

DRÁPA AF MARÍUGRÁT, THE JOYS AND SORROWS OF THE
VIRGIN AND CHRIST, AND THE DOMINICAN ROSARY

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ONE OF THE MOST popular Latin religious works of the Middle Ages was the *Liber de passione Christi et doloribus et planctus Matris eius* which was formerly attributed to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux but has lately been attributed to the Italian Cistercian abbot Ogerius de Locedio (1136–1214).¹ Thematically, the *Liber de passione Christi* is what is generally known as a *Planctus Mariae* ('The Laments of Mary'),² in which the Virgin tells of the passion of Christ (the *Passio*) and of her own affliction and sorrow at the crucifixion (the *Compassio*). Throughout most of Western Europe the *Liber de passione Christi* was translated, or adapted, into nearly every vernacular in both prose and verse. Rosemary Woolf has commented on the frequent appearance of this text in manuscripts in medieval England (1968, 247–48), for instance, and similarly John Secor noted its occurrence in medieval France (1985, 322). In Iceland there survives a vernacular prose version which appears at the end of *Mariú saga* with the Latin title *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie* (Unger 1871, 1003–12; see also Schottmann 1973, 504–05), and two poetic versions: a skaldic poem called *Drápa af Mariúgrát*, which is the subject of this examination, and an endrhyming poem called *Mariúgrátr*.³

Although it cannot be determined for certain that the *Liber de passione Christi* was the direct source of the Icelandic *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie*, or indeed of either of the two extant poetic versions, the latter three texts are certainly part of the vernacular tradition of the *Liber de passione Christi*. Ian Kirby cites the *Liber de passione Christi*

¹ See *PL* 182, 1133–42 for the text and a variant in Mushacke 1890, 41–53. On the author see Barré 1952 and Sticca 1988, 103–04.

² A detailed discussion of the *Planctus Mariae*, its origin and development, and its place in medieval spirituality is provided by Sticca 1988.

³ For editions of *Drápa af Mariúgrát* see Kahle 1898, Sperber 1911, Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, Kock 1946–49 and my unpublished dissertation (Wrightson [1994]). For an edition of *Mariúgrátr* see Jón Helgason 1936–38, II 76–83. I have used my edition of *Drápa af Mariúgrát* for references and quotations, which for the most part correspond to the published editions.

as the closest parallel he can find to the *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie* (1976–80, II 77). Given the similarities between them, it is likely that the poet of *Drápa af Mariúgrát* used a version of the *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie* as a source text and added various motifs and themes, some of which belong to the tradition of the *Planctus Mariae*. Simeon's prophecy that a sword will pierce Mary's heart or soul, which occurs in the poem but not in the prose narrative, for example, was a common motif in descriptions of the Virgin's sorrow at the foot of the cross.⁴

The religious and meditative poem, or lyrical composition,⁵ *Drápa af Mariúgrát* was probably composed sometime in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.⁶ As would be expected of a *Planctus Mariae*, the thematic structure of the poem centres on Mary's sorrow at Golgotha. Other prominent themes of interest to this examination of the structural and thematic contents of this *drápa* are various sorrowful events (besides the crucifixion) from the lives of Mary and Christ, the five joyful mysteries (or joys) of the Virgin, the dual theme of the *Passio* and the *Compassio*, and the theme of meditation. The themes of the joys and sorrows are dealt with in specific sections of the *drápa* in such a way that to some degree the structure relates to the thematic content.⁷ Moreover, it can be shown that this poem structurally and thematically resembles the later Dominican Rosary⁸ and can be read as an essentially meditative text in the style of the Rosary.

Drápa af Mariúgrát consists of 52 stanzas which are divided into four sections: the *upphaf* (st. 1–15), two *steffjámál* each with its own refrain (st. 16–27 and 28–36), and the *slæmr* (st. 37–52), the first three

⁴ The references to Simeon's prophecy in the poem are discussed below. The relationship between the poem and the *Planctus siue lamentacio beate Marie* is dealt with more fully in Wrightson [1994], 42–45.

⁵ For a discussion of the definition of the lyric as a religious and meditative composition, see Woolf 1968, 1–15.

⁶ The poem is preserved in the sixteenth-century vellum manuscript AM 713 4to. See *KLNM* 11, 379 and Kålund 1889–94, II 128–31 for a description of this manuscript. As to the date of composition of the poem, both Jón Þorkelsson (1888, 41) and Finnur Jónsson (1920–24, III 16) dated it to around 1400.

⁷ Cf. *Lilja*, in which some of the *drápa* sections are devoted to specific themes or subject matter. For an edition see Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, B II 390–416, and for a brief discussion see Hallberg 1975, 179–80.

⁸ By 'later Dominican Rosary' is meant the form of the Rosary which resembles the form it has today. The development of the Rosary is discussed briefly below.

sections being mainly devoted to various sorrows of the Virgin and Christ (see table on p. 291 below). Six sorrows from the life of Mary are referred to: ‘Simeon’s Prophecy’ (st. 6, 17 and 22), ‘The Flight into Egypt’ (st. 7), ‘The Meeting with Christ on the Way to Golgotha’ (st. 13), ‘The Saviour’s Death’ (st. 31), ‘The Descent from the Cross/The Deposition’ (st. 34) and ‘The Burial/The Entombment’ (st. 35).⁹ And three sorrows from the life of Christ are referred to: ‘The Carrying of the Cross’ (st. 13), ‘The Crowning with Thorns’ (st. 21) and ‘The Crucifixion’ (st. 31).

Of these sorrows, ‘Simeon’s Prophecy’ is the only one which is treated differently from the others and as a result is given prominence over them. Furthermore, it can be shown that this particular sorrow forms an important part of the thematic and meditative structure of the poem. The prophecy, according to the gospel of Saint Luke (2: 34–35), the only account of it in the Bible, is as follows:

et benedixit illis symeon et dixit ad mariam matrem eius ecce positus est hic
in ruinam et resurrectionem multorum in israhel et in signum cui contradicetur
et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius ut reuelentur ex multis cordibus
cogitationes (Wordsworth and White 1889–1954, I 320).

The prophecy is not given in full in *Drápa af Maríugrát* but is instead divided into two parts, which occur separately, the second part being repeated at a later point. It is first mentioned in the *upphaf* where the poet tells how Mary presented the child Jesus to the Lord in the temple when the days of her purification were over, and how the prophets Simeon and Anna declared Jesus to be the true God (st. 6). This reference constitutes the first part of the prophecy. In this introductory section of the *drápa*, the poet stops short of revealing the rest of the prophecy, that a sword will pierce Mary’s heart/soul, which is only implied here. It is not until approximately the middle of the poem that the remainder of the prophecy is referred to by the words of Mary herself:

því líkast var mjer sem mækir
mundi bjartr í gegnum hjarta

⁹ Six was not the usual number of sorrows of the Virgin. It was normally either five, seven or fifteen. The topic of the sorrows also varied in the Middle Ages. The six sorrows referred to in *Drápa af Maríugrát* correspond to those listed by Hirn from the thirteenth century, according to which the sorrow missing from the poem is ‘The Search for Jesus in Jerusalem’ (1912, 381–82). See further Woolf 1968, 268–70, Hirn 1912, 381–404 and Graef 1985, 306–08.

standa mitt, er eg Jésú undir
allar leit með benja sveita (17.5–8)

and

at sonnu er mjer sem stálit stinna
standi bjart í gegnum hjarta (22.7–8).

These repeated references to the prophecy emphasise the dual theme of the *Compassio* and, by implication, the *Passio* since by the Middle Ages Simeon's prophecy had long been understood as referring to the Virgin's suffering at the foot of the cross, and the piercing of her heart/soul was made parallel to the piercing of Christ's side (Hirn 1912, 380–81). Any mention of the sword piercing Mary's heart/soul reinforces the image of the sorrowing mother, the *mater dolorosa*, which is central in the *Planctus Mariae* tradition. 'Simeon's Prophecy' also emphasises the meditative process in this poem. It not only refers to Mary's lamentation at Golgotha, the main scene of the *Planctus*, but also to all her other sorrows. As Yrjö Hirn suggested, the prophecy, being the first of the Virgin's sorrows, serves as an introduction to the general grief or affliction which she is to experience in her life; it encompasses all those sorrows which she experienced before, during and after the crucifixion (1912, 382). When the prophecy is referred to repeatedly in the meditative process, then, as in *Drápa af Mariúgrát*, it functions as a constant reminder of all Mary's griefs.

Like the sorrows of the Virgin and Christ which occupy the first three sections of the poem, the subject of Mary's joys also occurs in specific parts. The first three sections of the poem, the *upphaf* and the two *stefjamál*, have references to the joys of 'The Resurrection' and/or 'The Assumption' at or near the end (st. 11, 27 and 36; see table below),¹⁰ and the *slæmr* begins with reference to both these joys and includes an enumeration of the full five joys: 'The Annunciation', 'The Nativity', 'The Resurrection', 'The Ascension' and 'The Assumption' (st. 38 and 43–46). The effect of having 'The Resurrection' and 'The Assumption' dispersed through the poem in this way is first that it creates a build-up to the formal enumeration of the five joys, and second, it reinforces the duality of the theme of the *Passio* and the *Compassio*, and the duality of the theme of devotion to and meditation on both Christ and His mother. The joys of 'The Resurrection' and 'The Assumption' are particularly apt for representing Christ and Mary respectively. Since

¹⁰ Note that the Resurrection is also mentioned in stanza 18 in the first *stefjamál*.

'The Resurrection' is essentially Christocentric it can be used to remind the meditator of Christ, and since 'The Assumption' is the only one of the five joys which is not Christocentric (Woolf 1968, 140), it is perhaps the most suitable reminder of Mary. In the event of 'The Assumption' the Virgin is the central figure and accordingly the meditation on this event focuses on her and her joy; the meditator rejoices for her. In comparison, Christ is the central figure in the events of the other joys and the meditation is focused on Him. Mary rejoices for her Son in 'The Annunciation', 'The Nativity', 'The Resurrection' and 'The Ascension'. In turn the meditator shares in her rejoicing so that both the meditator and the Virgin are rejoicing for Christ.

Mary's joys are linked thematically to the sorrows by the theme of meditation which runs throughout this Old Icelandic *Planctus*, that is, both the joys and the sorrows are topics for contemplation on the Virgin and Christ. According to this reading of *Drápa af Mariúgrát* it is basically a meditative poem. Themes of praying, weeping and remembering occur frequently in the text and together they emphasise the meditative process (see especially st. 5, 24, 40, 42, 47–49 and 52). While the main topic for meditation is the scene of the Virgin's lamentation at the crucifixion, the inclusion of the joys as other topics is not completely out of place, especially if one considers the extra-liturgical meditative text, the Rosary.

This late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century *drápa* is thematically and structurally similar to the later Dominican Rosary, the formation of which occurred over some five hundred years. It is generally agreed that the development of the Rosary into the form it has today (that is, its structure and the inclusion of the joys and sorrows) took place gradually from the twelfth to the end of the sixteenth century across Europe.¹¹ Given its combination of repeated prayers and meditation on the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries in the lives of Mary and Christ, the Rosary is thematically similar to *Drápa af Mariúgrát* with its heavy emphasis on the joys, the sorrows, contemplation and prayer.

In addition, the refrains of the poem and the Hail Mary and the Our Father of the Rosary share certain themes and function in a similar way. Like the Our Father, the first set of refrains in *stefjamál* 1 honours God and His glory:

¹¹ See O'Carroll 1982, 313–14, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 1967–79, XII 667–70 under 'Rosary' and *KLNM* 14, 414–20. I am grateful to Gerry Turcotte at the University of Wollongong for his advice on the history of the Rosary.

Öllum hlutum er æðri og sælli
 eilífígastr skepnu deilir,
 honum sje dýrð á himni og jörðu,
 hann er hærri en gjörvalt annat.

(16.5–8, 20.5–8 and 24.5–8)

The second set of refrains mainly honours the Virgin, but does so in the context of her position as the mother of the Lord and her role as mediator,¹² as is the case with the Hail Mary:

Yfirþjóðkonungs allra jofra,
 öllu góðu í himna höllu,
 ræðr og stýrir, mæri og móðir,
 María sæl, hjá dróttni várum.

(28.5–8, 32.5–8 and 36.5–8)

To a degree these refrains resemble prayers in their adoration of the Lord and His mother. One of the functions of these repetitive half-stanzas is to continue and to reinforce that veneration, which is also a way of understanding the Rosary prayers.

Structurally, the poem and the Rosary consist of divisions which are marked by prescribed and repeated verses or prayers. *Drápa af Maríugrát* can be divided into four sections (the *upphaf*, two *steffjámál* and the *slæmr*). These sections are marked by prescribed and repeated texts, the refrains, which not only distinguish the first and last parts from the middle, but also divide the middle section into the two *steffjámál*. This division is signalled by a change of refrain. Each *steffjámál* contains its own refrain which is repeated three times. The Rosary is also divided into specific sections which are marked by prescribed and repeated texts. It has five decades, each consisting mainly of the Hail Mary which is repeated ten times. A decade is distinguished not only by the number of Hail Marys in it, but also by the Our Father which begins it and the Glory Be to the Father which ends it.

Besides division, prescribed texts and repetition, the poem exhibits some numerical balance in the arrangement of its stanzas which is also like the structure of the Rosary. The first and final sections of the poem are almost identical in length, the *upphaf* having 15 stanzas and the *slæmr* having 16. While the numbers of stanzas in *steffjámál* 1 and 2 are not the same, there being twelve stanzas in the first and nine in the

¹²The depiction of Mary governing all that is good in heaven next to her Son implicitly refers to her status as a mediator between mankind and God.

second, there is numerical symmetry within the block of verse that constitutes the two *steffjamál*.¹³ Together the two *steffjamál* make up 21 stanzas which can be divided into seven groups consisting of three stanzas each: three stanzas containing the first refrain (st. 16, 20 and 24), three stanzas containing the second refrain (st. 28, 32 and 36), and five groups each with three non-refrain stanzas (st. 17–19, 21–23, 25–27, 29–31 and 33–35; see table below). The balance of these divisions in the poem resembles that in the Rosary. Just as the Rosary has groupings of prayers into specific numerical lots (namely five lots of ten Hail Marys), so the *drápa* as a whole consists of groupings of stanzas into the almost evenly numbered *upphaf* and *slæmr*, and the consistent groupings of stanzas into lots of three in the two *steffjamál*.¹⁴

It thus appears that the structure of an Icelandic *drápa* is particularly suited to this type of Rosary-like meditation poem in which contemplation of a new topic is prompted periodically by the interruptions of the refrains. In contrast, Hans Schottmann views the structure of *Drápa af Maríugrát* rather more negatively. He maintains that the structure of the *drápa* in this poem with its constant interruption of the Virgin's speech by the refrains and the use of kennings, which he claims reduces the narrative flow, is extremely unsuitable for portraying the emotion of the *Compassio* (1973, 507). Nonetheless, it is possible to read the poem's structure in a more positive way, especially if the theme of meditation is taken into account. As the table below shows, within the two *steffjamál* the text occurring between the refrains contains reference to one or more sorrows and/or joys. With the exception of 'Simeon's Prophecy', which is repeated at various points, a new sorrow is introduced between every two refrains except between st. 24 and 28 and each of these sorrows constitutes a fresh topic for meditation. At the

¹³ Alternatively the two *steffjamál* can consist of nine stanzas each if the three stanzas which occur between the last refrain stanza of *steffjamál* 1 and the first refrain stanza of *steffjamál* 2 (i. e. st. 25–27) are separated into some kind of intermediary group on their own. Another possibility is to include stanzas 37–39 of the *slæmr* in *steffjamál* 2, making it 12 stanzas and, therefore, making it agree in length with *steffjamál* 1. This option is not adopted here, though, since stanza 37 clearly marks the beginning of the conclusion of the poem: *Veiti, hilmir vænnar stéttar, / viðrkvæmilig orð í slæmínn, / . . . bjartrar sólar* (lines 1–2 and 3).

¹⁴ Although any *drápa* with symmetry in its stanza arrangement can resemble the Rosary in structure, not every *drápa* has the additional thematic similarities which this poem displays.

same time the key joys of 'The Resurrection' and 'The Assumption' occur repeatedly in the two *steffjamál* as alternative topics for contemplation and as a constant build-up to the meditation on the five joys which follows in the *slæmr*. Apart from continuing and reinforcing veneration of our Lord and His mother, then, the refrains also function for the most part as introductions to meditation topics. By its very interruption of the narrative, each refrain acts rather like the Our Father and the Glory Be to the Father in the Rosary which signal the introduction of a joyful, sorrowful or glorious mystery.

Also worth noting is the occurrence of a marginal cross next to each refrain in AM 713 4to and what such markings may reveal about the uses, or intended uses, of this poem. One effect of markings like these is to allow easy access to specific sections of the text. In the case of *Drápa af Mariúgrát*, the marginal crosses lend some support to the notion that the poem as it is preserved in this manuscript can be read as a meditative text, with most of the refrains and corresponding crosses acting as indicators for a change of topic. Given the references to audiences in the poem and its strong didactic theme (see, for example, st. 23, 31, 39, 42 and 50), it is likely that it was intended for the instruction perhaps of monks and/or clerics on devotional matters relating to the Virgin, in particular the recitation of the Hail Mary (see st. 42, 47 and 52) and meditation on the joys and sorrows. Such instruction may have been given by reading the poem in full or in part to a monastic community in the refectory, for example, and parts or all of it may have been used in the liturgy. In either of these scenarios marginal crosses would have been useful for locating certain themes and topics, as they would also have been if the poem was used for private devotional purposes.

As far as the similarities between the later Dominican Rosary and *Drápa af Mariúgrát* are concerned, it is not known whether the former could have directly influenced the composition of the latter in Iceland at the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century. If it did not, the overall style of this poem, with its emphasis on both the joys and sorrows, meditation and prayer, especially the Hail Mary, and its structure, suggest that it not only bears a resemblance to the later Rosary, but also that it, generally speaking, anticipates this text. An interesting comparison is a Middle English text on the joys of the Virgin by the Yorkshire Cistercian Stephen of Salley (d. 1252) which is also very similar in style and content to the later Dominican Rosary (on this see further Graef 1985, I 264).

Without more detailed information of the development of the Rosary in Iceland, especially regarding the dates of the introduction of the various elements which make up the Dominican Rosary, definite conclusions cannot be drawn about the influence of one text on the other. At any rate *Drápa af Mariúgrát* and the Rosary can be linked by their thematic and structural similarities. It is possible, though not certain, that some elements of the Rosary, such as the inclusion of the joys and sorrows which took place in Europe in the fourteenth century, could have influenced the composition of this Old Icelandic poetic *Planctus Mariae*.

DISTRIBUTION OF SORROWS AND JOYS IN *DRÁPA AF MARIÚGRÁT*
(The numbers in brackets refer to stanzas)

	SORROWS	JOYS
<i>Upphaf</i> (1–15)	Simeon's Prophecy (6) The Flight into Egypt (7) The Carrying of the Cross (13) The Meeting with Christ on the Way to Golgotha (13)	The Assumption (11)
<i>Stefjamál 1</i> (16–27)	Refrain (16) Simeon's Prophecy (17) Refrain (20) The Crowning with Thorns (21) Simeon's Prophecy (22) Refrain (24)	The Resurrection (18) The Resurrection (27) The Assumption (27)
<i>Stefjamál 2</i> (28–36)	Refrain (28) The Saviour's Death/Crucifixion (31) Refrain (32) The Deposition (34) The Entombment (35) Refrain (36)	 The Resurrection (36)
<i>Slæmr</i> (37–52)		The Resurrection (38) The Assumption (38) The Annunciation (43) The Nativity (44) The Resurrection (44) The Ascension (45) The Assumption (45–46)

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A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOUR: THE BRIEF CAREER OF
ERLENDUR ORMSSON

BY RUTH ELLISON

BISHOPS OF SKÁLHOLT in the seventeenth century could expect many and varied visitors with requests to make of them, from ambitious clergymen or representatives of the Danish powers to increasing numbers of beggars as the century advanced, but few guests or demands can have been odder than those Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson found confronting him in Holy Week 1656. The visitor was a middle-aged man of good family called Erlendur Ormsson, and he was demanding that the bishop authenticate his vocation as a prophet—not by any means a regular occurrence in an orthodox Lutheran setting.

Who was this eccentric person? According to Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur in his *Prestaefir* VIII 619 (Reykjavík Lbs 2365 4to), he was the son of séra Ormur Narfason, priest from 1600 to 1620 in Ferjubakkakapung (the parish of Borg í Mýrum) and from 1620 to 1650, when he retired, at Breiðabólstaður á Skógaströnd on Snæfellsnes. Both were regarded as desirable and prosperous livings, though séra Ormur's money ran out towards the end of his life (after establishing seven children), making it necessary for the bishop to contribute to his pension from central funds (Hannes Þorsteinsson, *Ævir lærðra manna* 48, 130^r, Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn). Séra Ormur was the son and grandson of sheriffs, Narfi Ormsson and Ormur Jónsson, each in his turn *sýslumaður* of Kjósar- and Gullbringusýslur and resident in Reykjavík when it was only a single farm. Séra Ormur's mother was the daughter of a wealthy farmer from Eyjafjörður, and he married the daughter of a priest from Seltjarnarnes.

Erlendur Ormsson thus grew up in the west of Iceland in relative affluence and with the advantage of influential and educated family connections. What he did with these advantages before 1656 is not clear. His elder brother Jón became a priest in 1630 and was from 1644 to 1685 parish priest of Miðdalsþing in Dalasýsla. Erlendur, though clearly well versed in the Scriptures, did not follow his brother into the church; instead, like virtually every other man above servant status, he became a farmer, though not apparently a successful one.

Bishop Brynjólfur was indefatigable in visiting every parish in his huge see every few years, not only checking the church plate and accounts but, as the need arose, hearing cases which came under church law or holding impromptu local synods. In his *Visitaziubók* for the Southern Quarter and Snæfellsnes (Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn, Biskupasafn A II 9) there is a record of the bishop's visit to the peninsula in 1655. Séra Ormur was fit enough to attend the visitations both of his old parish at Breiðabólstaður and of the neighbouring one of Narfeyri (where he was apparently living in retirement) and to set a sprawling but firm signature under the records (pp. 303 and 311). A couple of parishes further to the west, at Setberg, Bishop Brynjólfur had intended to have a general meeting with the parishioners, but the occasion turned into a hearing of the complicated matrimonial case of Vigdís Magnúsdóttir and Egill Egilsson, which eventually had to be referred to the next year's General Synod. (The case, because of misbinding, covers pp. 264–66 and 283, and is then followed by transcripts of relevant documents.) When the bishop tried to resume the intended general meeting (p. 293) there were only seven parishioners still present, who for their virtue are, most unusually, named in the record. They include 'Ellend' Ormsson frá Hómrum' (i. e. Hamrar í Grundarfirði), who was also one of three laymen to sign, with seven clergy, the record of the matrimonial hearing. His name there (p. 283) is spelt 'Erlendur'; it is assumed that the laymen will be *óskrifandi* (unable to write) and will 'handsala ad sijn nófn hier under skrifest' (authorise the writing of their names hereunder), but in fact all three sign 'm. e. h.' (*með eigin hendi*). Erlendur's signature is a laboriously printed 'ellendur ormson', strongly suggesting that he would have had great difficulty in writing anything other than his name, but there can be virtually no doubt that this is séra Ormur's son, since the name is a rare one and the time, area and status are all appropriate.

There is nothing here to explain why, some six months later, Erlendur should suddenly cast everything aside to become a wandering prophet, but there are some hints at least to be found. It is not certain when séra Ormur died; Sighvatur Grímsson's unspecified sources suggested 1651 (clearly too early, from the documents cited above) or 1656. At some time during the two years 1655–56 '.x. aura' were paid out 'wegna Sera Orms' (on behalf of séra Ormur), presumably for his pension, from the episcopal estates in the Heynes (Akranes) area (Reykjavík AM 270 fol., 86'), and in the 1659 'Reikningur biskupsens wid sera Þörd Jönsson i Hitardal umm skulldaskipte þeirra sem nu standa þau' (The bishop's

reckoning of his accounts with séra Þórður Jónsson of Hítardalur as they now stand; Reykjavík AM 272 fol., 108) this clause occurs: ‘Er svo rād fyrer giórt ad S. Asgeir Einarsson medtake ij eda iij kyr þar westra enn .x. aurar gialldest wegna S. Orms Narfasonar.’ (It is intended that séra Ásgeir Einarsson [séra Ormur’s successor] should receive two or three cows there in the west, but ten *aurar* be paid on behalf of séra Ormur Narfason.) This could mean that séra Ormur was still alive as late as 1659, but it more probably represents the final clearing up of an unsettled debt, namely the 1656 pension contribution, which must have been advanced by séra Þórður, or possibly séra Ásgeir.

One reason for supposing that séra Ormur had died in 1656 is that one of his younger sons, Narfi, who had contracted leprosy (endemic in Iceland at this time; séra Hallgrímur Pétursson is the most famous sufferer), was the subject of a court order on 17th May 1656, at Drangar á Skógarströnd, assigning him to the care of his maternal uncle, séra Stefán Hallkelsson of Seltjarnarnes (Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn, Skjalasöfn Sýslumanna Snæf. IV 1.a, previously Thott 2109 4to, 41^v–42^r). His father, subsisting on a slim pension, had been unable personally to care for him already in 1655, when a previous court meeting at the same place on 15th June agreed that Narfi had no kin locally ‘sem fie edur forlax Eyrer ætte’ (who had money or maintenance; 36^v), but deferred any decision about who should pay for his support. An attempt was to be made to have Narfi admitted to the local leper hospital, but no suggestion was made then that he should be sent out of the area. When in the following May they again discussed ‘þann wanfæra weika og spillta mann Narffa ormsson’ (that poor, sick and leprous man Narfi Ormsson), they found ‘fyrer full sanindj ad einginn hier Nalægtt er J Nejmi Wænd sagdann omaga ad annast’ (with full certainty that there is nobody in this neighbourhood with any hope of caring for the said pauper; 42^r), and that his nearest solvent relative was now his uncle on Seltjarnarnes—not, curiously, his brother, séra Jón Ormsson in Dalasýsla. This is not proof of séra Ormur’s death but, even though the authorities could be brutal in getting paupers off their hands, they might be expected to show some respect for the sensibilities of their parish priest for the past thirty years if he were still living.

If Sighvatur Grímsson is correct in saying that Erlendur Ormsson was twice married, though without recorded offspring, he may well have been a widower in 1656. This, together with the death of his father, would explain to some extent his readiness to break away from the

normal constraints of *vistarböndin* (residence requirements), and if both bereavements were recent they, together with the deplorable state of his brother Narfi, could have turned his mind to the wrath of God. (It is probably unjustifiable to suggest that a desire to escape responsibility for his brother had anything to do with his leaving Snæfellsnes, since the court in 1655 had clearly recognised that Erlendur could not afford to support Narfi.)

Just to announce oneself to be a prophet, however, was neither simple nor, in the seventeenth century, safe, especially if one's prophecies took the form of actual predictions rather than inspired denunciations of the sins of the people. Anyone claiming to foretell the future was liable to fall foul of anti-witchcraft legislation, from *Jónsbók (Mannhelgi 2)* onwards, which saw *spáfarir* or *sortilegium* as a branch of black magic. In fact, although later writers (mainly genealogists) who refer to Erlendur regularly call him *spámaður*, it is never made clear in contemporary sources exactly what powers he was claiming, since his own approach to the bishop was made orally, and Bishop Brynjólfur writes only of his 'gift from the Holy Spirit'. Erlendur's evident need to dissociate himself from any hint of witchcraft could mean that prediction was part of his 'gift' but, as will be seen below, his chief patron, séra Jón Magnússon, was impressed mainly by his denunciatory eloquence and by his unexplained knowledge of séra Jón's own past. It is probable therefore that the specific gift Erlendur was claiming is what is called in 1 Corinthians 12: 8 'the word of knowledge', there regarded as distinct from prophecy, although some theologians identify it with the power by which Jesus knew of the Samaritan woman's five husbands, and there the woman responded by acknowledging him as a prophet (John 4: 17–19). The other biblical example usually cited is Peter's denunciation of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1–11), which appears to depend on supernatural knowledge of their secret dealings (Davies 1996, 53–54). This gift has become fashionable in some modern charismatic circles and there have been cases in both Britain and America of claimants to the gift first persuading vulnerable people that, despite having no memory of it, they have been the victims of sexual or Satanic abuse, and then denouncing the 'perpetrators', often in circumstantial detail. In similar fashion Erlendur evidently saw the identification and denunciation of witchcraft as a major part of his mission.

There was a remarkably large number of people in seventeenth-century Iceland claiming second sight which, whatever may have been the case in the saga period, was now normally a matter of clairvoyance

rather than foreseeing and might therefore be thought comparable to Erlendur's 'word of knowledge'. It was a regularly accepted phenomenon and possession of it seems never to have been associated with witchcraft in any accusations, though witnesses frequently based their 'evidence' on second sight and courts sometimes, but not always, accepted this. Erlendur clearly regarded his prophetic ability as a divine gift quite separate from and superior to such a commonplace gift of nature; hence his determination to have it ratified by the bishop.

Bishop Brynjólfur was a rational and scholarly man, not given to extremes and unlikely, on the face of it, to encourage the exercise of the more spectacular charismatic gifts by the laity. His attitude to witchcraft was neutral, in that he never publicly questioned its seriousness or pleaded for mitigation of sentences, but he never initiated any prosecutions, and when two of his students at Skálholt were found in possession of a book of eighty spells in 1664, the bishop treated the matter as one of internal discipline and expelled the offenders rather than handing them over to the law (Reykjavík AM 275 fol., 311–23). He was therefore not going to be eager to endorse a witch-hunting self-proclaimed prophet, but he was also a tactful man, who rarely blundered in his dealings with individuals. He took Erlendur's request seriously, and settled down to a thorough examination of his theological position which must have taken some time. At the end of it he issued Erlendur with an open letter (Reykjavík AM 269 fol., 465–66, printed Brynjólfur Sveinsson 1942, 64–65), which is worth quoting in full.

