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ICELANDIC IN THE ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES

By ARNOLD TAYLOR

(Presidential address delivered at the ICELANDIC LEGATION,
12th February, 1954).

I am fortunate today, ladies and gentlemen, as your president in having the opportunity of addressing you on an occasion when the Society is the guest of H.E. The Icelandic Minister. It is not often that our society meets outside the precincts of some academic institution — indeed this is the first time that I can recall during my membership — and I should like first of all to say how glad I am that we should be enjoying the hospitality of our Icelandic friends. I feel the pleasure of it so keenly myself because I am of old well acquainted with Icelandic hospitality, and though I have no intention of wearying you with a recital of personal experiences I should like to tell you of one occasion when I was not only the recipient but, I might almost say, the victim of it.

Many years ago, as a young student, I was wandering about alone in the east of Iceland. It was a pleasant, though somewhat protracted business, for I had occasion to visit a great number of farms, and though in a hurry, as young students to their own misfortune very often are, I generally found myself delayed. One evening I crossed the ridge of Hellisheiði, between Vopnafjörður and Fljótsdalur, on horseback. I had been warned that no one had previously tried out the path that summer and that it would be better to take the longer road by way of Fagridalur. But that would have meant an extra day, which I thought I could ill afford. There was no track visible over Hellisheiði; I simply had to go on from one stone cairn to the next, when miraculously in the far distance another was to be seen. I was unlucky. I had

not gone more than a third of the way when it began to snow, and the bright light of the near-arctic evening was replaced by utter darkness. My subsequent fears and experiences will not interest you, suffice it to say that I was completely lost and that I was fortunate, some eight hours later, to arrive at a farm on the other side, near exhaustion but at least alive. So, in the middle of the night, I knocked up the good people on the farm and was shewn into the blue-painted parlour reserved for guests. I protested that all I wanted was to sleep, but in vain. Clearly I must be hungry and must first partake of milk and *skyr* as a substantial foundation for the inevitable cakes and coffee. I waited and waited in that blue-painted room, expecting my meal at any moment. I had bargained on waiting half-an-hour, one always had to at every farm one visited. But the half-hour passed, and the hour too. I walked up and down the room to keep myself awake, and suddenly in the stillness I was attracted by a hissing sound outside the window. I looked out and saw that the daughter of the house had at last managed to drive home one of the cows and with her young cheek pressed close to its flank was milking it into a pail. The feast was eventually spread before a creature little able to do justice to it, but it nevertheless showed Icelandic hospitality triumphant.

The membership of our Society, ladies and gentlemen, happily comprises two main types of interest, the professional and the lay. The first is maintained mainly by academics, and I suppose that to them our name of *Viking Society for Northern Research* is ultimately due. But it does attract a good many people whose interest is not purely academic, and I think that one could truly add that its well-being and continued expansion is to a great extent dependent upon them. I thought this afternoon, as a representative of the former, that it might be of interest to us all to review some of the activities of our universities in northern research. It is salutary,

on occasion, to re-consider one's aims and methods and to try to decide whether they are whole. In doing so, however, I shall crave one indulgence. What I have to say may not have universal application, and you must allow me my limitations and permit me to base my remarks on my own particular sphere of northern research, Old Icelandic, and on the universities I know well.

Icelandic, in the English universities, is usually taught as a subject within the English department, and many of us who teach it are appointed as teachers of English rather than of Icelandic. The reasons for this are historical. Icelandic, like Gothic, entered the English curriculum as another example of a Germanic language which could be used for philological comparison with our own. It provided a convenient form of Old Norse, which in the past supplied us with many loanwords and now gives us material for comparative philological and morphological study. This purpose still remains, though it is of less importance than it was, for the tendency in departments of English during the past thirty years has been to concentrate study more and more on English Literature rather than English Language. It is, of course, not to the point for me to comment on this here, but to accept it as the present trend and to enquire in what way it has affected the position of Icelandic. As a result of the improved status of literature, Gothic has suffered; it had, after all, little but philological material to offer. But Icelandic has been more fortunate. It had a magnificent literature, the appeal of which could re-inforce its linguistic attractions. But if Icelandic is to remain a branch of literary study within the School of English, it might be well to see what arguments we can muster for it.

I read recently an article advocating a more widespread study of Celtic in the English universities, and as might be expected one of the arguments was ethnographic. It was pointed out that in our own islands there

existed languages which the majority of our people were unable to understand, but which had a rich literature that ought not to be ignored. The ethnographic argument could be put for Icelandic too, perhaps even more forcibly, for the racial connection between the Icelanders and Englishmen is surprisingly close. Like the Norsemen, the Anglo-Saxons were of Germanic stock. Both left the continent of Europe at different times during the Dark Ages to colonise a little-developed island of the west. When the Anglo-Saxons came to this country in the fifth century they overran and conquered an already existing Celtic population, and the inter-mixture of these two races forms the basis of our people today. The Norsemen who went to Iceland were less fortunate, for they found no one either to welcome or repel them. The few hermits who are said to have been the only previous inhabitants had, it is true, the virtue of being Celts, but it would be difficult — and indeed invidious — to attribute to those religious ascetics any influence on the subsequent population. The clear-sighted Norseman no doubt realised the difficulty, for he had the forethought to take with him as slaves a sufficient number of Celts to make good the obvious deficiency. Here then there is a basis of racial similarity which was made even more definite by the Scandinavian colonisation of the north and east of England in the ninth and tenth centuries, so that a certain racial homogeneity between the England of Aethelred and the Iceland of Snorri can be assumed. It is, of course, as yet beyond the psychologist and even the literary critic to estimate the literary importance of ethnic origins, but even if we concentrate on the visual and more easily assessable characteristics of our two nations today it is clear that a similarity exists between the Englishman and the Icelander and that the latter is the least characteristically Scandinavian of all the Scandinavian group. Perhaps I might also remind you of a point, which many of you may have heard before

that recent experiments in blood-groupings have shewn that there exists a tendency to greater similarity between the Icelanders and the English than between the Icelanders and their traditional parent stock, the Norwegians.

However, leaving the racial point aside, I should also like to remind you of the similarity of position and development between the two races: both occupied western islands, which were on the edge of the civilisation of their time, and both were enabled, at least initially, to put back the clock and develop a Germanic society more or less in isolation. Both in due course were to feel the impress of Christianity and the increasing influence of European thought. Now this comparison could easily be developed in detail — both began to write under the same auspices, both had their historians at a similar stage of development, Bede and Ari, both were later to lose their independence for a time — but it could equally easily be exaggerated, and lest I say too much I shall leave the development of the theme to you.

Supposing then we accept a similar ethnic basis for the two peoples, we can go further and remind ourselves of the similarity of the early literatures of the two countries. Both have a Germanic background with a tradition of oral composition in verse on like subjects, and both early developed — and for similar reasons — a vernacular literature in verse and prose. From both these early literatures of the two countries, coming as they do from medieval times, much has been lost. Manuscripts have gone astray and been destroyed and much was not even written down, so that of neither have we a complete picture. We should therefore be grateful that the one can supplement the other. It is precisely because the analogous Icelandic literature developed some three or four hundred years later in the Middle Ages than the English — and therefore probably more quickly — that more of the primitive material has survived, and this material is of particular importance for the English

student who is trying to understand his own early literature. No doubt my academic colleagues will feel that I am on dangerous ground when I make this statement, and for their satisfaction I admit it. It has been said that too great a use has on occasion been made of Icelandic material in commentary on Anglo-Saxon literature and Anglo-Saxon institutions. But this should not mean, as it sometimes does, that Icelandic sources can be ignored. Personally I should like to state it as my conviction that a knowledge of thirteenth-century Icelandic literature is essential to the proper reading of Old English letters and that knowledge for instance of the *Völuspá* will increase an appreciation of *Beowulf*.

So far I have considered the position of the study of Icelandic within the School of English as it affects the English student and English literature, though I have, of course, not discussed the subject by any means fully. I have, for example, ignored altogether the impact made by Icelandic letters, often under the pseudonym of Runic Literature, on English writers of the last two hundred and fifty years. But it is time for me now to turn for a moment to consider how its position in the department of English affects not the students and not English but Icelandic itself.

There are naturally both advantages and disadvantages. Let us take the latter first. The virtual restriction of the teaching of Icelandic to the students of English limits the study of it, in most cases, to the study of its thirteenth-century literature, because it is in that century that we find the greatest affinities between it and English. Perhaps this need not worry us unduly, as it was that century which made Iceland's greatest contribution to world literature. More serious is the fact that Icelandic is not taken by all students of English medieval literature, and even when taken only a limited amount of time can be spent on it. The result is that the student, during his undergraduate days, can at best receive only a reasonable

grounding in the language and a very limited experience of the literature. Research work can only be attempted at the postgraduate stage, and because the undergraduate's basic preparation has been so limited, such research is likely to take longer than a corresponding task in another branch of the curriculum. The obvious retort is that the initial preparation should be greater, but whilst Icelandic remains an ancillary subject within the English degree this is difficult if a reasonable balance of examinational subjects is to be maintained. The clear solution of the establishment of a school of Icelandic studies in these days of comparative poverty in the universities is unfortunately unlikely, unless some generous benefactor should provide the money for a chair. It might, perhaps, be thought that the answer lies in the setting up of departments of Scandinavian Studies, now becoming more common, but I do not think so. It seems probable that a student who enrolls in such a department will, for practical reasons, concentrate on one or more of the modern Scandinavian tongues, so that if his course should contain Old Icelandic at all, it will do so only as an ancillary or subsidiary subject with perhaps no more time spent on it than in the past. Indeed it may well turn out, as I imagine to be the case in the college which our Society has adopted for its home, that the greatest demands on a teacher of Old Icelandic in a department of Scandinavian Studies will continue to come from the Schools of English and German.

The disadvantage of the attachment of Icelandic studies to the English Departments is admittedly serious, but I do think that there are advantages which go far to outweigh it. One result of the very limited amount of time available is that concentration on the medieval period is essential, and by a series of accidents Old Icelandic is established as a subject in its own right. There is then no danger of the sagas being regarded, as sometimes they seem to be in Iceland, as literature of the present day.

English students naturally equate them with Old English literature, or at the very least think of them as products of the Middle Ages to be studied against a medieval and not a modern background. I do not, of course, wish to suggest that all Icelandic native scholars ignore the medieval setting of the sagas — I should be wrong if I did — but even well-educated and thinking Icelanders of the present day persist in regarding their sagas as written in the language of “at the most yesterday” though their historical subject matter may be centuries old. If I may venture the criticism, I think that scholastically the Icelandic sagas would be better appreciated in their own country if more Icelanders were willing to admit, as, say, we in England do of Chaucer, that the sagas are not modern literature but deserve to be studied within their own historical setting. The Icelanders may, of course, retort with a certain amount of justice that the same applies to Shakespeare in this country.

As a corollary to what I have just been saying I might add that the English student approaches the sagas not only as essentially medieval but also as one who already has some knowledge of a parallel Germanic literature, to wit Old English. This I believe to be valuable, for although I have so far only proposed it as one of the reasons for the retention of Icelandic in the English School I consider the advantage a reciprocal one. The Icelandic scholar could learn much from a study of Old English, as no doubt a few have done. But on the whole I think that I might again say that the English student has an advantage over his Icelandic fellow, whose knowledge of parallel medieval literatures is normally slight. This leads me to suggest that the English approach to the sagas, though restricted, has its contribution to make towards the study of them. It might be difficult, with our limited resources and opportunities, to enter into competition with the scholars of Scandinavia in this field, but the recognition and utilisation of what slight advantages we have should not be forgotten.

In thinking over what I have said there occurred to me the names of the many English scholars who have occupied themselves with Icelandic studies, and I should like on this occasion to pay tribute to one or two of them who have influenced me, even though the selection of a few from a longish list may be an invidious task. The first is W. P. Ker of University College, whose work, particularly in the field of Icelandic, I have always admired. There can, I imagine, be few here today who have had the privilege and pleasure of listening to his lectures, but fortunately he has left to us in his *Epic and Romance* and elsewhere some record of them. These to me seem still to constitute the finest pieces of constructive criticism on the sagas I have read. Although fixed in their present form more than half a century ago, they can be recommended to the English student of the present day almost without reserve and will no doubt continue in the future to be an inspiration to many. The other name, which it is impossible for me to omit, is that of E. V. Gordon. His published work in this field was perhaps not very great — in bulk I mean — though his reader *An Introduction to Old Norse* has already proved its value for several generations of students. I personally owe him a very great debt, and I shall always remember him with affection as a most inspiring teacher of his own interests, medieval English literature and Icelandic. I here emphasize my conviction of the truth of the words of Professor Nordal of the University of Reykjavík who said of E. V. Gordon's early death that it was an irreparable loss to Icelandic studies in England.

I have instanced these two men because for me they typify something of the finest in the contribution that English scholarship has to make towards the study and appreciation of Icelandic letters. But lest I might leave the impression that the tradition of valuable work by Englishmen in this subject is in danger, I will venture to add one more name — it is that of our Honorary

Secretary and Editor, Professor Turville-Petre. As the majority of you will know, he has recently published a volume on *The Origins of Icelandic Literature*, and to me again this work presents some characteristic features of English scholarship. In it he places the early poetry and prose of Iceland in its proper historical setting and, best of all, makes clear, in a way which no other modern account does, the supremely important part played by the Church in the development of saga-writing. His book will command respect not only in England but in Scandinavia also.

