you get into it? There is clearly no overall theme or argument to summarise, for anything like that would defeat the purpose of inclusiveness; and no team of editors, however strict, can impose more than a formal guidance as to length and layout on a list of 150 contributors. So: should one read it alphabetically? Or by individual contributors? By ‘cherry-picking’, taking one topic after another at random? Or perhaps by taking a big topic, *Njáls saga*, say, or ‘Skaldic Verse’, and pursuing the cross-references listed? A first point about this volume is that whichever method is selected, the lists and indexes make it easy to pursue. Contributors and their topics are listed at the front, entries at the back, marked out as bold in a list which also functions as general index. Each entry consists of text, essential bibliography in smaller print and a list of cross-references to other entries. Print is admirably clear, paper and binding—an important point for a book which may take much handling from many readers—of high quality.

Furthermore, any of the methods suggested above will produce immediate pay-off. To give a string of eclectic examples—it is bound to resemble the famous list in Borges’s ‘Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge’—Alan Binns’s article on ‘Ships and Shipbuilding’ not only draws attention to the overrating of Gokstad evidence, and summarily dismisses many of the claims made for it on the basis of Captain Andersen’s not-quite-replica (I had certainly been taken in by these); not only gives a brief, highly technical but easy-to-follow account of the Skuldelev and other finds (the Nydam boat in the Schleswig Museum, this informed me, is a poor reconstruction because of differential shrinkage, making it much less of a ‘war canoe’ than previously thought); it also provides a brief effective counter to modern historians’ scepticism over Viking army numbers as recorded in contemporary chronicles. If the Vikings were sailing Skuldelev 3s rather than Gokstads, the fleet sizes given in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* become much more plausible. Much of this information was entirely new to me, as it would have been to any but a specialist. As significantly, much of the misinformation corrected was all too familiar.

Hopping sideways, one might take the vexed issue of *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Hávamál*, both entries being allotted sensibly to the same contributor, D. A. H. Evans. Among novel information gleaned from these entries were the possible derivation of *hugsvinnr* from *catus*, ‘shrewd,’ a false etymology of Cato which I was not aware of; and the large number of manuscripts (42) of *Hugsvinnsmál*. The



entry on *Hugsvinnsmál* does state, clearly if contentiously, ‘*Hávamál* is certainly older than *Hugsvinnsmál* and is probably consciously echoed’, but also adds immediately, ‘the precedence between *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Sólarljóð* is less clear’. There is a topic there in itself; as there is in the *Hávamál* entry’s ‘it is plainly not a unified composition’, compare Carolyne Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnostic Theme and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry* (1993), 65, ‘*Hávamál* is a coherent poem.’ Evans here is perhaps slightly more towards the ‘opinion’ than the ‘raw data’ end of that polarity, but what he says is perfectly clear, and the disagreements with von See or Hermann Pálsson can be followed up from the bibliography. Evans writes a third entry on *Viktors saga ok Blávus*.

Or take a saga. Which was the saga (one might want to know) thought to be a sequel to *Hrafnkels saga*? A glance at the entry on *Hrafnkels saga* itself does not tell me—and I was unconvinced by Henry Kratz’s final remark on that work that if it has a message ‘it seems to be that only some are called to be leaders, but those who are must always exercise restraint’—but at this point the Index comes into play. It refers to *Hrafnkels saga* eight times, under *Brandkrossa þáttur* (whose author knew of Hrafnkell, it seems, but not of the saga); under *Fljótsdæla saga* twice—and that turns out to be the possible sequel being sought, maybe ‘the youngest of the *Íslendingasögur*’, writes Alison Finlay; and then under ‘Freyr and Freyja’, under *Haensna-Þóris saga* (an entry which again raises a ‘two-version’ issue with interesting serendipity), under *Riddarasögur* by Marianne E. Kalinke, connected with the issue of date, and finally under ‘Varangians’, with reference to Eyvindr Bjarnason, whose killing may, I suppose, be counted as Hrafnkell’s exercise in ‘restraint’, if not in the way that word is moralistically used. Reading the sentence above may perhaps convey a sense of the breathlessness this book is likely to cause. Anyone who followed up all the references above would be a long way on to understanding saga tradition, or the relation in sagas between history and fiction.

The convention of the reviewing genre obliges one to try to find fault, and one way of attempting to do so might be to review the contributions of the chief editor, Phillip Pulsiano. This exercise got off to a poor start, with the entry on *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* as fascinating as any of the above with its references to *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain*, its mention of Finnur Jónsson’s disputable (and duly disputed) theses over *Víglundar saga* and over dual authorship, and its again helpful bibliography. It was possible to work up more of a feeling of disappointment over the entry on ‘England, Norse in’, but honesty compels me to admit that that was because I had thought ‘Norse’ would be a reference to the language rather than the people. Pulsiano does give space and references to the question of the survival of the Norse language, but his entry is mostly on political history; he has not solved the problem of Norse–English linguistic relations, and if he had, of course, it would have issued as a book rather than an entry. One might conclude here that encyclopedias are there to list what is known, not directly to attack the unknown. Pulsiano’s entry on ‘Old English Literature, Norse Influence on’ also has to be taken as a fair starting-point and authoritative summary. As a patron of the Swordsman pub in Stamford Bridge, I would have accepted a less cool and more romantic account of ‘Stamford Bridge,

Battle of'—the story of the Viking holding the bridge over the Derwent till stabbed from below is not there, but once again the reference to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is there for anyone to follow; and as usual the bibliography turns up a reference to a work not known to the reviewer, one put out by the East Yorkshire Historical Society. In short one has to concede that the chief editor's own entries are an image in brief of the whole work: packed with information, rich in suggestion, authoritative without dullness, exciting without exaggeration.