Vitnisburdur Erlende Ormssyne vtgefenn af biskupenum

Ollum fromum monnum sem þessi ord sia edur heyra oskar vnderskrifadur nadar aff Gudi fodur fyrer Jesu Christi forþienustu j samverkan heilagz anda. Hier med aujsande, ad þessi frómur mann Erlendur Ormsson hefur fyrer mig komid og mig personulega vmbedid sig ad forheyra um syna tru og vidurkenning, sem hann j liosi latid hefur sinz christenndomz og þeirrar gafu sem hann af Gudz orda skilningi og heilagz anda gifft medkennest, huad eg og j nockurn mata giort hefi, ad eg hefi hann forheirt, og hefi eg ei annarz kunnad a hönum ad merkia enn þess sem godu og gudhræddu Gudz barni hæfer af sier ad heyra láta, bædi uppa vidurkinningu Gudz almattugz, hanz veru og vilia, almættiz og miskunar, Christi personu, embættiz og forþiennustu, sem og heilagz anda rykiz, ráda og stiornar j christiligri kyrkiu, manneskiunnar veikleika og ouerdugleika af nattu-runni, enn heilagz anda krafft j synum breyskum verkfærum af nadinni, effter þui sem hann uill sierhuorium synum gafum *m* utbija. Sømuleidiz hefi eg hanz medkenning heyrt um skapadra anda edur eingla hug og hætti, bædi godra og vondra, sierhuorra j sinn mata, huar um *m* hann hefur ei annarz af sier heyra latid

enn opinnberad er j Gudz ordi, og þar a ofann af sagt ad hafa neinar meiningar þar umm af heidinna manna edur annara spekinga fræðum eda fræðabokum utdregnar, utann alleinasta effter Gudz ordi og heilagri ritningu einfalldliga, sem christilig kyrkia hier kenner og helldur. Þar med hefur hann afsagt ei alleinasta brukun og tijdkun alla a runum, ristingum, særingum og odru kukli, helldur og allt nám, skin og vit sig nockurn tijma þar a hafft hafa, og framveigiz fastmælum bundid það alldrei vilia uita. Þui hefi eg ecki annarz af hönum merkia kunnad enn christenz manz ord og athæfi, það framast eg hefi kunnad ad ad komast og askinia ad verda. Þui kann eg hann ad so stoddu ecki ad mizgruna umm neina oleifilega hluti ne kunnattu. Bidiandi ad heilagur andi drottentz stiorni oss ollumm, synu heilaga nafni til dyrdar enn oss til nytsemdar og sinni christilegri kyrkiu til eflingar, enn diofulsinz valldi og velum til eidingar fyrer vorn drottentz Jesum Christum. Amen.

Skalholhti 1656 5 Aprilis.

Testimonial issued by the bishop for Erlendur Ormsson

On all pious people who read or hear these words, the undersigned prays the grace of God the Father, for the merits of Jesus Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; making known herewith that this pious man, Erlendur Ormsson, has come before me and personally requested me to examine him as to his belief and the confession he has made of his Christian faith and concerning the spiritual gift which he through his understanding of God's word and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit recognises; which in some measure I have also done, in that I have examined him, and I have not been able to perceive in him anything that it does not befit a good and godfearing child of God to utter, both in his acknowledgement of Almighty God, His being and will, omnipotence and mercy; the person, role and merits of Christ; and also the power, rule and governance of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Church; the weakness and unworthiness of mankind by nature, and the power of the Holy Spirit, through grace, in His fallible agents, according as He wills to distribute His gifts to each. I have likewise heard his deposition concerning the character and customs of created spirits or angels, both good and evil, each in his own degree, of which he has said nothing contrary to what is revealed in God's word, and in addition he has disclaimed any opinions on the matter derived from the teachings or books of heathen men or other sages, believing solely and simply according to God's word and Holy Scripture, as the Christian Church here teaches and believes. Moreover he has not only disclaimed all use and practice of runes, carvings, curses and other magic, but has denied that he ever at any time had any learning, understanding or knowledge of these things, and he has given his solemn word that he never wishes to know anything of them in future. I have therefore been unable to perceive anything in him other than the words and behaviour of a Christian, so far as I have been able to investigate and observe. Therefore I cannot suspect him, as things stand, of

any forbidden practices or knowledge. Praying that the Holy Spirit of the Lord may guide us all, to the glory of His holy name and to our benefit and the strengthening of His Christian Church, but to the destruction of the power and devices of the devil, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

Skálholt, 5th April 1656.

The general outline of the bishop's enquiry appears to have followed that of Martin Luther's *Lesser Catechism*, although he is unlikely to have been satisfied with a straightforward recitation. There was at this time no formal Confirmation in the Lutheran church in Iceland, and it was only in 1635 (when Erlendur was already adult) that it became a legal requirement for parish priests to teach children *i Lutheri Catechismo* before admitting them to communion, so a man of Erlendur's age would not necessarily have learned this *barnalærdómur*, although in his case his father probably had seen properly to his religious education even if he had not, apparently, taught him to write.

The nature of angels and devils, which evidently so preoccupied both Erlendur and the bishop, is not something on which the Catechism has much to say, but it was being hotly discussed in Iceland at the time in the context of witchcraft. 'The teachings or books of heathen men' could refer to classical philosophers, but is far more likely to be a reference to the widely canvassed opinions of Jón Guðmundsson *lærði* ('the learned'; 1574–1658). This unschooled layman, despite several accusations and two sentences of exile for studying and teaching witchcraft (though not for any *maleficium*), continued to maintain that it was as proper a study as that of zoology—his remarkably accurately illustrated *Registur nockra Hvalfiska i Islands og Grænlands Hafi* survives in one autograph fragment and several manuscript copies. Jón's poem *Fjandafæla* was composed in 1611 as part of his supposedly successful undertaking to overcome the Snjáfjöll ghost, a poltergeist which had been causing havoc on Snæfjallaströnd in the Westfirths, and it had a considerable circulation both orally and in manuscript even before séra Guðmundur Einarsson wrote his *Lítill hugrás yfir svik og vélræði djöfulsins* in 1627 to try to counter Jón's influence. In this poem Jón explains his version of the Fall of the Angels, in which one third fell into hell but the rest only as far as the earth and its surroundings, in which they swarm as thick as motes in a sunbeam. Three heavens between the moon and the earth are also full of *loptandar*, which are devils, as are trolls and *draugar*, which are devils inhabiting dead bodies whose souls are in hell (Ólafur Davíðsson 1940–43, 119). Jón also believed firmly in

elves, as children of Adam by Lilith (another of his works was an essay called ‘*Ælfheimar eður Undirheimar*’, copied in Reykjavík Lbs 1430a 4to), but other contemporaries thought that the elves also were fallen angels. White witchcraft was claimed to be the means of taming and controlling this mass of petty devils, through wisdom inherited from, among others, Solomon, Charlemagne and St Olaf. In the face of such current heresy, it is not surprising that Bishop Brynjólfur investigated Erlendur’s beliefs in ‘created spirits’ so carefully. The bishop was familiar with Jón *lærði* and his theories: Jón had dedicated to him his 1644 *Tijdfordriif edur Lijtíð Annals kuer*, which included a section on runes (Jón’s autograph manuscript is Reykjavík AM 727 4to II), and Bishop Brynjólfur may have copied some of Jón’s less contentious essays. (Cf. Páll E. Ólason 1918–37, II 633–34, no. 5619.)

The phrasing of Erlendur’s rejection of witchcraft has legal overtones; ‘*brukun og tíjdkun*’ in particular echoes ‘*ad tídka og bruka*’ in the *Recess* of Christian IV published 27th February 1643, as it appears in the Icelandic translation inserted in Brynjólfur’s letter-book in connection with the case of the two students (Reykjavík AM 275 fol., 316). The specific repudiation of ‘runes, carvings and curses’ is reminiscent of the wording of oaths taken by defendants in witchcraft trials, for although the expression varies with each individual case, virtually every witchcraft case in Iceland turned on the possession and alleged use of ‘runes’. These were hardly ever the classical *fupark*, but covered a number of other forms, from the composite ‘bandrunes’ such as *Fjölnir*, to what were often called *characteres*, sigils such as Solomon’s Seal (in a wide variety of forms) or Charlemagne’s Knot. These could be drawn or painted (as in the students’ book of spells) but often relied for their effectiveness on being carved, on anything from wood to fish-bone to a living calf’s skin.¹ *Særingar*, often in verse like Jón Guðmundsson’s *Fjandafæla*, could be curses against the devil or formulas for summoning him. The legalistic phrasing of this part of Erlendur’s *Vitnisburður* caused Hannes Þorsteinsson to surmise that he had ‘*meðal annars verið borinn vantrú eða heiðinglegri villu og kukli*’

¹ The younger Jón Jónsson of Kirkjuból confessed to having ‘*klippi*’ Solomon’s Seal on a calf’s hide to cure it when it was being plagued by the devil (Ellison 1993, 235), and spell 7 in the oldest surviving *galdrabók*, Stockholm MS ATA 21284, offers two forms of *Ægishjálmur* which one has ‘*að klippa eður rista*’ (to clip or scratch) on the shoulders of cattle to protect against sickness (Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson 1992, 284).

(been accused among other things of atheism or pagan heresy and witchcraft; *Ævir lærðra manna* 48, 131^r, Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn) and had been summoned to clear himself, but there is no basis for this in the document, and it takes no account of Erlendur's desire to have his spiritual gift recognised.

It will not have escaped the careful reader of the *Vitnisburður* that the one thing Bishop Brynjólfur does not do is endorse Erlendur's claim. Nor indeed does he give him any licence to rove about the country, but Erlendur was evidently satisfied that he now had the bishop's backing as well as the Spirit's leading and could ignore the law with impunity. He probably stayed in Skálholt over Easter or longer, long enough at least to become acquainted with Gísli Einarsson, the senior master of the school. Gísli was the best mathematician in Iceland but, thanks to his alcoholism, notably incompetent in money matters. Erlendur either lent him a small sum of money (10 *aurar* = 60 ells or half a *hundrað*) or was commissioned by him to run some errand; in either case the money had eventually to be paid to Erlendur by the *umboðsmaður* at Heynes, who managed the Skálholt estates in the west of Iceland, and it was charged, like other debts he had incurred, against Gísli's salary for the financial year 1657–58 (Reykjavík AM 271 fol., 181). An errand is perhaps more likely than a loan, given Erlendur's poverty; collecting the money in Heynes would be convenient whether he were going home to Snæfellsnes or following the scent of witchcraft to the Westfirths, as proved to be the case.

It was inevitable that Erlendur should be drawn to the Westfirths, where witch-hunting in Iceland had finally got going, after a slow and reluctant start compared with other Scandinavian countries, with the burning of three men in Trékyllisvík in Strandasýsla in September 1654. It may have been widely known in early 1656 that the phenomena which led to those burnings had not ended, perhaps also that Margrét Þórðardóttir, probably the daughter of one of the executed men, had been charged with witchcraft and had fled—she was to be declared Wanted at the Alþingi that summer. Certainly Erlendur will have known that two minor cases of witchcraft had been reported to the 1655 Alþingi from the neighbouring county of Ísafjarðarsýsla. Now, while still at Skálholt or on his way west, he heard of a new scandal, the burning in Easter week 1656 in Skutulsfjörður, Ísafjarðarsýsla, of the two Jón Jónssons, father and son, from Kirkjuból for witchcraft against their parish priest, séra Jón Magnússon (Ellison 1993). The lure was irresistible.

It is not clear how long it was before Erlendur reached Skutulsfjörður, some sixteen or seventeen *þingmannaleiðir* (day's rides) from Skálholt (Jón Helgason 1966, 157). The first definite date for his presence at either Kirkjuból or Eyri, the *prestssetur*, is 29th August 1656, but by that time he and séra Jón were firm friends and allies, and he had clearly been in the district for some while. The two made a perfect partnership; Erlendur was ready to lend a sympathetic ear to all the pastor's tales of continuing satanic attacks and séra Jón, who had believed and assiduously recorded every vision and even mere tingling sensation of his second-sighted parishioners, only to have such 'evidence' passed over in court, felt vindicated by the arrival of a guaranteed divinely inspired prophet whose word must be accepted even by cynical judges. Séra Jón himself 'undraðist yfir hans vitsmunum og þeirra hluta, sem mjer sagði um mína hagi og annarra manna, sem mjer barnkunnugir voru, hverju eg kunni ekki að neita' (marvelled at the intellect apparent in the things he told me about my own situation and that of other people whom I had known from childhood, which I could not deny; Jón Magnússon 1912–14, 150).² Modern psychiatrists who have read séra Jón's *Píslarsaga*, the story of his 'martyrdom' by conspiring witches and incompetent officials, have concluded that he was a paranoid schizophrenic; it is clear from his narrative that, though rational enough in some other respects, he was incapable of seeing the flaws in any piece of evidence which seemed to serve his purpose, and therefore of perceiving that Bishop Brynjólfur had not in fact endorsed Erlendur as a prophet.

Erlendur roamed around the region—séra Jón says that he 'var þriggja eða fjöggra náttu fresti á mínu heimili, þegar hann hjer ferðaðist til og frá, náttstaddur' (spent three or four nights at my home while he was travelling to and fro around here; p. 150)—and it is perhaps reasonable to surmise that he was not at Eyri in Skutulsfjörður when the bishop came on visitation, 19th August 1656 (*Visitaziubók Brynjólfs biskups um Vestfirðingafjórðung 1639–71*, Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn, Biskupasafn A II 6, 259–60). The bishop held a special meeting with the parishioners before his usual check on church property, to see how they were recovering from the trauma of the burning of two churchwardens:

² The most accessible edition of séra Jón's apologia is *Píslarsaga síra Jóns Magnússonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 1967, but this omits a number of postscripts to the manuscript (Copenhagen Ny kgl. sml. 1842 4to), some of which make reference to Erlendur. I am therefore taking all quotations from the edition of Sigfús Blöndal, Copenhagen 1912–14.

Visiteradur Sófnudurenn að Eyri J Skutulsfirði, hann yferheyrður og eftir á ámintur á Christeligann lífnad Jdran og yferböt, Jtem á bænahalld og eindrægne J andanum möte djófulsens freistingum og äräsum sem nu geisa hier og annarstad^r á þessum Seinustu Häskalegu tímum, hvad Gud nädarsamlega J Jesu nafne Álijte. Töku þui nálæger Söknarmenn vel og Gudlega.

The congregation at Eyri in Skutulsfjörður was visited, questioned and afterwards exhorted to Christian living, repentance and atonement, as also to prayer and unity in the Spirit against the temptations and assaults of the devil, which are now raging here and elsewhere in these last dangerous times, the which may God graciously regard in Jesus' name. The parishioners present took this well and piously.

Nobody mentioned to the bishop that witchcraft attacks on the pastor were continuing or that a cow in Hnifsdalur had been '*trölldreppin*' (killed by magic), let alone that suspicion was focusing on Þuríður Jónsdóttir of Kirkjuból, daughter of the elder and sister of the younger Jón Jónsson executed at Easter. To me this argues the absence of the encouraging voice of Erlendur Ormsson, since it was only ten days later that he set out with séra Jón to Kirkjuból to confront Þuríður with her sins.

Usually séra Jón's narrative, however insane, strikes the reader as completely sincere; one of the few moments of disingenuousness is when he claims (p. 71) to have gone to Kirkjuból purely to discuss business with Sturli Bjarnason, one of the other farmers there, and 'því fjell mjer af hendingu til viðstöddum að vera við samræður Erlends og Þuríðar' (it chanced accidentally that I was present at the talk between Erlendur and Þuríður). (He introduces Erlendur's name without explanation, as if his identity must be familiar to any reader.) In fact it is plain that they had concerted their tactics as they rode together from Eyri. There was to be no formal, legal accusation of witchcraft, but Erlendur was to turn his prophetic eloquence on Þuríður, hoping for a spontaneous confession or other damaging utterance, while séra Jón hovered, nominally out of earshot but ready to pounce. The plan was thwarted by Þuríður, an intelligent and courageous girl (this was one of séra Jón's main pieces of 'evidence' against her, pp. 97–98), who had bitter experience of how rash words could be twisted in a witch-hunt, and therefore maintained a stubborn silence. Most of the people on the farm had evidently come out to greet their pastor, who had not been there since he was first struck down by witchcraft the previous October. While séra Jón went to the upper farmhouse to talk to Sturli Bjarnason, Erlendur launched straight into his harangue of Þuríður 'fyrst við kirkjugarðinn þar í viðurvist sinnar móður og nokkra annarra' (first by

the church-yard there, in the presence of her mother and several others), who included her younger siblings, the servants and the man she was engaged to marry, Örnólfur Jónsson (p. 72). What exactly Erlendur said in the 'iðranaáminning . . . sem hann veitti Þuríði' (the exhortation to repentance which he delivered to Þuríður; p. 98) is not known; what is certain is that the heat of his denunciation so scared Örnólfur that he abandoned his intention of marrying her (p. 149; *Alþingisbók* 1658 Nr. XXIX 7). Þuríður turned her back on Erlendur and stalked off to the kitchen to get on with her work, but he and his audience pursued her there and, since they were now out of his hearing, séra Jón was hastily summoned to listen. He was deeply impressed at 'hversu líklega Erlendur við Þuríði talaði' (how convincingly Erlendur spoke to Þuríður; p. 72), and baffled by her lack of response.

Next Þuríður took refuge in the church, followed this time only by Erlendur and séra Jón. There her silence finally defeated Erlendur and he left her, not before staring closely at both her cheeks to see whether she had shed a tear (p. 73). (Séra Jón does not appear to be familiar with the idea that witches could not weep, but regards her tearlessness as a sign of 'demantiskur hugur' (adamantine spirit) in a 'forhert og brjóstlaus manneskja' (hardened and heartless person; p. 98).) Erlendur left the church and went off to persecute Þuríður's mother Guðrún Bjarnadóttir, an easier target. When the personal possessions of the two Jóns had been confiscated after their burning, Þuríður had begged the sheriffs to allow her as a keepsake her father's fur-trimmed silk cap, which she had later been seen wearing. Taking courage from this, Guðrún had then begged to keep her son's cap, 'flugelshúfu, silkisnúrur marglagða' (a velvet cap, much ornamented with silk thread), and this Erlendur now proceeded to bully out of her, finally carrying it off in triumph (p. 98).

While he was so occupied, séra Jón was taking his turn at haranguing Þuríður, or as he puts it he 'talaði við Þuríði heilræðum' (gave Þuríður some good advice), but with no more response than Erlendur had achieved. In his frustration he saw a black aura around Þuríður, spreading out to engulf him, and regretted not having brought any witnesses with him (p. 73). When she suddenly knelt in silent and still tearless prayer, séra Jón was reminded of her brother similarly kneeling after his condemnation, and became convinced that she was muttering a spell against him (p. 102). He decided on a quick retreat, pausing only outside the farm to say goodbye to the rest of the household, with a short lecture for the younger children on their urgent need to hold firm

in the fear of God. Þuríður meanwhile had gone alone back to the kitchen. While séra Jón was speaking, Erlendur Ormsson flinched and cowered dramatically ('við brá og skaut sér undan í hnipri', p. 74), but the pastor was too keen to get away to investigate the reason. He more than two years later collected the testimonies of two of his regular second-sighted witnesses to the effect that they had seen strange flashing lights over the farm kitchen at that moment (p. 81), and assumed that Erlendur had seen something similar, but if so he had forgotten it when the time came to record his testimony.

This is not the place at which to pursue Þuríður's story in detail; she was too wise to wait for séra Jón to accuse her formally, and within three days she had left the district, though publicly and in good order, to seek the protection of the local *prófastur* (rural dean), séra Jón Jónsson of Holt í Önundarfirði, and his redoubtable wife Halldóra Jónsdóttir. Séra Jón Magnússon took legal steps against Þuríður, and Erlendur undoubtedly remained in the district to be star witness against her when the court met at Eyri in late January 1657. That session was however cancelled on the grounds that the pass from Önundarfjörður was blocked by snow, so Erlendur would next have expected to testify at the regular court meeting on 7th April 1657, but this session too was cancelled. (Séra Jón had not realised that he needed to take out a new summons against Þuríður, and without it the sheriff would make no move in the case.) Of Erlendur's activities for the rest of that year we have only the curt comment of the immediately contemporary *Viðauki Vatnsfjarðarannáls* by séra Sigurður Jónsson of Ögur við Ísafjarðardjúp: 'Fór hér um Erlendur Ormsson með mikilli mælsku' (Erlendur Ormsson went around here with great loquacity; *Annálar 1400–1800* III, 84).

Erlendur had evidently outstayed his welcome in the Westfirths, other than with séra Jón Magnússon, and found the Spirit leading him further afield. Before he left in 1657 or 1658 he recorded and signed his testimony against Þuríður at Tunga í Skutulsfirði, in case it should ever be needed. Where he then went is unknown, though he may have visited Heynes for his ten *aurar* debt, if it had not been paid earlier. It is certain however that he was not still in the Westfirths when the case against Þuríður was eventually brought to the Alþingi in 1658.

Because the lay authorities had proved unwilling to move against her, séra Jón brought his case to the General Synod of the Skálholt see, which met at Þingvellir at the same time as the Alþingi. He and Þuríður were both there in person, but he brought only sworn testimonies, not Erlendur or any other witness. The Synod spent some time considering

the case, so it comes as something of a surprise that there is no mention of it in the records, though an examination of *Prestastefnuþók Brynjólfs biskups Sveinssonar* (Reykjavík Þjóðskjalasafn, Biskupasafn A III 1) will explain this. In earlier years it is plain that minutes were taken during the Synod but written up later, being signed only by the bishop and one or two other witnesses, but by 1658 a much more efficient secretary was at work. He took very full minutes, often quoting oral evidence *verbatim*, and then wrote them up, incorporating written evidence, before the end of the Synod so as to get them signed by all the members of the panel chosen to hear the causes. In the case of séra Jón v. Þuríður the decision was made to pass the papers directly to the lay Alþingi, and they were evidently not returned to the secretary of the Synod. The *Alþingisþók* record is therefore unusually full, but gives only the detailed recommendations of the Synod as to what allegations should be further investigated, not the actual evidence laid before it. Séra Jón had intended to include a transcript of Erlendur's evidence in the papers he prepared for the next stage of the case, but found he had lost the relevant paper (p. 149).

It is possible to some extent to sort out what must have been in Erlendur's testimony by comparing the recorded allegations with those made by séra Jón at different places in his work. Séra Jón's mysterious illness will naturally have been the major part of his own evidence (this was not questioned, only the timing of the fits in relation to Þuríður's presence), and he was almost certainly responsible for the allegation that a school of witchcraft had been run at Kirkjuból with Þuríður as a pupil alongside her brother. The matter of the bewitched cow at Hnífsdalur could have been raised by either séra Jón or Erlendur; it is only certain that the accusation did not come from the cow's owner, who resisted all pressure to blame Þuríður although it was not disputed that she had stroked the beast some two months before it died.

Although he undoubtedly asserted that Þuríður was a witch, the main testimony from Erlendur was evidently not directly to acts of *maleficium*, but to unnatural and unchristian behaviour. Séra Jón had complained of the unnatural courage of a girl who did not break down when her father and brother were burned, and made much of her not only wanting her father's cap but wearing it herself 'á laugardaginn næstan eftir bruna þeirra feðga, eftir því sem mjer hefir hermt verið' (on the next Saturday after the burning of father and son, as I have been informed; p. 98). In Erlendur's testimony (*Alþingisþók* 1658 Nr. XXIX 4) this was evidently transformed into the accusation that, on the very day of the burning,

Þuríður sýnt hafi á sjer sjerdeilis gleðimót með leikaraskap og glens, dinglað fótum við stokka, leikið að skopparakringlu, með skemmtun og skritilyrðum, sett upp flögelshúfu, þá hún vitað hafi föður sinn og bróður á einu báli brennda.

Þuríður had displayed a special gaiety with foolery and fun, had drummed her heels against planks, had played with a spinning-top with pleasure and joking words, and had put on a velvet cap, when she knew her father and brother had been burned on one fire.

On 5th April 1656 Erlendur Ormsson was in Skálholt getting his testimonial from the bishop. On the day of the burning, 10th April 1656, he cannot therefore have been anywhere near the Westfirths, so his 'testimony' must have been given as a prophet with a divinely inspired 'word of knowledge'.

Séra Jón had also presented sworn evidence from Þuríður's ex-fiancé Örnólfur Jónsson, apparently thinking that his rejection of her would be an impressive testimony against her. Naturally, however, Örnólfur deposed that he had never had cause to suspect Þuríður when he got engaged to her (probably, from the lack of mention of him earlier, after her father's death), and he also said that it was the vehemence of Erlendur's attack on her which had frightened him off. To the Synod, this weakened the case against Þuríður considerably; they still thought it needed careful investigation, but part of the enquiry should be into not only the substance of Erlendur's accusations but his motive for attacking her so violently. Their ninth point was 'að Erlendur Ormsson gjöri skil á þeim áburði, sem hann bar Þuríði fráverandi og hann hefur handskrifað í Tungu, hann annað hvort reki af sér eða straffist fyrir svoddan ofuryrði' (that Erlendur Ormsson should render an account for the accusation which he brought against Þuríður in her absence and which he signed at Tunga; he should either clear himself or be punished for such exaggerated speech). One may suppose that in this context his fault was not just 'exaggerated speech' but the *hubris* or even blasphemy of laying claim to divine inspiration.

Together with the recommendations of the Synod, séra Jón and Þuríður came before the *lögrétta*, and she claimed the right to clear herself, as the law still was, by *tylftareidur* (an oath supported, in the seventeenth century, usually by twelve oath-witnesses rather than the earlier eleven; see Ellison 1993, 221). Séra Jón claims that there was uproar in court at the suggestion that she could swear herself innocent not only of bewitching him but of ever having practised witchcraft (p. 135), but in fact it is plain that Þuríður made a good impression on

both Synod and Alþingi. One unnamed member of one or other court nearly gave séra Jón apoplexy by commenting that she was far too pretty and intelligent to be a witch (p. 63). The Alþingi agreed to her request and prescribed the form of the oath she was to take, in séra Jón's presence, after the recommended investigations had been completed. 'En Erlend Ormsson dæmum vér skyldugan að gjöra skil á sínum orðum og áburði, áður en eiðurinn sé tekinn' (But we find Erlendur Ormsson bound to render an account for his words and accusation, before the oath is taken). If he could prove his allegations, Þuríður would be punished according to law, i. e. burned alive, but if not, and if she could find twelve women to support her oath, the whole case against her would collapse, regardless of anyone else's evidence. That Erlendur at this time had wandered further afield is shown by the final clause of the court's decision: 'En domur þessi sé auglýstur fyrir Erlendi svo tímanlega, að hann kunni auðveldlega vestur að komast til forsvars og bevísinga sinna orða, ef hann getur' (But this judgement is to be made known to Erlendur in such good time that he can easily come west to defend and prove his words, if he can do so; *Alþingisbók* 1658 Nr. XXX).

The official record of that next court hearing, back in the Westfirths at Mosvellir í Öndarfirði, is missing; séra Jón, who transcribed the records of the cases he won, did not care to record the one he lost, and we have only the list of points he intended to make (or perhaps wished he had made) to the court (pp. 151–52). He was shocked and baffled that Erlendur's evidence could have been called in question, since he still believed him a true prophet, inflamed with zeal against evil-doers and especially witches (p. 150). The court, however, thought otherwise. It must have been easy to find witnesses to disprove Erlendur's absurd claims about Þuríður's behaviour on the day of the burning, since she had been observed by such people as Sheriff Magnús Magnússon and Deputy Sheriff Gísli Jónsson, and with their evidence his entire claim to divine inspiration was torn to shreds. With the influential support of Halldóra Jónsdóttir, Þuríður had no difficulty in finding suitable oath-witnesses and was triumphantly cleared.

So what happened to Erlendur Ormsson? The Alþingi had not formally endorsed the Synod's recommendation that he should be punished if he were found to have borne false witness, but this would be expected. True, in some witchcraft cases the court ruled that witness had been given in good faith and should not be penalised, but in others specific and often heavy penalties were laid down. Some accusers,

persuaded they had been wrong, volunteered compensation, which could be very high. Erlendur, who made no such move, had laid himself open to prosecution under at least two laws. *Réttarbætr Hákonar konungs* clause 8 on slander (*Jónsbók* 1908, 294–95) laid down that calling anyone ‘drottinsvikara, fordæðu, morðingja, þjóf . . . eða önnur jafnskemmileg orð’ (traitor, sorcerer, murderer, thief . . . or other equally damaging names) should incur a fine of four marks to the crown, and *fordæða* is usually translated, and would certainly include the meaning, ‘witch’. *Mannhelgi* 25 (*Jónsbók* 1908, 65) is more severe:

Svá er mælt um rógsmenn alla, at sá maðr er hann verðr kunnr ok sannr at því, at hann rægir mann við konung eða biskup, jarl eða sýslumann, svari slíku fyrir sem sá ætti er rægðr er, ef hann væri þess sannr.

Thus it is decreed of all slanderers, that any man of whom it is known and proved that he slanders anyone to the king or bishop, earl or sheriff, shall face the same penalty as the slander-victim would if he were guilty.

Nobody in fact would have suggested that Erlendur should have been burned alive, but a flogging would have seemed entirely appropriate, since that was usually the penalty for minor witchcraft offences (such as owning runes or *characteres* but not using them). Compensation would also be appropriate, but Þuríður, who eventually sued séra Jón for compensation for slander and persecution, did not bother with Erlendur, perhaps because he was too poor, perhaps because she despised him as a mere tool. If he were too poor, he might also have to compound for the four mark fine at the standard *Stóri dómur* rate of two lashes to the mark (*Lovsamling for Island* I 1853, 87). Moreover, he could then also have been fined another four marks or eight lashes for unlawful *lausamenska* or breach of the residence laws, since a ruling of the Alþingi in 1638 (*Alþingisbók* 1638 Nr. XIV) had laid down that no one was entitled to roam around as Erlendur was doing unless he had ten full *hundruð* in disposable assets and no dependants.

It is uncertain in fact whether Erlendur paid any formal penalty. He had clearly not done so when séra Jón, still utterly convinced that Þuríður was a witch, wrote his *Píslarsaga* to prove it during the years 1658–59, but at the time the postscript called ‘Project eða Inntak’ (pp. 151–54) was written, the threat was still hanging over him. By then even séra Jón was beginning to have doubts of Erlendur, though sure that he must have acted from motives of compassion and conviction if he had invented his evidence, so that it would be unfair to punish him severely (p. 154). Perhaps Erlendur’s priestly connections or even the bishop’s testimonial had some effect in protecting him from the

severity of the law. Perhaps it was clear to the court that he had genuinely believed himself to be inspired and was shattered to recognise his delusion. It is equally possible that, knowing his evidence to be false, Erlendur had avoided the court altogether and could not be found for punishment. All one can say for certain is that he disappeared from the west of Iceland, and ‘Prophet’ Erlendur Ormsson was heard of no more.