In conclusion I should like to add a few words on some of the inherent problems which face us as teachers of Icelandic in the English universities today. Unless I am greatly mistaken, there is nowadays a stronger vocational bias in the attitude of the student towards the subjects of his choice and his approach to them. The academic interest with the better student remains, and, if we do our work well, there will always be the few who are sufficiently attracted to concentrate their later studies on Icelandic. But, for them, the time which can be allotted within the framework of a syllabus for a first degree in English is lamentably short, and for some reason it seems more difficult now than before the war to send our students out to Iceland, where their interest will be increased and their knowledge expanded. I don't know whether I should be right here in following the age-old custom of the Englishman in difficulty and blaming the government, but the reasons are probably mainly economic. I should, therefore, like to take this opportunity of asking our host, His Excellency the Icelandic Minister, to convey to his government our gratitude for the generous support which their scholarships have given to some of our pupils. For the man or woman who is to do research work on the sagas, a visit to the land of their origin, preferably with time spent in the countryside, remains the greatest spur. But in our

teaching we must also remember those other students who may begin by taking Icelandic only as a necessary subsidiary to their English course. If they are sympathetically treated, their interest also can be aroused sufficiently for Icelandic to be of lasting benefit to them, and, although they do not follow up the subject as actively as the research worker, I like to think that it will continue to give them pleasure in the years to come when they have left the university for the outside world. In this our Society can help, and I would urge all teachers of Icelandic not to fail to make its existence known to all their pupils. Particularly those who take up posts in the London area may well be attracted. Indeed I should like to feel that the present flourishing state of the Viking Society is, in some ways, a reflection of the measure of our success.

I sincerely hope, ladies and gentlemen, that this very general account of the reflections of one who teaches Icelandic has not altogether wearied you this afternoon. The theme of my talk has been a very personal one, though one which should exercise the minds of all who are interested in our subject. I have deliberately, because of our mixed audience, kept my address as general as possible and avoided the more specific problems of greater interest to the academic members. I sometimes feel that on another occasion frank discussion of these problems would be of immense value. But today I have given expression to my more general thoughts; I have been, as it were, merely thinking aloud, not very deeply perhaps but with an earnestness of purpose, about the subjects which I teach and love — subjects which have given me a great deal of pleasure. If some of this pleasure can be transferred to others, neither the subjects nor the teaching of them will have been in vain.

THE COURSE FOR GREENLAND

BY G. J. MARCUS

GREENLAND was colonized from Iceland during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The two main settlements were the Eystribygd and the Vestribygd, both on the south-west coast. Roughly midway between the two was a smaller settlement, called the Middle Settlement, about which little is known. For several centuries the colony prospered and supported a population of about 3,000 souls. The remains of nearly 300 farmsteads have been discovered by successive generations of Danish scholars, to whose painstaking labours our present knowledge of medieval Greenland is in large measure due. According to the thirteenth-century *Konungs Skuggsjá*, the principal imports of Greenland were iron and iron goods and timber for house-building; and the chief exports were sealskins and other hides, walrus-rope, falcons, and walrus-ivory. It is to be emphasized that, in spite of the extensive and well-stocked farms, the colony was never entirely self-sufficient. "From the foundation of the Settlements . . . the welfare of the colony had depended upon sea-communication. The trade with Europe was in the long run essential to its survival."¹

The course for Greenland was originally by way of Iceland. In the early years of the colony the track lay westward from Snæfellsnes across the Grænlandshaf to Midjökull; and then southward down the east Greenland coast, and around Cape Farewell to the Eystribygd and Vestribygd. But in the last year of the tenth century Leif, son of Eriþ Raudi, steered straight across the ocean for Norway. This was the beginning of the

¹ G. J. Marcus, "Gardar: The diocese at the world's end," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, LXXIX (1953), p. 105.

direct traffic between Greenland and Europe, and the first transatlantic trade-route in history. The course which Leif followed is unknown; but there is reason to believe that, at any rate in the later Middle Ages, the Norsemen usually crossed the Western Ocean on the parallel of Hernar, a place on the west coast of Norway some thirty miles north of Bergen. It was a track which lay well to the southward of the dangerous south coast of Iceland, on which so many craft were to meet their end. That it involved the crossing of an immense span of open sea — more than 1,000 nautical miles — between the Faroe Islands and the east Greenland coast, would seem to be conclusive evidence of the high standard of seamanship and navigation that the Norsemen had reached in these early times.

In the opening years of the eleventh century quite a number of the settlers were also deep-water sailors. Leif Eiríksson and, somewhat later, Skúf in the *Fóstbræðra saga*, were true *hafsiglingarmenn*, sailing to and fro between Greenland and Europe. Most of the overseas traffic of Greenland was with Norway; but a good many voyages, particularly in the earlier period, were made to Iceland. There was at this time a fairly close connection between the two lands.² The fame of St. Thorlák, it is stated, extended to Greenland as to other parts of the Norse world. From time to time a Bishop of Gardar would visit his brethren of Skálaholt and Hólar. But these voyages, by all accounts, were by no means frequent. It is recorded that when one Ketil “the Stammerer” was blown off his course to Greenland in 1208, he did not return to Iceland until four years afterwards. There is considerably less evidence of traffic to continental America. Apart from the Norse voyages there in the

² In the eleventh century, according to Adam of Bremen, Greenland was considered to lie within the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Skálaholt — “per quem transmisit archiepiscopus suos apices populo Islandorum et Gronlandorum, venerabiliter salutans eorum ecclesias,” etc. See *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (1876), p. 185.

early eleventh century, there are only two recorded cases of sailings from Greenland to Vínland and Markland. The first of these was in the year 1121 and the second in 1347. There is, however, no reason to suppose that these were isolated cases. And there also exists a certain amount of indirect evidence which seems to suggest that occasional voyages continued to be made to the opposite side of Baffin Bay. Some time before the union of Greenland and Norway in 1261 the traffic between the two countries had passed altogether into Norwegian hands. By the act of union the king is believed to have assumed responsibility for the provision of shipping. In the latter half of the thirteenth century the Greenland trade was subjected to an increasing measure of governmental control, and eventually became a royal monopoly.

It is impossible to arrive at anything like a precise estimate of the comparative regularity of communications with Greenland; the statistics are inadequate and there are too many unknown factors involved; but it is probable that these communications were rather more frequent than was formerly supposed. There can be no question but that only a fraction of the voyages to and from Greenland were ever recorded in writing. In the *Sturlubók*, for instance, reference is occasionally made to voyages which find no mention at all in the Icelandic annals. It is also worth observing how often what was unquestionably the longest and most formidable ocean voyage known to the medieval world was commemorated in a brief sentence or so. "Bjarni Herjólfsson sailed out from Greenland to visit Earl Eirík." "Karlsefni fitted out his ship and put to sea; he made a fast passage, and he came to Norway safe and sound." "They came to Norway." "Afterwards Bárð put to sea and made a fast passage. He came to Greenland." "Bárð now put to sea and after a prosperous voyage made a good landfall." "It is said of Bárð's voyage that it was a prosperous one. He made a good landfall in Greenland."

“ Þorgrím sailed for Greenland and made a fast passage.” “ Skúf and Bjarni put to sea. They got a fair wind and had a prosperous voyage and came to Norway.”³ “ The following summer they sailed for Norway and made a fast passage.” The journeyings by sea of successive Bishops of Gardar also give testimony of the comparative regularity of the traffic. Again, though it is certain that there was sometimes an interval of several years between one Greenland sailing and the next, it is to be remembered that there might sometimes be several ships arriving in Greenland in a single season. This had happened in the early history of the colony, and it happened again in 1131.⁴

At the same time the Icelandic annals and sagas record a grisly toll of shipwrecks, strandings, and crews overtaken by *hafvilla*, craft headed off and helplessly adrift on the high sea.⁵ During the colonisation of Greenland, it is stated in the *Landnámabók*, of the twenty-five ships which sailed from Iceland, only fourteen ever reached their destination. Of the remaining eleven some were driven back and others were lost.⁶ Of the three vessels which in 1125 sailed from Norway for Greenland, only one ever arrived in the Eiríksfjörð. A few years later there was the same high proportion of losses in a single season.⁷ In a single decade of the following century, the 1260's, the Greenland *knörr* was twice wrecked — in 1260 and 1266.⁸ According to the *Konungs Skuggsjá*, two special

³ *Íslendinga sögur*, ed. G. Jónsson (1946), I, 368, 389, 393; *ibid.*, IV, 426, 430, 434-5; *ibid.*, V, 280, 326, 389.

⁴ It is related in the *Grænlandínga Þáttur* that Özurr came to Eiríksfjörð in a large merchantman; that in the Vestribygd there was another *kaupskip* belonging to Kolbein Þorljóttsson; and besides these there is mention of a third vessel. All these *kaupskip* were Norwegian-owned. See *Ísl. sög.*, I, 395-99.

⁵ *Ísl. sög.*, I, 428: “ Fengu þeir enn veðr andstað, ok velkti þá norðr í Grænlandshaf. Fóru þeir svo nær Íslandi, at þeir sáu jöklana. Helgi gekk aldri frá stýri. Drifu þeir enn lengi, ok hvarf þeim sýn til jöklanna ”; *ibid.*, IV, 439: “ þeir höfðu útivist langa ok hæga ”; *ibid.*, V, 289: “ skip velkir úti lengi. Fá þeir veðr stór. ” Long passages of this kind were by no means infrequent on the Greenland route.

⁶ *Landnámabók*, ed. F. Jónsson (1900), p. 155.

⁷ *Ísl. sög.*, I, 395 ff.

⁸ *Islandske Annaler*, ed. Storm (1889), pp. 136, 357.

perils of the Grænlandshaf were the vast ice-fields extending all the way down the east Greenland coast to Cape Farewell, which were the cause of many unrecorded wrecks, and the dread *hafgerðingar*, or "sea-hedges," which, mentioned in the earliest times of the colony, appear to have been occasioned by seaquakes.⁹ Apart from those of the voyages which terminated in the loss of both vessel and crew, there were others at the end of which, though the ship itself was lost, the crew managed to struggle ashore to safety.¹⁰ It is not surprising that throughout the Middle Ages the navigation to Greenland was regarded as the most hazardous passage in the Northern seas.¹¹

In Northern literature — notably in the *Landnámabók*, in the *Konungs Skuggsjá*, and, above all, in the Icelandic sagas — there lies an immense store of information concerning the shipping, seamanship, and navigation of the Norsemen (though it is to be noted that there is a good deal more about the first and second of these than about the last). No less revealing is the evidence of archæology. In the marvellously light and elastic structure of the Gokstad craft: in the various fittings for the *stýri* and the *beitiáss*: in the fine craftsmanship of the Ladby anchor and its chain forerunner: in the small wooden bearing-dial recently brought to light by Dr. C. L. Vebæk — in all these and other items of a ship's gear may be discovered, as in the sources mentioned above, the secret of the Norse achievement on the high sea.

The craft in which the Norsemen made the long passage to Greenland were admirably adapted to the conditions of Western Ocean navigation. They were variously known as *hafskip*, *kaupskip*, or *knerrir*, and differed in several important respects from the *langskip* of the familiar

⁹ See I. J. Steenstrup, "Hvad er Kongespeilets Havgjerdinger," *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (1871). Cf. *Landnámabók*, p. 124; *The King's Mirror*, ed. and trans. Larson (1917), pp. 101, 137-8.

¹⁰ Larson, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-9; *Isl. Ann.*, *passim*.

¹¹ *Isl. sög.*, IX, 157; Larson, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-9, 137 ff.; *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, I, No. 66; *ibid.*, V, No. 152.

Gokstad type. "The *hafskip* was somewhat shorter than the longship; it drew more water, was broader in the beam, and of a much higher freeboard: in strong winds it was a faster sailer."¹² It was propelled by one large square-sail which was spread on a yard hoisted to a mast stepped amidships. The yard was hoisted and lowered by a halyard. In bad weather crews would reduce sail by taking in one or more reefs. In heavy gales the sail was sometimes goosewinged. The cargo (*bülki*) was stowed amidships. The oars, which were few in number, were rigged fore and aft. Experience seems to have shown that craft of this type sailed better without any elaborate rigging. The lightness and simplicity of the ship's tackle was in keeping with the light and flexible structure of the ship's hull.¹³

Like the longship the *hafskip* was steered by a side-rudder secured to the starboard quarter.¹⁴ The Rebæk rudder, which was excavated by Dr. Poul Nörlund and Captain Carl V. Sölver in 1944, is believed to have come out of a *hafskip*. It is hewn from a very heavy piece of oak, and measures over 13 feet in length. "This Rebæk rudder has a general resemblance to those of the Gokstad and Oseberg ships, but it differs in several respects, particularly in being much larger . . . A side-rudder such as this is the most perfect thing of its kind and must have been the outcome of a long process of development." From time to time doubts have been expressed as to whether the side-rudder was really effective in heavy weather. Among these critics was a distinguished shipwright, the late G. S. Laird Clowes, who was of opinion that "the persistence of these fragile and inefficient single quarter-rudders of the north well into the

¹² G. J. Marcus, "The Navigation of the Norsemen," *The Mariner's Mirror*, XXXIX (1953), p. 112.

¹³ Though no specimen of a Norse *hafskip* has survived the centuries, it is possible to form some conception of its general design and appearance from certain passages in the sagas, viz. in the *Egils saga* and the *Vatnsdæla saga*. See *Isl. sög.*, II, 37; *ibid.*, VII, 40-1.

¹⁴ It is to be noted that the side-rudder also acted to some extent as a keel.

thirteenth century must ever remain a matter for astonishment." But the practical experience derived from the voyages of the *Viking* and *Hugin* has put rather a different complexion on the matter,¹⁵ and it is worth noticing that professional seamen who have had practical experience of the side-rudder hold a very different opinion as to its efficiency.¹⁶

It is clearly established that in the Viking era and early Middle Ages the sailing vessels of the Norsemen were able to beat to windward.¹⁷ In the thirteenth-century sagas there are numerous references to ships beating up into the wind. With the help of the *beitiáss*, or tacking boom, the large square-sail could be close-hauled, enabling the vessel to sail with a beam wind and even to tack. A *beitiáss* was fitted in the *Hugin* in 1949, and gave very satisfactory results. It is to be emphasized, however, that though both the *hafskip* and the *langskip* could sail close-hauled they apparently did so only over com-

¹⁵ The *Viking* sailed from Marsteinen, outside Bergen, on 30th April, 1893, and made Newfoundland on 27th May after a rather rough passage: without, however, suffering any major mishap. The *Hugin* sailed from Esbjerg, Denmark, on 18th July, 1949 and arrived off the Kentish coast on the 27th.