This volume is an essential work for any reference library, while any private reader who buys a personal copy will find it an inexhaustible resource. It has some 150 contributors, more than twice as many entries, and perhaps three quarters of a million words on more than 750 pages. At \$95 that works out as extremely good value, even at words per cent, or penny.

T. A. SHIPPEY

THE HELIAND: THE SAXON GOSPEL, A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY. Edited by G. RONALD MURPHY S. J. *Oxford University Press*. New York and Oxford, 1992. xviii + 238 pp.

Six years ago Ronald Murphy published a collection of essays on the *Heliand* with the title *The Saxon Savior: The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth-century Heliand* (1989). The present volume is both a complement and a supplement. It contains a full prose translation of the Old Saxon original together with substantial expository footnotes and four appendices. Two of the latter are reprints of essays germane to the *Heliand* ('Magic in the *Heliand*' and 'Symmetrical Structure in the *Heliand*') which Murphy had meanwhile published elsewhere. Taken together, these two volumes—the earlier essays and now the translation plus appendices—provide the sum of Murphy's contribution to the study of the *Heliand* to date, and they are to be welcomed most warmly, by Old Norse scholars no less than by students of the other Germanic languages.

It would be otiose to labour the point, but it has to be observed from the outset that any would-be translator (as distinct from interpreter) of the *Heliand*—as of all literary masterpieces from this period—faces a near-impossible challenge. Readers of *Saga-Book* need no reminding that modern English has no real equivalents for the medieval Germanic cosmic ideas of, for example, *wewurt*, or *mudspel*, or even *middilgard*. Equally, whilst we in modern secularised Europe or North America certainly have our own social bonds and loyalties, our family and political hierarchies bear little resemblance to the structures of medieval tribal society—hence texts which refer to 'chieftains and their retinue', 'earls' and 'clan-relatives' cannot help but come over as archaic or maybe even as primitive. Furthermore, as regards the language of inspired utterance, modern English—even in the realm of sophisticated poetic diction—uses neither kennings nor assonance with much sense of intellectual ease, and alliteration, too, is relatively unusual. The attempt to mediate as translator between ninth-century Baltic culture and ours is thus a massive task, and the best that the *Heliand* translator can hope to achieve now is

an afterglow. Yet the challenge of making the *Heliand* accessible to a modern non-specialist reader is certainly worth undertaking and, despite any criticism of its diction, we should be grateful for the glow in Murphy's new version.

I should emphasise that Murphy's method is primarily expository, and the virtues of that method are admirable: the seventy-one fitts ('Songs') are all provided with a descriptive title, there is plenty of paragraphing within the Songs, the footnotes are frequent and informative, and their numbering is consecutive: 1–320.

Comparison with the most recent previous English *Heliand* translation, by Mariana Scott (University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures, 52 (1966)) is instructive, since the diction of Murphy's version could hardly be more different. Where Scott's technique employs assonance, alliteration and free rhythms, in an attempt to mirror and so to capture the poetic power of the original, Murphy has opted for prose. Aware that the original was written for oral performance, Scott aimed to produce a version which could be read aloud. Murphy's version is that of the teacher-scholar. Scott declared that she had 'settled on a somewhat archaic style as most appropriate for reproducing not only the biblical but somewhat primitive, naive atmosphere of the original'. By contrast, although he acknowledges with emphasis the originality of the *Heliand* poet's work—'Whoever he was, he was an enormously gifted religious poet capable of profound intercultural communication' (p. xiii)—Murphy makes no attempt to convey the formal skill of the original's verbal rhythms and he makes relatively little attempt at verbal artistry.

In his Introduction to the translation, Murphy explains that he set himself two principles: a visual one and a historical one. According to the former, he imagines for example what the Saxon poet must have had in mind when using the word *burg*, as in *Rumuburg* and *Nazarethburg*, visualising this as an Early Medieval hill fort, not a High Medieval stone castle, and so he translates these names as 'Fort Rome' and 'hill-fort Nazareth' respectively. As an example of the historical principle, he translates the word *degen* with 'thane' or 'warrior' (*gisithos* are rendered as 'warrior-companions') rather than 'knight', because the latter implies cavalry, whereas mounted fighting was a development which, for ninth-century Saxony, still lay in the future. (Footnote 13, on the other hand, concerning Zachary's upbringing of John 'to practise the warrior virtue of *treuwa*', finishes with the observation: 'In this ninth-century synthesis lies the first full written expression and perhaps the origin itself of the Germanic-Christian [ideal of] knighthood in the Middle Ages.')