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ON GIZURR ÞORVALDSSON'S SPEAKING STYLE

BY MARVIN TAYLOR

ONE STILL encounters the claim that the speech of saga characters is not differentiated stylistically.¹ Bouman, though, has observed that the length of sentences can vary in proportion to their 'weight' and the importance of the characters who speak them; this relationship holds in the *konungasögur*, where the king is allotted the longest sentences, and in certain *Íslendingasögur* (Bouman 1958, 66–67).² Hallberg, too, has shown that the speech of Njáll and Skarpheðinn in *Njáls saga* is consistently nuanced in characteristic ways (1966, 141–50). In fact, upon closer examination, it is possible to find a number of characters whose speech is distinguished by stylistic features of some kind. Elsewhere I have attempted a stylistic analysis of Atli's speech in *Egils saga* ch. 65 and suggested that he represents the caricature of a courtly aristocrat (Taylor 1992, 118–22). Here I should like to focus on Gizurr Þorvaldsson as he appears in *Íslendinga saga*.³ My starting point, however, is Sighvatr Sturluson.

Sighvatr's sarcastic advice to his ambitious son Sturla in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 125 represents one of the saga's stylistic extremes. It is 1237, and Sturla has just won the battle of Bœr and forced two of his opponents into exile.

Þá mælti Sighvatr: 'Bú muntu nú ætla at efna, frændi, er mér er sagt, at þú hafir af höndum látit Reykjaholt. Sér þú nú ok ofsjónum yfir flestum bústöðum,—eða hvar skal staðfestu fá, þá er þér þykkir sæmilig?'

'Þik læt ek nú allt at gera,' segir Sturla.

¹ Jeffrey denied that 'peculiarities in the use of speech of the different characters' exist (1934, 53, cited in Bürling 1983, 12 n. 5), and Bürling, while arguing that there are psychological differences, agrees with her that there are no linguistic ones (1983, 200–03). Lie held the same opinion (1937, 123–24).

² Comparable conclusions were reached for Old English poetry in Perelman 1980, 24–46, and Bjork 1985; cf. Meissner 1924. Hunt has observed (1985, 187–88) that the concentration of 'learned style' features in the *biskupasögur* seems to vary with the 'sanctity' of the subject.

³ The present essay has been revised from a paper given at the Ninth International Saga Conference in Akureyri in August 1994, which in turn followed Taylor 1992, 108–18.

‘Ekki er um fleiri at láta en tvá,’ segir Sighvatr, ‘þegar frá eru teknir biskupsstólarnir. Er þar annarr Oddastaðr, en annarr Möðruvellir í Hörgárdal. Þar eru bústaðir beztir ok munu þér þykkja einskis til miklir.’

‘Þessir líka mér báðir vel,’ segir Sturla, ‘en eigi ætla ek þá lausa liggja fyrir.’

‘Margs þarf búit við, frændi,’ segir Sighvatr. ‘Ráðamann þyrftir þú ok ráðakonu. Þessir menn skyldi vel birgir ok kunna góða fjárhagi. Þessa menn sé ek gerla. Þat er Hálfðan, mágr þinn, á Keldum ok Steinvör, systir þín. Þessi starfi er þeim fallinn í bezta lagi.’

Þá svarar Sturla: ‘Þessa er víst vel til fengit.’

‘Þá þarftu, frændi, smalamann at ráða í fyrra lagi,’ segir Sighvatr. ‘Hann skyldi vera lítill ok léttur á baki, kvensamr ok liggja löngum á kvíagarði. Þann mann sé ek gerla. Þat er Björn Sæmundarson. En fylgðarmenn skal ek fá þér, þá er gangi út ok inn eftir þér. Þat skulu vera bræðr þínir, Þórðr krókr ok Markús.’

Sturla kvað bræðrum sínum þat vel mundu fara.

‘Margs þarf búit við, frændi,’ segir Sighvatr. ‘Þá menn þyrftir þú ok, sem hefði veiðifarir ok væri banghagir nökkut, kynni at gera at skipum ok því öðru, er búit þarf. Þessa menn sé ek gerla. Þar eru þeir frændr þínir, Staðar-Böðvarr ok Þorleifr í Görðum.’

Sturla lét sér þá fátt um finnast ok lézt þó ætla, at þeir væri báðir vel hagir.

‘Svá er ok, frændi,’ segir Sighvatr,—‘þá menn þarftu, er vel kunnu hrossa at geyma ok hafa ætlan á, hvat í hverja ferð skal hafa. Þessa menn sé ek gerla. Þar er Loftr biskupsson ok Böðvarr í Bæ.’

‘Engi ván er mér þess,’ segir Sturla, ‘at allir menn þjóni til mín, ok er slíkt þarflausutal.’

‘Nú er ok fátt mannskipanar eftir, þat er þykkir allmikla nauðsyn til bera,’ sagði Sighvatr, ‘en þá menn þarftu, er hafi atráttu ok fari í kaupstefnur ok til skipa, skilvísa ok skjóta í viðbragði ok kunni vel fyrir mönnum at sjá ok til ferða at skipa. Þessa menn sé ek gerla. Þat er Gizurr Þorvaldsson ok Kolbeinn ungi.’

Þá spratt Sturla upp ok gekk út.

En er hann kom inn, brá Sighvatr á gaman við Sturlu,—ok tóku þá annat tal.

The passage is remarkable both for its cleverly incremented humorous and ironic tension and its controlled, sustained, elevated style.⁴ Among the most obvious stylistic devices are hypotaxis, including in some instances the separation of a relative clause from its antecedent

⁴ Structurally, the episode is not far removed from the ancient comic tale of the fool counting his chickens before they are hatched (or the profits from the sale of a pot of meal, etc.) and imagining his wealth increasing exponentially, until in his excitement he drops the eggs (upsets the pot, etc.). This is Thompson’s motif J2061, which is represented in thirteenth-century Europe in the exempla of Jacobus de Vitriaco (Jacques de Vitry) and Joannes de Capua. The saga passage is a *fremtidfantasi* of this kind (Christensen’s term for the motif (1939, 253)) in dialogue form. Cf. the psychological analysis in Müller (1939, 52–53).

(*Þá menn . . . sem hefði veiðifarir*, etc.), repetition (*Margs þarf búit við, Þessa menn sé ek gerla*), vocative and apposition (*frændi, mágr þinn*, etc.), clause parallelism, and the tight logical progression of the whole. Although the amount of dialogue attributed to Sighvatr elsewhere is too small for conclusive statistical comparison, it is obvious that the language attributed to him here is not intended to represent his normal speaking style. It is a parody of a particular kind of style.

I am not aware of a source or precise analogue of Sighvatr's speech (*Konungs skuggsjá*, for example, contains no comparable section), but a number of its stylistic features are duplicated in a speech delivered by Gizurr Þorvaldsson in ch. 155.

Gizurr is unique as a character in *Íslendinga saga* in that he delivers three relatively long, structured speeches of the classical type, two in military contexts (chs 137, 155) and one at the wedding at Flugumýri (ch. 170); as oratory, only documents such as Archbishop Þórir's letter in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 26 are comparable. Gizurr's other speeches in *Íslendinga saga*, too, whether in oratio recta or oratio obliqua, display relative uniformity of situation and style. (An appendix to this paper lists the places where speech by Gizurr may be found.) A large proportion occur in situations in which he is commanding or even intimidating others: e.g. chs 129, 138, 152, 156–57, 166, 176, 178, 195, 199, 200; cf. also the Reykjarfjarðarbók variant to ch. 195 (*Sturlunga saga* 1946, II 279–80) and *Þorgils saga skarða* ch. 1. Other types of verbal aggression represented include challenges, resolves, warnings, rebukes, refusals, accusations and criticism, a curse, and unspecified expressions of displeasure. There is virtually nothing in what might seem to be informal or colloquial style: few emphatic words and constructions and virtually no humour or colourful metaphor.⁵ (Sturla Sighvatsson's speech, in contrast, is full of these features. Sighvatr cannot have been parodying his son's speaking style.) Indeed, both the typical discourse situations and the style and structure of Gizurr's speeches suggest comparison with the language of the rulers and courtiers in the *konungasögur*.⁶

⁵ Very dry humour can perhaps be detected in Gizurr's speeches in *Íslendinga saga* chs 129 (*Þá mun ek norrænan eið vinna*), 156 (*Langt hafa slíkir til sótt*), 157 (*bað Gizurr þann aldri þrifast, er eigi væri hjá öðrum mönnum*), and 200 (*Þórðr mælti þá: 'Þess vil ek biðja þik, Gizurr jarl, at þú fyrirgefir mér . . .'* *Gizurr jarl svarar: 'Þat vil ek gera, þegar þú ert dauðr'*), and *Árna saga biskups* ch. 6 (*Þess vænte eg frænde að flestum munur þu verða ecke fyrrelat samur . . . þar sem þu lietst ecke fyrer mier*).

⁶ Such a comparison is beyond the scope of this paper; I must be content with mentioning the possibility and referring to Lie 1937 and Knirk 1981. For the

Gizurr's oration before the battle of Ørlygsstaðir even contains a narrative exemplum (ch. 137):

Gizurr talaði þá fyrir liðinu ok eggjaði menn til framgöngu. 'Vil ek eigi,' sagði hann, 'at þér hafið mik á spjótsoddum fyrir yðr, sem Skagfirðingar höfðu Kolbein Tumason, frænda minn, þá er hann fell í Viðinesi, en runnu sjálfir þegar í fyrstu svá hræddir, at þeir vissu eigi, er þeir runnu yfir Jökulsá, ok þar er þeir þóttust skjöldu bera á baki sér, þar báru þeir söðla sína. Leitið yðr nú heldr vaskra manna dæma, þeira er vel fylgðu Sverri konungi eða öðrum höfðingjum, þá er æ uppi þeira frægð ok góðr röskleikr. Efízt ok ekki í því, at ek skal yðr eigi fjarri staddr, ef þér dugið vel, sem ek vænti góðs af öllum yðr. Er þat ok satt at segja, at sá maðr má aldregi röskr heita, er eigi rekr þessa óaldarflokka af sér.—Gæti vár allra guð,' sagði Gizurr.

Allir rómuðu þetta erindi vel.

True or not (the account of Kolbeinn's fall in ch. 21 is not as specific), this insulting story about the Skagfirðingar's panicked flight through the river Jökulsá belongs to an international anecdote type with numerous representatives in historiography, epic and fabliau. In its best-known form, a flax field is taken for a body of water which must be swum,⁷ but there are also instances—as in Gizurr's speech—of panic or delusion in connection with a real river.⁸

purposes of the present investigation, I deliberately avoid the term 'courtly style.' While this concept has a firm place in medieval Scandinavian literary history (the necessary bibliography may be found in Astås 1993), it refers to a particular global stylistic profile of a text and does not necessarily characterise the speech of rulers and courtiers. To use it in the latter sense here would be misleading.

⁷ 'Swimming in the flax field' is folktale type (AT) 1290 and motif type (Thompson) J1821 (cf. D2031, imaginary river). The locus classicus is Paulus Diaconus's report of the Erulians' flight from the Lombards, *Hist. Langob.* 1.20; as here, panic is caused by the fall of the leader. In a widespread variant, the water is a sorcerer's illusion: this is represented in Icelandic in *Mágus saga jarls* (22–23) and elsewhere (e. g. a Sèra Eiríkr tale collected by Maurer (1860, 162–63); one is reminded also of Þórr's encounter with Geirrøðr's daughter).

⁸ An early example—though only remotely related—is 2 Kings 3: 22–23, in which the red light of dawn on the water is taken by the Moabites for the blood of their enemies; there is no swimming here, only the fatal rush of the Moabites into the hands of the Jewish army. Closer early medieval analogues of Gizurr's exemplum are Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.20, in which the Saxons and Picts take the Britons' war cry for the noise of the sky falling, throw away their weapons, and drown in panicked flight through a river (similarly Livy 40.58, though without a river), and perhaps the ninth-century poet Ermoldus Nigellus's description of the Orléanais' mocking travellers who swim the Loire: *Aurelianenses illos*

It is not uncommon for saga characters and narrators to mock others' confusion or flight. Agnete Loth (1960) noticed a motif of this general type in parallel passages in *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar* 40, *Morkinskinna* 229–30, and *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* ch. 72 (in *Heimskringla*; a horse starts at the enemy's battle cry, its tether flies up and strikes the rider, who believes he has been shot and flees), with which one may compare the story in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 156 of the confusion wrought by the battle cry of Gizurr's forces (Órækja's men begin to attack each other). I have elsewhere collected instances of related motifs in *Íslendinga saga*: coordination problems (falling), confusion, physical symptoms of fear, irresoluteness (beating about the bush, cowering, wavering, etc.), hiding, and flight (Taylor 1992, 198, 200–01, 211–12), but I have no example of a speaker embedding such a report in a formal oration as Gizurr does. In the closest parallel I have found, Flosi's warning to his men that whoever delays will be *svá hræddr, at eigi mun vita, hvert hlaupa skal* (*Njáls saga* ch. 130), the motif is presented as hypothetical result, not as history to be learned from.⁹

Gizurr's oration in ch. 155, in which he and his men are at Skálholt, preparing for Órækja's attack, is typical, in respect of both style and discourse situation, of the speech attributed to him:

Allir skutu nú til sjálfs hans órskurðar, hvers hann væri fúsastr.

Gizurr svarar: 'Þrjú lítast mér ráð til. Þat er eitt at fara í nótt ofan í Flóa í mót liði váru ok spara eigi, at þeir rekist eftir oss um hríð, er áðr eru farmóðir, ok vita, ef vér mættim ráða stund ok stað, hvar vér finnumst. Þat er annat ráð at fara ofan um ís hjá Iðu,'—þar var mjó spöng yfir, en þítt var at tveim megin—, 'ok vaka ísinn ok vita, ef vér fáim varit spöngina. Þriðja ráð er þat at biða hér, sem nú höfum vér um búizt, ok senda einhvern góðan mann í móti liði váru, þann er bæði kunni at skunda ok skipa reiðinni sem helzt gegnir ráði.'

It is of particular interest, however, due to its various points of agreement with Sighvatr's speech in ch. 125: hypotaxis, including in some instances the separation of a relative clause from its antecedent (*þeir . . . er áðr eru farmóðir; einhvern góðan mann . . . þann er . . .*), alliterative word pairs (*stund ok stað, skunda ok skipa*), repetition (*ráð, vita*), the listing structure, and, from the point of view of content, the

risere natantes; / turre vocant summa: 'Litus amate, viri' ('In honorem Hludowici,' lines 133–34; cited by Curtius as an example of epic comedy (Exkurs IV.5; 1948, 430)). This motif-complex will be addressed in more detail in a separate essay.

⁹ Þórhallur Vilmundarson observes that Gizurr's *eggjunarræða* may have been the model for those spoken against the Hólmverjar in *Harðar saga* (ÍF XIII, lx); the latter are more fragmentary, though, and contain no exemplum.

search for the ‘good man’ with the qualifications for a particular job. To be sure, parallels can be found in other saga texts as well. Hrafn and Már in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* ch. 6, for example, discuss personal qualifications in similar phrases,¹⁰ as do Eysteinn and Sigurðr Magnússynir in their famous dispute in *Magnússona saga* ch. 21 (in *Heimskringla*).¹¹ In *Njáls saga* ch. 29, Gunnarr and his Norwegian benefactors conduct a structured question-and-answer discussion as to what help Gunnarr will receive, how the ships he is given will be staffed, and so on. Sighvatr’s phrase *sé ek gerla* is used by Egill in an argument with royal messengers in *Egils saga* ch. 70 and by Flosi in a long deliberative speech in *Njáls saga* ch. 117. (Indeed, *Njáls saga* contains a number of long, logically structured speeches of the same general type as those of Sighvatr and Gizurr: see chs 7, 22, 64, 65, 67. Additional examples of structured argument may be found in Taylor 1992, 306–07, and Örnólfur Thorsson 1994, 912–13.) Potential rivals are listed and evaluated in *Valla-Ljóts saga* ch. 2 (with *sé ek þar fjóra menn*) and *Gunnlaugs saga* ch. 2 (in less detail). The conversation between Sturla and Sighvatr in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 128 in connection with Sturla’s attempt to dispossess Kolr inn auðgi contains stylistic reminiscences of the passage in ch. 125, though here it is Sturla who takes the *sé ek* role:

‘Þar er þat fé, er margr mun stórt illt af hljóta, því at illa er fengit.’
 Þá svarar Sturla: ‘Sé ek þat fé, er ek ætla, at eigi muni betra af hljótast.’
 ‘Hvert er þat?’ segir Sighvatr.
 ‘Þat er fé Snorra, bróður þins,’ segir Sturla.

The ‘regal’ family setting and, to a certain extent, the content of Sighvatr’s advice speeches are duplicated in *Óláfs saga helga* ch. 76 (in *Heimskringla*) in the well-known scene in which the king, visiting his mother, questions his small brothers, who are playing outdoors with toy models, about their ambitions for their future estates. As in the scene between Sighvatr and Sturla, the speeches follow a structured progression: the first brother’s desire is to possess a fleet, the second brother as much farmland as ten farms, the third so many cows that they would encircle a lake when they came to drink, and the fourth brother so many

¹⁰ ‘Þat væri mér skapfelldast at vera með þeim mönnum, er ódælir væri ok kynstórir, ok veita þeim eftirgöngu.’ Már mælti: ‘Slíkir menn væri mér vel hentir, sem þú ert.’

¹¹ The closest parallel stylistically is this statement of Sigurðr’s: *Þess þykkir mikill munr, at þat er höfðingligra, at sá, er yfirmaðr skal vera annarra manna, sé mikill í flokki, sterkr ok vápnfærr betr en aðrir menn ok auðsær ok auðkenndr, þá er flestir eru saman.*

household staff members that they would consume the third brother's cows at one meal. At this Óláfr pronounces the fourth brother a future king.¹² The differences between the *Óláfs saga* scene and Sighvatr's speech are obvious: in the former, the king-as-child motif is taken seriously and the ambition of founding a powerful estate is praised, while in the latter the motif is parodied and the ambition mocked.¹³ Still, the similarity is clear and shows that *Íslendinga saga* ch. 125 must be considered in the context of medieval Scandinavian literary conventions and ideas concerning monarchy and power. A further link between the *Óláfs saga* scene and *Íslendinga saga* is suggested by the fact that the former is immediately preceded by a scene in which, on Óláfr's arrival, he and the boys regard each other critically and the verb *yggla* 'scowl' is used; in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 50, when Gizurr's father presents his various children to Sighvatr Sturluson for his critical appraisal, Sighvatr criticises only the boy Gizurr, whose *ygglibrún* displeases him. But none of these parallels is as close in both style and content to *Íslendinga saga* ch. 125 as Gizurr's deliberative speech in ch. 155 is, so it makes sense to look more closely at the relationship between the two passages within *Íslendinga saga* as a whole. Can the similarity be coincidental?

The goal of Sighvatr's mockery is to criticise his son Sturla for wanting to be in some respects too much like a king, and the vehicle of the mockery is a pseudocourtly style, delivered as if Sighvatr were advising a young monarch. As monarchy and courtly life were institutions that for Icelanders were associated primarily with Norway, the charge of acting like a king can in some cases have amounted to the charge of bearing Norwegian sympathies. By the thirteenth century, the rivalry between Icelanders and Norwegians had become considerable indeed.¹⁴ In fact, many years ago, Ker observed that this rivalry is the

¹² A comparable test of three ostensible king's sons by means of fantasy questions—what bird, fish and tree they would like to be—is Gering's *æventyri* no. 79, summarised in Kalinke 1990, 168. The *Óláfs saga* scene and its variants are discussed with reference to Gizurr in Heinrichs 1995, 21–23 (with references), and from a folkloristic point of view in Almqvist 1994.

¹³ In folklore, however, not only the motif of building castles in the air, as in the *Íslendinga saga* scene (see note 4), but also air-castle competitions, as in the *Óláfs saga* scene, are typically associated with fools. The latter is Thompson's motif J2060.1; specimens involving a hypothetical herd of livestock are retold by Thompson (under J2062.1) and Christensen (1939, 35).

¹⁴ See *Ljósvetninga saga* ch. 19 and Björn Sigfússon's note there (with reference to *Voðu-Brands þáttur*, *Víga-Glúms saga* chs 2–3, etc.); further Andersson

basis for a stylistic caricature in the account of the priest Ingimundr Þorgeirsson's shipwreck in *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða* ch. 6:

One may remark, by the way, that there is something more than history in it, a comic or satiric motive, springing from the old humorous difference between Icelanders and Norwegians. The Norwegians were sometimes rude to the Icelanders: they called them 'tallow-sausages,' with other similar names. Here the Icelandic author takes revenge in a genial way, by merely recording the rather helpless and flurried talk of the Norwegian shipmen. (Ker 1906–07, 100)

(The Icelandic Ingimundr, by contrast, remains cool-headed and authoritative.)

In addition to the political threat increasingly posed to Iceland by the centralised Norwegian crown, there is ample evidence in the sagas of a cultural tension between the traditional lifestyle of the Icelanders and the new, continental trends followed at the Norwegian courts and in the Norwegian towns. We may note the implicit criticism directed by the writer at Snorri and his retinue's shields on their return from Norway in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 38: *höfðu meir en tólf skjalda ok alla mjök vandaða ok létu allvænt yfir sér*. In fact, a group of Snorri's countrymen mock and confront him on this occasion and soon afterwards demonstrate their hostility again in the form of parodies of the effusive encomium Snorri had composed on his Norwegian patron Skúli (chs 38–39). Snorri's enemies' objections to the poem, as to the shields, must have been to a large extent political,¹⁵ but they also had aesthetic grounds: one of the parodies refers to Snorri as a poetaster of the worst sort, and the parodists focus on Snorri's line *harðmúlaðr vas Skúli*, which must have struck them as an overwrought and inadvertently comical metaphor. So it is possible that the report of Snorri's poem and its parodies is meant to suggest that his vanity had a stylistic dimension

1991, 77–79, and Kreutzer 1996. Meulengracht Sørensen has analysed the literary image of Norwegian-Icelandic relations in sociological terms (1987; 1993, especially 120–23), and William Sayers (1995) has addressed the sexual dimension of the conflict.

¹⁵This particular group of Sunnlendingar was interested in compensation for the death of their relative, Ormr Jónsson, who had been killed by Norwegians. They suspect that Snorri had been sent from Norway 'to prevent them from prosecuting their case,' and Björn Þorvaldsson even makes this accusation to his face. Meulengracht Sørensen, on the other hand, stresses the cultural aspect of the conflict: 'Björn og hans ledsagere gør nar af Snorri og hans følge, sikkert på grund af deres ridderlige fremtoning, der har forekommet udenlandsk og uislandsk' (1993, 122; cf. 258: Óláfr pái and Kjartan are 'i grunden uislandske helte').

as well.¹⁶ This negative view of Norwegian courtly culture seems to apply also to the flashy but poorly made axe that King Eiríkr blóðøx gives to Skalla-Grímr in *Egils saga* ch. 38; the writer describes in detail the scorn with which Grímr, a smith, treats the gift, and eventually it is simply thrown away into the sea.¹⁷

Political tension is evident also in the attitudes toward monarchy displayed in the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga*. Although courtly culture and the political idea of monarchy itself held a strong attraction for many Icelanders, as Ármann Jakobsson has emphasised (1994), the reception of these ideas was not unanimously enthusiastic. The cowardly, hypocritical king (or earl) is a recurring feature in *Egils saga*, *Jómsvíkinga saga* and other texts (see Ólafur Halldórsson 1969, 20, 52–54), and the accusation of ‘wanting to be king’ seems to have been almost a standard criticism or insult directed at Icelanders either by Norwegians or by their own countrymen.¹⁸ In *Egils saga* ch. 12, Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson is slandered with the charge of plotting to usurp the Norwegian throne and of being so vain that he would have burnt the king, his guest, to death if that had not meant the loss of his own new, ornate hall—a false charge, as Þórólfr is absolutely loyal (to a fault, actually).¹⁹ In *Íslendinga saga* ch. 35, the Oddaveri Páll Sæmundarson is mockingly accused in Bergen of wanting, on the basis of his royal ancestry, to exact oaths of allegiance and mount a claim to the Norwegian throne.²⁰ This is the kind of insult referred to in *Njáls saga* ch. 116,

¹⁶ Snorri seems to boast of his own poetical achievement at the end of *Háttatal*, as Faulkes has noted (1991, xxiii).

¹⁷ Nationalistic *ressentiment* of this type, though from a Danish perspective, has been identified by Andersson (1991, 76–77) in Saxo’s criticism of the twelfth-century King Svend’s love for Saxon fashion, food and customs (Saxo 14.9.1–4, pp. 387–88; cf. also the account of Svend’s visit to Merseburg: 14.8.2, pp. 386–87). One might also point to the passages in *Kirialax saga* 9, *Þiðriks saga* ch. 262 and *Flóres saga* ch. 4 cited by Kalinke (1990, 43–44) as examples of at least ostensible ‘xenophobia.’

¹⁸ One may debate, of course, whether such examples indicate rejection of monarchy as a principle or only dissatisfaction with its realisation. The distinction is immaterial for the present argument, however.

¹⁹ The same slander story appears, *mutatis mutandis*, in *Njáls saga* ch. 109, where the motivation for the alleged disloyalty (among friends) is expressed by the slanderer in terms of a power struggle for *goðorð* (Kersbergen 1927, 74; cf. Bjarni Einarsson 1975, 123–55).

²⁰ According to Ólafur Halldórsson, *Jómsvíkinga saga* may have been conceived as a satire on the genealogical pretensions of the Oddaverjar (1969, 53;

in which Hildigunnr's first ploy in inciting her guest Flosi to vengeance is to flatter him by offering him a specially raised seat of honour. He casts it aside, saying, *Hvárki em ek konungr né jarl, ok þarf ekki at gera há sæti undir mér, ok þarf ekki at spotta mik*. In *Bandamanna saga* ch. 10, the word *konungr* functions as a mocking term of abuse: during a jury selection, one candidate is criticised as arrogant, since at the *þing* he had had a banner carried before him *sem fyrir konungum*, and another is confronted with the rumour that he had been characterised by King Haraldr harðráði as the Icelander most suited to be king, and both are dismissed with the remark, 'you shall not be king over this case.'²¹

The same political and cultural tensions are embodied in Gizurr Þorvaldsson, one of the most controversial figures in Icelandic history. Although the image of Gizurr in *Íslendinga saga*, our principal source of information, is by no means uniformly negative, it is dominated by his unscrupulous rise to virtually absolute power which, once attained, he turned over to Norway (while retaining the office of *jarl*), and for this reason many Icelanders have viewed Gizurr as more of a traitor than a hero. Nevertheless, he has had defenders,²² and scholars have been divided as to how fairly he is treated in *Íslendinga saga* and the other parts of *Sturlunga*. Björn Magnússon Ólsen found in *Íslendinga saga* a mixture of negative and positive images of Gizurr, which he attributed to Sturla Þórðarson's original and to interpolations from a lost **Gizurar saga*, respectively (1897, 310–59; cf. Sigurður Nordal 1942, 347; Úlfar Bragason 1986, 25); Pétur Sigurðsson responded by defending Sturla's impartiality with respect to Gizurr (1933–35, 14–20). Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir (1994) has argued that *Haukdæla þáttur*, in which Gizurr's parents Þóra Guðmundardóttir (yngri) and Þorvaldr

cited in Ármann Jakobsson 1994, 37 n. 30). One might compare the rebuke Snorri Sturluson receives in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 64 after boasting of the power he has gained through strategic marriage ties: in a *vísa*, one of his own men ironically compares him to the legendary Danish king Hrólfr kraki, who was killed in battle against his brother-in-law, and adds, *ójafnaðr gefsk jafnan illa*.

²¹ The latter remark is applied to both candidates in *Möðruvallabók* (*skaltu eigi konungr yfir þessu máli vera . . . Yfir öðru skaltu konungr en þessu máli*); in the *Konungsbók* manuscript it appears only in connection with the second (*eigi skaltu konungr yfir þessu máli*). On Icelandic attitudes toward monarchy see also Hermann Pálsson 1990, 125–30, and Ármann Jakobsson 1994 and 1995; further Þórhallur Vilmundarson's discussion of Sturla Sighvatsson's apparently real desire to be king—or at least to have the trappings of one, such as fortified castles (*ÍF XIII*, lii–lvii).

²² See the references and eloquent argument in Nedrelid 1994.

Gizurarson become engaged, may be regarded as a kind of prelude to *Íslendinga saga* that implicitly attributes conflicting elements of Gizurr's personality to his ancestry. Anne Heinrichs goes further, considering also the scene in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 22 in which Þorvaldr rejects the suggestion that he name his newborn son after Kolbeinn Tumason. Arguing that Þóra yngri must have been named after her great-grandmother, a daughter of King Magnús berfœttr of Norway, and noting that Gizurr is later referred to as *frændi* of King Hákon, whose service he enters (*Íslendinga saga* ch. 121), Heinrichs interprets Þorvaldr's unwillingness to identify his son with Kolbeinn, whose name would have represented 'die isländische Sache,' and his choice of the name Gizurr instead, as an affirmation of 'das norwegische Prinzip' in the family (Heinrichs 1995, 9, 17).

The information we have from *Íslendinga saga* itself about Sturla Þórðarson's relationship with Gizurr indicates a certain ambivalence. Though not himself a major figure in the power struggles of the time, Sturla was usually a member of the faction opposing Gizurr, and in 1242 was tricked and taken hostage by him at a negotiation meeting (ch. 157). For some years, though, perhaps in part as a result of his association with Gizurr as hostage, Sturla seems to have been on excellent terms with him: he marries off his daughters into Gizurr's family, becomes his *lendr maðr*, and privately, as well, they are described as friendly with each other (ch. 195). But in 1261, just before the final loss of independence, Sturla breaks with Gizurr when he fails to make good his promise to grant Sturla Borgarfjörður as a fief (ch. 197). Sturla's judgment of Gizurr seems to have been coloured by this break from then on, and although it is not known when Sturla began to write *Íslendinga saga*, it is likely that even the portions covering earlier years were written or rewritten from the post-break point of view (cf. Ármann Jakobsson 1995, 175). It is clear that Sturla repudiates what he perceives to be Gizurr's opportunism and regards the loss of Icelandic independence as a tragedy, even though he himself, ironically, had been willing to receive Borgarfjörður as a fief from Gizurr's hand.