¹⁶ "At one time there was much doubt as to the effectiveness of the side-rudder in heavy weather," declares Captain Sölver, "but this was dispelled by Captain Magnus Andersen's statements in the book he wrote about his voyage in 1893 from Norway to Chicago in a copy of the Gokstad ship He wrote: 'I have thought much about this (the side-rudder), and have come to the conclusion that this rudder may be considered as one of the most definite proofs of our ancestors' great understanding and experience in ship-building and seamanship . . . In my experience the side-rudder is much superior in such a ship to a rudder on the stern-post . . . I am glad to be able to state that it worked satisfactorily in every way and had the advantage of never kicking, as a stern-post rudder would certainly have done. One man could steer in any weather with merely a small line to help.'" Captain Sölver has reported on the efficiency of the side-rudder fitted in the *Hugin* in similar terms. He stated that with the sail close-hauled the ship sailed within 5½ to 6 points of the wind in a moderate breeze, making very little leeway. He further reported that the *Hugin* went about readily with a good working breeze in smooth water; but that in a seaway he had the oars on the lee side manned to bring her about, otherwise it would have been necessary to wear ship. See Magnus Andersen, *Vikingefærdene* (1895), *passim*; Carl V. Sölver, "Rebækroret," *Kronborgmuseets Aarbog* (1944), pp. 108-18, and "The Rebæk Rudder," *The Mariner's Mirror*, XXXII (1946), pp. 115-20; G. S. Laird Clowes, *Sailing Ship* (1948), Part I, 43; Brøgger og Shetelig, *Vikingeskipene* (1950), p. 153 ff.

¹⁷ *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, ed. F. Jónsson (1912), B, I, p. 500; *De gamle Eddadigte*, ed. F. Jónsson (1932), pp. 36, 187, 236; *Landnámabók*, p. 131; *Ísl. sög.*, III, 432; *ibid.*, VI, 17; *Orkneyinga saga*, ed. Nordal (1914), p. 243; *Fornmanna sögur* (1825), III, 26; *ibid.*, X, 71; *Fornaldar sögur* (1944) III, 154.

paratively limited distances, e.g., for making a Greenland haven.¹⁸ There is no record of vessels sailing on a wind for long periods. On the high sea, when the wind hauled ahead and blew a dead muzzler, the crew simply allowed their craft to drift.

It is uncertain when the *vindáss*, or windlass, was introduced in the North. It was at any rate in use in ocean-going craft in the latter part of the twelfth century, according to the *Guðmundar saga*, for raising the sail-yard. We may observe such a *vindáss* depicted in the well-known Winchelsea seal (*circ.* 1285), which shows the anchor-rope being hove in by means of a windlass mounted abaft the mast. In the fifteenth-century Kalmar ship the *vindáss* is situated in exactly the same position as in the craft portrayed in the Winchelsea seal.¹⁹ Pumps were not used on shipboard until after the Viking age.²⁰ The old method of baling was with bilge-buckets, as described in the *Fóstbræðra saga*. Two men were told off for the baling; one stood below in the baling well and the other on deck. The former filled the bucket and handed it up to his mate; and the latter hauled it to the gunwhale and emptied it over the side. Occasional mention is made of ship's pumps in the thirteenth-century sagas.²¹ The iron anchor (*akkeri*) dates back to the early Viking era.²² One was discovered in the Oseberg ship. On innumerable occasions we hear of vessels saved from imminent disaster by their ground tackle.²³

¹⁸ "Sáu þeir þá til Grænlandsjökla ok beittu undir landit" (*Isl. sög.*, I, 429); "þat var eitt sinn, er skipverjar sjá land fyrir stafni. Verða menn því fegnir ok beita þar undir" (*ibid.*, 467).

¹⁹ *Isl. sög.*, III, 371; *ibid.*, VII, 404; *Biskupa sögur* (1858), II, 50; *Fms.*, X, 53; *Flateyjarbók* (1860), III, 384; *Fld.*, II, 496; *ibid.*, III, 167; Neckam, "De nominibus utensilium," *Jahrbuch für rom. und engl. lit.*, XVII, 166; Carl V. Sölver, *Om Ankre* (1945), pp. 65, 116.

²⁰ It is stated in the *Grettis saga* that, in the time of this saga, there were no pumps in ocean-going craft. See *Isl. sög.*, VI, 50-1.

²¹ *Fb.*, II, 204-5; *Isl. sög.*, III, 408; *ibid.*, VI, 46-7, 50; *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* (1912), B, Vol. I, 668.

²² *Ibid.*, 330; Falk, *Altordisches Seewesen* (1912), pp. 78-81.

²³ There is an excellent description of the Norse anchor and ground-tackle in an article by Captain Sölver in *Acta Archaeologica*, Vol. XVII (1946) pp. 122-6.

The *knörr*²⁴ was the usual ocean-going craft of the Viking age, and is commemorated in numerous place-names — in Norway: Knarberg, Knarboe, Knardal, Knarestad, Knarfjaldet, Knarlagje, Knarreviken, Knarrum, Knartarud, Knarvestol, Knarvik; in Iceland: Knarrareyrr, Knarrarnes, Knarrarsund, Knarrarvað; and in the Orkneys: Knarstoun. Reference is made to the *knörr* in the *Landnámabók* and other early sources.²⁵ The Icelandic sagas, though written at a time when the *búza* was coming into common use in the North, rightly allude to the *knörr* as the normal ocean-going merchantman of the Viking era. They also mention certain individuals associated with the *knörr*. For instance, in the reign of Ólaf the Saint there was one Thorsteinn Knarrasmid, who was a builder of *knerrir*; and in the days of Hákon Hákonarson there was a shipowner called Knarrar-Leif, who was entrusted by the king with an important mission to Greenland.²⁶ On most of the Northern trade-routes, during the thirteenth century, the *knörr* was superseded by the *búza* and the cog. But on the Greenland passage no other type of *hafskip* is recorded down to the end of the Middle Ages.²⁷

In the main a remarkably high standard of seamanship prevailed. The crews had confidence in themselves and in the craft they sailed — in their own tough frames and stout hearts. in the instinctive resource and skill born of long years of experience on the coast and on the high sea. in well-found craft and good gear — and the event, for the most part, justified their confidence. This estimate

²⁴ The word *knörr* has often been rendered into English as "cog," "buss," and "galley." All these interpretations are wrong, especially the last. The *knörr* was essentially a sailing-vessel — e.g., "Byrr var á blásandi, ok gekk knörrinn brátt mikit . . . byrjaði honum vel til Íslands" (*Fms.*, VI, 249).

²⁵ *Landnámabók*, pp. 139, 155, 157, 165, 204; *Heimskringla*, ed. B. Adalbjarnarson I (1941), p. 116; *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldeedigtning* (1912), B, I, 415.

²⁶ *Fms.*, IX, 38; *ibid.*, X, 400; *Sturlunga saga* (1950), III, 8.

²⁷ References to the names of vessels engaged in the Greenland trade are rare. One such name, however, is the *Bauta hluti*, which is mentioned in connection with the Greenland traffic in 1366, and made a voyage from Norway to eastern Iceland in 1388. See *Isl. Ann.*, pp. 361, 366.

of Norse seamanship is based on a large number of significant passages in the sagas and other sources, of which no more than a few instances can be quoted here.

“In the autumn Sigurd wished to sail home, and encountered a heavy gale. Then the vessel began to be unmanageable, and they were driven northward into the ocean. There was such a strain on the sail that it was on the point of splitting. It seemed that every reef-point would part. Land was nowhere in sight. Now the sea began to run high and such a storm burst upon them that the water poured in over both sides; but they were such a tough crowd who sailed in her that not a word of misgiving was heard from any of them. The vessel was now beginning to leak badly, and all hands toiled for eight days in the baling-well. The craft was driven northward far across the ocean to a bay called Gandvík. They clewed up the sail with gaskets; and then they shipped such a heavy sea that the craft was all but overwhelmed. By this time most of the crew were at the end of their tether. Next they sighted land. That was a place shut in by cliffs. Later the vessel was driven up into a cove. Both ship and crew were saved.”²⁸

“When they were at sea they encountered strong head-winds, and the vessel drifted before the wind in heavy seas both night and day. And so it happened once that the tiller broke and the sail-yard carried away, and went overboard with much else that had not been lashed down. Then they drifted under some high cliffs. They were carried under a rocky headland where the shore was steep-to. Such was their situation when Illugi managed to weather the headland and put into a little bay, which ran a short distance inland by the headland.”²⁹

It frequently happened that when a ship was set on a lee shore, her crew would steer straight for the land in the

²⁸ *Fas.*, III, 354.

²⁹ *Isl. sög.*, III, 440-1.

hope of saving life, even though vessel and cargo had to be sacrificed. Thus on many occasions it is recorded that, though everything else was lost, the crew came safely to land. The hazardous operation of running a ship ashore (*síglá til brots*) seems to have been accomplished with considerable skill. There is a good example of this in the *Orkneyinga saga*. "Wednesday was very stormy, but during Thursday night they sighted land. It was then very dark. They could see breakers all around them. Up to this time they had held together. Now there was no choice but to run the two ships ashore; and so they did. There was a rocky beach in front of them, and only a narrow foreshore, and cliffs beyond. There all the men were saved, but they lost much of their belongings; some of them were thrown up during the night."³⁰ It is interesting to notice how often it happened that, when a vessel was driven on to the Greenland coast, her people reached the shore in safety.³¹

The maintenance and repair of these merchantmen is frequently mentioned in Northern literature. It is related in *Konungs Skuggsjá* how a vessel was equipped with stores and tools for dealing with any repairs that might become necessary in the course of a voyage.³² In the *Fóstbræðra saga* there is a lively description of a major operation of this kind being carried out in mid-ocean. The sail-yard had split in a violent squall and the sail went overboard. The crew seized the sail and managed to haul it in again. Then Skúf, the captain, asked two of the crew, Gest and Thormód, to fish the yard for him, which they did with remarkable skill; after which they bent the sail to the yard, and the ship proceeded on her voyage (to Greenland).³³

The ancient poetry of the Scandinavians, abounding as it does in technical terms and phrases, bears witness to the

³⁰ *Orkneyinga saga*, trans. A. B. Taylor (1938), p. 277.

³¹ *Isl. Ann.*, *passim*.

³² Larson, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

³³ *Fb.*, II, 205.

maritime predilections of this people. Old Norse — to a far greater extent even than modern English — is *par excellence* the language of the sea. A wide and workman-like vocabulary covered every phase of life afloat: the stowage of cargo; the berthing of passengers; the setting of watches; messing arrangements; boat-work, watering, and provisioning; fast passages and long; the signs of the weather; the strength of the wind; the motion and appearance of the sea; the set and drift of currents and tidal streams; squalls, gales, and fogs. In the early laws of Norway and Iceland we find evidence of an elementary rule of the road, and regulations for securing a safe load line.

As has already been said, there are relatively few references to Norse methods of navigation in the literature of the North. What little there is, however, is highly significant and to the point. "All the available evidence goes to show that the ocean navigation of the Norsemen may be resolved into three main elements. As may be seen from these sources, it was based on a very skilful dead reckoning, which was checked by an occasional observation of the heavenly bodies, and by such adventurous aids to navigation as seabirds, whales and ice-floes."³⁴ For centuries they had no compass³⁵ but shaped

³⁴ Marcus, "The Navigation of the Norsemen," p. 118. The importance of a knowledge of practical astronomy to the mariner is emphasized in a number of passages in the *Konungs Skuggsjá*. The only recorded case of "taking" the sun at sea belongs to the year 1267. See *Hauksbók*, ed. F. Jónsson (1892), p. 501. The late Dr. Hj. Falk was the first to draw attention to the significance of two passages in the *Guðmundar saga*, in which reference is made to a vessel's *sólbyrðin*, which he stated to be some kind of device for "taking" the sun. See *Biskupa sögur* (1858), I, 484; *ibid.*, II, 50. See also *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* (1912), B, I, 4, 668; *ibid.* (1915), B, II, 576; Falk, *Alt nordisches Seewesen* (1912), pp. 19, 54; O. S. Reuter, *Germanische Himmelskunde* (1934), pp. 598 ff. The difference in the distribution of certain species of seabirds, such as the fulmar petrel and the Brunnich guillemot, may have given the mariner some inkling of his northing or southing. Nearer land there would be small auks — puffins, common guillemots, etc. It may be seen from the sagas how carefully the Norsemen observed the birds sighted at sea. See *Hb.*, pp. 4, 433; *Bp.*, I, 656; *Fb.*, II, 456. Cf. Rex Clements, *A Gypsy of the Horn*, chap. iii; J. S. Learmont, *Master in Sail* (1950), p. 56.