As regards the poetic diction of the original, and in particular its use of *Stabreim*, Murphy explains that the poem's poetic power lies principally in the imagery used by the poet and in 'concept alliteration' or 'concept rhyme' (rather than in the self-echoing sounds of consonants and vowels), i. e. he maintains that the *Heliand*'s poetry parallels the main principle of Hebrew poetry whereby, for example, 'mountain' rhymes with 'hill', and 'fishes' with 'whales', or the clause 'they put Him on a cross' with 'they hanged Him from a tree'. Whilst I concede both that concept poetry is present in the *Heliand* and that its power is undeniable, I would still stress that the artistic skill—and power—in the *Heliand* poet's use of alliteration and assonance is rather more immediate and unmistakable.

As an illustration of Murphy's method we may take the *Heliand's* opening sentence (the original of these lines is also supplied by Murphy to whet the appetite of 'the curious (and the brave)', p. xvii):

There were many whose hearts told them that they should begin to tell the secret runes,  
the word of God, the famous feats that the powerful Christ accomplished in words and  
in deeds among human beings.

(There is a helpful footnote on the interpretation of *giruni* where it occurs here and again later in the poem.) That Murphy is more interested in sense than sound is immediately clear: where the original has twenty-nine words, Murphy uses as many as thirty-six (Scott used twenty-eight).<sup>1</sup> Whilst Murphy's sequence of clauses does reflect the structure of the original well enough, to my ear the diction lacks the conviction of naturalness—in everyday English that opening phrase, 'There were many', requires a complement such as 'people'. Similarly, present-day English (in contrast to Old Saxon) does not readily use article-adjective-noun constructions like 'the powerful Christ'—'Almighty Christ', or 'Christ the all-powerful' are preferable. Equally, whilst the phrase 'among human beings' (for *undar mancunnea*) can indeed be heard at any modern English church service, it too obviously reflects a politically correct attempt to avoid exclusive language ('mankind' does, however, occur elsewhere in the translation).

On the positive side, these opening lines do contain one cheerful, spontaneous alliteration: 'famous feats' for *maritha*. Elsewhere, too, Murphy's diction permits other felicitous and unforced alliterations: 'the high heavens', 'taxes and tolls', 'then and there', 'our decision and doom', 'God's good son set off', etc. To that extent, *Stabreim*—the principal aspect of verbal artistry in the original—is not entirely missing. A reviewer from this side of the Atlantic might have feared the intrusion of American diction, but there is nothing more unfamiliar here than 'stickerbush', 'stein', 'hard cider', 'ray grass', 'mindset of the people', 'sneaky people' or 'gotten her pregnant'.

As observed at the outset, some medieval concepts remain virtually untranslatable. With Old Saxon *middilgard* Murphy compromises: in the text (e. g. Song 11 and elsewhere) he translates it as 'middle world', but for the title of Song 11 he writes 'John announces Christ's coming to Middlegard'. As regards the concepts *uurd* and *metod*, he writes as a gloss on his translation of *so habed him uurdgiscapu metod*

<sup>1</sup> Scott's version of the opening lines, for comparison, reads:

Many there were tensing their minds  
to say what was whispered: that Might-Wielding Christ  
had here among men done miracles many  
With His words and His works.

I have to agree with other critics that Scott's version, in its deliberate attempt to reflect the verbal artistry of the original, errs too far in the other direction (her richly alliterative diction also includes, for example, 'thusly', 'soothly', 'All-Wielder', 'twain', 'hand-gifts', 'Land-Warder', 'winsome possessions', 'aethling', 'wave-farers', 'swarthy flames'). The place-names *Rumuburg* and *Nazarethburg* she adopts without alteration other than the insertion of a hyphen.

*gimarcod* ('this is the way the workings of fate made him, time formed him'): 'Fate and time are the highest entities in Germanic religion', and refers the reader to chapter 3 of *The Saxon Savior* (Footnote 12. Scott's rendering of these ideas is: 'So have the Weird Ones set down: The Measurers have marked it.').

The commentary in the footnotes is a vital part of the translation. As one would expect, words and ideas from the original are expounded, ranging far and wide, but the commentary also raises interesting questions, such as, did Luther know the *Heliand* (note 19)? Theological implications are also explored—as in note 278, where Murphy explains why the *Heliand* poet felt obliged to add a comment on Christ's un-warrior-like passivity during his final trial. And note 68 acts as a vehicle for one of Murphy's major historical interpretative insights—that the *Heliand* contains a hidden polemic against the manner of Charlemagne's imposition of Frankish rule on the Saxons.

'The merry message'—thus Murphy translates Old Saxon *blidi gibodskepi*. This new *Heliand* translation conveys not just 'good news', nor, in Scott's archaic phrase 'blythe tidings', but a 'cheerful sound', a merry message. The translator's joy is evident in his enthusiasm and shared sense of merriment. Whatever may have been the reality of Frankish missionary methods amongst the Saxons, Murphy's translation of the *Heliand* is a labour of love, and it is to be welcomed with gratitude.

RICHARD F. M. BYRN

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