These circumstances suggest that Sturla and other Icelandic contemporaries (the Sturlungar, at least) could well have associated Gizurr in a negative way with Norwegian politics and culture. Little is told directly in *Íslendinga saga* of Gizurr's stays in Norway (1229–31, 1242–44, 1246–52, 1254–58), but what there is, is punctuated by two unflattering reports: as a young steward in Bergen, the drunken Gizurr one night held an Icelandic relative, Jón Snorrason murti, under the

blows of a servant, from which Jón died (ch. 79); and in ch. 192 it is suggested that Gizurr was able to grow in esteem at court only through the death of another Icelandic courtier, Þórðr kakali, his chief rival for favour with the Norwegian king. It is true that the oracular dream-woman in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 190 is 'well disposed' toward Gizurr and designates not him, but Þorgils skarði as a 'bird that fouls its nest,' i. e. a traitor,²³ but this passage, along with certain others, is thought to be an interpolation by the compiler of *Sturlunga saga*, whose judgment of Gizurr seems to have been more favourable than Sturla's (Úlfar Bragason 1986, 170–78).

Especially in the light of the circumstantial evidence, then, the similarity between the sarcastically 'regal' speech in ch. 125 and the style associated with Gizurr later in *Íslendinga saga* suggests that the writer may have intended a kind of subtle criticism of Gizurr through a style elevated—beyond the demands of naturalism in the presentation of dialogue—into the realm of caricature. If so, the figure of Gizurr in *Íslendinga saga* would be linked with the type of the xenophile who scorns both homeland and native speech, such as the prodigal son Helmbrecht in the Middle High German *Meier Helmbrecht* of Wernher der Gartenære, a work contemporary with *Íslendinga saga*, or several figures in Holberg's plays. The type is represented also in the writings of Baldvin Einarsson, one of the founding fathers of the modern Icelandic republic (Árni Böðvarsson 1964, 198).²⁴

This interpretation of the style of Gizurr's speeches is supported by an event early in Gizurr's career reported in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 129, when Gizurr is temporarily defeated by his rival Sturla Sighvatsson and must promise to go into exile in Norway: he tells Sturla, when asked, that he would prefer to swear the required oath in its Norwegian rather than Icelandic form. (The distinction is evidently one of diction, not dialect.) The preference has been interpreted as a mocking allusion on Gizurr's part to Sturla's ties to the Norwegian crown (Úlfar Bragason

²³ 'Er þér vel til hans [Gizurar]?' segir mærin. 'Harla vel,' segir hon . . . 'Hvernig er þér til Þorgils skarða?' segir mærin. 'Illir þykkir mér allir þeir fuglar, er í sitt hreiðr skíta.'

²⁴ In *Konráðs saga keisarasonar ok Róðberts svikara*, the outwardly courteous, eloquent polyglot Róðbert uses his knowledge of foreign languages to betray his monoglot foster-brother Konráðr (discussion in Kalinke 1983, 859–61; 1990, 157–66; Kastner 1978). To be sure, the moral of the saga is evidently that one must learn foreign languages in order to avoid being taken advantage of, but at the same time the example of Róðbert is a signal that eager assimilation to foreign influence should be treated with suspicion.

1986, 111), but the passage can also be read as the writer Sturla Þórðarson's implicit indictment (in hindsight) of *Gizurr's* Norwegian ties. Sturla Sighvatsson had, indeed, spent time in Norway (1233–35) and received orders to bring Iceland under his control (*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* ch. 180; cf. *Íslendinga saga* ch. 92), but it must be remembered that Snorri Sturluson, Þórðr Sighvatsson kakali, Þorgils Þoðvarsson skarði and Gizurr himself received such orders, too. Snorri defied his, and Sturla's power never became firm enough to allow him to carry such orders out; Þórðr kakali was distrusted and relieved of his authority by the king and his zealous agent Bishop Heinrekr in 1249, and Þorgils skarði was killed in a smaller-scale power struggle in 1258. Gizurr, on the other hand, as we know, defeated and killed Sturla and his father Sighvatr in 1238, and afterwards, acting on direct orders from Norway, assassinated Snorri in 1241, had himself sent to Iceland as royal agent in place of Þórðr in 1252, accepted the title of *jarl* and large parts of Iceland as fief from the Norwegian crown, set up his own court with *handgengnir menn* and arranged eventually for Iceland to surrender its sovereignty. To be sure, the account in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* indicates that Gizurr was acting under pressure from the king and Bishop Heinrekr, who suspected Gizurr of stalling on his promise to win Iceland for the crown (chs 276 and 300). But this account is otherwise no more positive than the others, since it emphasises that Gizurr won political support by obscuring the real nature of his mission (chs 297, 311).

Moreover, *Íslendinga saga* makes the contrast in character between Sturla Sighvatsson and Gizurr clear: both were ambitious, but Sturla appears impetuous and naive, Gizurr cool and calculating. It is difficult to imagine the ingenuous Sturla as the agent of a foreign king, but Gizurr's adroitness in political sleight of hand, reported in *Íslendinga saga* again and again,²⁵ together with his mannered, cosmopolitan speaking style, which is explicitly praised several times,²⁶ make him the sort of international figure who would be at home in any medieval European chronicle. If any Icelander in *Íslendinga saga* is associated with Norway, it is Gizurr. Even if it is true that Gizurr is (intended by the writer to be) making a veiled criticism of Sturla Sighvatsson's links

²⁵ *Íslendinga saga* chs 129, 151, 154, 157, 176–77, 178, 197, 199, 200. Cf. Þórhallur Vilmundarson, *ÍF XIII*, lxii–lxiii; Taylor 1992, 222–25, 242–43, 329.

²⁶ *Íslendinga saga* chs 121, 137, 170, *Þórðar saga kakala* ch. 45; cf. also *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* ch. 311 (= *Íslendinga saga* ch. 198 in Króksfjarðar-bók, see *Sturlunga saga* 1946, II 281): *bað þá til góðum orðum . . .*

to Norway by offering to swear a Norwegian oath to him, the irony of the criticism cannot have been lost on the writer, who must have seen the passage, on one level at least, as an indictment of Gizurr's own ties to that country.

For the sake of argument, let us ask whether Gizurr's stylistic profile, like that of a king in a king's saga, might not simply be a function of his social status or *kurteisi*. In other words, how can we be sure that a negative stylistic colouring was applied to Gizurr's speeches? Perhaps the colouring was positive, an expression of respect for his status, or perhaps there was no deliberate colouring involved one way or the other. Perhaps the style is merely a function of the speech situations allotted to him in the text—situations which call for a certain degree of formality and authority that takes priority over the narrator's desire for individual characterisation. After all, a character's speaking style can rise to the discourse situation, as we know from the example of famous last words (such as Árne beiskr's in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 173, with *sé ek*, litotes and triple clause subordination with a relative clause separated from its antecedent). The style of Gizurr's speeches, however, together with the repertoire of discourse situations reproduced, is so uniform that it cannot be the result of random, objective reporting, nor can the correspondence between Gizurr's style and the parodic speech in *Íslendinga saga* ch. 125 have escaped the saga-writer's notice. Moreover, it is impossible to overlook the evidence of resentment towards Gizurr on the part of Sturla Þórðarson and others.

My thesis is based on the premise that the writer was able to stylise the speech of a certain character in a relatively uniform way. Obviously, this does not preclude the possibility that the actual speech of the real Gizurr Þorvaldsson distinguished itself in more or less this way from that of other Icelanders of his time. Several considerations make this likely, in fact. For one, the writer Sturla was a contemporary and an erstwhile associate of Gizurr's and thus able to draw from life. Also, Gizurr was by all accounts a man of culture and achievement with a strong sense of his own importance, and it is only natural that he would have chosen his speaking style carefully. He was probably educated enough and familiar enough with the European tradition of political and military leadership to have delivered formal, rhetorical speeches of the type transmitted in *Íslendinga saga*.²⁷ Indeed, he prose-

²⁷ On the question whether military leaders actually gave or could have given the speeches attributed to them in classical historiography, see Norden 1958, 87 n. 1; the answer seems to be yes.

cuted his first legal case at the age of twelve (*Íslendinga saga* ch. 39).

As for Sighvatr, perhaps he really did at one point give his son Sturla the sarcastic advice in pseudocourtly style as reported for the year 1237. If so, whom or what he was parodying? Where did he get his idea of this style? Could the source have been *Konungs skuggsjá* or *riddarasögur*, personal contact with foreign courts or people who had spent time at them? Was Sighvatr parodying the style of a particular person he knew? To sum up: Sturla had returned from the Norwegian court two years earlier, and his reckless ambition clearly incurred his father's disfavour, but there is no indication that Sturla's speech habits can have been the stylistic source of Sighvatr's parody. Gizurr's speeches, on the other hand, provide the closest parallel to it in *Íslendinga saga*. By 1237, the twenty-eight-year-old Gizurr already had sixteen years of political experience (minus two years on the Continent); the Sturlungar would have known him well enough to be able to parody him. As we have seen, Sighvatr's antipathy toward Gizurr is signalled already in the latter's childhood.

In any event, the actual speech of real medieval people is beyond reconstruction. We can reconstruct, to a certain extent, typical vocabulary, phraseology, syntactical and stylistic patterns of the spoken languages, but we can only rarely be certain that a given speech transmitted in a text was actually spoken by the person it is attributed to, or by anyone else for that matter. The fact that any writing, even copying or compiling, necessarily involves some degree of editing and stylisation in the broad sense (at least the choice of what to copy and what to omit) means, of course, that we must treat a text primarily as an artifact, not as fossilised speech. In the case of the present investigation, this means that when we notice a unique similarity between Sighvatr's mockery in ch. 125 and Gizurr's address in ch. 155, we are justified in looking for a connection within the framework of the text as a whole. Regardless of whether Sighvatr the character or Sighvatr the real person intended to parody Gizurr specifically, it is evident, when we take stock of the style attributed to the different characters in the text, that the speech in ch. 125 mimics a stylistic type that the writer consciously associated with him.

*Appendix: Texts containing speech by Gizurr Þorvaldsson
(or indicating his participation in speech situations)*

Chapters containing oratio recta: *Íslendinga saga* chs 129, 132, 137, 138, 155, 156, 170, 174, 175, 176, 195, 199, 200; *Þorgils saga skarða* ch. 1; *Árna saga biskups* ch. 6.

Chapters containing only oratio obliqua: *Íslendinga saga* chs 149, 151, 152, 154, 157, 166, 172, 177, 178; ‘Samsteypukafli’ (*Sturlunga saga* 1946, II 280–81); *Þórðar saga kakala* chs 36, 45; *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* chs 257, 297, 300, 311.

Chapters mentioning only that a conversation took place, or noting that Gizurr expressed a favourable or unfavourable disposition, without details: *Íslendinga saga* chs 39, 82, 99, 127, 140, 148, 164, 167, 168, 179, 194; *Þórðar saga kakala* chs 34, 44, 47; *Þorgils saga skarða* chs 7, 33, 79.

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THE GERMANIC THUNDERWEAPON

By LOTTE MOTZ

THE NORTH-GERMANIC PEOPLE looked to Þórr more than to any other divinity to keep them safe from danger and destruction. Striding through the landscape, fording rivers and traversing forests, he was always watchful for any threat to gods and men. And the enemies of cosmic order were well acquainted with his doughty weapon, for many a giant's skull was smashed by his hammer, and many a giantess lay dead after an encounter with the deity. The weapon carried by the god must therefore be considered the most vital of all instruments in the battle for survival.

The weapon is invariably designated by the noun *hamarr*, English 'hammer', in the Old Norse texts, and consequently we visualise it in the form of this tool. A close look at the texts reveals, however, some ambiguity in the nature of the implement. Sometimes it is hurled like a missile and sometimes it is brandished like a battleaxe. We may also wonder why a being who is not a craftsman is so consistently pictured with a craftsman's tool. Let us now consider the texts for a clearer image of the instrument.

Þórr's weapon in the Old Icelandic texts

Þórr's weapon was forged for him in the smithy of some dwarfs to serve as a missile and as a weapon of close attack (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 35). It would never fail, no matter how hard the blow, and it would return to the owner of its own accord when it was cast. Þórr indeed threw the hammer in his duel with the giant Hrungnir, and he broke the giant's head into small bits: *hann . . . reiddi hamarinn ok kastaði um langa leið at Hrungni* (he . . . swung his hammer and threw it from a great distance at Hrungnir; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17). He flung his weapon also at the Midgard snake, as he was fishing in the ocean, and it is said that the monster's head was struck from the body: *Þórr kastaði hamrinum eptir honum, ok segja menn at hann lysti af honum hofuðit vid grunninum* (Þórr threw his hammer after it, and they say that he struck off its head by the sea-bed; *Gylfaginning* ch. 48). In the Eddic poem which relates the same event, the head was merely battered by the tool before the fishing line was cut (*Hymisqviða* st. 23; *Edda* 1983, 92):

Hamri kniði háfiáll scarar,
ofliótt, ofan úlfs hnitbróður.

With his hammer he struck down upon the most ugly head (hair's high mountain) of the wolf's inseparable (or battle-) brother.

A skaldic poem, Úlfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa*, also tells the story; here the head, hewn from the body, was sent into the sea:

Víðgymnir laust Vimrar
vaðs af fránum naðri
hlusta grunn við hrönnum.

Víðgymnir of Vimur's ford struck the head (ear-bed) from the shining snake by the waves (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4).

And with his hammer Þórr smote and shattered the skull of the giant mason: *ok laust þat hit fyrsta högg er haussinn brotnaði í smán mola* (and struck the first blow so that his skull was shattered into fragments; *Gylfaginning* ch. 42).

In his journey to Útgarda-Loki Þórr struck a sleeping giant with such force that the edge of the tool, the *hamarsmuðr*, sank deeply into the giant's skull: *hann . . . reiðir hamarinn títt ok hart ok lýstr ofan . . . hann kennir, at hamars muðrinn sökkr djúpt í höfuðit* (he swings the hammer quickly and hard and strikes down . . . he feels that the edge of the hammer sinks deep into the head; *Gylfaginning* ch. 45). Three blows were dealt by Þórr, who held the handle with both hands, and he created three large valleys through his deed (*Gylfaginning* chs 45, 47). In a verbal battle with the crafty Loki Þórr threatened to sever Loki's head from the neck with his hammer: *herða klett drep ec þér hálsi af* (I shall strike the head (rock of shoulders) off your neck; *Locasenna* st. 57, *Edda* 1983, 108). A skaldic poet (Bragi gamli) calls Þórr *Þrívalda . . . sundrkljúfr níu höfða* (cleaver apart of Þrívaldi's nine heads; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 4). If we consider the verbs describing the action of the *hamarr* we find that *kljúfa* has an unequivocal sense of 'to cleave'; we also find *drepa af*, *knýja ofan*, *ljósta af*, *ljósta ofan*; the words *af* and *ofan* add to the basic sense of 'strike' a sense of removal, of putting into another place; *drepa höfuð af* is the term for 'beheading' in *Gulapingslög* no. 259 (*NGL* I 84–85; cf. no. 241, *NGL* I 80). We thus find the sense of 'severing', an action accomplished by an axe. The phrase *högg hamars* is also found (*Þrymsqviða* st. 32; *Edda* 1983, 115); the noun *högg* often denotes an act of hewing; axes and swords are denoted as *höggvápn* by Snorri (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 49).

The instances in which a head is severed from the shoulders, or severing is threatened (*Húsdrápa*, *Locasenna* st. 57, *Gylfaginning* ch. 48),

indicate the performance of an axe. The ‘cleaving’ of the heads of Þrivaldi, in its turn, points to the employment of an axe. The noun *muðr* designates in Old Icelandic the steel edge of an axe (*RGA* 1973– I, 536); it is the *muðr* of Þórr’s weapon which penetrates deeply into a giant’s skull (*Gylfaginning* ch. 45). This *muðr* creates the indentations of three valleys; again the employment of an axe is suggested by this action.¹ The shattering of the head of the giant mason (*Gylfaginning* ch. 42), conversely, suggests the action of a hammer. Þórr’s tool does not produce the sounds which are linked with iron hammers.

The ambiguous use of Þórr’s instrument, as hammer, missile or axe, has not been given much attention in Germanic scholarship. Sometimes the weapons are equated. The archaeologist Peter Paulsen includes, without explanation, a chapter on ‘Þórr’s hammer’ in his book on axes (Paulsen 1956, 205–21). Þórr’s hammer is related to or equated with cultic axes of prehistoric times, such as those in rock drawings from the Bronze Age.² Jan de Vries declares that axes and hammers represent the same instrument (de Vries 1956–57, II 125).

Others, however, have taken account of the discrepancy. In the earlier edition of his book, de Vries (1935–37, II 213) assumes that Þórr’s hammer had originated in an axe of stone. Hilda Ellis Davidson suggests that the hammer was substituted for an earlier axe when men became impressed by the fires of the blacksmith’s forge (Gelling and Davidson 1969, 145–46). Oscar Montelius believes that a hammer replaced the earlier tool when the original meaning of the word *hamarr* had been forgotten (Montelius 1910, 69; cf. Simpson 1979).

Through my own examination I have reached the conclusion that Þórr’s weapon was originally a stone or a tool of stone and that it was later visualised in many forms: as a wedge, chisel, bolt, or spear, as a stone or club, as a hammer or an axe. The image of an axe was prominent because of its high social and religious significance. Let us now consider the various aspects of Þórr’s implement.

¹ The valleys are ‘four-sided’; yet the edge of the tool, the *hamars muðr* (i. e. *peen*), could not have created a square indentation. Since we are told that the instrument sank in ‘up to the handle’ we may assume that it was the square back of the tool which left the imprint.

² Marold 1974, 209–11, seems to equate the axes on rock drawings with hammers. She declares, 218–19: ‘Axt und Hammer sind nichts Neues in Skandinavien, seit der Steinzeit finden wir dort Kultäxte und Amulettäxte . . . Dennoch erlebt der Hammer, resp. die Axt im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert eine Art Renaissance.’

The significance of hammers

In our time the instrument denoted as a hammer consists of a shaft of wood and a head of iron. The head ends in one or two flat surfaces, set parallel to the direction of the shaft. The iron part may also end in one sharpened edge set at right angles to this direction. The tool is employed for crushing or for driving.

Hammers are not easily discovered in the finds of prehistoric times. It appears that in archaic times the act of hammering was performed with a stone, a club, or the blunt end of an axe. The specialised tool, designed for beating or driving, belongs to the iron worker's craft. Iron hammers did not appear in the Germanic area until the beginning of the Christian era (*RGA* 1911–19, II 372–73 under *Hammer*). The hammer of the Germanic blacksmith was made in various forms. A square head might have its shaft-hole placed in the centre or close to the butt. The head might end in a rounded surface and also possess a sharpened edge, set at right angles to the direction of the shaft (fig. 1, p. 349 below).

Frequently the tools have been discovered in the graves of artisans (Müller-Wille 1977, 149–51). Sometimes an artisan's utensils were also found in combination with grave gifts of a different sort. A burial place in Vestly, Rogaland (sixth century) contains a sword, arrowheads, knives, jewels, and a hammer as well as other smith's tools (Müller-Wille 1977, 166–67). We may deduce that some men, engaged in various pursuits, might also practice the blacksmith's craft. The richest find of ironworkers' utensils was discovered in Mästermyr on Gotland in a wooden box which might have been lost by accident (Müller-Wille 1977, 190–92).

In the Eddas, hammers are presented (except for Þórr's hammer) in relation to the smithy and the blacksmith's work. In the dawn of time the gods created hammer and tongs and anvil, and thereafter all other tools (*Gylfaginning* ch. 14). The master smith Vǫlundr crafted with his hammer precious objects for his royal captor (*Vǫlundarqviða* st. 20; *Edda* 1983, 120). His tale of insult and revenge found pictorial expression: the craftsman and his tools, anvil, tongs and hammers are shown on the well-known Franks Casket (about AD 700); the picture stone of Ardre VIII of Gotland (ninth century) displays the smith's tongs and hammers and the victims of his vengeance (Müller-Wille 1977, 132, fig. 1).

Reginn, who forged a precious sword for his fosterling Sigurðr, is another famous smith of Germanic literature. The adventures of Sigurðr were frequently depicted in the Middle Ages, engraved on memorial stones, stone crosses, baptismal fonts, or even the portal of a church

(Müller-Wille 1977, 130–31, 134). In one of the scenes the smith Reginn, slain by Sigurðr for his treachery, lies amidst his tools, his hammers, tongs, anvil and bellows (rock drawing in Södermanland in Sweden). In another the living craftsman creates the weapon with his utensils: hammer, tongs and anvil (church portal in Hylestad, Setesdal; Müller-Wille 1977, 133, fig. 2). The images of tongs and hammers are also carved on the burial stones of human artisans (in Denmark).³

The assembled evidence shows clearly that the hammer was one of the most important of the blacksmith's implements, present in pictorial and textual references to his calling, and in the assemblages of his tools, laid beside the craftsman in his burial place, symbolising his life's work on his stone.

No evidence, however, indicates that the employment or the symbolism of the hammer transcended the narrow boundary of the blacksmith's craft. Neither archaeology nor texts point to the use of hammers in warfare or to any status in the ritual of religious or public life. Serving exclusively as craftsmen's tools, they are not listed by Snorri Sturluson among the arms of combat, such as axes, lances, swords, or arrows (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* 1848–87, I 563–71). They are not listed by archaeologists among the ordinary tools of a farmer's household but only, with other instruments, among the implements of skilled artisans. Hammers were not crafted for a symbolic purpose, nor employed in ceremonial, nor enriched with decorations or shaped into elaborate forms. Though in the course of the centuries beliefs and superstitions might become attached to the blacksmith and his hammer, the tool was in Germanic times symbolic only of the iron worker's trade. (Certain amulets will be discussed later.)

Þórr and his implement

Not a single act of craftsmanship is ascribed to Þórr. He is not a craftsman but a fighter. An artisan's implement is not a fitting attribute for a person whose life's work is battle. Þórr's instrument is never shown with other craftsman's tools, and it does not produce the sound of a hammer. Þórr, as an armed weather god, has counterparts in other Indo-European mythologies, e. g., the Roman Jupiter, Indian Indra, Greek Zeus, Slavic Perun, Celtic Taranis, Latvian Pērkons. We cannot doubt that the figure of Þórr reaches back into Indo-European times. In the age of Indo-European unity, which preceded the Iron Age, this god

³ Müller-Wille 1977, 135–37; the images belong to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

could not have held an iron worker's hammer. Indeed, the gods are pictured with various arms: bolts, axes, clubs, or arrows. If Þórr later wields an iron hammer it must have supplanted the earlier thunder-weapon, as has been suggested by some scholars.

There is no evidence, however, to show that hammers supplanted earlier aggressive arms. Hammers have not been recovered from hoards of Viking treasure and thus could not have held much practical or symbolic significance.⁴ The most exalted place in weaponry was in medieval times accorded to the sword. One hundred and thirty-three sword names are listed in the *pulur* (name lists in *Snorra Edda*) and not a single hammer name. Mysterious powers were attributed to some swords, as to that of Freyr which fights by itself when wielded by a doughty warrior (*For Scírnis* st. 8–9; *Edda* 1983, 71). Swords were forged for young warriors by master craftsmen, such as the sword Gramr for Sigurðr or the sword Nálhringr for Þiðrekr. If an older weapon of high religious status, a guarantor of life and its continuation, were to be replaced by a weapon of the Iron Age it would naturally have been supplanted by a sword.

Þórr's weapon is often a shafted instrument, whether a hammer or an axe. Let us see whether the older tool, the axe, was ever superseded by a hammer. In contrast to hammers, axes appear frequently in archaeological finds in the Germanic area, onwards from the Neolithic Age.⁵ Crafted in flint and later in bronze and iron, they retained importance and significance and became the favourite weapon of the Viking raiders.⁶ From the earliest times onwards axes were imbued with religious value; cultic axes are seen among the rock drawings of the Bronze Age and were graven on memorial stones.⁷

⁴ In his listing of Viking artifacts Graham-Campbell (1980) lists about 45 hammers among 540 items. And these hammers are not part of household equipment, but part of specialised craftsmen's possessions; Graham-Campbell 1980, 279, pl. 415 b, f; and 131, no. 449.

⁵ The neolithic graves of Gotland contain as the most important grave goods axes, harpoons, and arrowheads (Stenberger 1977, 90). In votive deposits, especially in the Neolithic Age, one may encounter flint and stone axes, flint chisels and blades, clay vessels as well as jewellery (Stenberger 1977, 103).

⁶ In the Bronze Age the blade received new and graceful forms, and often bore elaborate decorations (*RGA* 1973–, I 541–44). The axe of the Norsemen, the *hache noresche*, was known in terror throughout Europe (Paulsen 1956, 16).

⁷ Axes of clay, covered with a thin sheet of bronze, were discovered in Brøndsted Skov in Denmark and in Skogstorp in Sweden (*RGA* 1973–, I 563);

Miniature axes have been found that were intended to be worn as amulets or for adornment in a tradition which extended in certain areas from the Stone Age to the time of the Viking incursions (Paulsen 1956, 190–221; de Vries 1956–57, I 116).⁸ Throughout the northern and north-western parts of Europe we come upon especially precious and richly decorated blades. These must have served as a sign of rank for warriors of high station.⁹ To substantiate this assumption we may point to an illustration by Matthew Paris in a manuscript of the second quarter of the thirteenth century depicting the battle of Stamford Bridge; here King Harald harðráði alone holds an axe while his followers wield various other weapons.¹⁰

From the thirteenth century onwards a crowned lion, clasping an axe, is depicted on the royal seal of Norway (Paulsen 1956, 262). Thus we do not find that the hammer has replaced the axe in warfare or in heraldry. When Christianity and Christian imagery came to the North of Europe the cross was shown on certain axes, as on the axe of Sibirsk (Paulsen 1956, 138), indicating their unbroken sanctity. Christian imagery did not find expression on workmen's hammers, and in St Olaf's axe the tool retained its religious significance into Christian times.

Axes, furthermore, were not supplanted by hammers in folk traditions. Axes are cast on the eve of the Thursday (Þórr's day) before Easter onto the sprouting fields to promote the growth of fruit (de Vries 1956–57, II 122). Axes still function in the marriage customs of modern times; they may be placed beneath the bridal bed or on the threshold which the bride must cross.¹¹ Axes are employed against the ravages of storm and wind. In Slesvig-Holstein an axe is thrust into a door-post in the course of a thunderstorm. It may also be laid on the table to keep lightning from the dwelling (Schwantes 1939, I 273). Axes and not

there is a figure holding an axe in its hand from a burial-find in Grevensvænge in Zealand; two drawings made before 1780 show that the figure was one of a pair when found (see *RGA* 1973–, I 564).

⁸ Miniature axe blades of gold and silver, worn as amulets in the early Christian era, have also been discovered in German graves (*RGA* 1973–, I 565).

⁹ Paulsen 1956, 101; among the images are birds, snakes, spirals, plants, crosses, triangles, beasts of fantasy and of reality.

¹⁰ Reproduced in Paulsen 1956, 258.

¹¹ Bächtold-Stäubli 1927–42, I 743–48 under *Axt*. It must be noted, however, that in one small area near Skåne, it is a hammer which is laid beneath the bed of the bride (see Elgquist 1934).

hammers are thrown by the sprites of German folklore to cause pain in back or legs (Bächtold-Stäubli 1927–42, I 743–48 under *Axt*). And the shafted instrument in the god's hand would in all likelihood be an axe, paralleling the axe of the Viking raider.

We may conclude that hammers did not replace earlier implements in folk belief, heraldry, ceremonial, or human warfare. This finding is not surprising, for the blacksmith did not rise above other classes in the Germanic Middle Ages, and the highest office of the land was held by a warrior king. The two important smiths of Germanic literature, Reginn and Vǫlundr, are shown in humiliation and defeat. It is true that Þórr appears at times in humble form with the features of a peasant lad, but he was never redrawn as a blacksmith.

It might be argued that in his form as a folktale hero the god might do battle with an ordinary household tool. But in Viking times hammers were not common household equipment. They are not listed in the inventories of Viking artifacts among household tools, such as knives, scythes, sickles or axes, but only among the special equipment of skilled artisans. The very rarity of hammer finds also shows that they were not common in a household (cf. note 4 above). Moreover, the Norse farmers accomplished their bloody deeds with spears, axes, pikes or swords, and even a servant might wield a spear (*Ynglinga saga* ch. 48, *ÍF* XXVI 80), whereas hammers are never named. Even the craftsmen of the texts, Reginn, Vǫlundr, and the skilful dwarfs, did not employ their craftsmen's tools in battle, for these creatures fight their enemies by magic means (Motz 1983, 90–115). I venture to assert that no episode of the Icelandic texts shows the killing of a man with a craftsman's hammer. Þórr's deeds thus would have no model in the literature, myth, folklore or social reality of Norse tradition.

It is true that in one humorous poem Þórr is cast in the role of a blacksmith (Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, 11th century; *ÍF* IX 267–68). In this poem the noun *hamarr* does not appear; the man is named in mockery the Sigurðr of the sledgehammer (*Sigurðr sleggju*), the king of the tongs (*konungr tangar*) and the Þórr of the bellows (*Þórr smiðbelgja*). The poem testifies, incidentally, to the low esteem accorded to the craftsman by the warrior. The poem does not point to any special relationship between the god and the craftsman's hammer.

If the hammer did not replace other instruments in heraldry, ceremonial, human warfare, and especially in folk belief, why should it replace the Stone Age instrument in the hand of Þórr? Yet the noun *hamarr* consistently designates the weapon in the texts. We may wonder if the

noun has a less specific meaning, denoting simply the mighty object in Þórr's hand. Let us now consider how the instrument was visualised in various sources.

The visualisation of Þórr's weapon

We find Þórr's weapon visualised as various objects and a hammer is not prominent. On a picture stone from Altuna, Uppland (eleventh century) the god holds a shafted instrument which might indeed be a hammer; it might also be a double axe, such as those of the rock drawings of the Bronze Age (fig. 2, p. 349 below). On the Gosforth Stone (tenth or eleventh century) the shafted object holds a greater resemblance to an axe than to a hammer. On a stone of Ardre (ninth century) a spear is wielded against a water monster.¹² On Thorvaldr's Cross Slab (Isle of Man, tenth century) a male figure carries fish, dangling from a cross, and he holds a square object, a stone or a book, ready to be hurled, in his right hand (Gschwantler 1968, 166).