³⁵ The earliest reference to the magnetic compass in the North occurs in the fourteenth-century *Hauksbók*: there is no mention of it in Sturla Thórdarson's recension of the *Landnámabók* in the previous century. It is evident, too,

a course across the open sea by means of azimuths of the celestial bodies.³⁶ A well-known passage in the *Flateyjarbók* tells how, after a long spell of fogs and northerly winds, drifting "they knew not where," Bjarni Herjólfsson and his crew were able to get their bearings when at last the sun appeared.³⁷ The recent discovery in southern Greenland of what is apparently part of a bearing-dial disposes of the time-honoured belief that the Norsemen possessed no kind of navigational instrument. It also serves to show that the old Norse method of steering by the celestial bodies was by no means so crude and inaccurate as has sometimes been suggested. For the rim of this dial — which is believed to date back to about the year 1200 — is apparently divided, not into four, or into eight, or even into sixteen points or directions, but into thirty-two.³⁸

The crux of the whole matter is, indeed, contained in the sailing directions for the Greenland passage cited in Hauk Erlendsson's recension of the *Landnámabók*: "From Hearnar in Norway sail due west for Hvarf in Greenland; and then will you sail north of Shetland so that you can just sight it in clear weather; but south of the Faroe Islands, so that the sea appears half-way up the mountain-slopes; but steer south of Iceland so that you may have birds and whales therefrom."³⁹ Broadly speaking, this passage may be said to reveal the three-fold basis of Norse navigation. First, dead reckoning: mariners must know within rough limits when they had

from the frequent allusions in the sagas to the state of *hafvilla*, that the compass was not in use in earlier times. See *Hb.*, p. 5; *Fb.*, I, 332, 431; *Isl. sög.*, III, 453, 468; *ibid.*, IV, 51; *ibid.*, VII, 435; *ibid.*, IX, 294-5; *ibid.*, XI, 186, 411; *Fms.*, III, 181; *Fld.*, III, 330, 402.

³⁶ By day the Northern seaman steered by the sun. Before the advent of the magnetic compass, it was, indeed, his only guide when out of sight of the land. By night he steered by the stars, especially by the Pole-star. See *Bibliothek der Angelsächsischen Poesie*, ed. W. C. Grein (1857), II, 351-2; *Orosius*, ed. J. Bosworth (1859), pp. 19, 20; *Fms.*, X, 112; *Martu saga*, ed. C. R. Unger (1871), I, 7; Vogel, *Geschichte der deutschen Seeschiffahrt* (1915), p. 519.

³⁷ *Fb.*, I, 431.

³⁸ Carl V. Sölver, "The Discovery of an Early Bearing Dial", *Journal of the Institute of Navigation*, VI, No. 3 (July, 1953) pp. 294-6.

³⁹ *Hb.*, p. 4.

run their distance and when to look out for the low-lying Shetlands, the mountain-slopes of the Faroes, and the "birds and whales" from Iceland.⁴⁰ Second, latitude sailing: since the outward-bound Greenlandman wintered in Nidarós,⁴¹ it is evident that she must have sailed down the coast to Hernar, which lay on the parallel of her destination,⁴² then squared away to the westward as soon as she got a slant (*ok byr gaf*). Third, "the adventitious aids to navigation": those specifically named in Hauk's instructions were the two important marks,⁴³ the Shetlands and the Faroes, and also the *fauna*, referred to above. Following the course set out in the sailing directions a vessel would arrive at last off the east Greenland coast some 60 miles or so north of Cape Farewell. The final stage of the voyage, like the first, would be merely a matter of coastal navigation.⁴⁴ It is probably safe to assume that the sailing directions in the *Hauksbók* were the literary version of a far longer and fuller set of oral instructions which were familiar to all mariners with long experience of the Greenland run.⁴⁵

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"From Snæfellsnes in Iceland to the nearest point of Greenland is four days' sailing across the sea to the westward," writes Sturla in his recension of the *Landnámabók*. In the early years of the colony it was

⁴⁰ For Sturla's references to dead reckoning on the Northern sea-routes, see *Landnámabók*, p. 129. For the practical limitations of dead reckoning, see *Isl. sög.*, XI, 186, 411. Cf. Lecky, *Wrinkles in Practical Navigation* (17th ed., 1914), pp. 183-5; Carl V. Sölver, *Imago Mundi* (1951), pp. 212, 216 ff.; Marcus, "Navigation of the Norsemen," pp. 119-20.

⁴¹ *D.N.*, VII, Nos. 103-4. It would appear that on her homeward voyage the Greenland *knörr* called at Bergen.

⁴² There are a number of passages in the Icelandic sagas, notably in the *Grettis saga*, which strongly suggest latitude sailing. See *Isl. sög.*, VI, 46-51.

⁴³ For references to *hafnarmerki* in early poems and the sagas, see *De gamle Eddadigte*, p. 202; *Bp.*, I, 563; *Fld.*, I, 412.

⁴⁴ *Det gamle Grønlands beskrivelse af Ivar Bárðarson*, ed. F. Jónsson (1930), p. 18 ff.

⁴⁵ The part played by *personal knowledge and experience* in the navigation of the Norsemen can scarcely be set too high. See Larson, *op. cit.*, p. 157; *Isl. sög.*, IV, 51; *Bp.*, I, 484; *Sturlunga saga*, II, 496-7; *Fb.*, II, 457. Cf. Chaucer's description of the Shipman in the *Canterbury Tales*: see *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. Skeat (1894), IV, 12.

apparently possible to cross the Grænlandshaf in the vicinity of the 65th parallel. What is no less significant is the number of wrecks that are stated to have occurred on the actual coast-line. Two well-known instances of craft wrecked on the east Greenland coast were those of the Norwegian merchant, Arnbjörn, in 1125, and of the Icelandic priest, Ingimund, in a vessel called the *Stangarfoli*, in 1189. In the Icelandic annals it is stated that in the year 1200 the bodies of Ingimund and his companions, together with the *Stangarfoli*, were discovered on the shore⁴⁶ — just as in the case of Arnbjörn and his crew early in the previous century. It would also appear from certain passages in the Icelandic sagas that the ice-floes carried down by the polar current were far less formidable than they became in after years. Soon after the turn of the century, however, these ice-floes extended so far down the east Greenland coast that the old course had to be abandoned. According to the thirteenth-century *Konungs Skuggsjá*, the ice conditions on the Greenland coast were by this time becoming similar to those which obtain there at the present day.⁴⁷ “As soon as he (the mariner) has passed over the deepest part of the ocean, he will encounter such masses of ice in the sea, that I know no equal of it anywhere in all the earth. Sometimes these ice fields are as flat as if they were frozen on the sea itself. They are about four or five ells thick and extend so far out from the land that it may mean a journey of four days or more to travel across them. There is more ice to the north-east and north of the land than to the south, south-west, and west; consequently,

⁴⁶ *Isl. Ann.*, pp. 120, 181. Cf. *Sturlunga saga*, I (1878), 106: “Skip þetta kemr í óbygðir á Grænlandi. Ok lýkr því máli svá, at þar tynask menn allir. En þat verðr svá víst, at fjórtán árum síðarr fansk skip þeirra, ok þá fundusk menn sjau í hellis-skúta einum. Þar var Ingimundr prestur. Hann var heill ok ófúinn, ok svá klæði hans; en sex manna bein voru þar hjá honum. Vax var ok hjá þeim ok rúnar þar er sögðu atburð um líflát þeirra.”

⁴⁷ Larson, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-9. There are significant references to drift-ice off the coasts of Iceland, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the Icelandic annals. For the existing ice conditions on the east Greenland coast, see Hydrographic Dept., Admiralty: *Arctic Pilot*, Vol. II (1949), 28-36, 426-7.

whoever wishes to make the land should sail around it to the south-west and west, till he has come past all those places where ice may be looked for, and approach the land on that side." From the description of these vast ice fields in *Konungs Skuggsjá*, it is apparent that ships must now have been wrecked on the ice-edge, rather than on the coast itself. "It has frequently happened that men have sought to make the land too soon and, as a result, have been caught in the ice-floes; and some have perished in them; but others again have got out, and we have seen some of these and have heard their accounts and tales. But all those who have been caught in these ice drifts have adopted the same plan: they have taken their small boats and have dragged them up on the ice with them, and in this way have sought to reach land; but the ship and everything else of value had to be abandoned and was lost. Some have had to spend four days or five upon the ice before reaching land, and some even longer." Later evidence to much the same effect is to be found in the description of life and conditions in Greenland compiled by the Norwegian cleric, Ívar Bárðarson, who administered the estates belonging to the see of Gardar in the middle decades of the fourteenth century. Ívar Bárðarson emphasizes the fact that the ice conditions had become immeasurably more severe than they had been in an earlier era. "Item from Snæfellsnes in Iceland, where the distance to Greenland is shortest, two days' and two nights' sailing due west is the course, and there lieth Gunnbjarnarsker half-way between Greenland and Iceland."⁴⁸ This was the old course, but now ice has come down from the north-west out of the gulf of the sea so near to the aforesaid skerries, that no one without extreme peril can sail the old course, and be

⁴⁸ The Gunnbjarnarsker (which, according to the *Lanánámabók*, one Gunnbjörn Úlfsson is said to have discovered early in the tenth century) are generally believed to have been a group of rock-islets lying off the east Greenland coast, approximately midway on the track between Snæfellsnes and the Eystribygd.

heard of again . . . Item when one sails from Iceland, one should shape one's course from Snæfellsnes . . . and then sail due west one day and one night, but then slightly south-west to avoid the aforesaid ice, which lieth off Gunnbjarnarsker, and then one day and one night due north-west, and so one comes right under the aforesaid high land of Hvarf in Greenland, under which lieth the aforesaid Herjólfssnes and Sandhaven."⁴⁹

The difficulty of transacting business with Greenland is mentioned in a letter written in 1341 by Bishop Hákon of Bergen, who stated that the way lay *per mare non minus tempestuosissimum quam longissimum*.⁵⁰ Communications with Greenland were now becoming very irregular. Moreover, it may be safely said that in no one year in these later centuries is there any record of more than one *knörr* making the long voyage to Hvarf. In the middle of the fourteenth century there was an interval of nine long years between one sailing and the next. It is significant, too, that the news of Bishop Álf's death, in 1378, did not reach Norway until six years later.⁵¹

On the other hand the effect on navigation of the worsening ice conditions ought not to be exaggerated. The long interval already mentioned — between 1346 and 1355 — during which no passage is recorded to have been made to Greenland, may very well be explained by the calamitous consequences of the Black Death.⁵² These consequences are similarly reflected in the statistics of the Iceland trade. Though her foreign trade was rapidly declining, the ocean traffic between Norway and her dependencies was still vigorous and important in the early half of the fourteenth century.⁵³ A letter from the Bishop of Bergen to the Archbishop of Nidarós in 1325, in which reference is made to certain "merchants of

⁴⁹ *Det gamle Grønlands beskrivelse*, p. 19.

⁵⁰ *D.N.*, V, No. 152.

⁵¹ *Isl. Ann.*, p. 414.

⁵² *Isl. Ann.*, pp. 213, 224, 356, 403-4.

⁵³ Bugge, *Den norske sjøfarts historie* (1923), p. 234.

Trondhjem, who now sail from Greenland in *knerrir*,"⁵⁴ suggests that a fairly substantial traffic was still carried on between Greenland and the mother-land; and this is borne out by the series of voyages to Greenland listed in the Icelandic annals. It is also to be remembered that a particular sailing was as a rule only recorded when some distinguished person was on board (such as the Bishop of Gardar);⁵⁵ or when, as in 1346, an unusually rich cargo was carried;⁵⁶ or when, as in 1355, there was something remarkable to record;⁵⁷ or, again, when the voyage ended in shipwreck.⁵⁸ At irregular intervals a *knörr* would be fitted out for the long voyage across the ocean. From time to time shiploads of walrus-ivory would arrive in Norway from Greenland. Successive Bishops of Gardar would be consecrated in Trondhjem cathedral and, in due course, would take passage for their diocese "at the world's end."⁵⁹

There is certainly no truth in the statement which has sometimes been made that, in the later fourteenth century, communication with Greenland was "practically abandoned." The archæological evidence proves conclusively that towards 1400 the Greenlanders were still in intimate contact with Europe.⁶⁰ Besides the evidence of archæology there are a number of documents relating

⁵⁴ *D.N.*, VII, Nos. 103-4.

⁵⁵ *Isl. Ann.*, *passim*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵⁷ "Koning Magni Befalingsbref Powell Knudsson paa Anarm (?) gifvet at seigle til Grönland . . . Vi ville at I vide at I haffuer taget alle de Mænd som i Kaaren ville fare af alle, hvad heller de ere nævnte eller ei nævnte, mine handgagn: Mænd eller andre Mænds Svenne oc af andre Mænd, der I faae til os at føre dermed som Powel Knudssen, som Hövidsmand skal være paa Kaaren, fuld Befaling at nævne de Mænd i Kaaren som hannem tykkes bedst tilfalden være baade til Mestermænd oc Svende; bede vi at de anamme denne vor Befaling rett god Villie for Sagen, at vi gjöre det i Hæde til Gud oc for vor Sjels oc Forældres Skyld, som udi Grönland haver Kristendom oc Ophold til denne Dag oc vil end ei lade nederfalle om vore Dage" (*Grönlands historiske Mindesmærker*, III, 121-2).

⁵⁸ See *Isl. Ann.*, 228: "Grönlands-knörrinn sökk niðr við Noreg."

⁵⁹ *D.N.*, XVII (B), pp. 280-3.