In describing Þórr's statue in the temple of Uppsala, Adam of Bremen (IV 26; 1961, 470) mentions a sceptre as Þórr's attribute, and this information is repeated by Olaus Magnus (1555, 100), where Þórr is depicted with a sceptre in a woodcut. It is true that Saxo Grammaticus mentions 'Jove's hammers', *malleos quos Ioviales vocabant*, in his *Gesta Danorum* (1931–57, I 350); these are, however, not the weapons of the god, but cultic instruments which might imitate the sound of thunder. Þórr's weapon, on the other hand, is a club, *clava*, in his account (Saxo Grammaticus 1979–80, I 72; 1931–57, I 66). Saxo thus clearly distinguishes between the hammer, a cultic tool, and the *clava*, the mighty weapon. And the giant Geruthus is slain by a sword, *chalybs* (Saxo Grammaticus 1931–57, I 242). In one of the Anglo-Saxon dialogues *Solomon and Saturn*, thunder swings a fiery axe (Menner 1941, 169).

According to the folklore of Värend in Småland thunder is a stone, thrown by Þórr or Gofar, still often found in places which were struck by thunder; such a stone is designated as *thorenvigg*, 'Þórr's wedge' (Hyltén-Cavallius 1863–68, II 222). A modern farmer of this area told that he had seen the god riding in his carriage; he has also been seen carrying a bolt of stone in his hand (Montelius 1910, 77). The Swedish names *thornkile*, 'Þórr's wedge', *thorensten*, 'Þórr's stone', the Norwegian *torelod*, 'Þórr's ball', indicate that the instrument was viewed as a stone, a ball or a wedge. The Greek noun *keranos*, 'thunderbolt', was

¹² The stones are reproduced in Meulengracht Sørensen 1986.

routinely translated as *thorvigge* in Danish medieval texts (Blinkenberg 1911a, 69).

A kenning in a skaldic poem, descriptive of Þórr's weapon, evokes the image of a battle-axe (Þjóðólfr hvinverski, *Haustlǫng* st. 17; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17). Here Þórr is named the 'friend of the troll of the snout', *rúni trolls trjónu; trjóna* 'snout' is a variant of *muðr* 'mouth' which also designates the cutting edge of an axe; battleaxes are traditionally referred to as troll-women. Þórr is thus the 'friend of the edged battleaxe'.

We thus find the following objects in Þórr's hand: a bolt, a stone, an axe, possibly a hammer, a wedge, a spear, a ball, a sceptre or a club, while in the Icelandic texts one noun only is employed.¹³ We may also observe that the noun *sleggja* 'sledge-hammer' is never used for Þórr's implement. It has been claimed that the hammer was engraved on memorial stones of medieval times. What was engraved, however, is the image of certain amulets which may bear a resemblance to a hammer in some of their stylisations. These will now be discussed.

The amulets

Small artifacts that could be fastened to a chain or a ring, made of iron, but also of more precious metals, plain or elaborately decorated, have been discovered in areas of Scandinavia.¹⁴ They are ascribed to the tenth century AD. Since a vertical part, resembling a shaft, extends from a horizontal part, resembling a hammer's head, the relics are interpreted as replicas of the hammer swung by Þórr, and the name 'Þórr's hammer' has been applied. They are said to indicate a rise of fervour of pagan faith in the face of triumphant Christianity.

¹³ A statuette of bronze from Eyrarland in Iceland is traditionally believed to represent the god Þórr with his hammer. An unprejudiced look at the object in the man's clasp shows that this has small resemblance to a hammer. Its shaft is split in the middle, terminates in three knobs, rests on the man's knees, and issues from beneath his mouth. It is held in a way in which no hammer is ever held. When the picture of the statuette was shown by me to persons unacquainted with Norse scholarship, the object was never recognised as a hammer. If it was identified at all it was identified as a musical instrument (cf. Motz 1992). In the present article the object on the man's knees is not counted among the forms in which Þórr's weapon was conceived.

¹⁴ Paulsen 1956, 205–15; while the artifacts of precious metal were worn singly, those of iron, which show no decoration, appear in numbers on rings. These are found mainly in Swedish areas and are from the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century.

The interpretation of these objects as ‘hammers’ may be questioned. They are flat, sometimes elaborately decorated and fashioned of precious metals, of minute size, and they were worn as jewels or as amulets. The blacksmith’s hammer is invariably bulky and consists of wood and iron. In most examples of the amulets there is no separation between ‘shaft’ and ‘head’; sometimes the decoration proceeds unbroken from the horizontal to the vertical section. A hammer’s head is always bulkier than the shaft; in the ornaments the thinnest part is at the bottom of the vertical section, and never at the top. The artifacts thus would represent a very stylised version of the craftsman’s tool. Hammers were, however, never manufactured in stylised form; they were not produced in miniature or in precious metal; they were never decorated and were never worn as amulets. Hammers, it was noted earlier, are not listed among the artifacts of Viking treasure.

Some of the amulets resemble the blade of an axe. We may recall that axe blades are flat and may be fashioned in precious metal; they are seen in very stylised form and are often adorned with elaborate decorations (sometimes the decoration of an amulet is the same as that incised on certain axes; Paulsen 1956, 208). The thickening of the horizontal section recalls the thickening of an axe-blade towards the shaft. The pointed excrescence at the end recalls the curve of the edge. Axe blades were produced in miniature through the ages. The custom was indeed very popular at the time of the Viking raids (*RGA* 1973–, I 566). Miniature blades of silver, named St Olaf’s Axe, are sold to the present day (figs. 3, 4, 5, pp. 349–50 below).

On the basis of the evidence I suggest that the so-called ‘Þórr’s hammer’ represents yet another form of the axe-blade pendants of archaic tradition. It is true that some amulets resemble hammers and some even bear resemblance to the Christian cross. We know that the Christian cross exerted great influence on the pagan symbol; and some images show its transformation into a cross (Paulsen 1956, 217). Paulsen also points out (1956, 205) that stylistically the forms of miniature axes, miniature hammers and miniature crosses flow into one another.¹⁵ I suggest that the object known as ‘Þórr’s hammer’ represents a middle

¹⁵ Paulsen further states that some ‘hammers’ resemble amber crosses worn as amulets. Amulets in the form of crosses are reproduced in Paulsen 1956, 200, figs e, f. Among the charms which dangle from an archaic Greek necklace is one identical in shape to one of the Germanic ‘hammer’ amulets. It surely did not reproduce Þórr’s hammer (Cook 1914–40, II, fig. 633 on p. 700).

stage between the axe blade and the cross. Paulsen observes with regard to axes (1956, 233): 'In the Viking Age we recognise the axe . . . as the symbol of battle, of power, of dignity, of legality, ownership, and salvation' (my translation).

I suggest that it was the axe blade and not the hammer which symbolised loyalty to the pagan faith. The hammer, therefore, did not replace the ancient image of the axe blade in the jewellery.

It has been claimed that the custom of wearing amulets was stimulated by the Christian custom of wearing the Christian cross. The wearing of amulets, was, however, an established tradition among the Germanic peoples. Hundreds of golden bracteates, showing scenes of cultic significance, for instance, which testify to the popularity of the practice, have been discovered and ascribed to the Migratory period.¹⁶

The magic sign

A sign, actually named *Þórshamarr*, does, in fact, exist in Norse tradition; it resembles a swastika. Such signs are found on archaic artifacts, on boundary markers, on runic stones, and on the bracteates of the Middle Ages. The sign occurs in many regions of the world, and does not seem to have originated in the North of Europe. We may assume that here an important sign became attached to an important god (de Vries 1956–57, II 127). It has no relation to a hammer and here we find an example of an object, designated by the noun *hamarr*, which has no link with the craftsman's tool.

The noun hamarr

If we assume that Þórr's weapon was visualised in many forms we may wonder why one noun was so consistently and unvaryingly applied. We

¹⁶ Hilda Ellis Davidson (1965, 13) asserts that the image of Þórr's hammer appears on runic stones which also show an inscription to the god. This claim cannot be substantiated: what appears is the image of the amulet, as can clearly be noted in some instances by the presence of the loop. And these stones do not coincide with the stones bearing inscriptions to Þórr. The latter are seen on the stones of Glavendrup in Fyn, Virring in North Jutland, Sønderkirkeby on Falster, all in Denmark, and Velande Skattegården in Västergötland, Sweden (Marold 1974, 195–96). The 'hammer' sign appears on stones in Læborg, Spentrup, Hanninge in Jutland, and Schonen, Åby in Västernorrland, Stenkvista Kirka in Södermanland, Karlevi in Öland, Gårdstanga in Skåne; enumerated in Paulsen 1956, 216, and in Marold, 1974, 196. On such a stone the amulet may turn into a cross (Paulsen 1956, 217).

may also search for the underlying reason. My investigation of the noun *hamarr* has led me to the following conclusion: the noun has another meaning, 'stone'; Þórr's weapon was originally a stone or a tool of stone; the old name was kept when his emblem was conceived in various ways.

The Old Icelandic *hamarr* is possibly traceable to an Indo-European root **(a)kam-* with the meaning 'pointed', 'sharp', 'stone'. We thus find Sanskrit *ásman-* 'stone, rock', Lithuanian *akmuō* 'stone', Greek *ákmōn* 'anvil', Old Slavonic *kamy* 'stone weapon', Avestan *asman-* 'stone, heaven', Old High German *hamar* 'hammer', 'hammer used as a weapon', Old Icelandic *hamarr* 'crag, rock, cliff' (de Vries 1962, 207; Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon 1989, 303).

The meanings indicate that the craftsman's tool, the 'hammer', was originally a stone. This indication is verified by archaeology. Flattened stones without handles have been excavated in Denmark near places where iron smelting took place as late as the last centuries before the Christian era, together with stone anvils to work the iron which was gained from swamps (fig. 6 on p. 350 below; Brøndsted 1957–60, III 113). Germanic speech thus retained the name of the simpler tool after it had been replaced by the shafted instrument of wood and iron.

If we apply the sense of 'stone' to the noun *hamarr* and remember that the god's name corresponds to English 'thunder', we may understand the phrase 'Þórr's hammer' to be the linguistic counterpart to English 'thunderstone', German *Donnerstein*, Dutch *dondersteen*, Danish *tordensten*, Norwegian *torestein*. These names are given to certain Stone Age relics through which in folk belief thunder was created, and they may lead us to trace a connection between Þórr's weapon and the ancient concept of the thunderstone.

The thunderstone

The belief that thunder and lightning are caused by a stone which falls to earth from heaven is apparent in a great number of traditions. The agent is identified with prehistoric artifacts of stone, stone chisels and stone axes, and also fossils which are encountered in the fields.

The belief has kept its vitality in the Germanic area into modern times. It is thought that in its fall the object becomes deeply embedded in the earth and that it will slowly rise to the surface. Wonderful qualities are attributed to such a stone. It is treasured, put in a special place within the house, hung up near the chimney or beneath the roof, or set on the shelf for storing milk. Above all, it will protect the house

against lightning, but it may also guard the health of cattle, or keep the trolls from harming men.¹⁷

We have noted that the concrete form of the talisman is identified with prehistoric artifacts of stone. It is only natural that many names should be recorded for a significant element of folk belief, and some of these will be cited here.

We find Danish *tordenbolt*, *tordenkile*, *tordenkølle*, *dönnesten*, *tordensten*, *Sebedeje*, Swedish *thorvigge*, *thorenvigg*, *godviggen*, *thornkilen*, *thornskil*, *gomorsten*, *thorensten*, *askvig*, *oskpil*, Norwegian *torestein*, *torelod*, *dynestein*, *toreblyg*, Dutch *donderbeitel*, *donderkeil*, *dondersteen*, German *Schurstein*, *Donneraxt*, *Donnerkeil*, *Donnerhammer*, English *thunderbolt*, *thunderaxe*, *thunderhammer*, *thunderstone*, *thunderflone*.¹⁸ Some of the names that have archaic forms have an archaic sense, and we cannot be completely sure of their meaning. We have some certainty, however, that the weapon was visualised as a stone, an axe, an arrow (English *bolt*, Danish *bolt*, Swedish *pil*), as a wedge (German *Keil*, Danish *kile*, Norwegian *blyg*, Dutch *keil*), a club (Danish *kølle*), a chisel (Dutch *beitel*), or a round ball (Norwegian *lod*).

We may observe that Iceland, alone in the Germanic area, does not evince a belief in thunderstones (though one instance has been recorded). Notions concerning the concept are also rare in northern Norway. Thunderstorms are infrequent in northern Norway and are exceptional in Iceland. The tradition might have been forgotten or might never have developed (cf. Blinkenberg 1911b, 93). The objects encountered in these places are all of stone, and they represent, as a wedge, a bolt, a knife or a chisel, the kind of utensil which had originated in pre-metal times.

The thunderstone in non-Germanic tradition

The wide diffusion of the belief in thunderstones is indeed surprising. The traditions from outside the Germanic area exhibit strong resemblances to the Germanic pattern. It is thought that the stone has dropped from heaven, that it is embodied in stone artifacts of prehistoric times,

¹⁷ Blinkenberg 1911b, 69 (chimney), 70 (beneath the roof), 74 (milk shelf). Used as an amulet such a stone may protect from illness (Blinkenberg 1911b, 90); on p. 121 Blinkenberg lists references to the stone being said to rise to the surface of the earth.

¹⁸ Dictionaries consulted: Alexander Jóhannesson 1956; Beets and Müller 1890; Cleasby and Vigfusson 1874; Dahlerup 1919–54; Fritzner 1886–96; *OED*; Schade 1872–82; de Vries 1962; also Blinkenberg 1911b.

axes, knives and arrowheads of flint, that it is embedded in the earth and will slowly rise to the surface, that it has protective qualities, especially that of shielding men from lightning. It is sometimes worn as an amulet to guard its owner against danger.¹⁹

Evidence of these beliefs has come from Hungary, Lithuania, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, Assam, Burma, Cambodia, China, Japan, the Guinea Coast, and the Sudan (Blinkenberg 1911b, 98–120). We find the semantic equivalent of the Germanic name ‘thunderstone’ in the Lithuanian *Perkuno akmuo* (Perkun is the god of thunder), Moravian *kámen hromovi*, French *pierre de tonnerre*, Spanish *pedra de rayo*, Portuguese *pedra de raio*, Italian *pietra de truono*, ancient Greek *keranía líthos*.

As in the Germanic area, the name may indicate that the lethal missile was envisaged as a Stone Age tool, as in Greek *astropoléki*, ‘sky-axe’, or as a weapon, as in Hungarian *Isten mjila*, ‘god’s arrow’ (Blinkenberg 1911b, 99 (wrongly printed *Iften*), 107).

The name Mjöllnir

The name of Þórr’s weapon, Mjöllnir, has been connected with Icelandic *mjoll*, a word for fresh snow, with reference to its shining or flashing, and to *mala* and *mølva* ‘to grind’ (de Vries 1962, 390; cf. Alexander Jóhannesson 1956, 677). It is also plausible to relate the name to Slavic and Baltic cognates: Old Slavonic *mlünŭji*, Russian *molnija*, ‘lightning’, and Latvian *milna* for Pērkon’s weapon (see Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon 1989, 627). It is noteworthy that in Slavic and Baltic the thunderstone is designated by a noun that is cognate with Icelandic *hamarr*: Lithuanian *Perkuno akmuo*, and Moravian *kámen hromovi*. These facts suggest that the Slavic, Baltic, and Germanic peoples, who were neighbours, had at one time formed a cultural subgroup among the Indo-European nations.

The thunderstone and the god Þórr

Hyltén-Cavallius (1863–68, II 222; quoted in Blinkenberg 1911b, 87) reports that lightning is believed to be a ‘wedge of stone thrown by Thor or Gofar, and is still often found in the places where the thunder has struck’. This object is called *thorenvigg*, ‘Þórr’s wedge’. That Þórr was brought into relation with the thunderstone is shown by the names

¹⁹ Andree 1889, 30–31; as in Lausitz or in parts of France, Blinkenberg 1911b, 100, 103–4.

thorvigge, thornkile, thorenvigg, thornskil, thorensten (Swedish), *taarenstien* (Danish), *torestein, torelod, toreblyg* (Norwegian). We may understand that folk belief had placed the agent of the thunder clap into the hands of the mighty god. A modern account, cited earlier (p. 337), actually notes that Þórr carried a 'thunderbolt of stone'. The attachment of the phenomenon to a god is also evident in non-Germanic traditions in such names as *Perkuno akmuō*, and in Latin *Jovis tela*, 'Jupiter's arrows'.

We may assume that two different beliefs existed side by side: that the stone fell of its own volition and that it was hurled by a god. It is surely a mark of faith in human achievement and in humanist values when the destructive power of the thunderstorm is controlled by a god in human form who is also the 'friend of men'. In tracing Þórr's weapon to the thunderstone we may understand why it was sometimes cast, for it retained the ancient image of the fall from heaven. The return of Þórr's weapon of its own accord parallels the rising of the thunderstone from its embedding in the earth. We also understand why it retained its ancient name. But we must not forget that in later times it was also seen in various other forms.

The thunderweapon in non-Germanic mythologies

The awe and terror caused by thunder and the lightning stroke clearly left their mark on folk belief throughout the world. They also left their imprint on sophisticated mythologies. In the traditions of the Ancient Middle East the rule of the pantheon is accorded to the weather god who wields the weapon of the thunderstorm. And he is almost always pictured with his sign of sovereignty. In Syrian iconography he is shown with a club as he strides across the mountains (Helck 1971, 170), and the weather god carved into the rock Yazilikaya of Anatolia holds a spear (von Schuler 1965, 212). In north-Syrian images of the first millennium BC the axe is the most common of his attributes.

The Mesopotamian god of arms, Ningirsu, is in possession of a seven-headed mace (Jacobsen 1947, 394). Zeus triumphs over Typhoeus with a bolt, but he is also shown with a double axe, a spear, and even with a sword (Cook 1914–40, II 559, 704, 712, 722, fig. 669 and plate XXX). The battles of the gods are of vital significance, for through them the order of the cosmos is created and upheld. We may observe that the instrument used for fighting the divine battle shows some resemblance to the fighting tool of folk belief, envisaged as a stone, a

mace, a club or an arrow. The archaic object has assumed various forms in the myths. From a missile it has turned, in many cases, into an instrument of close attack. In the instances in which the weapon is hurled, the ancient image of the fall from heaven has been retained.

The god Þórr

We cannot doubt that Þórr belongs in kind with the strong god of storms through whom the cosmos is upheld. He possesses the ancient thunderweapon, and, like that of Zeus, it has retained its name. It is clear that the medieval Norsemen no longer remembered the derivation of the instrument or the archaic meaning of its name. When it was associated with Þórr, the noun *hamarr* did not relate to a well-defined entity of men's surroundings; it had received a meaning of its own as an object of sacred and mysterious significance. Thus no synonym is ever used for Þórr's attribute.

If we examine the figure of the god in the Germanic context we still find him as the champion of cosmic order, and he is depicted, above all, in his relentless fight against the giants. He has acquired the features of a folktale hero who achieves his triumphs through his strength of muscle rather than his sovereignty over the elements of nature. In the Icelandic texts he has all but lost his relation to the thunderstorm. While his ride in a goat-drawn carriage may cause the fires of the earth to blaze and the mountains to burst asunder, it does not create the destruction of the thunderstorm.

His *hamarr*, in turn, is bereft of meteorological significance. By the time of our sources it has become above all Þórr's invincible weapon. What was retained was the ancient name, its occasional use as a missile, its voluntary return, and its deadly impact on the enemy. The Slavonic *kámen hromovi*, the Lithuanian *Perkuno akmuõ*, as names for the thunderweapon, using nouns which are cognate to Germanic *hamarr*, indicate that the designation had already existed in Indo-European times. It is only natural that a name meaning 'stone' should be given to an instrument of stone.

If the name *hamarr* was given to the thunderstone, as argued in this article, the meaning 'stone' was subsequently lost in the Scandinavian languages except for Icelandic natural features, where the word is used to mean rock, crag or cliff. The name has remained, however, in the West Germanic languages in isolated instances, e. g. English *thunderhammer*, German *Donnerhammer*. In a Middle High German curse,

cited by Grimm, *donerstein* actually interchanges with *hamer*: *sô slahe mich ein donerstein* (let me be slain by a *donerstein*), and *dat di de hamer sla* (may you be struck by a *hamer*).²⁰

Summary

Þórr's weapon has traditionally been held to be a hammer, but in this article I have questioned this assumption. Þórr's use of this weapon is ambiguous and it is visualised in various forms. The worship of the god predates the use of iron hammers. A hammer did not replace an earlier implement in Germanic folk belief, imagery, ceremonial or warfare. The noun *hamarr* has the meaning of 'stone', 'rock'. The belief in thunderstones was widespread in the Germanic area. The thunderstone was often believed to be Þórr's weapon. A similar process took place in ancient mythologies. Þórr's earliest weapon was a stone which later was also seen in other forms: among these the axe is prominent. His weapon did not receive its name or nature from the ironworker's tool but from the ancient concept of the thunderstone. The noun *hamarr* was retained after it had acquired a new meaning. It denotes the variety of forms in which the thunderweapon is envisaged. Not only the instrument, but also its name existed in Indo-European times.²¹

²⁰ Grimm 1875–78, I 149, 151. The archaic sense of *hammer* as 'stone' is retained in a few instances in West Germanic speech. The name of the Highland game of 'throwing the hammer' has a counterpart in the Middle High German name *steinstosson*, also used of a game. The German *Hammerwurf*, denoting a short distance, parallels the English 'stone's throw'. In Dutch both compounds are preserved: *steenworp* and *hamerworp*.

²¹ I am indebted to Jacqueline Simpson, Einar Lundeby, Elsa Mundal, Oddvar Nes and Anthony Faulkes for comments, suggestions and corrections in this article.

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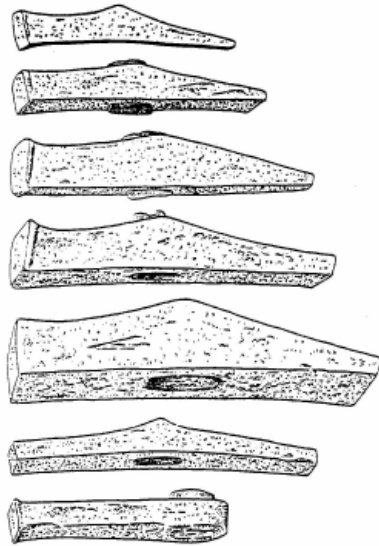


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

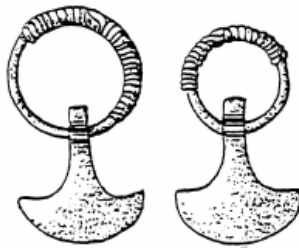


Fig. 3

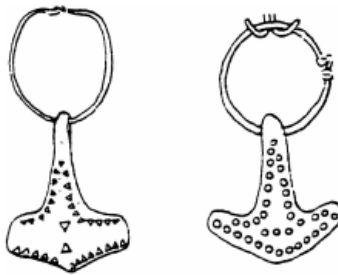


Fig. 4

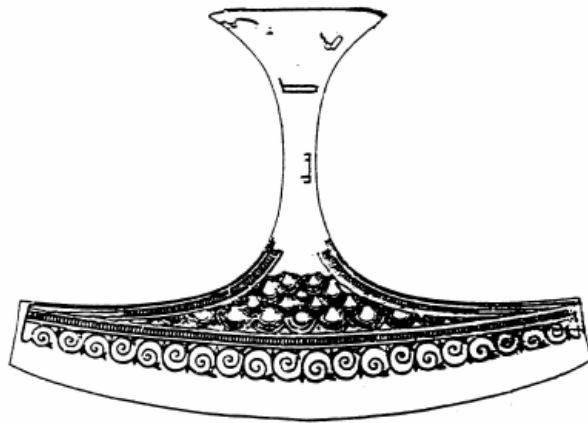


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

NOTES

JOHN BUCHAN'S *THE ISLAND OF SHEEP* AND *FÆREYINGA SAGA*

BY JOHN GORNALL

Buchan's last Hannay novel (1936) 'is about the sharp eyes and general knowledgability [*sic*] of children' and 'the middle-aged keeping—or recovering—their zest for life' (Adam Smith 1965, 263). As the reader will recall, this keeping or recovering arises from the obligation to fulfil an oath made in youth to a latter-day, land-operating Danish 'viking' called Haraldsen. In pursuit of the money for 'a sort of Northern Renaissance of which he was to be the leader' (Buchan 1956, 38), Haraldsen has fallen foul of a gang of villains and believes in the probability of a continuing blood-feud that will pursue his son. The fulfilment of the oath takes place many years later in 'the Island of Sheep', part of 'the Norlands'. There the younger Haraldsen, a mild recluse who ultimately reveals his innate Nordic character, turns berserk and, with the help of the islanders, equally berserk as a result of the arrival of the *grind*, confounds his enemies.

This histrionic Northern material incorporates fragments of myth. Thus, we read of 'Nanna, who was Balder's wife', 'the maidens in the *Edda*', and 'Fenris-Wolf' (Buchan 1956, 147). Comments such as Sandy's 'he took a fancy to me, for I knew all about his blessed Sagas' (39), Hannay's 'there's a good deal of lunacy in the Northern races' (71), and the narrator's (Hannay's) '[he] quoted something from the *Hava-mal* (whatever that may be)' (153) are patronising or even dismissive. The detailed saga references, however, are coherent with the story and respectful of the source material. One, for example, illustrates the younger Haraldsen's morbid character: 'Read in the Sagas, and you will see how relentless is the wheel. Hrut slays Hrap, and Atli slays Hrut, and Gisli slays Atli, and Kari slays Gisli' (148). Another explains his recovery of nerve at the sight of an old sheep-dog turning on its younger attackers: 'It is a message to me . . . That dog is like Samr, who died with Gunnar of Lithend. He reminds me of what I had forgotten' (152). This note, however, is about a different and perhaps more intriguing type of debt to a saga that is less obviously present than Dasent 1866 or 1861, presumably Buchan's sources for the above.

'The Norlands' are of course the Faroes. Thus, the skipper taking on an unexpected passenger to them in the northern Orkneys explains that 'He will have to pay the whole fare between Leith and Reykjavik'

(Buchan 1956, 171). But the neatest confirmation is that Haraldsen 'was full of the islands' history, from the famous old saga of Trond of Gate, which is the Norland epic, to the later days' (182). The reference is undoubtedly to Powell 1896, which identifies Trond (there Thronð) as the hero of the Saga of the Faroe Islanders.¹

As to the name of the particular island, a likely source is indicated in Buchan's symposium, also called *The Island of Sheep* (1919).² 'A number of characters . . . meet in a shooting-lodge on a Scottish island to discuss the post-war world' (Adam Smith 1965, 300). 'Do you know,' explains one of the participants,

that St Brendan came here on his great voyage? It is his Island of Sheep, where he found the lamb for the Paschal sacrifice . . . He sailed . . . out of tempestuous seas and came suddenly to a green isle of peace with sheep feeding among the meadows. And long after him the monks had their cells on the west shore looking out to the sunset. (Adam Smith 1965, 186)

The island of the novel also has a Scottish connection and is equally idyllic: 'It reminded me [Hannay] of Colonsay, a low, green place cradled deep in the sea, where one would live as in a ship with the sound of waves always in the ear' (Buchan 1956, 173).

But although a *locus amoenus*, a place as much of the imagination as of geography, the Island of Sheep is also set firmly within the archipelago, from which, on another level, it may equally well have derived its name (Faroes = 'Islands of Sheep'). It might be seen as occupying roughly the same space as present-day Skúvoy:

We came to the little port of Hjalmarshavn [= Tórshavn], the capital of the Norlands . . . We . . . rounded the south end of the main island, skirted its west side, and threaded our way through an archipelago of skerries till we were abreast of Halder [= Sandoy?], the second biggest of the group . . . Presently on our port appeared a low coast-line, which from the map I saw was the Island of Sheep. It was separated from Halder by a channel perhaps two miles wide (172–73).

Skúvoy is the Skúvey of Powell 1896, in which it is the site of an attack and a siege. I hope to show that both may be reflected in the setting and action of Buchan's novel.

The island is 'shapen so from its height that there is the best of vantage ground there. There is but one path up it' (Powell 1896, 30).

¹ Powell's title 'reflects the house style of the Northern Library series: sagas are about heroes, and it is the name of the hero who had to take pride of place on the title page' (Wawn in Powell 1995, iv).

² Adam Smith's claim that 'the Island of Sheep . . . is a name for the Faeroes' (1965, 263) is inexact.

Ossur is attacked there by Sigmund at a time when no watchman is on the path. Ossur 'had an earthwork cast up round the homestead in Skufey' (30), but it fails to protect him. 'Now Sigmund spied a place where the wall of the work had tumbled down a little, and it was somewhat easier to win in there than in another place' (33). Sigmund kills Ossur but the other defenders surrender after the threat that 'he should cut them off from food in the work or burn them therein' (33–34).

There are points of resemblance, despite the dislocation, between the above and, in the earlier part of the novel, the attack on the elder Haraldsen and his companions at Mafudi's kraal in southern Africa. 'The Hill of the Blue Leopard' is approachable only 'up a narrow bush road' (Buchan 1956, 59). 'The only danger-point was the gate' (59). And the attackers intend to burn them out. Although this scene and that on Skúfey perhaps both belong to the same traditional type, the three correspondences are, in the context of the novel, at least suggestive.

In the siege, the similarity between saga and novel is more compelling. This time it is Sigmund himself, the hero of the first part of the saga, who is on the defensive. He is besieged in the homestead at the top of the island by Thronð, in reality the villain of the piece rather than the hero. 'Then Thronð went up and they all, and came to the homestead and made a ring round it' (Powell 1896, 49). When the besiegers have been attacking for some time, Sigmund's wife calls to them:

'How long are you going to fight with headless men, Thronð?' said she. Thronð answered, 'As true as day,' said he, 'Sigmund must have got away'. Then he went round the house . . . till he came to the mouth of an earth-house a little way off the homestead. (50)

In the elliptical manner of the sagas this is as much as to say that Sigmund has escaped from the homestead by means of an underground chamber (*jarðhús* in Powell's original). The besiegers, searching for him, come to a rift that runs across the island. 'It was then as dark as it could be. Soon after this a man leapt over the rift to where Thronð and his men were . . . It was Sigmund' (50). Having killed one of the besiegers, Sigmund leaps back over the rift and escapes by jumping from 'a rock that jutted over the sea' (50).

The younger Haraldsen's house on the Island of Sheep is also on a vantage point, being 'built on high land above a little voe ['inlet']' (Buchan 1956, 173). What is more, it has an out-building (perhaps owing something to the monks' cells on St Brendan's Island of Sheep): 'It [the House] was all new except at one end, where stood a queer little stone cell or chapel, with walls about five feet thick. This, according to

the tale, had been the home of an Irish hermit . . . in the dark ages' (175). It is in the House that the 'neurotic Viking' (110), Hannay, and the others are besieged.

As the circle tightens, it is decided that Haraldsen, whose capture is the main objective of the besiegers, 'must be got out of the House into hiding' (222). A method presents itself: 'I have mentioned that to the north of the House, at the end of a kind of covered arcade used for pot-plants, stood the little stone cell of an Irish hermit who had brought Christianity to the Norlands . . . In the floor of the cell . . . [were] steps which led downward to the sea, ending in a cave in the cliffs' (222). Haraldsen is advised 'not to try to get out at the sea end . . . but to stay tight in [significantly] the passage' (222). Once the besiegers' quarry is thus in hiding, Hannay is able to tell them that 'Mr Haraldsen is not at home. He has left the island.' Eventually, Haraldsen, now berserk, rushes from the cell, seizes the chief of his enemies, and taking 'great leaps among the hags [hollows] and boulders' (236) reaches a cliff-edge from which he hurls him into the sea.

The correspondences between saga and novel are this time surely striking. In both, the siege is of a house on a hill on an island. The house has in both an out-building and/or an underground passage. Again in both, it is into this construction that the human objective of the siege escapes, thus enabling the besieged to announce his absence to the besiegers. And in both, finally, we have a sudden, unexpected attack by the escaper from outside the siege, his leaps over the terrain, and a cliff-top finale.

I suggest that Buchan's most compelling debt in *The Island of Sheep* to Old Norse literature is not his plot of blood-feud and berserks, his references to Northern mythology, or even his skilful use of the sagas of Gísli and Njáll. It is his silent appropriation of one, and possibly two, graphic settings and actions from the only saga that he names, 'the famous old saga of Trond of Gate'.

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FOUR PHILOLOGICAL NOTES

By †D. A. H. EVANS

1. *margin hváirtveggju*

In ch. 51 of *Egils saga* (ed. Sigurður Nordal, *ÍF* II (1933) 129) we read that

á Norðimbralandi váru þeir einir menn, ef nokkut var til, at danska ætt átti at faðerni eða móðerni, en margin hváirtveggju.

The most recent English rendering of these words of which I know is that of R. I. Page in *Peritia* 1 (1982) 346:

in Northumbria the only men who amounted to anything were of Danish parentage on father's or mother's side, and *many on both*. [Italics added]

This understanding of the passage and (what particularly interests me) of its last two words, is found in all five published English translations of *Egils saga*, from the Rev. W. C. Green in 1893 ('nearly all the inhabitants were Danish by the father's or mother's side, and many by both,' p. 91) to E. R. Eddison in 1930 ('many by both the one and the other,' p. 99), Gwyn Jones in 1960 ('many of them by both,' p. 121), Christine Fell in 1975 ('many of them were both,' p. 75) and Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards in 1976 ('in many cases on both,' p. 117). Nor are English translators alone in this: the Latin rendering by Guðmundur Magnússon in *Egils-saga sive Egilli Skallagrimii vita . . . cum interpretatione latina* (Havniæ, 1809) is in effect identical (though it fails to render *margin*):

nam hi soli erant incolae Northumbriae, si modo ulli erant, qui paternum maternumve genus, aut etiam utrumque a Danis habent.

Similarly N. M. Petersen's Danish translation (4th edition (1923) 152):

I Northumberland var det nemlig saa godt som ingen Indbyggere, der jo enten paa fædrene eller mødrene Side var af dansk Æt, og mange var det paa begge Sider.

So also in German: Felix Niedner in 1911 (here cited from *Germanische Welt vor tausend Jahren*, ed. K. Reichardt (1936), 98) has 'von Vater oder Mutter oder auch von beiden Seiten' (he too omits *margin*) and Kurt Schier in 1978, p. 134, has 'von der Vaterseite oder der Mutterseite, viele aber von beiden'.

It may well seem rash to query so formidable a consensus, especially as the sense allotted to *margin hváirtveggju* appears so natural in itself, but I cannot see how such a sense can be extracted from these Icelandic words. The morphology of *hvar(r)tveggi/hvar(r)tveggja* exhibits much

variety, but there is no doubt about the meaning: in the singular it means ‘each of two (individuals or things)’, and in the plural ‘each of two (groups)’; to quote Leiv Heggstad, *Gamalnorsk Ordbok med nynorsk tyding* (2nd ed., 1930) ‘pl. *hváirtveggja* um tvo flokkar: *góðir menn eru þér til hugganar, illir til frama, hváirtveggju til bata.*’ (The quotation is normalised from *Heilagra manna sögur*, ed. C. R. Unger (1877), I 459.) The words in *Egils saga* can only mean ‘and each of these two groups (i. e. those who were Danish on the father’s side and those who were Danish on the mother’s side) was numerous’; no mention is made of those who were Danish on both sides, even though such persons must certainly have existed.

Nordal provides no note on the phrase, but two other Icelandic editors who have annotated it interpret it this way. Finnur Jónsson, editing *Egils saga* as vol. 3 of the *Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek* in 1894, writes (p. 146):

margir hváirtveggju, ‘multi utrique’, von beiden (d. h. den von mütterlicher oder väterlicher seite von dän. herkunft) gab es viele.

Óskar Halldórsson, in his modern spelling edition (1967), p. 162, has the following note on the words:

þ. e. hvorir tveggja (þeir, sem áttu danskan föður, og þeir, sem áttu danska móður) voru margir.

2. *mjōðdrekkja*

This weak feminine noun appears, on the face of it, to be a compound of *mjōð*- ‘mead’ and the root conveying the concept of drinking; since the contexts show that the word is not an abstract but refers to a material object, the Cleasby–Vigfusson dictionary of 1874 glosses it ‘mead-cask’ and Fritzner’s *Ordbog* (2nd ed.) II (1891): ‘Drikkekar hvoraf man drikker Mjød.’ However, in *Maal og Minne* (1919), 79–80 Kristian Kålund pointed out that in none of the three instances cited by these dictionaries is any connection with mead or drinking evident. In *Laxdæla saga* ch. 43 (*ÍF* V, 131) Ingibjörg, sister of Óláfr Tryggvason, uses a *mjōðdrekkja* as a kind of hatbox from which she takes out a *motr hvítan, gullofinn* to present to Kjartan; in *Egils saga* ch. 46 (*ÍF* II, 117) Egill, leading a plundering band in Kúrland, seizes *mjōðdrekkju eina vel mikla* from a farmer’s treasure-house, which is later found to be *full af silfri*; and in *Þiðreks saga af Bern* ch. 160 (ed. Guðni Jónsson (1954), I 229 = p. 164 in C. R. Unger’s edition of 1853) Sigmundur’s queen, pregnant

with Sigurðr, gives birth to him in a remote forest valley and, taking from her *mjǫðdrekkja*, which she has with her, a glass jar, she wraps the baby up and places it in the jar.

In view of these passages (the only occurrences of the word known to him) Kålund proposed that *mjǫðdrekkja* had nothing to do with drinking mead but was a loan word (subsequently modified by popular etymology) from Old English *mydrece* (*myderce*, *mederce*); the etymology of this word is not clear, but its meaning is certainly ‘casket, chest’, as in *mydrece oððe cyst* glossing *loculus* (see *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. J. Zupitza (1880), 313) and Ælfric’s *to þinum mydercum* for *arcariis gazae tuae* in Esther 3: 9 (*Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, ed. B. Assman (1889), 96, line 156).

Kålund’s suggestion is clearly highly plausible. Though it is not noticed in the supplement which Sir William Craigie added to the reissue of the Cleasby–Vigfusson dictionary in 1957, and was evidently unknown both to Anatoly Liberman, who calls *mjǫðdrekkja* ‘a transparently Icelandic word’ (*JEGP* 82 (1983), 401) and to R. M. Wilson, who seems to have thought Egill’s discovery of silver in a mead-cask was meant to be funny (*Medieval Literature and Civilization, studies in memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (1969), 122), it has been accepted by Finn Hødnebo in the supplementary fourth volume of ‘Rettelser og tillegg’ he added to Fritzner’s *Ordbog* in 1972 and by the authors of the standard etymological dictionaries, F. Holthausen (1948), Alexander Jóhannesson (1956, see p. 1090), Jan de Vries (1961), and Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon (1989). (The reference to *mjǫðdrekkja* as an *Irish* loanword in Sigrid Valfells and James E. Cathey, *Old Icelandic, An Introductory Course* (1981), 239 is evidently a slip of the pen.)

Nevertheless, as it stands Kålund’s proposal remains a conjecture only, albeit an attractive one; a mead-cask *might*, after all be used for the purposes the three texts describe, much as simple folk are sometimes said to keep their life savings in a teapot. It is therefore worth while to draw attention to two further occurrences of *mjǫðdrekkja* (or variants *mjǫðdrekka*, *mjǫðdrykkja*) which transform Kålund’s conjecture into a certainty.

First: in *Tristrams saga ok Ísondar* (ed. E. Kölbing, 1878), an object which appears on p. 37 as a *kistill* (‘little chest, casket’) reappears on p. 53 as a *mjǫðdrykkja*. In ch. 29, when Tristram has slain Mórhold in combat, a portion of Tristram’s sword is left embedded in his skull; this is then removed with tongs and presented to his grieving sister Ísodd:

Lét hun þegar þvá af heilann ok blóðit ok lagði í kistil sinn, at þat skyldi vera til áminningar harms ǫllum, þviat með þvi var hann drepinn.

Subsequently, in ch. 43, Ísodd examines Tristram's damaged sword:

Ok sá hun þegar skarðit, er gøðist, þegar Tristram drap Mórhold . . . ok gekk hun þá til mjöðdrykkju sinnar ok tók sverðsbrotit, þat er hun hafði hirt, ok lagði í skarðit, ok fell samfeldliga í sverðit, sem þat hafði ur stokkit.

This saga was also edited by Gísli Brynjólfsson (1878) and by Bjarni Vilhjálmsson in *Riddara sögur* I (1949); Bjarni's text is mainly based on that of Gísli but with occasional readings from two seventeenth-century manuscripts in Landsbókasafn, and here the two crucial phrases appear respectively as *í kistil sinn* (p. 73) and *til mjöðdrekkju sinnar* (p. 111).

Second: in *Elis saga ok Rósamundu*, edited by E. Kølbing in 1881 from the Uppsala manuscript De la Gardie 4–7 fol. of c.1250, we read at p. 75:

Siðan toc mærin or mioðdreckiu sinni IIII gros sua kroftug, at allregi scapaðe guð þat kuikuende ne mann, er abergði þæma grosu, sua at þau niðr kæmi um halsinn i briostið, at ægi væri þegar sua hæill sem fiskr i vatni.

For *mioðdreckiu* Cod. Holm. Perg. 6, 4^o (c.1400) has *mioddrykciu*. Kølbing also prints, at the foot of the page, the somewhat revised text from Cod. Holm. Perg. 7, fol. (late 15th century), where this passage reads:

Sydan toc mærin einn smyslabudzk; hon tok þar up ur graus sokroptug, at all dri skop gud þat kvikindi hier a jardriki, ef abrygdi þeim grosu, so huerr sem þvi rendi niðr i briostit þat var þegar heillt.

That is, the *mjöðdrekkja* or *mjöðdrykkja* of the older manuscripts has been interpreted as a *smyslabuðkr* 'box for ointments'.

This saga is based on the French poem *Elie de Saint Gille*, edited by G. Reynaud in 1879 (a work seldom read, at least in Oxford; the Bodleian copy was uncut in 1996). At p. 48 we find the lines (1445–48) on which this passage depends:

Rosamonde s'en torne et son ecrin deferme:
A ses mains qu'el ot blances en a traite[s] .II. herbes
Que Dieus ot sou ses piés, le glorieus chelestre,
Quant en crois le leverent la pute gent averse.

We see here that *mjöðdrekkja* and its variants is a rendering of *écrin* 'little box, casket.'

3. *Víga-Glúms saga*, ch. 1

At the end of the first chapter of *Víga-Glúms saga* Eyjólfur, the son of Ingjaldr Helgason at Þverá, asks his father for leave to accompany to Norway the Norwegian captain Hreiðarr, who has been lodging with them over the winter. Ingjaldr has never cared for merchants, but is prepared to make an exception for Hreiðarr. In the edition of G. Turville-Petre (second edition (1960), 2), normalised and with modern punctuation, the final sentence of the chapter runs thus:

Ingjaldr segir, at fáir drengir munu slíkir sem Hreiðarr: ‘ok með þessi þinni meðferð ok at reyndum [hans] drengskap leyfi ek þér ferðina, ok þykkja betr, at þú farir með honum en með öðrum.’

(The editor supplies *hans* from the late paper manuscripts; it is not in Möðruvallabók.) The sentence appears identically (in effect) in Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eyfirðinga sögur*, ÍF IX (1956), 5.

The meaning is obvious, but what is the syntax of *þykkja*? It is clearly not 1st sg. pres. subj. nor 3rd pl. pres. indic., so it must be the infinitive; but (though the editors have no comment) one would surely expect *mér þykkir*. Unless one is prepared to emend so as to read that, all I can suggest is that the writer momentarily reverted to indirect speech, so that one should punctuate as follows:

Ingjaldr segir, at fáir drengir munu slíkir sem Hreiðarr: ‘ok með þessi þinni meðferð ok at reyndum [hans] drengskap leyfi ek þér ferðina,’ ok þykkja betr, ‘at þú farir með honum en með öðrum.’

4. *marsala*

Readers of Sir John Betjeman’s autobiographical poem *Summoned by Bells* will recall his description of the absurd ‘Colonel’ Kolkhorst’s regular Sunday-morning ‘rout’, frequented by undergraduates (of the better sort), and a memorable feature of the Oxford of the nineteen-twenties:

D’ye ken Kolkhorst in his artful parlour,
Handing out the drink at his Sunday morning gala?
Some get sherry and some Marsala—

the latter being those temporarily out of favour with the Colonel; as Thackeray put it in 1848 in his *Book of Snobs*, ch. 25, ‘I prefer sherry to marsala when I can get it’. Marsala is an inferior sherry-like wine, nowadays mainly used in cooking, and named from the Sicilian town where it originated.

As I have not seen it noticed, it might be of interest to draw attention to an amusing error in Halldór Halldórsson, *Old Icelandic 'heiti' in Modern Icelandic* (1975), a work which principally consists of alphabetised instances in post-1540 Icelandic (whether as simplexes or as elements of compounds) of words which belong wholly or mainly to the Old Icelandic poetic vocabulary. One of these words is *marr* 'sea', where Halldór adduces (for example) *mararbotn* 'the bottom of the sea', *marglytti* 'jelly-fish', *marhálmur* 'sea-grass', and many other such compounds. One of these is *marsala*, where Halldór states (p. 56), 'probably the word means "sale at sea, i. e., at ship's side"'. He has taken this word (via the files of *Orðabók Háskólans*) from an advertisement in an 1899 issue of the Reykjavík newspaper *Fjallkonan*, which Halldór quotes in an abbreviated form as *Nýkomið með, Laurá* [a ship] . . . *Vínföng* . . . *Marsala*. Of course, the reference is to the Sicilian wine.

REVIEWS

TÚLKUN HEIÐARVÍGASÖGU. By BJARNI GUÐNASON. *Studia Islandica* 50. *Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands*. Reykjavík, 1993. 287 pp.

Bjarni Guðnason has made himself something of a specialist in works that no longer exist. What is perhaps his earliest publication, ‘Um Brávallaþulu’ (*Skirnir*, 132 (1958)), was on the lost poem thought to lie behind the accounts of the legendary battle at ‘Brávellir’ in Saxo and in *Sögubrot af fornkonungum*. His doctoral dissertation, *Um Skjöldunga sögu* (1963) tackled another lost work, and in 1978 he published *Fyrsta sagan*, a study of the lost *Hryggjarstykki*. This latest monograph almost conforms to this pattern; true, *Heiðarvíga saga* (*Hvs.*) is not actually lost, but it came as close to being so as any work that exists at all can have done. The beginning of the sole manuscript that seems to have survived into the seventeenth century had already lost its opening leaves, and one leaf towards the end of the saga, when it was sent to Sweden in 1683. In 1725 Árni Magnússon arranged for it to be lent to him in Copenhagen, but by a fortunate error only the first twelve leaves were sent—fortunate because, after Árni’s scribe Jón Ólafsson frá Grunnavík had copied these, both the leaves themselves and Jón’s copy were destroyed in the fire of 1728. Jón thereupon reconstructed their contents as best he could from memory, and it is this reconstruction, with a certain sprinkling of eighteenth-century phrasing, which constitutes the first half (roughly) of the saga in modern printed editions. And then, in 1951, the missing leaf near the end came to light, in poor condition, in the National Library of Iceland, among a number of vellum pieces that had come to the Library from Öxnadalur in 1910. This was too late for its contents (so far as they were legible) to appear when Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson edited the saga in volume III of the *Íslensk fornrit* series (*Borgfirðinga sögur*, 1938), but they have been inserted into the 1956 reprint. (This necessitated some adjustment of the pagination from p. 314 on, and it is a minor vexation of Bjarni’s monograph that he has, most of the time, used the old page-numbering.)

This unhappy history hardly provides a promising start for any *túlkun*, or interpretation, of the saga, and its style and narrative content might well appear to make matters worse. ‘It seems in various ways to be imperfect and primitive—and, as far as that goes, archaic. The writing is stiff, often downright clumsy, repetitious and ponderous. The sequence of events is very complicated, and people crop up in the story without any word as to their origin or connection with the action.’ That is Jónas Kristjánsson (*Eddas and Sagas* (1988), 224), but he is doing no more than expressing the consensus; the usual view, indeed, is that this is the very oldest of the Family Sagas, so primitive, so unpractised, does the style appear. Nor does Bjarni, for all the radicalism of his approach, dissent entirely from such judgements; he admits the exposition is in parts involved, the mode of narration awkward (*framvinda . . . á köflum snúin, frásagnahátturinn óþjáll*, p. 25), the plot is hard to remember (p. 22) and the

style is in places ‘at once uneven and unpolished, sentence connectives are clumsy, and at times words and phrases are repeated unnecessarily’ (*í senn ójafn og óheflaður, setningatengsl eru ólíðleg og orð og orðasambönd eru stundum endurtekin að nauðsynjalausu*, p. 194), though Bjarni also holds (surprisingly, some may think) that it is not possible to doubt the author’s skill in telling a story (*Ekki verður efast um sníld höfundar til að segja sögu*, p. 25).

Bjarni’s essential thesis can be stated quite simply. *Hvs.* is not, as hitherto believed, an *erindislaus athafnasaga hefnda og víga* (‘a tale of events, of reprisals and killings, with no message,’ p. 21); true, *Hún snýst frá upphafi til enda um hefndir og gagnhefndir* (‘From beginning to end it turns on deeds of revenge and counter-revenge,’ p. 30), but there is more to it than meets the eye (*ekki öll, þar sem hún var séð*, p. 27), it contains ‘hidden judgements’ (*leynda dóma*, p. 20, *hulda dóma*, p. 254); under the surface it is an attack on the endless killings which characterised the period when the Old Icelandic Republic was disintegrating (*undir niðri atlaga á stanslausum mannvígum, sem tíðkuðust á upplausnartímum þjóðveldisins*, p. 27). There is probably not a great deal of genuine history in the narrative; rather, it is a *skáldsaga andlegrar merkingar* (‘a work of fiction with a spiritual meaning,’ p. 234), in which Víga-Styrr, the *ofsamaðr* who dominates the first half of the saga, and who kills repeatedly for the most trivial of reasons, is *hin dökka mynd Sturlungaaldar* (‘the dark image of the Sturlung age,’ p. 234), symbolising the violent and revengeful values of heathenism as against the ever-forgiving Gestr Þórhallason: *Með Víga-Styr og Gestri er höfundur að lýsa átökum heiðni og kristni* (‘In Víga-Styrr and Gestr the author is illustrating the clash of paganism and Christianity,’ p. 258). As well as Styrr, Barði and his mother Þuríðr, votaries of bloodshed and revenge, stand for the old pagan values of *forneskja*, which Óláfr helgi gives as his reason for refusing to admit Barði to his court, and which here means (Bjarni argues at length, pp. 45–65) not ‘magic’ (which Barði is not said to have engaged in) but ‘heathen ways, unchristian acts, killing the innocent.’ And on the other side, alongside Gestr, we have Guðlaugr, who refuses to join the revenge expedition of his father Snorri goði (and who later became a monk in England) and Eiðr, who speaks for reconciliation at the *Alþingi*, for all that he has lost two sons in the killings on the heath, having vainly tried to dissuade them from riding forth to the fight. ‘The author explains the curse of his own age as remnants of Old Norse ideas about the duty of revenge, which was still governing men’s acts,’ Bjarni sums up (*höfundur skýrir böll samtíðar sinnar sem leifar norrænna hugmynda um hefndarskyldu, sem enn ráði gerðum manna*, p. 261). And if this saga was written as a message for the Sturlung age, then of course it cannot date from c.1200, as is usually supposed; Bjarni puts it some sixty years later (p. 253).

Now it is certainly true that some of the events in the saga are, in the context of the *Íslendinga sögur*, highly unusual, even unique. When Styrr’s son Þorsteinn pursues Gestr, his father’s slayer, to Norway and then to Constantinople and twice makes attempts on his life but succeeds only in wounding him, on both occasions Gestr not only laughs off the wound but actually intervenes on Þorsteinn’s side, on the second occasion buying off the indignant Varangians with his own money and giving his now penniless attacker more money to get

him back to Iceland. Then there is Óláfr helgi's rejection of Barði on moral grounds; there seems to be no true parallel to this, for Grettir, the only other Icelander to be thus rejected, suffered because he was an *ógæfumaðr*, not because of *forneskja*. Again, there is Barði's mother Þuríðr; the 'female inciter' is of course a stock figure, but her bizarre humiliation, in being deliberately tumbled from her horse into a stream, 'has no parallel in the sagas, any more than much else in *Hvs.*' (*á sér ekki hlíðstæðu í fornum sögum fremur en margt annað í Heiðarvígasögu*, p. 66). Bjarni is not quite the first to propose that we should be alert to a *sensus spiritualis* (p. 266) in the saga, for, as he observes on p. 179, Nordal wrote in 1938, 'It is at times as though the saga was turning into a kind of exemplum about the wrongs entailed by the old slayings of kin' (*Það er stundum eins og sagan verði nokkurs konar dæmisaga um ranglætið í hinum fornu ættvígum*, *ÍF* III, cxii), but Nordal made this point only in passing and did not follow it up. As so often nowadays when scholars espy hidden religious symbolism and spiritual messages in works seemingly secular, one wonders just why the writer had taken such care to hide his important message. In the tale told by Ketill Þorsteinsson (later bishop of Hólar) in *Þorgils saga ok Haflíða*, which preaches forgiveness and which Bjarni adduces as a parallel to *Hvs.* (*gagntekin sömu hugsjón* 'permeated by the same idea', p. 181; *Líkur hugmyndaheimur* 'a similar world of notions', p. 182), the message is explicit: Ketill says he resolved to refer the assault he had suffered *á guðs miskunn* 'to the mercy of God', and yielded the case to his opponent *fyrir guðs sakir* 'for the sake of God' (quoted p. 182).

Still, if Bjarni had left the matter at this point, I would have little quarrel with him; this saga does have odd features and Bjarni's explanation is far from implausible. Unfortunately, he has embedded this perfectly reasonable hypothesis in a mass of extravagant suggestions which are only too likely, I suspect, to lead many readers to dismiss the whole volume. First, he believes that a number of episodes in *Hvs.* are modelled on Old Testament events. Thus, the killing of the bullying Styrr by the youthful and undersized Gestr is seen as a derivative (*afsprengi*, p. 98) of David's killing of Goliath, and Gestr's subsequent forgiving of the attacks on Styrr's son Þorsteinn (as recounted above) is claimed to be probably based on David's forgiveness of King Saul's attacks on him (p. 104). When, just before his killing, Styrr arrives in frosty weather at the farmstead Jorvi with his companions, there is thick smoke in the house, under cover of which Gestr smites Styrr from behind with an axe. This combination of frost and fire is an image of the Christian hell (cf. *milli frosts ok funa* in *Sólarljóð* st. 18), the hell to which Styrr must now depart. This method is extended to *Laxdæla*. When Gestr Oddleifsson dies in midwinter, ice makes Breiðafjörðr impassable to ships and his corpse cannot be conveyed from Barðaströnd for burial at Helgafell; then a sudden break in the weather allows this, and he is buried where he had desired; the very next day the ice returned, and remained for most of the winter (*ÍF* V, 196–97). This story, Bjarni thinks (p. 137) is based on the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt when the Red Sea miraculously opened to permit them dry passage and then closed in once more, drowning their Egyptian pursuers.

Even less likely to command wide assent is Bjarni's belief that many of the names in *Hvs.* have symbolic significance. This notion is very prominent in the book and is regarded by Bjarni as fundamental to his analysis: 'People will not get far in the interpretation of *Hvs.* if they do not understand the names symbolically' (*Menn ná ekki langt í túlkun Heiðarvígásögu án þess að skilja nöfnin táknrænum skilningi*, p. 258). Here are some examples. Barði (pp. 151–52) is *sá sem ber* ('he who beats') and *sá sem er barinn* ('he who is beaten'); his world is one of fighting (*barsmíðar*). His wife Auðr is *auðna* 'good fortune, luck'; when he strikes her, he strikes away his *auðna* (p. 63), and Auðr's name is also the inspiration of Spes (Latin for 'hope') in *Grettis saga* (p. 225). Guðlaugr washes away (*laugar*) his sins by praying, and becomes a monk in England (p. 96). Þuríðr, the personification of revenge (p. 267), is from earlier *Þór-riðr, and is as it were a representative of Ása-Þórr, and her humiliation in the stream is a reflex of the god's struggle through the river Vimur, as told in *Snorra Edda* (pp. 87–91). The author of *Hvs.*, Bjarni holds, was very conscious of Þórr as, so to speak, the moving spirit of paganism, which is why he shortened Þorgestr (as he is named in some sources) to Gestr (p. 106; but the statement on this page that he is called Þorgestr in *Eyrbyggja* is wrong, as indeed p. 103, n. 1 shows); Gestr may also partly owe his name (p. 109) to the fact that Christ on earth was a *gestr* among men. (In fact, the number of Icelanders in the sagas with Þór- as the first element in their names must be at least 1500, and they cannot all have been champions of paganism: Þorlákr inn helgi was not.) Bjarni sees the same kind of symbolism in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* (p. 259): Hávarðr is he who through his deeds raises for himself a lofty memorial (*há varða*), his wife Bjargey puts things to rights and brings food into the home (*bjargar málum og dregur björg í bú*) and, though their son Óláfr's name is not transparent, he is a mixture of hero and saint (like Óláfr helgi, Bjarni presumably means).

I hope Bjarni will not take it amiss if I cast back at him some of his own words, from *Skírnir* 145 (1971), p. 164, where he was reviewing Hermann Pálsson's *Tólfta öldin*:

Öllum er ljóst að hugkvæmni er einn mikilvægasti eðlisþáttur góðs vísindamanns, en hún verður at taka lögun af þeim heimildum, sem úr er unnið og láta sig sennileik einhverju varða. Lausbeizluð hugkvæmni er leikur, sem ekkert á skylt við fræði- eða vísindarannsóknir, heldur skáldskap.

Everyone can see that imagination is one of the most important qualities of a good scholar, but it must take its form from the sources that constitute the basis of the enquiry and must allot some weight to probability. Free-ranging imagination is a game, which has no relation to scholarly or scientific researches, but rather to the art of fiction.

I am afraid that parts of this review might suggest to the reader that I think this book of little value. That is far from my view. It is always engaging, even entertaining, it is lucid and erudite, and though it leaves me on the whole unconvinced, Bjarni argues his case as powerfully as anyone could have done. Everyone interested in the sagas should read it; they will learn a great deal from

it and, if they are foreigners, they will learn much Icelandic too, for Bjarni is a master of a rich, flexible and idiomatic style. (If I can do so without being too presumptuous, I would however suggest that in *skírskotanir . . . eru valin* (p. 44) the last word should be *valdar*, on p. 113 I note that the initial genitive (rather than dative) in *þessarar lýsingar verður naumast til annarrar jafnað* is unsanctioned by the dictionaries, and on p. 153 I wonder whether the datives *Drápi . . . lygum, þjófnaði og blekkingum* might not better be accusatives, since they would seem to be more naturally in apposition to *grófar misgerðir*, rather than *hefndum*, in the preceding clause.)

Finally it may be of interest to note that another scholar, evidently independently of Bjarni, thought he detected a further instance of Christian symbolism in *Hvs.*: Thomas D. Hill, 'Guðlaugr Snorrason: The Red Faced Saint and the Refusal of Violence', *Scandinavian Studies* 67 (1995), 145–52, argues that the frightening, blood-red countenance of Guðlaugr after he has refused to join his father's killing expedition is derived from Christian iconography, where (as Pope Gregory, quoted by Hill, states) red is the colour of *caritas*. Hill's view is denied by William Sayers (in the same volume of the same journal, pp. 536–40), who thinks Guðlaugr is simply embarrassed by his father's response; Hill then replies (pp. 544–47), having, to my mind, the best of the argument. Neither writer shows any awareness of Bjarni's book.

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HANSISCHE LITERATURBEZIEHUNGEN: DAS BEISPIEL DER ÞIÐREKS SAGA UND VERWANDTER LITERATUR. Edited by SUSANNE KRAMARZ-BEIN. Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 14. *Walter de Gruyter*. Berlin and New York, 1996. xxiv + 315 pp.

This volume is the publication of a symposium held in Bonn in 1992. After an introduction (pp. ix–xxiv) in which the editor summarises the contents of the articles, it is divided into five sections: a pair of introductory papers, half a dozen on *Þiðreks saga* itself, two on the Old Norse context, two on High German parallels, and two on other Old Norse works.