⁶⁰ Poul Nörlund, "Buried Norsemen at Herjólfnes," *Meddelelser om Grönland*, LXVII (1924), 103, and *Viking Settlers in Greenland* (1930), p. 126. It is to be remembered that, though the official sailings were becoming rarer, there is reason to suspect that there were others which were unlawful and unrecorded.

to conditions in Greenland at the close of the fourteenth, and at the beginning of the fifteenth century, which certainly do not suggest that the colony was on the verge of extinction. The first of these documents records certain proceedings brought against a party of Icelanders who, it was stated, had lately made the voyage to Greenland forbidden by law (*att ingen mader skulu sigla i kaupferder til skatlanda waro*)⁶¹ and had trafficked with the inhabitants without having gained the king's permission (*att þeir hafdo koft ok selt a Gronlande vttan orlof konungsdoomssens*). The Icelanders' defence was that they had been driven thither by stress of weather,⁶² and they denied that they had broken the law by trafficking with the Greenlanders. It would appear from this document that towards the end of the century the Thing was still held and that a steward (*umbodzman*) was appointed to watch over the king's interests in Greenland.⁶³ In the year 1406 another party of Icelanders, who were likewise bound for Iceland from Norway, were driven off their course to the Greenland coast. They were obliged to spend four winters there before they were able at last to return to Norway, and thence to their own land. The intelligence which they brought back with them to Europe is the last certain knowledge that has come down to us concerning conditions in the Eystribygd: and here again there is no suggestion that the colony was in imminent danger of extinction. The sanctions of the law were at any rate still in force there, judging from the death-sentence pronounced in 1407 on a Greenlander called Kolgrím, who had been found guilty of seducing another man's wife by means of magic (*svarta knonstr*). There has besides been preserved a most interesting and unique document: namely, a marriage certificate issued in Greenland and

⁶¹ *G.H.M.*, III, 125.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 139: "at þeir varo i hafve i storum vanda ok vada ok liifshaaska, fyrir storum sio jaklum ok isom, ok fengo storan skada a þeirra skipom er brotnado ofvan sio, ok lofuado sigh til heilagra stada fyr en þeir fengo land j þvilike store naudsyn."

⁶³ *Det gamle Grønlands beskrivelse*, pp. 30-1.

dated 19th April, 1409. This contains nothing whatever that could be construed as proof that the Greenlanders were falling away from Christianity, or that matters in the colony were approaching a crisis; but rather the contrary.⁶⁴

In the past it used to be believed that, owing to the increasing difficulty and danger of the Greenland voyage, it finally became impossible for vessels to reach the inhabited regions of the country; or — if, perchance, possible — vessels no longer made the attempt. That not long after, cut off from contact with the outer world, the colony perished. This view of the case is to some extent borne out by a document which must now be considered.⁶⁵ It is a letter written by Pope Alexander VI in the year 1492/3 which came to light in the Vatican archives some sixty years ago, that apparently relates to a later stage in the history of the medieval colony than the marriage certificate referred to above. If the intelligence contained in this document is authentic, it must clearly have come to Europe at some date subsequent to the voyage of 1410; for it implies that there was now no priest left alive in Greenland, which was certainly not the case on the former occasion. But certain statements in the letter which suggest that communication with Greenland had been finally severed can no longer be accepted, for reasons about to be set out.

In point of fact, the history of this, the final phase of medieval Greenland, has had to undergo a drastic revision in the light of the important discoveries made by Nörlund, Roussell, Vebæk, and other Danish archæologists in the last thirty years or so, reminding us once again of the essential truth of Sir Charles Oman's dictum that,

⁶⁴ *Isl. Ann.*, p. 288; *D.I.*, III, No. 597; *ibid.*, IV, No. 376.

⁶⁵ "et ob id ac propter rarissimas navigationes ad dictam terram causantibus intentissimis aquarum congelationibus fieri solitas, navis aliqua ab octuaginta annis non creditur applicuisse et si navigationes huiusmodi fieri contingeret, profecto has non nisi mense Augusti congelationibus ipsis resolutis fieri posse non existimentur" (*D.N.*, XVII, No. 759). See Daniel Bruun, *Erik den Røde*, (1930), p. 134; Nörlund, *Viking Settlers in Greenland*, p. 144.

"The real foe to final conclusions on ancient history is the spade, not the parchment." The new evidence leaves no room for doubt but that the Greenlanders were in communication with Europe practically down to the end of the century. Long after the date when official communications had ceased entirely, as the excavations at Herjólfssnes have proved, certain articles of clothing produced in this furthestmost outpost of Christendom continued to reflect the fashions of contemporary Europeans in a quite remarkable degree. The discoveries include a distinctive type of pleated gown — one of them with a V-shaped neck — such as are depicted in the portraits of Christus and Pisanello: these were in vogue about the middle of the century. There are also a number of high conical caps, such as may be seen in the paintings of Dirk Bout, Hans Memling, and others of their school; allowing for the normal time-lag, they were probably worn in Greenland in the final quarter of the century.⁶⁶ Another remarkable fact which has emerged from these discoveries is that much of the clothing found at Herjólfssnes is not the dress of poor peasants, but of the relatively well-to-do. Herein lies a problem which, up to the present, has not been satisfactorily resolved. It is also important to note that, at any rate so far as Herjólfssnes is concerned, the inhabitants did not "go native," but remained faithful to Christian and European tradition.⁶⁷

The crucial cause of the colony's decline and extinction must, perhaps, be looked for in the climatic, rather than in the navigational, factor. Both the documentary and the archæological evidence prove conclusively that climatic conditions in Greenland rapidly deteriorated in the later medieval period. First, let us take the docu-

⁶⁶ Nörlund, "Buried Norsemen at Herjólfssnes," pp. 149 ff., 181 ff., 221, 236, 251 ff., and *Viking Settlers in Greenland*, p. 125; A. W. Brøgger, *Vinlandsferdene* (1937), pp. 168 ff.

⁶⁷ Nörlund, "Buried Norsemen at Herjólfssnes," pp. 66, 219, and *Viking Settlers in Greenland*, p. 342; Marcus, "Gardar: The diocese at the world's end," p. 112.

mentary evidence. The movements of the Eskimo tribes, as evidenced in the Scandinavian sources, serve to show that the ice-edge was moving southward.⁶⁸ Another significant piece of evidence is the change of course already mentioned. Second, the climatic deterioration revealed in the historical sources is borne out by the evidence of archæology. It is certain that the Norse colony supported far larger flocks and herds than could possibly be raised there to-day. Farms have been discovered beside fjords that are at present choked with ice. It has been shown, too, that in the vicinity of Herjólfssnes about the year 1400 the ground became permanently frozen. At the date when the bodies were interred it must have thawed in summer time to a considerable depth, for the bodies and the garments in which they were shrouded were penetrated by the roots of plants. It is significant that the later burials lay nearer the surface.⁶⁹ The result of these climatic changes was that the Greenlanders were faced with steadily declining food supplies. The land could no longer support their numerous livestock. Judging from the state of the bodies discovered in Herjólfssnes churchyard, the inhabitants must have suffered from semi-starvation. The once vigorous Norse stock had grievously deteriorated. Few of the fifteenth-century Greenlanders appear to have attained middle age. A high proportion of them died in early youth. Malnutrition was unquestionably responsible for the eventual extinction of the settlement.⁷⁰

Another crucial factor in these developments was the encroachment of the Eskimos. It has been rather too

⁶⁸ "When the colonies were first settled, there were traces of the former existence of the Eskimos, but none then lived so far south. The Eskimos follow the seals, which frequent the edge of the ice, and this indicates that in the tenth century the ice-edge in Baffin Bay lay far to the north. In the thirteenth century the Eskimos reappeared and advanced persistently southward, until by the middle of the fourteenth century they had occupied the West Settlement." See W. Hovgaard, "The Norsemen in Greenland" *Geographical Review* (New York: 1925), XV, 605.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 603.

⁷⁰ Fr. C. C. Hansen, "Anthropologia medico-historica groenlandiae antiquae," *Meddelelser om Grønland*, LXVII (1924), 518 ff.

hastily assumed that, because the Eskimo of the present day is mild-mannered and peaceable, his ancestors of five or six hundred years ago were of much the same disposition. The truth is, that not only Eskimo legend, but also the documentary evidence, points to a certain amount of frontier strife between the two races.⁷¹ In the early half of the fourteenth century the Vestribygd had been overrun; in 1355 the news that the Greenlanders were forsaking Christianity and mixing with the heathen led to the despatch of a special expedition from Norway,⁷² and in 1379 the Eskimo are recorded to have made a damaging attack on the colonists, slaying some and leading off others into slavery.⁷³

Exactly when the Norse colony became extinct is uncertain, and will probably never be known. It is by no means impossible that a handful of survivors may have lived on after the turn of the century. The recent archæological discoveries may even cause us to revise our views as regards the story of "Jón Grænlendingr," which was for long rejected as apocryphal.⁷⁴ According to this story a German merchantman was in 1540 or thereabouts bound for Iceland and, being blown out of her course, arrived eventually in a fjord near Cape Farewell. On an island in this fjord were presently discovered "many sheds and huts and stone houses for drying fish," and also the body of a man clad in frieze and seal-skin, with a hood on his head, lying face downward on the ground. The description of the dead man's dress certainly tallies with what we now know of the habiliments of the fifteenth-century Greenlanders. But, towards the end of the century, when John Davis cruised off the west Greenland coast, he saw only falcons and seals, a solitary

⁷¹ H. Rink, *Eskimoiske Eventyr og Sagn* (1866), pp. 198-209; *Isl. Ann.*, p. 364; Therkel Mathiassen, "Archæology in Greenland," *Antiquity*, IX (1935), p. 195.

⁷² *G.H.M.*, III, 121-2.

⁷³ *Isl. Ann.*, p. 364.

⁷⁴ *G.H.M.*, III, 513 ff.; Nörlund, "Buried Norsemen at Herjólfnes," p. 259; Vebæk, *Beretninger vedrørende Grønland*, No. 1 (1952), Sect. ix, 96.

circling raven, and, in latitude 64° N., a party of Eskimo. The ice conditions were by this time much the same as they are at the present day; and in his account of the voyage Davis paints a picture of unrelieved desolation. "The 20 July as we sayled along the coast the fogge brake up, and wee discovered the land, which was the most deformed and mountainous land that ever we sawe. The first sight whereof did shewe us as if it had bene in forme of a sugar loafe, standing to our sight above the cloudes for that it did shewe over the fogge like a white liste in the skye, the tops altogether covered with snowe, and the shoare beset with yce a league off into the Sea, making such yrksome noyse that it seemed to be the true patterne of desolation, and after the same our Captaine named it, The land of Desolation."

THE STORY OF ÞORSTEINN UXAFÓT

BY ALAN L. BINNS

THE text of *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts* is found in *Flatleyjarbók* on folios 126 to 133 (p. 249 to p. 263 in vol. I of the edition of Vigfússon and Unger¹), where the story forms chapters 201 to 214 of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*. There are also some paper manuscripts, but they are all transcripts of *Flatleyjarbók* and have no independent value. *Flatleyjarbók* was written in 1390 for Jón Hákonarson, this part of it probably by Jón Þórðarson, and in the seventeenth century it was still in the possession of a direct descendant of the original owner.² From this descendant, Jón Finnsson by name, Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson unsuccessfully attempted to buy it. As *Flatleyjarbók* contains, besides *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts* and indeed much else, the story of Auðunn Vestfirzki,³ it is pleasant to recall the story from *Ævisaga Brynjólfs biskups*.⁴ "Brynjólfur, bishop of Skálholt, visited in that summer (1647) the Westfirths for the third time, and took the service in the church of Flatey on the twelfth Sunday after Trinity; Jón Finnsson⁵ lived there, he had a parchment book in monkish script inherited from his ancestors and containing the Norwegian Kings' sagas and much besides, and it was called *Flatleyjarbók*. Bishop Brynjólfur had formerly sought to buy it for money, and when that would not do he tried with five hundreds of land and did

¹ *Flatleyjarbók*, Christiania 1860. Ed. G. Vigfússon and C. R. Unger.

² F. Jónsson "Flatleyjarbók" in *Aarboger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, III række, 17 bind, 1927.

³ Discussed by A. R. Taylor in *Saga-Book* Vol. XIII, part II.

⁴ Given in *Sturlunga saga*, ed. G. Vigfússon, 1879, Prolegomena p. CXLIII, footnote; translated here from Espólins Árbækur, 1821-55, VI 122-3.

⁵ The text reads "Jón Torfason," Jón Finnsson's nephew. G. Vigfússon in the *Rolls* series *Icelandic sagas*, I, 1887, p. xxx, accepts this. For the reasons (here followed) for assuming that they were confused and that Jón Finnsson must be meant, see F. Jónsson in *Íslenzkar Fornögur*, III, 1883, p. xix.

not get it any the more for that. But when Jón afterwards accompanied him to his ship as he was leaving the islands, he gave him the book, and people think that the bishop must have fully rewarded him." Certainly it would appear that the reading of *Auðunar þáttir vestfirzka* had not been wasted on its owner.

As *Þorsteins þáttir* is not one of the better known *þættir*, a brief summary may help to put in their proper place the two points dealt with here. Its first chapter deals only with Úlfjót and Úlfjót's Law. Then the characters of the story are introduced, Þorkell Geitisson, his dumb sister Oddný, and Ívarr ljómi from Norway. Þorsteinn was the illegitimate son of these last two, though Ívarr at first denied his paternity. Þorkell had the young Þorsteinn exposed to die, but a man called Krummr found him, and brought him up as his own child. When the child grew up he frequently visited his mother's home, and one day when he was there his grandfather Geitir saw him trip over his *fylgja*, a white bear cub. This led to the discovery of his real origin, and his acceptance by Þorkell. The next chapter tells of a dream which he had, in which he entered a burial mound and assisted one party of its inhabitants against another. He was rewarded by Brynjarr, their leader, with a gift of enchanted gold which had the power to cure dumbness, and Brynjarr prophesied that Þorsteinn would change to a better faith, and asked that if a son should be born to Þorsteinn he would christen him Brynjarr, so that the latter's name might be baptised. Þorsteinn then went to Norway, failed to get Ívarr to acknowledge him as his son, and joined Styrkárr in an expedition against trolls in Heiðarskógr. He was victorious, and returned to challenge Ívarr again to accept him as his son; this time at the point of the sword, and this time successfully. Chapter XIII tells how he wrestled at King Ólaf's command against an ox to which an ostensibly Christian chief was sacrificing in

secret. He pulled so hard that he pulled one of its hind legs off, and thus acquired his nickname. After this he disposed of the last relative of the trolls he had beaten before, christened his son Brynjarr, thus fulfilling the mound-dweller's request, and fell on the Long Serpent with King Ólaf.

The story seems to touch reality at the beginning and end, for the chapter on Úlfjót is historic, and there does seem to have been a Þorsteinn uxafótr on the Long Serpent at the battle of Svøldr. The earliest authority, Oddr, says so in his life of Ólaf Tryggvason, but names him among the survivors, not among those who fell, and so do the longer *Óláfs saga* and *Fagrskinna*, if one can assume that the Þorsteinn of the latter without any nickname is our Þorsteinn. He is mentioned in *Heimskringla* too, but there his fate is not clear. None of these sources give any reason for believing him to have been an Icelander, and Oddr believed him to have come from southern Norway. Perhaps that is why our author forbore to make him a full-blooded member of the Icelandic family of the Krossvíkingar, but gave him a Norwegian father. It is curious too that the *þáttr* does not mention that Ívarr ljómi died alongside his long lost and reluctantly found son. For all the sources agree that Ívarr ljómi fell on the Long Serpent. Indeed in *Flateyjarbók* itself, on fol. 235 in *Mannatal á Orminum*, both Þorsteinn uxafótr and Ívarr ljómi are named, but not together, and not as related. Fol. 256 tells of the death of Ívarr and the escape of Þorsteinn, thus contradicting the version given in *Þorsteins þáttr*, and again no relationship between the two men is suggested. It might be thought that the *Óláfs saga* material of *Flateyjarbók* represents an independent historical tradition, unaffected in these places by the *þáttr* elsewhere absorbed into it. That is, that it stuck to the facts, or at any rate to more plausible fictions, and had no truck with the more entertaining stories accepted in the *þáttr*. But this view, that

a line can be drawn separating the unreliable *Þorsteins þáttur* from the larger work in which it is set, seems untenable when one also considers *Sǫrla þáttur*, another unhistorical insertion in the *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* which makes impossible any simple antithesis between *Þorsteins þáttur* as fiction and the references to Þorsteinn elsewhere in the saga as historical tradition. *Sǫrla þáttur* connects Ívarr ljómi with the Heðinn and Hogni story, and on fol. 143 of *Flateyjarbók* (op. cit. p. 282) it says "Ívarr ljómi was to keep watch this night, and when everyone on board was asleep Ívarr took the sword which Jarnskjöldr had had, but Þorsteinn his son had given him, and all his equipment, and went ashore on the island." Jarnskjöldr was the husband of Skjaldvǫr the troll-wife with whom Þorsteinn has his great fight, and it is this sword of Jarnskjöldr that gives Hogni the blow that eventually releases him from his fate. But from *Þorsteins þáttur* it is by no means clear that Þorsteinn ever had the sword of Jarnskjöldr, let alone gave it to Ívarr. The sword which the story does mention three times is Skjaldvararnautr, which Þorsteinn sees hanging on the wall above Skjaldvǫr, and with which he kills her. A little later he uses Skjaldvararnautr to fight Jarnskjöldr, who is presumably using his own sword, and to threaten Ívarr into accepting him as his son. At the end of the story he uses it again against the survivors of Skjaldvǫr's family. Of Jarnskjöldr's sword there is never any mention. One might think of some such explanation as the existence of two different traditions about the sword, but it seems more likely that the writer of *Sǫrla þáttur* is remembering *Þorsteins þáttur* and doing so inaccurately.⁶

The other reference to Þorsteinn in *Flateyjarbók* outside his own *þáttur* is historically more considerable.

⁶ Whether contact had taken place between the two stories before they were included in *Flateyjarbók* one cannot tell. *Sǫrla þáttur* comes only ten pages after *Þorsteins þáttur* in the MS. As one might expect so recent a reader of the latter to have a clearer memory of it, one might argue that Jón is unlikely to be responsible for any confusion. But clearly nothing of weight could be drawn from this.

On fol. 256 (op. cit. p. 491) we find the exchange between Ólaf and Þorsteinn which fits so well the Þorsteinn sketched in the *þáttr*. If it is part of a historical tradition, it might be thought to have provided the point of departure for the *þáttr*, which would then be, like the medieval chivalric *enfances*, an attempt to provide a past for a hero already known which would agree with the lines of his character already laid down. The dialogue between Ólaf and Þorsteinn takes place towards the end of resistance on the Long Serpent, when the defenders of the prow had been forced back towards Ólaf's group at the stern. "So it is said that Þorsteinn uxafótr was in the waist of the ship, aft by the raised deck. He said to King Ólaf whilst the earl's men were most furiously boarding the Serpent, "Lord" he said, "each should now do what he can." "Why not?" said the king. Þorsteinn then struck with his fist one of the earl's men who was climbing aboard near him, and the blow landed on the man's cheek with such force that he was flung far into the sea and died. After that Þorsteinn became so raging that he seized the outrigger of the sail and fought with that.⁷ But when King Ólaf saw that he said to Þorsteinn "Take your weapons, man, and defend yourself with them, because that is what weapons are for, for men to fight with them in battles, and not smite just with their hands or lumps of wood." It is immediately after this that Ólaf, trusting

⁷ Shetelig and Falk in their *Scandinavian Archaeology* (1937, p. 352) keep the word "yard" used by Zoëga to translate *beiti-áss*, but make it clear that the reference is to the lower edge of the sail, which at this date would be loose-footed. So the *beiti-áss* was probably like a modern spinnaker-boom in that only one end of it was attached to the sail whose foot it was used to extend (when sailing to windward, and the square sail would not otherwise set properly). The word is recorded in Modern Icelandic (from *Gullbringusýsla*) in a similar sense, and to avoid the ambiguity of English "yard" or "boom" it might be better translated "outrigger." It was presumably fourteen feet long or more, though not of course as long as the boom of the Long Serpent, which Þorsteinn could not have lifted alone. On the bulwark of the Gokstad ship, just forward of the mast-step and at the level of the floor-boards, is mounted a block of wood with two holes pierced into it at an angle. They are 6 inches in diameter, and are probably supports for the base of the *beiti-áss* to prevent it damaging the ship's side. They can be seen in the section on p. 149 of *Vikingskipene, deres forgjengere og etterfølgere*, A. W. Brøgger and H. Shetelig, Oslo 1950.

to weapons, throws three spears at Earl Erik and misses with all three. The passage above implies that Þorsteinn considered it best to rely on his brute strength rather than his weapons, strength which is to be seen from the *þáttr* and (perhaps independently?) from his nickname. But is that because this scene in the *Óláfs saga* has been influenced by the depiction of Þorsteinn in the *þáttr*, or because the *þáttr* is an elaboration of the view of Þorsteinn presented in this scene from *Óláfs saga*? The nickname *uxafótr* in the *Óláfs saga* need not be drawn from the *þáttr* since it is found in the other sources as well, but both this scene in *Óláfs saga* and the *þáttr* might be inspired ultimately by the nickname, and the characteristics which it suggests.

If this scene was part of an early historical tradition about Þorsteinn, and not a late addition, one wonders that the author of the *þáttr* did not include it, instead of ending his tale as he does with a hurried summary of Þorstein's later career which comes as an anti-climax. There seem to be two possible reasons. One, that he already knew the material about Þorsteinn in *Óláfs saga*, but considered this as the well-known tale which he was to supplement with an *enfances*, seems the less likely. There is no evidence that Þorsteinn *uxafótr* was such an important figure, and the *þáttr* in saying that he was killed on the Long Serpent contradicts what seems to have been the generally accepted story. More probably the author knew only that a man named Þorsteinn *uxafótr* had been on the Long Serpent, and he thought he had been killed on it. This lack of knowledge of his subject may seem to contrast with the general air of being well-informed about the past which he gives by his references to figures and institutions of the past not known from other sources, but his historical knowledge seems to have been limited, though much exploited. On this view, the scene between Ólaf and Þorsteinn is part of the original account; there is no obvious reason for rejecting it, unless it were that the

highly fictitious nature of Þorstein's exploits in the *Þáttr* might be held to cast doubt on everything connected with him. And if the account in *Óláfs saga* is accepted it seems that at least the character of the hero is faithfully depicted, if his deeds are not, in *Þorsteins þáttr uxafóts*.

The two parts of the story treated in this paper are the first chapter on Úlfjót's Law, with its problem of relationships with *Landnámabók* and other historical texts, and the tenth chapter, the fight with the trolls and its possible relationship to folk-tale or other sources.

II

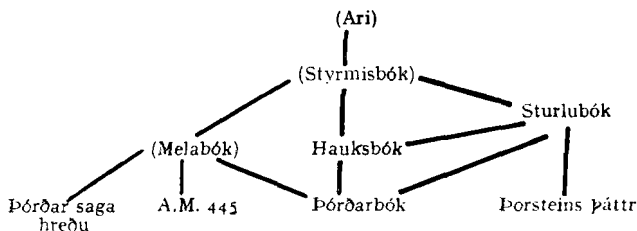
Chapter 1 of the story begins with Þórður skeggi's *landnám*, and ends with that of Þoðvarr inn hvíti and Þórir hávi, but the bulk of it is a description of the heathen law. This begins with rules about figureheads on ships (which might frighten the *landvættir*) and goes on to the temple ring, the swearing of oaths on it, the oath formula, and the division of the land into quarters. It implies that the last was also the work of Úlfjót, and ends with an equation between temple toll and church tithes. This material occurs in very similar (and clearly related) forms in four places. One is our story, another *Þórðar saga hreðu* (in the version in *Vatnshyrna*) and the third and fourth are in two versions of *Landnámabók*, *Hauksbók* cap. 268 and *Þórðarbók* (Jónssonar, sometimes called *Younger Melabók*) cap. 307 and appendix.⁸ It is hard to give a satisfactory account of the relationships between these four, and harder to relate them to their source. Much of Maurer's scheme is vitiated by the assumption needed for it, that the *Melabók* from which Þórður copied was a better forerunner of the extant fragment A.M. 445, whereas Jón Jóhannesson has

⁸ The *Hauksbók* passage will be found on p. 95 of *Landnámabók I-III*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, Copenhagen 1900, and the *Þórðarbók* passage on p. 135 of *Landnámabók Melabók A.M. 106, 112 Fol.*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, Copenhagen 1921.

shown that it was our A.M. 445 itself.⁹ But Maurer's view that *Þorsteins þáttur* does not derive the passage under consideration from *Hauksbók*, but from some earlier stage, can be abundantly justified, for it has a fuller and apparently more original treatment.

There are also some resemblances between cap. 294 of *Þórðarþók* and *Þorsteins þáttur*. Both in their description of the *landnám* of Krummr have "á Hafranesi inn til Þernuness" against the "á Hafranesi ok til Þernuness" of *Sturlubók* (*Hauksbók*, cap. 255, p. 93 has "ok allt til Þernuness"). *Sturlubók* and *Hauksbók* both have "þrjú lǫnd ǫðrum megin at Þernunesi" where *Þorsteins þáttur* and *Þórðarþók* have "inn ǫðrum megin at Þernunesi." These readings were used by Maurer to differentiate between *Hauksbók* and *Þorsteins þáttur*, and to suggest that the latter used a version of *Landnámabók* more original than that available to Haukr, and this seems likely on other grounds too. But they are used by Prof. Jóhannesson to suggest that *Melabók* (from which he

⁹ Maurer's scheme is set out in *Abhandlungen der Philosophisch-Philologischen Classe der Königl. Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, XII Band, 1 Abt. München, 1869. The diagram given is not quoted from there, but composed to illustrate the view advocated there.



Texts named within brackets no longer survive. Prof. Jón Jóhannesson in his important *Gerðir Landnámabókar*, Hið Íslenska Bókmenntafélag, Reykjavík 1941, from which any modern work on *Landnáma* must start, made the following corrections to the scheme shown in the diagram.

- (a) Þórður Jónsson did not know *Hauksbók* and *Sturlubók* directly, but through *Skarðsárþók*.
- (b) Þórður was copying from A.M. 445 for *Melabók*.
- (c) *Þorsteins þáttur* is to be linked with *Melabók* not *Sturlubók*.

There are, of course, many other differences between Maurer and Jóhannesson on this topic. The former assumed the work of Ari to be the first *Íslendingabók*, the latter assumes it to be a *Landnámabók*.

assumes Þórður has this reading; the original is not now extant) was the common source of the legal material in *Þorsteins þáttr* and *Þórðar saga hreðu*. It seems dangerous to use *Þórðarbók* as evidence for more than the general statement that the legal material was in *Melabók*. Prof. Jóhannesson himself elsewhere, it seems to me rightly, dismisses other resemblances between *Þorsteins þáttr* and *Þórðarbók* as due to borrowing by the latter from the former, not as from a common source. But he finds it difficult to believe that such minute agreements as this and others were the product of constant reference to *Þorsteins þáttr*; he finds it more reasonable to explain the resemblance by deriving *Þórðarbók* and *Þorsteins þáttr* from a common original, from *Melabók*, to which he attributes what is necessary to make it a satisfactory source. It must be remembered on the other hand that Þórður did add to his exemplar from other sources,¹⁰ and it was probably this which enabled him to avoid the error of attributing the division into quarters to Úlfjót; he says that it happened in Þórðr gellir's day, and refers to Þormóðr allsherjargoði, in both these things differing from the other versions of *Landnáma*. But if the legal material was in all the earlier *Landnáma*, surely *Þorsteins þáttr* and *Þórðar saga hreðu* would not both have dropped part when copying from *Melabók*? Prof. Jóhannesson also maintains that this material came to *Melabók* from *Styrmisbók*, so that there would be the further coincidence to explain that *Hauksbók* also omits this "original" material. *Hauksbók*, then must have omitted, in copying from *Styrmisbók*, the same passage omitted by *Þorsteins þáttr* and *Þórðar saga* in copying from *Melabók*; but it seems simpler to assume that the passage was not there in the first place than to assume such coincidences to explain what is more probably one among many of Þórður's additions. The evidence of the

¹⁰ Arngrímur Jónsson's *Crymogæa* and *Eyrbyggja saga* are among the sources whose use Jón Jóhannesson demonstrates, *op. cit.* p. 33.