Alois Wolf ('Vermutungen zum Wirksamwerden europäischer literarischer Tendenzen im mittelalterlichen Norden', pp. 3–26) explores the European tendencies in medieval Scandinavian literature, pointing out the common importance of heroic ideals, the conversion and the development of national feeling. He also draws an interesting distinction between the outlooks of Norway and Iceland, Icelanders being apparently more conscious of difference from the rest of Europe. Thomas Behrmann in 'Norwegen und das Reich unter Hákon IV. (1217–1263) und Friedrich II. (1212–1250)', pp. 27–50, gives what looks to a non-historian like a comprehensive survey of relations between Hákon's Norway and Frederick's Empire. He covers contact with England, Africa and the Middle East and shows that the geographical span of *Þiðreks saga* fits equally well with the world-view of crusaders and that of merchants.

Edith Marold examines 'Die Erzählstruktur des *Velentsthátr*' (pp. 53–73), finding it to be characteristic of both the *Íslendinga þættir* and *chansons de geste*. She links this connection with *Karlamagnús saga* and parallel political conditions in France, Germany and Norway. Disappointingly, she ignores the French, German and English variants of the Velent story, although she deals with *Völundarkviða*. Hans-Peter Naumann's essay on Velent's brother Egill ('Der Meisterschütze Egill, Franks Casket und die *Þiðreks saga*', pp. 74–90) is out of place. It discusses the Franks Casket interestingly but has little to say about *Þiðreks saga* and nothing about the Hanseatic League. In a brief item ('*Þiðreks saga* als Gegenwartsdichtung?', pp. 91–99) Heinrich Beck suggests that the international relations depicted in the saga reflect conditions then prevailing in Germany in much the same way as Saxo turns the past into an image of the present. Gert Kreutzer gives an exhaustive account of 'Aspekte des Komischen in der *Þiðreks saga*' (pp. 100–30), from simple farce to ironical criticism. There are possible comic relationships with *Parzival*, *König Rother* and *Eckenlied*. The mixture of 'high' and 'low' cultures indicated here, he considers, are to be found not at the Norwegian court but on the Continent. Ulrike Sprenger's 'Zum Superbiaproblem in der *Þiðreks saga*' (pp. 131–49) concentrates on the presentation of Þiðrekr. She analyses analogues, such as the apportioning of blame in the *Rabenschlacht* and *Dietrichs Flucht*, the example of Job as a type of patience under undeserved suffering and the Scandinavian view of giant descent and diabolical nature. In her conclusion, that Þiðrekr's hell-ride stems from a conception alien to that found elsewhere in the saga, Otto Gschwantler concurs. He also suggests that the hero is not damned but has not yet gained salvation. His close reading in 'Konsistenz und Intertextualität im Schlußteil der *Þiðreks saga*' (pp. 150–72) is very enlightening, particularly for its structural implications.

Heiko Uecker, in the highlight of the collection, 'Nordisches in der *Þiðreks saga*' (pp. 175–85), goes to the heart of the question—what is Nordic in *Þiðreks saga*? His foundation for an answer touches on nomenclature, grammar, the presentation of heroes and the borders of orality and literacy, and should be read by all concerned with these topics. Susanne Kramarz-Bein compares '*Þiðreks saga* und *Karlamagnús saga*' (pp. 186–211), showing that they may have more in common than a superficial resemblance as legendary cycles, sharing some specific details (e. g. twelve companions, *moniage*) as well as structural aspects.

Peter Göhler's contribution is 'Überlegungen zur Funktion des Hortes im *Nibelungenlied*' (pp. 215–35). He considers that even the protagonists prize the treasure primarily for its symbolic importance rather than for its monetary value. He refers to the *Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid*, *Völsunga saga*, the Edda and Danish ballads; but if there is mention of *Þiðreks saga* I have missed it. Hermann Reichert, in his examination of '*Þiðreks saga* und oberdeutsche Heldensage' (pp. 236–65), finds the saga generally consistent with a southerly context. Contrary to the normal ascription to Low German sources, there are specific indications of High German—even Tyrolean—origins for some of the constituent parts.

Rudolf Simek ('Zum *Königsspiegel*', pp. 269–89) looks at *Konungs skuggsjá*, appropriately, in a Hanseatic context; unlike other 'mirrors for princes' it concerns itself with merchants, and its household pattern of economy is difficult to explain. Finally, Stefanie Würth deals with '*Alexanders saga*: Literarische und kulturelle Adaptation einer lateinischen Vorlage' (pp. 290–315). She renews the discussion of Brandr Jónsson as possible translator, sketching his biography. She places the *Alexandreis* in context and deals with the nature of medieval translation and the specifics of Bishop Brandr's practice. Here there is another suggestion of contemporary political resonance.

If one were still tempted to view *Biðreks saga* from a Migration Age rather than a Late Medieval perspective, this volume would be the ideal preventative. It is a very useful tour through and around—sometimes at a considerable distance from—the subject. One last complaint: an index would have been invaluable.

ANDREW R. DAVIDSON

THE UNACCENTED VOWELS OF PROTO-NORSE. By MARTIN SYRETT. NOWELE Supplement Vol. 11. *Odense University Press*. Odense, 1994. [4] + 323 pp.

This is a thoroughly critical piece of work: a timely and welcome contribution to Norse philology. Earlier toilers in the field of Proto-Norse—at least, those seeking to give a comprehensive account of the language or of some major aspect of it—tended to be dogmatic. They imposed their version of order on the sparsely documented early history of Scandinavian (or Scandinavian and Ingvaenic, depending on your point of view), and showed little inclination to ponder fundamental questions about the kind of exercise in which they were engaged. Syrett, in contrast, is properly concerned with the nature of the evidence he is working with, at one point (p. 36) even equating our 'knowledge' of Proto-Norse with illusions, and constantly warning of the dangers of circular argumentation. He is also refreshingly free of preconceptions—indeed, again and again he comes back to the point that we must approach the data without preconceptions of any kind—even the most ancient and hallowed.

The Unaccented Vowels of Proto-Norse is a self-explanatory title, but it will be worth briefly rehearsing the contents of the work. Chapter 1 provides a critical evaluation of the various sources of evidence for Proto-Norse, while chapter 2 discusses earlier interpretations of the evidence and the author's own approach to it. There follow six chapters of analysis dealing not only with final and composition syllables but also word-formation suffixes. The last chapter summarises what has gone before and offers a brief, tentative conclusion.

In itself the conclusion seems conservative and unexciting. It is that the unstressed vowel system of Proto-Norse differed from the stressed in having fewer units, which meant that the realisation of the unstressed vowels could vary to a much greater extent than that of their stressed counterparts. The implications of such a view, however, are far-reaching. Syrett reconstructs the early Proto-Norse unstressed long vowel system as /i:/, /u:/, /o:/ and [æ:], and

considers what he takes to be fluctuations in the spelling of the last of these four (especially in the 3rd sg. weak preterite ending, which exhibits the forms **-a**, **-ai** and **-e**) as an indication ‘that there was no direct mapping between the phonetic value of the unit *æ-* and any individual rune’ (p. 268). If he should be right, it would of course do away with the need to interpret a form such as **talgidai** ‘[NN] carved’ as a backward spelling (following the coalescence of /ai/ and /æ:/), which involves the doubtful assumption of an orthographic tradition among rune writers in Proto-Norse. The **ai** rendering now becomes simply ‘an approximate orthographic representation of a sound for which no equivalent rune existed’ (pp. 253–54)—a parallel to the use of **ai**, **ia** and **au** for monophthongs in the runic writing of the Viking Age.

To some extent, of course, this approach conflicts with the conception, much favoured in the literature of the last twenty or thirty years, of a near perfect fit between the phonemes of Proto-Norse and the twenty-four runes of the older *fupark*. But Syrett has his doubts about the fit—on methodological grounds if nothing else. Elmer Antonsen’s view (*A Concise Grammar of the Older Runic Inscriptions* (1975), 4) that Proto-Germanic (not ‘urnordisch’ as stated by Syrett) had six vowel phonemes and therefore it is no accident that the older *fupark* contained just six vowel runes, elicits the apt comment (p. 35) that the *fupark*’s fit with the Proto-Norse phonemic system is not accidental either, ‘since the reconstruction of the language is heavily reliant on the evidence of the early runic inscriptions.’ In more positive vein (and leading ultimately to views such as that noted above about [æ:]), it is suggested that ‘some aspects and problems of early runic phonology~orthography are better explained by assuming a degree of uncertainty in the phonemic~graphemic fit’.

The analytical procedures adopted in *The Unaccented Vowels of Proto-Norse* are designed to ensure maximum objectivity. Contemporary evidence in the form of runic inscriptions is the starting point, and the identification of syllables that share a morphological function is chosen as the initial method of analysis. Morphs thus identified are compared with reflexes in later, better documented, stages of the language, and only then is an attempt made ‘to extrapolate phonological information from the data’ (p. 37). This reassuringly cautious approach typifies the constant critical watch Syrett keeps on himself as well as others. A manifestation of the same reluctance to build castles in the air can be seen in frank admissions of ignorance, as when we are told (p. 156) that in the present state of our knowledge there is simply no way of determining the length of the final vowel in the Kjøllevik stone’s acc. m. sg. **minino** ‘my’.

It will by now be apparent that I find little to criticise in this book. Occasionally, perhaps, an argument can seem slightly strained. There is the suggestion, for example, that **runo**, which occurs more than once, is an acc. pl. form ‘runes’, remodelled from earlier /ru:noz/ by analogy with stem classes whose acc. pl. ended in a vowel—at the same time as those same stem classes were themselves adopting final /-z/ in the acc. pl. by analogy with /-o:-/-stem nouns like /ru:noz/. I do not deny that such a sequence of events is possible, but it seems methodologically unsound to assume it (the importance of distinguishing between what *might* have happened and the limited range of developments

we as scholars can allow ourselves to reconstruct is more than once rightly underlined by Syrett himself).

The English is throughout plain and relatively jargon-free. Occasionally I found it a little over-colloquial, and one or two of the colloquialisms seemed to obscure the intended meaning. 'Flipside' (p. 27), for instance, ought from the context to mean something like 'consequence [of this]'—an interpretation that does not accord with my—possibly imperfect—understanding of the term.

Yet these are but minor quibbles. The author has deepened considerably our understanding not only of the unstressed vowel system of Proto-Norse but also of the many problems involved in dealing with a language the direct evidence for which is so meagre and uncertain. He deserves our congratulations.

MICHAEL BARNES

WORD HEATH. WORTHEIDE. ORÐHEIÐI. ESSAYS ON GERMANIC LITERATURE AND USAGE (1972–92). By ANATOLY LIBERMAN. *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1. *Episteme dell'Antichità e oltre 1. Il Calamo*. Rome, 1994. 498 pp.

On the occasions on which I have heard Anatoly Liberman lecture, the performance has been striking. One after another, propositions seem to burst out, impelled by the pressure of a wealth of ideas waiting to launch themselves on the listener. There is no need for a script; Liberman draws on a wide range of accumulated knowledge, darting with a sometimes bewildering speed between examples in diverse languages and cultures. The ideas thus impelled are quirky, idiosyncratic, above all, provocative; the present volume, a collection of 21 essays, three of them hitherto unpublished, is the same.

The essays printed centre on two main areas, etymology and mythology, the one fertilising the other. This is amply illustrated by one of the central essays in the volume, Essay 11, 'Snorri and Saxo on Útgarðaloki, with Notes on Loki Laufeyjarson's Character, Career and Name' (pp. 176–234). Liberman's first concern here is to establish the nature and origin of Útgarðaloki, evaluating Snorri and Saxo as sources, sifting through previous scholars' views on the etymologies of key words that trace indebtedness to foreign concepts; just what, for example, is the significance of Snorri's use of the West Germanic *hanzki* for Skrímir's glove (p. 183)? Why is Útgarðr in Saxo more like Grendel's mere than the home of a Nordic giant, and what is its relation to the phrase *at fara einhvern um útgarða*, with an apparent meaning of 'devastate' (p. 187)? His conclusion is to reconstruct a myth, in which a sky-god was obliged to travel to the outer, or other, world, to obtain mantic wisdom from, or pay homage to, a rival deity, our Útgarðaloki. He, in turn, can be identified with the Loki of the Norse cosmogony. Etymologies of words from Loki's immediate environment are drawn in to support the argument, or to illustrate the wealth of scholarly surmise the subject has attracted: Nál, Loki's mother, for example, is elucidated by such comparisons as *Teufelsnadel*, 'Devil's Bride', apparently a Swiss word for dragonfly, or does *nál*, 'needle', being the word for a 'sharp object', as is *pike*, suggest Loki's piscine ancestry (p. 195)? Stories that show

Loki as a trickster, in Liberman's argument, are late; in origin he is a chthonian deity, and thus identifiable with Útgarðaloki.

If I have chosen to examine this one essay at disproportionate length, it is because it is symptomatic of the collection. The wealth lies in the detail: the combination of widespread reading of scholarship and the use of the most apparently disparate etymological details in pursuit of a common objective is typical of Liberman's method. So, too, is a tendency toward unexplained categorical statements of views we may be less inclined to concur with than Liberman thinks we should. Can we really accept his statement that mistletoe can 'under no circumstances become a deadly weapon' (p. 201) in a world-view in which poetry can be swallowed as mead and the wolf Fenrir be fettered with a silken band? Why should Beowulfian phrases in *Andreas* (Essay 9, 'Beowulf-Grettir', p. 140) not be quotations? Or the 'patchiness' of the *Nibelungenlied* (even if we agree that this 'patchiness' exists) be a satisfactory reason for dismissing *Beowulf* as a coherent whole: 'Beowulf is a mediaeval poem; and a total unity of artistic design should not be assumed for it: suffice it to remember how patchy the *Nibelungenlied* is' (Essay 7, 'Germanic *sendan*, "to make a sacrifice"', p. 111). And has Steblin-Kamenskij, in *The Saga Mind*, really told us 'the truth (not the syncretic truth but just the truth) about authorship and fiction in early Scandinavia' (p. 85)?

Etymology pure, rather than in the service of mythology, is revealed in the second of the essays I would take as exemplary of the collection: Essay 14, 'Some Germanic Words Beginning with *ft-*: Language at Play' (pp. 264–91). Here, the issue at stake is that of iconicity; does the phonetic structure of words with similar initials owe its origin to semantic constraint? To what extent is *Ablaut* a grammatical, distinctive feature, and to what extent merely an expression of linguistic freedom? Since the age of the Neogrammarians, conventional philology has relied on the concept of stable laws of linguistic change; against this Liberman postulates a force towards iconicity which pushes linguistic instability to the verge of the chaotic. In the terms of contemporary informatics, his is a concept of fuzzy linguistics.

Logically, in arguing for fuzzy linguistics, Liberman argues against dogmatism—even if elsewhere in the collection he is guilty of the same sin himself. In the article immediately following the one just discussed, he takes issue with the dogmatism of etymological dictionaries and, in reviewing Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon's Icelandic etymological dictionary (Essay 15, pp. 292–302) provides an example of how an entry in a non-dogmatic dictionary should be written (pp. 300–01). He disclaims this is a model, but if it is not, what is it? Certainly it establishes the principle that the ideal etymological dictionary should present a summary history of etymological research on each word offered, rather than attempting to propose a definite etymology of its own.

For the present reviewer, the most interesting section of the collection was the one that had least to do with the subject matter: the introduction, in which Liberman outlines the problems he faced as a Jewish student before emigrating from the Stalinist Soviet Union. Liberman's sharp words for the Communists of the West to which he emigrated, especially Italy, have a certain poignancy

in a post-Berlin Wall age, especially from a standpoint in the East of Germany, and in an age in which late capitalist philistinism seems to be the major inhibition to scholarly freedom of expression.

The book is by no means free of misprints, possibly the most creative of these being the one that makes Harald Hardrada into one of the Eumenides, 'Kind Haraldr' (p. 62). The editorial practice is somewhat puzzling in places, as when Icelandic names are not printed with diacritics when part of a bibliographical reference, giving us on p. 61 the sentence 'Hrafnhildur Bððvarsdóttir (Bodvarsdottir [1976]) showed . . . ' or when Icelandic words are italicised as foreign terms, but given English plurals: 'visas' or '*vísur*', surely, but not *vísas*. The attractive cardboard binding of my copy stood up to some pretty rough handling without showing undue signs of wear or loosening pages.

The book is announced as the first volume of Liberman's selected writings. Quirks notwithstanding, it whets one's appetite for Volume Two.

STEPHEN N. TRANTER

THE SAINTS IN ICELAND: THEIR VENERATION FROM THE CONVERSION TO 1400. By MARGARET CORMACK. With a preface by PETER FOOTE. *Subsidia Hagiographica* 78. *Société des Bollandistes*. Bruxelles, 1994. xii + 296 pp.

Thoroughness and carefulness are the hallmarks of this, the first part of a projected two-volume work on the Saints in Iceland. This volume deals with material relating to the four centuries after AD 1000: the second is planned to cover the period from 1400 to the Reformation.

The study proper comprises three main parts. In the first, Dr Cormack examines different sources of information relating to the saints: records concerning their feast days; inventories of church property (*máldagar*), which usually mention the name of the patron saint (or saints) of the church; hagiographic literature, principally Old Norse prose literature but not excluding Latin and poetic texts; personal names which reflect those of individual saints; and information from annals and other narrative sources concerning the forms which veneration of the saints might take (feasts, fasts, vows, prayers, offerings, pilgrimages and the adoration of relics). This examination is based on more detailed information given in the other parts. Of these, Part II comprises a list of the saints known from one or other of the above kinds of information (and also, exceptionally, from the very sparse survivals in the form of church ornaments and vestments) to have been patrons or co-patrons of individual ecclesiastical buildings, or to have been represented there by, for example, images or a copy of the saint's life. Part III is a list of the Icelandic churches, chapels etc. and the saints associated with them. These three parts are preceded by a brief introduction to Icelandic ecclesiastical literature intended for the layman and based firmly on existing scholarship, and followed by various appendices, a substantial bibliography and a selective index, and a map of Iceland showing (almost all) the ecclesiastical buildings to which reference is made.

In his preface to the work, Peter Foote commends Dr Cormack's reliability and caution in presenting the material she has investigated, and the present reviewer is happy to echo this commendation wholeheartedly. Only very occasionally might one perhaps call into question her identifications; thus, I am not certain that the *giorninga bok* mentioned at page 81 was indeed a version of the *Acts of the Apostles*, as Olmer thought, since in the list in which it appears it is preceded by a *messubok* and followed by a *martyrologium* (*Diplomatarium Islandicum* II 427).

The presentation is virtually immaculate, another testimony to the author's exceptional vigilance; I have observed only a half-dozen insignificant misprints in the entire work ('sensivity' for 'sensitivity' on page 10, 'Maunday' for 'Maundy' on page 111, and one or two missing apostrophes and accents). A few statements might with advantage be slightly modified: the comment on Hákon Magnússon at page 127 (note 291), for instance, or the at first sight rather startling statement at page 82 about the author of the preface ('A text on the fates of the apostles has been edited from a ms. written c. 1360 by P. Foote (1976)'). A pernickety critic might react adversely to the decision to treat modern Icelandic patronymics as surnames in the Bibliography, while medieval names are given in the traditional manner in the index; another might question the decision to translate Icelandic quotations into English but not Latin ones (a decision no doubt reflecting the publisher's normal practice).

But these are trivial matters. What is important is to recognise the immense diligence and care Dr Cormack has displayed in this erudite and well-researched volume, and to wish her well as she works towards the completion of her planned task.

I. J. KIRBY

THE VIKING-AGE GOLD AND SILVER OF SCOTLAND (AD 850–1100). By James Graham-Campbell. *National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh*, 1995. vii + 260 pp., 65 figs, 75 plates.

This most welcome study draws together what is known about all the recorded gold and silver objects from Scotland which were made or owned by Scandinavian settlers or their descendants. There is little material which can be attributed to a time before the coin-dated hoards, all of which were deposited after c.930; at the other end of the chronological spectrum, all hoarding appears to have ceased after the 1260s. A small quantity of 'late Norse' (later eleventh- and twelfth-century) material, particularly finger-rings, is also incorporated. Included throughout are Professor Graham-Campbell's judicious revisions and updatings of earlier (often his own) attributions and commentaries. Excluded from the catalogue is material ascribed to native insular traditions, even if it may have been hidden in anticipation of Viking raiding. Nonetheless, even some of these pieces, such as the Croy and Talnotrie hoards and the Hunterston and Westness brooches, an Anglo-Saxon gold finger-ring from near Selkirk, and a silver horn-mount from Burghead, are illustrated and briefly discussed.

After sections which define the work-scope, the collection is introduced in its order of discovery, from the seventeenth century to 1993 (pp. 9–14). This is a useful, indeed fascinating, antiquarian and archaeological review, and also serves as an introduction to the order in which the material is catalogued. The four hundred or so catalogued items come from thirty-four hoards and twenty-five single finds. The hoards may be bullion only, or a mixture of bullion with coins or coin only. The coins, which are not discussed or described individually, provide both dating information and evidence for the external contacts (and thus the source of the silver) of these Scandinavian settlers. In Chapter II, D. M. Metcalf summarises the monetary significance of the coin-hoards (pp. 16–25).

Discussion (pp. 26–33) of the small number of early hoards and related finds, that is from the period c.850–950, includes sections on Pictish and other insular silver, Hiberno-Viking arm-rings, gold rings and silver pins. The marks left through testing the silver by nicking and pecking have been rigorously noted, and are also a topic of further comment. There follows a substantial chapter (pp. 34–48) devoted to the Skaill, Orkney, hoard of c.950–70. This is by far the largest Viking-Age treasure from Scotland, and contains prestige ornaments, among them some ‘ball-type’ penannular brooches with what Graham-Campbell, in an important art-historical précis, argues is Mammen style ornament. Concomitant metallurgical analysis by Wilthew (Appendix I; pp. 63–72) of brooches, arm-rings and neck-rings from the Skaill hoard reveals them to be of high quality silver, but leaves open such questions as workshop location and chronology. Kruse and Tate’s discussion of metallurgical analysis (Appendix II; pp. 73–82) ranges more widely through the material; they note that Arabic coins probably account for the purity of silver in objects from Skaill. In contrast, the late hoard from Burray has a relatively base silver, perhaps deliberately alloyed in the face of a silver shortage.

The hoards and related finds of c.950–1100 are discussed next. Included with the introduction to this later material is a note by Leslie Webster (pp. 49–51) on the unusual Iona ring, and the broadly comparable ring from Hitchen, Herts; this is one of the few points in the book (another being the ‘details’ of the trichinopoly chain from Inch Kenneth, Mull, Pl. 3c) where illustration is unfortunately inadequate to allow full appreciation of the objects. The Burray, Orkney, hoard is also discussed here—as with Skaill, this is the first full treatment of this important find.

This section of the book concludes with a chapter dealing with ‘Contents and Contexts’ (pp. 57–62). Insofar as the form of the bullion is concerned, the hoards almost exclusively comprise standard Scandinavian types of ornament and their insular variants. They were manufactured in standard ways, most often hammered from ingots into rods which were then bent, twisted or plaited into finger-, arm- or neck-rings; rarer are the technically more sophisticated processes of lost-wax casting and engraving found on the ‘ball-type’ brooches. Punch decoration was common, and Graham-Campbell has assembled all the currently known variants of punch designs; this demonstrates that the bar stamps used to ornament the Hiberno-Viking armrings were a distinctively separate group.

A review of the characteristically Scottish 'ring-money' shows that it was deposited in the Scottish hoards c.950–1050; the earliest dated occurrence, however, is from the Goldsborough (Yorkshire) hoard of c.920. The typology and metrology of 'ring money' require further assessment, and data to facilitate this are published here. Assessment of the hacksilver, on the premise that the more regularly silver is exchanged, the more it will have been fragmented and nicked in testing, reveals that Viking-Age Scotland was a relatively inactive and unsophisticated economy.

Find circumstances often militate against detailed records of the location and context of hoard deposition, although there was clearly a predilection for prehistoric and natural mounds, as well as church or monastic sites. The small size and fragmentary condition of most single finds from settlement sites indicates that usually they were lost during commercial or metal-working activities. The remarkable find by a diver of a gold arm-ring on the sea-bed in the Sound of Jura raises the possibility of ritual offering. Here some further details of the find-spot—for example the distance from land—would have been of interest.

In terms of distribution, the material is mostly in the western and northern isles, the areas of primary Scandinavian settlement, where it might be expected; there is, however, a small group from the south-east. Chronologically, most tenth-century hoards are from the west of Scotland, and most eleventh-century ones are from the north. When it comes to determining the reasons for hoard deposition, Graham-Campbell is cautious, and would link only the Iona Abbey hoard with a historical event (in this case, a documented Viking raid on the monastery in 986).

The second part of the work consists firstly of check-lists arranged in chronological order of deposition (pp. 83–90), followed by catalogues arranged in order of discovery (pp. 91–168). The catalogues are a mine of information—they often quote antiquarian sources *in extenso*, and in several cases report oral traditions gathered by Olwyn Owen which allow more precise find spots to be attributed. They provide detailed bibliographies, cross-refer to comparanda in Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia and beyond, and contain specialist reports on a wooden container for the Burray hoard and on textile remains associated with the Lewis Castle, Stornoway, hoard.

Virtually every one of the items, no matter how small or apparently standard/featureless a fragment, is shown in a series of good quality black and white photographs. It is a pity that a small number of single finds from excavations in Orkney in the late 1960s to early 1980s are not included. The line-drawings—maps, plans, artistic motifs, and diagrams, most of them (like the plates) prepared specifically for this book—are both helpful and of a high standard.

Professor Graham-Campbell and his team of contributors have succeeded admirably in making details of this material readily available, and it is a work of which the Royal Museum of Scotland may rightly feel proud. It also promises things to come, ranging from a detailed study of the Colonsay Viking hoard to an overview of the Pictish material, all of which will assist in putting this material into a wider perspective. And the fact that this work has high-

lighted unanswered questions—Why does the geographical focus of hoarding change from the tenth to the eleventh century? Why did hoarding stop in the 1060s?—is a testimony to its synoptic value. This is a work not only for specialists in Viking-age precious metalwork; it has a significance for all students of Scandinavian settlement and of the broader Scandinavian contributions to the archaeology of the British Isles.

R. A. HALL

SAGAS AND POPULAR ANTIQUARIANISM IN ICELANDIC ARCHAEOLOGY. By ADOLF FRIÐRIKSSON. *Worldwide Archaeology Series* 10. Aldershot 1994. ix + 212 pp., 95 figs.

In what he describes as ‘a critical review of interpretation in Icelandic archaeology, with particular reference to literature and folk-lore studies’ Adolf Friðriksson asserts (p. 16) that ‘sagas, place-names and folk-lore have formed the cosmology of Icelandic archaeology’. He goes on to dissect how ‘the hegemony of literature’ (p. 45) has influenced popular antiquarianism, a phenomenon which he defines (p. vii) as spontaneous curiosity, part folk-lore and part archaeology. His method is to chart, chapter by chapter, how antiquarians and archaeologists sought examples of different classes of site, identifying them on the basis of saga references or through other clues which ultimately derive from the sagas (‘speculative topographic observation’, p. 108), excavated them, and then, usually, claimed that the results vindicated the saga in question.

A change in this procedure was personified in Kristján Eldjárn, who became sceptical of it during his time as State Antiquary and Director of the National Museum (1948–68). But thenceforth, claims the author, most Icelandic archaeologists have remained under the influence of what are now more deeply submerged preconceptions, unconsciously bolstering them by indulging in ‘highly sophisticated scientific research and advanced theorization’ (p. 108).

On occasion the substance of these arguments suffers through being expressed in a slightly unusual English phraseology. An ambiguous use of language is also frustrating; was it Eldjárn or is it the author who states (p. 21) that Roman coins are rarely found in Ireland, Scotland and the Northern Isles? Whoever it was, some reference here to Bateson’s papers on Roman coins in Ireland (for example, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 76, 1976) would have been appropriate and instructive. More remarkable omissions are explained, although not excused, by the author’s belief that popular antiquarianism, as he defines it, has not been the subject of previous study. This is to turn a blind eye to a range of earlier studies; in England alone, those by Leslie Grinsell come immediately to mind.

Several points of detail in the discussion are questionable. The author seems to teeter on the edge of the trap which he himself has defined when discussing the possibility of finding the alleged burials of some of Iceland’s original settlers (p. 75); and are the supposed late ninth century remains discovered at Reykjavík (pp. 159–61) certainly of that date? Remains excavated at Hegranes

are accepted as representing a temporary booth (p. 128), although ‘almost half’ (or perhaps more?) of the structure has been lost through erosion; and it is suggested (p. 33) that the island of Papey may have got its name because it has many hills of beehive shape, ‘quite like those houses which the Vikings must have seen in the west, such as on Skellig Michael,’ even though there is no evidence that the Skellig Michael buildings are as early as the Viking Age—that is itself ultimately a piece of ‘popular antiquarianism’.

Over and above these points, however, the basic historiographical commentary on some well-known sites makes fascinating, if archaeologically alarming, reading. A good example is the study (pp. 110–13) of how *Eyrbyggja saga* has influenced expectations about the so-called ‘court circle’ at Þórsnesþing, and how antiquarians have had the eyes to see its remains in many different locations: ‘the perpetually changing lore shows the vivid creativity of popular antiquarianism’. The author concludes (p. 144) that at present there is no secure method of identifying assembly sites. And he is similarly sceptical about the validity of dating the remains of farms, opining that the paucity of well excavated and independently dated examples means that ‘generalizations about the age or chronology of house types have as yet no sound basis’ (p. 158).

Adolf Friðriksson would redirect Icelandic archaeology into an approach which concentrates on themes rather than individual sites, and which uses saga analogy in the interpretation of remains which are contemporary with the writing of the saga. Although sometimes questionable in its arguments, as noted above, short on detailed analysis and marred by some indifferent line drawings and truly awful reproduction of photographs, this short book will play a part in shaping Icelandic archaeological research. It should be included on the reading list of every course which explores the legacy of saga literature.

R. A. HALL

NORTHERN ANTIQUITY: THE POST-MEDIEVAL RECEPTION OF EDDA AND SAGA. Edited by ANDREW WAWN. *Hisarlik Press*. Enfield Lock, Middlesex, 1994. x + 342 pp.

Inasmuch as the ‘post-medieval’ period continues on to the present day, all of us who study, teach and are inspired by the Eddas and sagas have something in common with the subjects of this interesting and important collection of essays. We continue as they did to create the past, to value the old texts for those things that we can perceive as being relevant to our own lives and times and as forwarding our own ideologies and doctrines. No doubt, too, each generation of scholars reacts in complex ways to the achievements and limitations of its precursors. We are uneasily aware of both our indebtedness to them and our superior sophistication—attitudes that in the nature of things are bound in another generation to seem biased and transparent.