“Pernuness” readings may suggest that the legal material was in *Melabók*, but cannot allow us to say anything about the form it assumed, and certainly is not enough to allow us to determine the affiliations of this now lost version.¹¹

Where *Þorsteins þáttr* seems to have a better text than *Hauksbók* it is often supported by *Þórðar saga hreðu* as well as *Þórðarbók*. *Þórðar saga* sometimes gives a text which seems to be even fuller than that of the *þáttr*, but it does this by borrowing from *Íslendingabók*. As Maurer thought that the common source of this chapter on Úlfjót’s law was Ari’s first version of *Íslendingabók* he assumed that the saga was therefore a better text than the *þáttr*. But B. M. Ólsen has shown that the material is unlikely to have been in the first *Íslendingabók*,¹² and the extra material in *Þórðar saga* is borrowed from the extant *Íslendingabók*. The resemblances between *Þórðar saga* and *Þórðarbók* which Maurer used to differentiate the pair of them from *Þorsteins þáttr* and *Hauksbók* are perhaps to be explained by the view that both are conflated texts which pad out the original material from other sources (some of which still exist) and sometimes use the same ones. The *þáttr* agrees with the saga in one important place where their reading seems preferable to that of either *Þórðarbók* or *Hauksbók*. The first two have (about the *goðar*) “þeir skyldu dómnefnur eiga á þingum,” *Þórðarbók* “þeir skyldu dóm eigna á þingum,” *Hauksbók* “þeir skyldu nefna dóma á þingum.”

As *Þórðarbók* and *Þórðar saga hreðu* both added to the original source, we are left with *Þorsteins þáttr* and

¹¹ It is likely on other grounds that the law material was in *Melabók*, as Þórður started to copy it in its proper place before he decided to relegate it to the appendix. This very relegation suggests to me that he had decided to amplify and alter it by reference to other sources. In the two and a half sentences common to the appendix and cap. 307 are two minor differences which also suggest that the version in the appendix cannot be taken to be a straightforward copy of what stood in *Melabók*.

¹² In articles on *Íslendingabók* from 1885 onwards in *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*.

Hauksbók as straightforward versions of it, and the *þáttr* seems to preserve older formulæ better in such readings as “róðru blótnauts” for *Hauksbók’s* “rjóðru nauts blóðs” and in “vitni bera eða kviðu, eða dóma dœma sem ek veit réttast” for *Hauksbók’s* “vitni bera eða kviðu eða dóma,” as *bera* goes well enough with *vitni* and perhaps with *kviðu*, but scarcely with *dóma*. So it appears that *Þorsteins þáttr* is the best guide left to us of the form in which the material appeared in its original source.

What was this? It would be possible to account for some of the ignorance of genealogies and topography shown by the *þáttr* by assuming that its author had no *Landnámabók* from which to copy, but some small separate work on Úlfjót’s Law. It seems to me that his ignorance is not of a kind which can be so explained. Cap. 2 of the present *Íslendingabók* is not full enough to be the source, but it might be urged that Ari wrote a separate libellus on the topic, or that his first *Íslendingabók* was fuller; this latter was Maurer’s view. The ignorance of the *þáttr*, and its special kind, can best be shown by the examples given by Jóhannesson, with some additions. The author of the *þáttr* introduced Þorkell Geitisson into the Reyðarfjörðr family of Krossvíkingar descended from Þórir hávi, presumably because Þorkell lived at a place called Krossavík too. He seems to have confused Krossavík on Vápnafjörðr with Krossavík on Reyðarfjörðr and then confused the families. The passage in cap. 2 of the *þáttr* about the settlement of Krummr resembles very closely the account given in the chapter of *Landnámabók* which contains the Þórir hávi material used in the preceding chapter of the *þáttr*. And surely the author of *Þorsteins þáttr* got the idea of crediting Þorkell with a thrall called Freysteinn from the Freysteinn inn fagri of the immediately preceding chapter of *Landnáma*. His paragraph on Freysteinn begins “Þorkell átti þræl einn, útlendan at ǫllu kyni” which

last is perhaps used only as a conventional descriptive tag, as he later gives a respectable genealogy for Freysteinn. He says his father Grímkell lived at Vors, and married Álǫf, daughter of Brunnólfr Þorgeirsson Vestarsson. Now names did of course repeat in families, but as Jóhannesson points out, it seems unlikely that the husband of a daughter of Brunnólfr Þorgeirsson Vestarsson lived at Vors when one remembers that only thirteen chapters earlier in *Landnámabók* (say two pages) we find that Brynjólfr Þorgeirsson Vestarsson took land round Eskifjörðr. He had sixteen children, presumably some daughters, but none named as Álǫf. The nickname "inn fagri" is obligingly explained in the *þáttr* since Freysteinn was "not ugly and bad to deal with like other thralls." When he is freed he takes Sandvík, Viðfjörðr and Hellisfjörðr and is called a *landnámsmaðr*. This mention of the places is from *Landnámabók*, but by the *þáttr*'s own chronology the year would be 990. There is no suggestion in *Landnáma* that Freysteinn was related to Brynjólfr Þorgeirsson, or that he was a thrall. If he had been a thrall in the district he could scarcely have been one of Þorkell Geitisson's, since Þorkell as far as we know was first brought to the district by the author's confusion of the two Krossavíks. And there does not seem any reason for believing that Sandvík and the rest were settled as late as 990. This is perhaps ignorance of the information contained in *Landnámabók*, but it is of a special sort; "it aint what a man dont know that makes him ignorant, but what he does know that aint so." The author of the *þáttr* wanted to use characters who would have a ready-made aura of historicity about them, and for him the importance of *Landnámabók* would be that it made such characters easily available rather than that it made possible a consistent historical background.

If one assumes from the above that the author of the *þáttr* had a *Landnámabók* before him, it does not prove

that no separate work on Úlfljót's Law existed, but it removes the need for assuming such a work, since his copy of *Landnámabók* (like *Melabók* and *Hauksbók*) would probably contain a chapter on Úlfljót's Law. *Sturlubók* does not contain this chapter, so it cannot have been the text he had, and as *Hauksbók* contains it only in an inferior form from which the *þáttr* cannot be derived, one is left with the choice between *Styrmisbók* and *Melabók*, or perhaps some lost *Landnámabók*. As we do not have their texts of Úlfljót's Law, any attempt to go beyond this choice must of necessity be speculative, but might be based on comparison of *Þorsteins þáttr* and *Þórðar saga hreðu*. As neither of their versions can be derived from the other, the *Landnáma* text required must have been available to both. The *þáttr* was written in a manuscript for Jón Hákonarson. *Þórðar saga* was formerly part of *Vatnshyrna*, and two sagas from *Vatnshyrna*, *Þórðar saga* and *Flóamanna saga* bring their genealogies down to Jón Hákonarson, so that it is generally accepted that that volume too was written for him. As there is no reason to assume that the genealogies down to Jón are not original, *Þórðar saga* was probably composed in his circle. Maurer has shown by arguments not affected by his other, erroneous, assumptions, that *Vatnshyrna* was probably written at Helgafell under that Þorsteinn the abbot with the engaging nickname "the ball-shaped" who was the son of Snorri Markússon á Melum. Whether one attributes *Melabók* to the father or son, this suggests a possibility of contact between *Melabók*, *Þórðarssaga* and *Þorsteins þáttr*. The association of the latter (through its presence in *Flateyjarbók*) with Helgafell might also be taken through Magnús Þórhallsson, the other scribe of *Flateyjarbók*, probably a priest of the monastery, who witnessed a land sale at Hríf very near Helgafell in 1397.¹³ Though Vigfússon¹⁴

¹³ *Diplomatarium Islandicum* VI 32-34, quoted by Jóhannesson op. cit. p. 55.

¹⁴ *Rolls Series Icelandic Sagas*, I, 1887 p. XXV.

connects *Flateyjarbók* with the library of Þingeyrar, it seems that as far as *Þorsteins þáttr* is concerned one might also look to Helgafell.

Úlfjót's Law, a connection with Jón Hákonarson, and with Helgafell, are not the only things the *þáttr* and the saga have in common. They are the only sagas of Icelanders to refer to Ólqf, wife of Klyppr who killed Sigurðr slefa.¹⁵ The *þáttr* makes her the sister of Ásbjörn, the saga in one version his daughter, in the other his granddaughter, and *Heimskringla* makes her his daughter, but the form of the reference, which is much the same in each case, makes it easy to see how the mistake arose. She is not mentioned in any surviving *Landnáma*, and there is no necessity to assume that she appeared in some lost version. In *Þórðar saga* she is relevant, as her husband was Þórðr's brother, but in the *þáttr* she merely pads out the pedigree of Ívarr ljómi.

Could the source for *Þórðar saga* and *Þorsteins þáttr* have been *Melabók*? The answer will depend partly upon the view one takes of the odd juxtaposition, in both *þáttr* and saga, of the material about Ólqf Ásbjarnardóttir and of Úlfjót's Law. If one were to decide from the connection between Jón Hákonarson's texts and Helgafell (and thus *Melabók*) that *Melabók* was the most likely source, then Ólqf and Úlfjót's Law must be separately explained, as it cannot be shown that the former had been taken up into *Melabók*.¹⁶ A hint in favour of *Melabók* might be drawn from the absence of the Úlfjót's Law chapter from *Sturlubók*. Had it been in *Styrmisbók* it seems odd that *Sturlubók*, written by one so concerned in law as Sturla, should omit it. Against any such conclusion is Hauk's comment that in some respects *Styrmisbók* was fuller than *Sturlubók*, and Haukr has the Úlfjót's Law chapter, which he certainly cannot have got from *Melabók*. Jóhannesson suggests, op. cit. p. 170,

¹⁵ I am greatly indebted to Mr. G. Turville-Petre for suggestions about Ólqf which are incorporated in the excursus on her at the end of this article.

¹⁶ See the excursus on Ólqf at the end.

that the copy of *Styrmisbók* which Sturla had used, together with his Sturlung material came into the hands of Þorsteinn abbot of Helgafell, as he believes him to have written *Melabók* from it. So that the connection of *Þorsteins þáttur* and *Þórðar saga* with Helgafell can still be considered relevant even if one does not accept *Melabók* as their common source.¹⁷ One's conclusion is that for Úlfjót's Law the *þáttur* is our best surviving unsophisticated source, and that it got its information from a copy of *Styrmisbók* in the monastery of Helgafell not long before 1390. This conclusion must be speculation. To suggest as Maurer did that it came from Ari is to have to prove a negative, that it was not in *Styrmisbók*, of which there can be no proof. It is true that Þórðr skeggi and Þoðvarr hvíti of the chapter on Úlfjót's Law were both ancestors of Ari whose land settlement we presume Ari treated, but then they would also certainly be in *Styrmisbók*.

In between the historical question of Úlfjót's Law, and the more nebulous affiliations suggested by cap. 10 of the *þáttur*, stand other problems of its relationship to existing literary texts. There is for instance no other record of a sister of Þorkell Geitisson called Oddný; but Brodd-Helgi, with whom Þorkel's father Geitir is so much concerned in *Vápnfirðinga saga*, had a daughter Oddný according to *Njáls saga*. He and Geitir are said to have been much of an age, and the attribution of an Oddný as daughter to Geitir rather than Helgi would perhaps be more likely from an author who knew *Njáls saga* than one who did not, as this seems to be the only saga which mentions her.

The resemblance between Þorsteinn uxafótr and Ormr Stórolfsson is closer than is explicable on any assumption of shared folk-tale elements, and it is a resemblance

¹⁷ Qlof at any rate in both texts seems unlikely to be from *Melabók*. Mr. Turville-Petre is of the opinion that both borrowed here from *Heimskringla*; or the borrowing one might think was more directly from the sources from which he suggests Snorri took it, as they were material of a kind very likely to have been collected by Styrmir.

which concerns the Þorsteinn scene in the *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (*Flateyjarbók* fol. 256, Unger p. 491) as well as some incidents in the *Þáttr*. That is clear from the detail of Þorsteinn swinging the *beiti-áss* as a weapon on the Long Serpent. It is difficult to believe that the resemblance of this to the scene between Ormr and Jarl Erik is coincidental. Ormr had said that the Long Serpent would have lasted longer if he had been there with the king's other champions, and Jarl Erik to make trial of this put him in a ship alone whilst fifteen other ships attacked it. "Ormr tók einn berlingsás digran, þrettán alna langan"; with it he destroyed seven ships. The men were saved, but Jarl Erik ordered the entertainment to stop. *Berlingsáss*, like *beiti-áss*, is a difficult word, usually translated simply as pole. *Cleasby-Vigfússon* refer to a modern English building term "barling", a long pole or cross-beam. *Svenska Akademiens Ordbok* has however the rare word "bärling" with the maritime significance of a long pole for quanting, used to get ships clear of quays, up rivers and so on, as a quotation from Schröderus (1638) illustrates; "vi foro uppföre med tillhjälp af langa bärlingar, som stöttes i bottnen." As the episode in which Ormr wielded this obscure nautical timber is the only place in Old Norse in which the word seems to be recorded, and is avowedly a reconstruction of the end of the Long Serpent, where Þorsteinn similarly wielded a similarly obscure *áss* it seems reasonable to assume some connection closer than that of folk-tale tradition. This has its bearing on the less tangible connection with other tales present in cap. 10 of *Þorsteins þáttr*. The danger of the "shared folk-tale" approach is that it always tends to "prove" far too much (and one cannot escape the danger merely by being aware of it). A good case (as well documented as such cases usually are) has been made out, without reference to these two tales, for considering that the fight in which the hero swings a long beam round his head is a very

primitive feature of the Bear's son folk-tale. But the connection between the two tales seems literary rather than of that kind.