Jesse L. Byock’s essay in this volume begins by quoting a number of crude ethnic slurs that Friedrich Engels, in letters to Karl Marx, directed against each of the Scandinavian nationalities. It is an appropriate viewpoint from which to consider the extent to which Scandinavians and other lovers of medieval

Icelandic literature may have been justified in believing that they had something to prove in the larger European context—some pretty hefty axes to grind. The tension they experienced between the cultural North and South in Europe energises and gives focus to much of the scholarly activity described in these essays.

Mats Malm's essay, 'Olaus Rudbeck's *Atlantica* and Old Norse Poetics,' about the work of a writer who thought Sweden was the lost land of Atlantis, emphasises, as do several other studies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philology here, that the historical or at least legendary past was the central topic of interest. Here the *fornaldarsögur*, *Heimskringla* and what could be gleaned of pagan religion took precedence over poetry and fiction considered more purely as art. Malm also claims a scientific soundness for much early empirical philology, despite the bizarre conclusions to which, at least in Rudbeck's huge work, it was expected to lead. Related in subject to Malm's essay are Jan Ragnar Hagland's 'The Reception of Old Norse Literature in Late Eighteenth-Century Norway' and Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen's 'Grundtvig's Norse Mythological Imagery—an Experiment that Failed.' The former shows how Norway, too, in contrast to England, Germany and Denmark, was at the end of the eighteenth century more interested in Old Norse history than poetry. In his rich and interesting study Lundgreen-Nielsen describes events a century later, when N. F. S. Grundtvig's desire to formulate a national imagery out of Old Norse myths collided with a Romantic quest for aesthetic originality, realism and individualism that emphasised character rather than the flat events of myth. Régis Boyer's 'Vikings, Sagas and Wasa Bread' is a learned and entertaining account of various myths of the Vikings through the ages in France. In a conclusion that might appropriately serve for this volume as a whole, he observes that since the myths of the Vikings were based largely on an ignorance of historical fact, what they really reflected instead was various aspects of the French imagination.

Iceland has gone through its own versions of the present's dialogue with the past, and four of the essays in this volume take up one aspect or another of the theme. M. J. Driscoll's 'Traditionality and Antiquarianism in the Post-Reformation *lygisaga*' and Jürg Glauser's 'The End of the Saga: Text, Tradition and Transmission in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Iceland' both deal to a large extent with the transition from a strict separation in Icelandic literary practice between the use of manuscripts for reproducing traditional Icelandic literature that was designed for communal reading and the exclusive use of printing for learned publication. Driscoll uses the ten romances that have been attributed to the learned séra Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín (1749–1835) to argue for an unbroken tradition of saga narrative in Iceland for nearly a thousand years. To do this he must assert, and this is the whole point, that the scholarly rejection of late narratives of fantasy and romance, like those written by Hjaltalín, results in a distortion and diminution of Icelandic literary history. The historical context of Glauser's study is similar, although his theme is different: the consternation produced in sophisticated literary circles when the classic sagas began to be issued in popular printed editions. The quotations are almost

the best feature of this thoughtful study. He opens by quoting a stunningly élitist attack by Benedikt Sveinbjarnarson Gröndal on the printed edition of *Fjórar Riddarasögur* (1852) issued early in his career by the famous printer Einar Þórðarson, and closes with the comic and ironic account in *Sjálfstætt fólk* of Bjartur's trip to the bookstore with Ásta Sóllilja, where he discovers that thirty years have passed since the last remaining copy of *Örvar-Odds saga* was sold, and that the modern era of mass-produced middle-brow books is firmly in place.

The story of Laxness's own involvement with popular modern-spelling editions of the sagas is well told by Jón Karl Helgason in his 'We Who Cherish *Njáls saga*: The Alþingi as Literary Patron.' For readers familiar with Icelandic publishing in the last half century and the changing roles of the political parties in cultural politics, this is obligatory reading, full of little ironies such as the canny capitalist marketing by the far-left Mál og menning, which as we know has recently, under a conservative government, taken over the distribution of many books once published by Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, an entity created by vehemently anti-Communist elements in the Alþingi to issue an edition of *Njáls saga* as a pre-emptive strike against Laxness's version. This is cultural warfare in the trenches, whereas Jesse Byock's concern in 'Modern Nationalism and the Medieval Sagas' is, among other things, to examine the corner into which the Icelandic book-prose partisans painted themselves in their belief that all great narrative art must be the product of individual fiction writers rather than an inherited traditional account of the past. In this respect, as in Matthew Driscoll's charge against a partial and biased literary canon, Sigurður Nordal comes in for the inevitable fault-finding. It is almost time for this multifaceted and charismatic figure to become the subject of an essay on his own in a future collection like this one.

The ample and scholarly study by Judy Quinn and Margaret Clunies Ross of 'The Image of Norse Poetry and Myth in Seventeenth-Century England' cannot receive justice in a short review. Its most interesting point to me—and one that resonates with the general theme of the volume—is that, largely through ignorance, Old Norse verse was believed to have been a source of the barbarism of rhyme in European poetry, as opposed to the quantitative verse of the ancient Greeks and Romans. In the case of nineteenth-century English friends of Scandinavia—like Samuel Laing, George Stephens, George Webbe Dasent, William Morris, W. G. Collingwood, Sir Edmund Head, Sabine Baring-Gould, George E. J. Powell, John Sephton—their sense of an embattled North was directed less toward nationalistic rivals than against perceived prejudices and failures in their own society and inherited culture. The world of the sagas was, if not a Utopia, then a repository of social and ethical virtue. The central essay of the collection, by its editor Andrew Wawn, on 'The Cult of "Stalwart Friththjof" in Victorian Britain', is a thoughtful and charmingly written development of this theme. It is a model of the kind of reception study illustrated in the volume as a whole, recreating in rich detail the various cultural contexts for both the Icelandic *Friðþjófs saga hins frækna* and Bishop Esaias Tegnér's *Frithiofs saga* (1824) which was based on it.

A central element in the reception of the sagas of Iceland is their translation. John Kennedy's 'The Translations of *Völsunga saga*' provides a judicious and even-handed description of the five we have, beginning with Magnússon and Morris in 1870. He concludes by suggesting that the archaisers are not entirely wrong. He may be swimming against the tide, however, in his desire to see translators today keeping the verb tenses and sentence structure of the originals. W. H. Auden, also associated with translation from Icelandic, is the subject of Sveinn Haraldsson's '“The North Begins Inside”: Auden, Ancestry and Iceland', which deals not with Auden's writing but with his family's idea that they were of Icelandic descent. They probably weren't, but it almost did not matter as long as they had it 'inside'. It is a nice story: the poet's father, Dr George Augustus Auden, a distinguished physician with broad scholarly interests, was clearly responsible for his son's attraction to the North. Julian Meldon D'Arcy's essay on 'George Mackay Brown and *Orkneyinga saga*' is a thought-provoking study of the steady influence of the saga on the work of this appealing modern Orcadian poet and novelist, whose religious themes have often led him to alter the saga in an attempt to define an appropriate Christian way of life.

All the essays in this volume are fully and carefully documented, with the result that they will doubtless serve as reference material for future researchers. There is an index of proper nouns and titles, and the text is essentially error-free. All that remains is to praise Ian Duhig's poem 'The Gloss', with which the volume ends. It is an elemental and ironic evocation of the remains of ancient men from the North on the modern British land and sensibility. More powerfully than any of the essays, it insists upon the pastness of the past.

ROBERT KELLOGG

GESCHICHTEN AUS THULE: ÍSLENDINGASÖGUR IN ÜBERSETZUNGEN DEUTSCHER GERMANISTEN. By JULIA ZERNACK. *Berliner Beiträge zur Skandinavistik* 3. *Freie Universität Berlin*. Berlin, 1994. x + 421 pp. + booklet of 49 pp.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the attempt has recently been made to show that the glossary translations of *Beowulf* in Klaeber's edition are distorted by 'culturally based assumptions' stemming from Klaeber's German upbringing (Josephine Bloomfield in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93 (1994), 183–203). In *Geschichten aus Thule*, the revised version of her 1992 Berlin dissertation, Julia Zernack takes aim at an equally famous corpus, the saga translations published in the 'Sammlung Thule' between 1911 and 1930 and frequently reprinted, together with other German saga translations of the past two centuries. The real purpose of the Thule collection, she suspects, was not so much the philologically faithful translation of Old Norse literature as it was 'the popularisation of the *Germanenmythos*' (p. 208). Indeed, Zernack rejects the notion of 'philological faithfulness' as a quality rendering a translation immune to ideological influences (for example pp. 239, 255), and she gives the philologically trained translators particular blame for fostering—willingly

or not—an image of the sagas that ‘may have functioned as one of the decisive catalysts in the political radicalising of Germanomania’ during the rise of Nazism (p. 346; see also pp. 75–76, 316, 365). The book has three parts: a historical survey of the German-speaking reception of Old Norse literature, especially in the form of translations (pp. 11–96), a stylistic analysis of selected translations (pp. 97–315) and a concluding discussion of the ideological aspects of saga reception (pp. 316–73). The bibliography of 822 titles includes over 300 German translations and adaptations of saga material, together with a few original efforts ‘in saga style’. (The list of translations may be superseded by Zernack’s *Bibliographie der deutschsprachigen Sagaübersetzungen*, which is in preparation as volume 4 of the *Berliner Beiträge* series.) Zernack’s bibliographical thoroughness guarantees that her treatment of these much-discussed aspects of German intellectual history will have to be taken seriously.

The core of the book, however, is its linguistic component. Although it was clear from the beginning that the Thule collection modernised and ‘smoothed out’ the language of the sagas to some extent (see, for example, the 1913 review cited on p. 208), Zernack has now catalogued numerous ways in which the ‘cultural gap’ separating the sagas from modern German readers was artificially bridged, focusing on translations by Gustav Neckel (*Hrafnkels saga*), Andreas Heusler (*Hænsa-Þóris saga*), Rudolf Meissner (*Laxdæla saga*), and Friedrich Ranke (*Gisla saga*): a simulated colloquial style manifested in parataxis, anacoluthon, redundant deixis, contracted word forms, modal particles and formulas, familiar figures of speech and relaxation of the requirements of the German clause frame (*Satzklammer*) in ways characteristic of spoken language; levelling of tense shifts; translation of place names and personal bynames into German; the simplifying translation of culture-specific terms, such as *Bauer* for *bóndi*; various other semantic shifts, such as the prejudicial use of loaded words in characterisations; and finally, the selection of the ‘canon’ of texts to be translated in the first place. I had to compile this list from various parts of the book (though there is an index of authors, there is no subject index); students of stylistics might have been grateful for a central checklist of the features mentioned, perhaps with rough indications of their distribution, especially since Zernack shows that not all of the Thule translators (let alone the others) worked alike, and some revised extensively for later editions.

Despite the value of many individual observations, the procedure in the linguistic part of the book is open to question in several respects. Reception theory, especially in the example of Ursula Rautenberg’s 1985 study of translations from Middle High German, leads Zernack to reject the traditional application of standards of ‘equivalence’ in favour of a descriptive approach concentrating on the target language and the ‘shifts’ discernible in the translation. But to judge from this book, one might conclude that the only achievement of ‘modern translation studies’ is a new terminology for the idea that translators’ stylistic decisions are subjective; Zernack uses this terminology uncritically. (Is translation analysis any richer for the term *coupled pair*, for instance, which is supposed to designate the juxtaposition of a piece of original text with its translation for purposes of comparison?) The reader’s confidence in this

theoretical framework is hardly strengthened by the fact that Zernack fails to observe one of its ostensible tenets. Although she carefully distinguishes normative, subjective *Fehlerkritik* from purely descriptive translation analysis and promises to undertake only the latter (for instance pp. 80–82, 101–02, 112), she does not, for it soon becomes evident that she is not neutral: she prefers translations that convey as much ‘foreign’ flavour as possible (for example pp. 160–63, 285 n. 21, 329), since the practice of filtering it out amounts to a ‘conquering translation’, a kind of ‘cultural imperialism’ (pp. 333, 341, 343).

The stylistic descriptions are marred by various inaccuracies, such as the consistent misapplication of the terms *Prolepse*, *Inversion* and *Finalsatz*. Also, given Zernack’s admission that so little is known about the historical stylistics of both German (pp. 130, 135) and Icelandic (pp. 162 n. 14, 228 n. 20), the fact that she nevertheless does occasionally pronounce judgement on what was ‘marked’ and ‘unmarked’ in source text and translation (as on p. 235) gives pause; no theoretical justification for the use of these terms is offered. Similar objections could be raised to the enigmatic appearance of the *langue–parole* opposition on pages 119, 125, and 127.

The most fundamental methodological difficulty, as one would expect, is the link between the stylistic and the ideological planes. There is no doubt that there was a tendency in the Thule series to smooth over the ‘otherness’ of the source culture, but certain elements observed by Zernack, such as Neckel’s alliterations, Heusler’s exaggerated faithfulness to saga syntax or Ranke’s partly archaic diction, point in the opposite direction; Zernack herself concludes that Heusler built syntactic ‘hurdles’ into his translations for reasons connected with his desire to revitalise the German language (pp. 231, 255). Determining whether a given translation practice preserves or obliterates the otherness of the source text is not as easy as one might think; the translation of place names into the target language seems to Zernack to mask the local colour of the original (p. 285), but it can be argued that translation rather *brings out* the local colour in this case (Hans Naumann in an early review, p. 88 n. 22). Equally problematic is the reconstruction of the translators’ motives; Zernack speaks anachronistically of ‘a translation theory’ that appears to have ‘formed the basis of the [German] reception of the sagas as a whole’ in the period 1907–45 (p. 317). The premise that style is a product of ideology requires Zernack to look for an ulterior motive in every stylistic feature, but the resulting ‘analysis’ in many cases relies on innuendo and begging the question. In my opinion, an accurate reconstruction of the genesis of the Thule translations would require more attention to what used to be called aesthetics, such as rhythmic considerations, which Zernack only rarely mentions (pp. 135, 232–34). But Zernack does not believe in the traditional notion of aesthetic judgement (see pp. 42–43, 113).

The external presentation of the volume is highly professional, and the text of *Hrafnkels saga* in the original and two translations is printed synoptically in a supplementary booklet tucked inside the back cover. In note 22 on page 265, the page numbers for three of six cited phrases are incorrect or missing, but otherwise I noticed only a dozen typographical errors. The presentation is not

helped by Zernack's peremptory and aggressive tone, especially in connection with the work of scholars she considers to be behind the times. Too often, publications she could have drawn on for support (or should have identified as forerunners to her own work) are dismissed as uninteresting. On the other hand, she sometimes gives too much credit. On page 365, where she points out that the Eddic *dómr um dauðan hvern*, often translated as 'fame', actually has the neutral meaning 'judgement', her footnote tells us that this observation 'was already made by Ernst Walter' in an essay of 1987. If Zernack wants to use the word *already*, how about mentioning Viktor Rydberg, who made the same point in 1886 (*Undersökningar i germansk Mythologi*, I 373)?

MARVIN TAYLOR

OLD NORSE STUDIES IN THE NEW WORLD. Edited by GERALDINE BARNES, MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS and JUDY QUINN. *Department of English, University of Sydney*: Sydney, 1994. 156 pp.

This collection of papers was published to 'celebrate the Jubilee of the teaching of Old Norse at the University of Sydney 1943–1993'. Such an occasion was well worth celebrating not just as a salute to the past, but as a marker for the future—and what a future it may prove to be, if we recall Gabriel Turville-Petre's bewildering 1969 prophecy: 'I think the future of Icelandic studies in the English speaking world lies there [in Australia]'. Margaret Clunies Ross, in a barnstorming opening paper, reflects on what Turville-Petre might have meant. She believes that in his visits to Australia he had been surprised and stimulated by the high levels of literary sensibility with which his Melbourne students approached the challenge of scaldic verse. Years of teaching his Oxford pupils had perhaps not entirely accustomed him to this. Such openness to new approaches and unfamiliar texts remains, she suggests, a distinctive (or at least a prominent) feature of the antipodean approach to Icelandic studies.

There is certainly evidence in these papers of some vigorous current scholarship in Australia and New Zealand. The contributions are: Leath Davey, 'Memories of the First Old Norse Class Taught at Sydney University by George Pelham Shipp'; Geraldine Barnes, 'Reinventing Paradise: Vínland 1000–1992'; Graham Barwell and John Kennedy, 'Charles Venn Pilcher: Bishop Coadjutor of Sydney and Translator from the Icelandic'; Graham Barwell and John Kennedy (eds), 'Two Icelandic Medieval Passion-poems'; B. K. Martin, 'Snorri's Myth about Hrungrnir: Literary Perspectives'; John Stanley Martin, 'People, Milestones and Memories: Some Reflections on the Teaching of Old Norse in Melbourne 1944–1993'; Russell Poole, 'Constructions of Fate in Victorian Philology and Literature'; Judy Quinn, '*Völuspá* in Twentieth-Century Scholarship in English'; Kellinde Wrightson, 'Changing Attitudes to Old Icelandic Marian Poetry'. Weighing in as an honorary Australian, by virtue of his having been 1993 Triebel Lecturer in Sydney, John Lindow has contributed the paper 'Interpreting Baldr, the Dying God', a valuable additional item.

Readers of the volume may be struck by three recurrent emphases. Firstly there is a keen but measured engagement with recent developments in literary and editorial theory. The reader is spared wearisome obfuscation; theoretical understandings are used as a stimulus to return to primary texts, rather than as an excuse to avoid all further contact with them. Secondly, there is evidence of attention to unfashionable primary works—notably the medieval Christian poetry of Iceland (Barwell and Kennedy, Wrightson), texts which were once much studied by supporters of the Oxford movement in Victorian Britain. Thirdly, the post-medieval reception of old northern texts is emphasised. This is not a new subject-area, either; Frank Farley, Ethel Seaton, Jack Bennett and others beavered mightily away earlier in the century apparently without requiring any empowering authorisation from impenetrable theoretical gurus. The lively papers by Barnes, Poole and Quinn, in their very different ways and styles, point to rich seams still to be mined. Geraldine Barnes's essay may underestimate Victorian fiction's fascination with Vinland: there was, for instance, R. M. Ballantyne's doggedly gung-ho *The Norsemen in the West, or America before Columbus. A Tale*, and Kipling's remarkable 'The Greatest Story Ever Told' with its embryonic modernism.

Australians have long exercised the right to indulge in a measure of what in cricket parlance is known as 'Pommie bashing'; and a touch of that is discernible in a couple of the volume's contributions, all of it genial (I think), most of it directed at Oxford, and, for all we know, some of it once justified. Only those seriously deficient in a sense of humour will be incapable of riding the punches. The neutral reviewer does well to recall how reluctant the great George Stephens of Cheapinghaven was to take sides between warring scholars of Manx runes in the late nineteenth century; their conflicts reminded him of 'the heroes of our Northern Walhall, [they] slay each other with gusto day by day, and when the "shades of evening fall", retire to a jolly . . . [wake], like good fellows as they are'. Stephens thought it best to smile from the side-lines, though he did offer to 'dress their wounds or give them decent burial' (MS Bodleian Eng. misc. d. 131, letter to Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 9 March 1887).

The volume's attention to the history of Old Norse teaching in Australia over half a century has seemed wholly 'uninteresting' to one imperious recent reviewer (Kirsten Wolf, *Scandinavian Studies* 67 (1995), 388–90)—such issues 'cannot matter one whit to academic readers of this book'. In fact they matter several whits to the present reviewer; and it is not difficult to imagine other academic readers, aware of and sensitive to the ever-present problems of maintaining a vigorous Old Icelandic presence within large and not always sympathetic English Departments, who may be prepared to find a few moments in their crowded schedules to listen to and (even) learn from tales of yesteryear. Margaret Clunies Ross notes that in Australia 'all' the current threats to the subject area 'have to do with money' (p. 13). Would that it were so simple back in Britain where the turbulence created by modular restructuring has not always helped the philological cause, reawakening long dormant but still damaging 'language versus literature' tensions. But perhaps such thoughts serve to strike

too hard the 'doleful key' which, as Russell Poole reminds us, Frederick Metcalfe (the original 'Oxonian in Iceland') so loathed in whingeing Anglo-Saxon elegies and so relished the absence of in Old Norse literature. Some of the more practical pedagogical problems during those pioneering Australian days (papers by Clunies Ross, Davey and J. S. Martin) assuredly remain with us today, notably the precarious availability of appropriate texts, glossaries and grammars. The black market price for a well annotated Gordon has held up well over fifty years. In other respects, though, the anecdotes seem like grainy old newsreels from a lost world: flourishing Saturday afternoon translation classes, voluntary mid-week preparation meetings, saga reading groups enthusiastically attended by non-medievalist academic colleagues, and the unchallenged priority given to developing language skills in courses lasting two years and more.

It has become a predictable reviewers' trope when discussing essay collections to complain about lack of overall coherence, unevenness of quality, failure to convert lecture into essay, inconsistency of format, poor proof-reading and absence of index; and the present volume rings several of these bells. Tasmanian readers will deplore the absence of a single reference to Australasia's most celebrated old-time fair dinkum Icelandophile—Jörgen Jörgensen, the revolutionary leader of Iceland for several chaotic weeks in the summer of 1809, who spent the last thirty years of his life in dissolute exile in Hobart, dreaming all the time of the lava and lyme-grass which he had once ruled and been compelled to leave behind.

ANDREW WAWN

MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL, CORRESPONDENCE AND GRAPHIC MATERIAL IN THE FISKE ICELANDIC COLLECTION: A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE. By ÞÓRUNN SIGURÐARDÓTTIR. *Islandica* XLVIII. *Cornell University Press*: Ithaca and London, 1994. pp. xi + 291.

An authoritative history of Viking-Age studies in the United States has yet to be written, but there is little doubt that whoever undertakes it will be prominent amongst those with reason to be grateful to Þórunn Sigurðardóttir for compiling this comprehensive descriptive catalogue of the Icelandic manuscript and graphic materials accumulated first by Willard Fiske and then by Halldór Hermannsson in the Fiske Icelandic Collection at Cornell University. The Fiske Icelandic collection has long been famous as a major resource in old northern scholarship, and even those who have never visited Ithaca will have consulted the catalogue of its enviable holdings of printed books. The appointment of a new curator and now the appearance of this descriptive catalogue represent a welcome commitment to the future of the collection.

After a visit to the United States in the 1850s, the Norwegian scholar P. E. Munch wrote to an Edinburgh friend that the publication of C. C. Rafn's lavish documentary compilation *Antiquitates Americanae* (Copenhagen, 1837), with its detailed examination of the evidence for Viking-Age discovery of the continent, had 'set the Americans agog on this theme'. The young Willard Fiske was clearly amongst them, and it is the correspondence of just such enthusiasts

with Fiske himself (until his death in 1904) and with Halldór Hermannsson, during his forty-three year stewardship of the Ithaca collection, that features prominently in the manuscript holdings. We find antiquarians in New England eager to believe in the Viking-Age authenticity of the Kensington Stone and its runes (recent publicity suggests that this stone, like the poor, will always be with us). We meet mid-Western protestant zealots of Scandinavian descent determined to refashion a creation myth for the United States based on something other, earlier, more Northern and less Catholic than Christopher Columbus. We glimpse newly-built mansions in Newport, Rhode Island, being decorated with stained glass designed by Burne-Jones and William Morris, with panels featuring scenes from *Eiríks saga rauða* and quotations from *Hávamál*. The catalogue reminds us, too, of folk more modestly housed in the new Icelandic settlements in Manitoba, the Dakotas and beyond—citizens of ‘Nýja Ísland’ only too eager to sustain cultural links with their old Icelandic home. And, in the background, a number of the documents remind us poignantly of the high hopes placed on the settlement of Alaska by many a famine-stricken, volcanic eruption haunted Icelander during the 1870s and 1880s; this was to be the exciting new colony where butter would eventually drip from every straw, and whence, in due time and according to Jón Ólafsson’s dreams, a hundred million people of Icelandic descent would stream southward to dominate the United States and cleanse ‘ina afskræmdu ensku tungu’ spoken there.

The catalogue reveals that every fresh batch of mail to Halldór Hermannsson brought requests for help not only from relentlessly enthusiastic laymen, but also from the professorial classes in the old world as well as the new. There were productions of *Fjalla-Eyvindr* to encourage, editions of *Hrafnkels saga* and translations of *Vatnsdæla saga* to check and correct, and there was the challenge of fending off at least one professor from Leeds trying to scrounge free copies of the *Islandica* series volumes. Halldór’s role at Cornell seems not unlike that of Guðbrandur Vigfússon or Eiríkur Magnússon in Victorian Britain—a native Icelander of great learning, tireless scholarly energy and sometimes prickly temperament providing an authoritative focal point for the old northern enthusiasms of the nation, and indeed of far-flung continents.

About Fiske himself we can sense several significant features from the materials described in the catalogue. We may note, first, that there are no medieval Icelandic manuscripts in the Ithaca collection, and very few other pre-nineteenth-century items. No doubt by the time British collectors such as Sir Joseph Banks and Sabine Baring-Gould had finished their Icelandic travels, there were not many manuscripts left for collection; but Fiske himself seems to have believed that the proper place for Icelandic manuscripts was in Iceland. Secondly, Fiske’s notebooks reveal him to have been a fastidious recorder of volumes seen and volumes sought—he knew what he was looking for and had a network of well-disposed friends and acquaintances all over Europe and the United States eager to assist him in his bibliophilic quests. Thirdly, Fiske, a man of considerable wealth, was always generous in his dealings with Iceland. He was responsible for supplying many books to the Latin school in Reykjavík and to the Möðruvellir college run by his friend Jón Hjaltalín. Such well targeted

(and well intended) largesse no doubt helped him to win Icelandic friends—and his life-long love of chess will not have hurt him either; but Fiske had paid his dues in other ways. He spent a lot of time in Iceland, learned to speak the language and established friendships, not just with the good and the great of Reykjavík, but with folk out in the country. He had a particular fascination with remote Grímsey and, through the efforts of Þorvaldur Thoroddsen and others, assembled a mass of documentary material (including photographs) of the people and their pursuits. Fiske was not only a loyal member of the Reykjavík branch of the Icelandic Literary Society, but also a founding member of the Icelandic Archaeological Society, having been a member of Sigurður Vigfússon's party which, whilst visiting Þingvellir, had decided to form the society.

Accordingly, at a banquet during his 1879 visit, Fiske (along with his travelling companion Arthur Reeves) found himself the recipient of a celebratory poem written specially for the occasion by Steingrímur Thorsteinsson. No wonder so many young Icelanders were going west at just this time—the United States is depicted as a land of such freedom and opportunity:

Til foldar, þar heiðríkt skín frelsisins ljós,
þar finnast ei kóngar né þrælar,
þar manndáð er aðall og atorkan hrós,
sem ein gerir þjóðirnar sælar.

It was also, as Rafn and his successors had sought to prove, truly the land of their fathers:

Sem Leifur hinn heppni vér kætumst í kvöld,
þá kom hann að Vínlandi forna;
nú syngur og klingir hin fagnandi fjöld,
því fundið er landið sitt horfna:
“Hið forna Vínland er vínland nýtt”
frá vörum íslenzkum hljóma skal títt’.

Exaggeration is a traditional function of Icelandic panegyric, of course; but Steingrímur's head was not being ransomed, and the tribute seems to reflect genuine esteem for Fiske the man as well as fascination with the ‘vínland nýtt’.

Many other recurrent themes and features catch the eye in the catalogue. Fiske sought to encourage the preparation and publication of an English-Icelandic dictionary to match the Cleasby–Guðbrandur Vigfússon Icelandic-English volume; both Fiske (in a review) and Halldór (via an unpublished bibliography of scholarship) demonstrate their fondness for the once fashionable *Friðþjófs saga*; and the diversity of Fiske's correspondents is striking, with major figures such as Lord Dufferin, Konrad Maurer, Sophus Bugge, Jón Borgfirðingur (father of Finnur Jónsson) and Matthías Jochumsson rubbing shoulders with bizarre individuals such as Garth Wilkinson, a British Swedenborgian fanatic who had his horses eat Icelandic lava to keep their teeth clean while he prepared an impenetrable book-length allegorical analysis of *Völuspá*. Noteworthy, too, are the extent and importance of photographic materials in the Fiske holdings, notably those of the Englishman F. W. W.

Howell at the end of the nineteenth century. Just how powerful a witness such material can be has been demonstrated recently in the set of late Victorian photographs of Iceland published in Frank Ponzi's revelatory *Iceland—the Grim Years* (Mosfellsbær, 1995). The catalogue also reminds us that some of the best letters and documents are to be found either bound in at the front of or lying loosely within copies of otherwise unremarkable printed books.

As was to be expected of a new volume in a monograph series with a long tradition of cataloguing primary sources, Þórunn Sigurðardóttir's book presents its material in a clear and well-organised fashion. The descriptions of individual items are for the most part succinct and informative; details of pre-Fiske manuscript ownership enable us, for instance, to glimpse fleetingly some of the Icelandic manuscript holdings of famous nineteenth-century philological figures. Not all these names are to be found in the index, and neither are the names of other individuals (some of them of real interest) mentioned in the summary descriptions of correspondence though not themselves authors of letters. This is a pity; but the indexer's art is long to learn and life is short. On p. 15, Item 25 the 'someone by the name of Percy' who must return a book to Sir Joseph Banks is surely Bishop Thomas Percy, a relentless book-borrower during the preparation of his *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* (1763) and *Northern Antiquities* (1770). In the biographical details provided for significant figures, the compiler seems to have had rather more success locating birthdays than dates of death. Overall, the volume seems to have been seen through the press with appropriate care. I noticed only a couple of minor typos ('concul' for 'consul', p. 108, and 'Josept' for 'Joseph', p. 169); the 'með' (p. 253, 13.2) in a category heading ought to have been translated into English; and there seems no reason why 'f. ex.' (p. 169) could not have been 'e. g.', in conformity with the Latin abbreviations used elsewhere in the volume.

No doubt in some hypertextual, multi-media based future, volumes of this sort will seem quaintly old fashioned; and the contents of the Fiske collection will be accessible by the flick of a computer switch. Until such a day—and indeed well after such a day—Þórunn Sigurðardóttir's catalogue will serve its users well. It is well worthy of the series in which it appears and of the collection which it describes.

ANDREW WAWN

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