III

Consideration of the folk-tale relationships of cap. 10 must be less definite than it is possible to be about Úlfjót's Law, as no original versions now exist of any of the folk-tale elements which one may think to recognise. And one may wonder if they ever did exist in the sense in which *Styrmisbók* existed; all that is possible is to consider cap. 10 as far as possible in the light of particular tales rather than abstract versions of motifs. In cap. 10 after various champions of Óláf's have been killed by the trolls, Styrkárr and Þorsteinn go up into Heiðarskógr and come to a *sæluhús*. They apportion tasks, Styrkárr is to light the fire whilst Þorsteinn gets water. This has to be done in such a situation, and this motif of separation of the comrades, one staying to prepare the meal, occurs in more than a quarter of the two hundred instances Panzer gives.¹⁸ It is not by any means an important resemblance between the *þátrr* and *Hallfreðar saga* and *Finnboga saga* that it occurs in them too; though as nothing comes of the incident in *Þorsteins þátrr*, whereas it is important in them, it might be taken as a relic of a folk-tale situation more clearly recollected in them.¹⁹

Whilst Þorsteinn is getting the water he sees a troll-girl and chases her to a large house. She escapes him there, but in the first room of the house he sees the troll-wife Skjaldvǫr asleep. A shield and sword hang on the wall above her, and this sword he uses to kill her. Perhaps this was just as well, for it might have been, though the

¹⁸ See the section "*Waldhausformeln*," p. 74 in *Studien zur germanischen Sagen Geschichte. I. Beowulf*, München 1910.

¹⁹ *Hallfreðar saga*, cap. 7, *Finnboga saga*, cap. 13. It might also of course be straightforward realistic description or literary borrowing. It is included above because there are other resemblances between these three tales.

Þáttur certainly does not say so, that only that sword would kill her.²⁰ Skjaldvǫr's skin was shaggy all over, but for one spot under the left arm, and there Þorsteinn thought a sword must bite, if it would bite on her at all. This one vulnerable spot in an otherwise invulnerable hide occurs in the tales of all countries, but it is characteristic of the sort of relationship to folk-tale that the *Þáttur* shows, that in it the point does not matter. No friendly spirit tells Þorsteinn this as the secret of victory, the defect is not explained or dwelt on. It is offered only as a (very reasonable) speculation of Þorsteinn, who seems to be as knowledgeable about folk-tales as his author. Þorsteinn stabs Skjaldvǫr in this vulnerable spot, and as she rises wounded to seek her assailant in the room, he resourcefully jumps over her into the bed, the last place she will search. Like so much else in the *Þáttur*, this detail has an air of folk-tale about it without seeming very likely to be connected with any particular tale. The nearest known to me is Árnason's tale of Þorsteinn Karlsson,²¹ but it is not very close. In it the hero and his companions escape being killed by a troll-wife by jumping over her daughters to the wall side of the bed, so that the troll-wife, decapitating those on the outside of the bed, kills her own daughters instead of them.

Skjaldvǫr thus dies on the sword without finding Þorsteinn. He retrieves the sword, goes to the inner door and through it sees the troll Jarnskjöldr, Skjaldís his elder daughter, and two child trolls Hak and Haka. Jarnskjöldr is admitting to his daughter that his mind is troubled, though there is only one man that he fears, and that man is Þorsteinn Oddnýjarson from Iceland; but he is unlikely to come to Heiðarskógr. This foreboding on the part of the troll, with the name of his killer, is found

²⁰ The situation is common enough; in *Hjálmþérs saga ok Qlvis*, cap. 10, it is explicitly stated that the troll there could be killed only with her own sword, and Þorsteinn in *Vatnsdala saga* uses Jökull's own sword to kill him. Panzer, op. cit., p. 287, gives other instances.

²¹ *Íslenzkar Þjóðsögur og Æfintýri*, Jón Árnason, Leipzig 1864, II, p. 443.

in Panzer's variants in Celtic, Indian, Serbian and Russian, but its appearance in *Hallfreðar saga* is more important. In cap. 6 of that saga Þorleifr inn spaki says to the disguised Hallfreðr who has been sent against him "Hann Hallfreðr er svá manna at ek skil sízt hvat manna at er at frásogn manna, ok horfinheilla er mér, hvat sem eftir kemr." This may be compared with the speech in the *Þáttr* "en svá er sem mér hangi blað fyrir auga um qll mín forlög, hvat sem því veldr" where Jarnskjöldr is speaking of Þorsteinn.²² After this Skjaldís comes out, finds her mother dead, and is killed by Þorsteinn with the sword Skjaldvararnautr. She is followed by Jarnskjöldr who suffers the same fate. Then Þorsteinn goes into the hall, but when he comes in, before he can notice anything he is grasped up and thrown down. It is Skjaldvǫr who is alive again "ok var þa sýnu verri viðreignar en fyrr," the traditional phrase for all afterwalkers.

Skjaldvǫr intended to bite his windpipe apart, but it occurred to him that he who created heaven and earth must indeed be great. He had heard many tales about King Ólaf and his faith, and promised now with a pure heart and whole mind to take that faith and serve Ólaf as long as he lived, if he got away. The successful prayer in association with either of the two King Óláfs is common to a whole group of tales, most of which have other features in common with *Þorsteins þáttr*.²³ In the tale of Ásmundur flagðagæfa in Árnason vol. I p. 178, Ólaf is actually present and physically assisting in the fight with Vǫlski which is eventually won "með guðs miskunn ok giptu Óláfs konungs." In the tale of Gullbrá²⁴ the successful prayer takes the form of a promise to build a

²² In *Orms þáttr*, Menglōð, Brusi's half-sister, says of him to Ormr "engan mann óttast hann útan þik einn." There are other points of similarity.

²³ Hallfreðr in cap. 7 of his saga prays "Dugi þú mér, Hvíta-Kristr, ef þú ert svá máttugr sem Óláfr konungr segir . . . Síðan réttist Hallfreðr upp undir honum með fulltingi guðs ok giptu Óláfs konungs." Of Ormr in his *þáttr* we are told that "hann heitir á sjalfan guð ok inn heilaga Péturm postula" but in the Faeroese versions of his story Óláfr is also associated with the deliverance.

²⁴ Árnason, op. cit., vol. I, p. 146.

church; in *Þorskfirðinga saga*, Þórir calls on Agnarr, a heathen ancestor, to help him in peril. If one groups the stories in the way adopted here, Dehmer's comment on Agnarr seems surprising: "Agnarr tritt als dämonischer Helfer auf"²⁵; and later, on Gullbrá, "Hier ist also des christlichen Gottes Hilfe an die Stelle des dämonischen Helfers getreten", where he again sees the Christian, as well as the pagan appeal for help, as the result of a substitution for the demonic helper more proper to folk-tale. The reason for feeling this interpretation to be unnatural becomes clearer when one considers the next step in *Þorsteins þáttr*. After Þorsteinn had prayed, as her teeth were on his throat, "kemr geisli inn í skálann ógurliga bjarttr, ok stendr þvert framan í augun kerlingar. Við þá sýn varð henni svá illt at dró ór henni mátt ok magn allt." So God sends Þorsteinn his help in the bright light which weakens his enemy. In the Ormr story and in *Hallfreðar saga* this weakening follows directly on the prayer and no light is mentioned. In the story of Gullbrá when Skeggi prays "við það kom ljós mikit í glyrnur hennar" and his enemy is petrified. In *Þorskfirðinga saga*, after Þórir has called on Agnarr "kom elding mikil frá hellisdyrunum . . . en jafnskjótt sem eldingin kom yfir drekana, þá sofna þeir allir."

The *þáttr* goes on to tell of Styrkárr who is attacked in the *sæluhús* by the two young trolls. He kills them, traces Þorsteinn to the trolls' house and vows to the Creator of heaven and earth to take Ólaf's faith if he finds Þorsteinn alive. This he does, and together they break Skjaldvǫr's neck (not without difficulty, as it was so thick) and burn the bodies.²⁶ The episode closes with a traditional speech from Styrkárr to Þorsteinn "You are a

²⁵ *Primitives erzählungsgut in den Islendinga sögur*, H. Dehmer, Leipzig 1927, p. 55.

²⁶ A similar precaution (presumably to prevent repeated after-walking, though not explicitly said to be for that purpose) is found in *Finnboga saga*, cap. 16, and in *Hávarðar saga*, where Ólaf deals so with Þormóðr. Ormr also breaks the cat's neck when he has killed it in his divinely assisted fight.

great champion, and it is most likely that this deed of yours will be remembered as long as the Northlands are inhabited."

How much significance is there in these parallels? Those between *Finnboga saga* and *Þorsteins þáttur* are not very important, though there are more than have been mentioned; both were exposed as children, both had a famous wrestling match with an ox and so on. Probably they both represent what might be called the same grade of mixture of fragmentary folk-tale material. The resemblances between *Hallfreðar saga* and the *þáttur* are more striking; the division of labour, the fears of the villain told to the hero, the prayer to God and the reference to Ólaf. It is scarcely enough to justify a theory of literary borrowing, but it suggests that, if they were put together from other tales, they both used some of the same ones.

But the most striking and significant is the episode of the prayer and the light. It will be remembered that *Þorskfirðinga saga*, the story of Gullbrá and *Orms þáttur* (though not *Hallfreðar saga* or *Harðar saga*) are all cited in R. W. Chamber's *Beowulf, a study of the poem*. So these tales, and perhaps in this episode *Þorsteins þáttur* too, are humble members of a group which includes *Grettis saga* and *Beowulf* as well. Their presence in it may seem surprising if one considers the light and the prayer, since *Grettis saga* contains neither prayer nor divine light, and *Beowulf* only a reference to God (not a prayer) and a much more dubious reference to light, perhaps divine. The prayer and the light then associate *Beowulf* only doubtfully, and *Grettis saga* not at all, with the others. There are of course many other possible resemblances, but these two particular points have been made to carry a good deal of weight in argument. When *Beowulf* is down before Grendel's mother, God easily decides the issue and *Beowulf* stands up (l.1556). He sees a sword, and fourteen lines later we find the

reference to light in l.1570 "Lixte se leoma leoht inne stod, efne swa of hefene hadre scineð rodores candel."²⁷ Chambers, op. cit. p. 467, finds it likely that the original story told how help was sent to the hero in the form of a ray like sunlight which dazzled the monster and showed the hero the sword. "Indeed it is quite possible that the story as the author of *Beowulf* here meant to depict it actually was that God intervened by sending a ray of light." Miss Whitelock would not allow that the light had necessarily any such implication.²⁸

Whether *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga* are descended from a common Scandinavian original, or *Grettis saga* is influenced by *Beowulf* is a question which is not likely to be answered from a consideration of *Þorsteins þáttur*. But Chambers's attempt to establish the presence of the divine light in *Beowulf* seemed to him important in that controversy. He writes, op. cit. p. 466, "There is one important feature however which the story in *Beowulf* possesses which is found neither in the *Grettis saga* nor in the *Samsons saga*" and he goes on to discuss the supernatural aid. His conclusion is that this episode of the light found in the story of Gullbrá and *Þorskfirðinga saga* is part of "the original Scandinavian waterfall story." It is this conclusion on which *Þorsteins þáttur* and the other tales can throw some light before it is used as evidence in any examination of the relationship of *Grettis saga* and *Beowulf*.

Any Scandinavian form of the story prior to *Beowulf* must have been pagan. The episode of the light as we have it in the story of Gullbrá and *Þorsteins þáttur* is certainly Christian (as it must be in *Beowulf*, if we are prepared to see it there at all). It is true that in *Þorskfirðinga saga* it is ostensibly pagan, as the heathen ancestor Agnarr is called on and intervenes. We have no

²⁷ Klaeber in his note ad loc. in his edition of *Beowulf* takes this to be the light seen by Beowulf as he approached the hall, and therefore not a divine intervention.

²⁸ *The Audience of Beowulf*, p. 67.

evidence uncontaminated by Christian influence and assumptions of what the heathen attitude to the gods was, but there is nothing to suggest that it coincided with the Christian so exactly, or that the heathen gods (and ancestors) were believed to use the divine light so characteristic of Christian belief from the episode on the Damascus road onwards. Mr. Turville-Petre points out that the word used in *Þorsteins þáttur*, "geisli," had been used two centuries before to symbolise St. Ólaf,²⁹ and Paasche observes "Ogsaa Olavsnavnet *geisli* er bestemt av europæisk sprogbruk, hører med til lyssymboliken omkring Gud." Dehmer's "demonic helper" whose place is taken by Agnarr or God has a place it is true, in the generalised abstracts of the plot of the Bear's son type of tale. But in *Þorskfirðinga saga* the nature of the miracle and its introduction fit so well a Christian background that it would seem more natural to invert Dehmer's statement. Agnarr appears in the place, not of a demonic helper, but of God. It is a Christian tale which has been translated into pagan terms, and this view is supported by another version of the light episode, that in cap. 15 of *Harðar saga*, again ostensibly pagan. There is no appeal to, or mention of, God; Hǫrðr is entering the mound of the un-dead Sóti, and his prudent companion Geirr insists on bringing light and wax with him "því at hvártveggja hefir mikla náttúru með sér." Sóti is beginning to defeat Hǫrðr when the latter resourcefully bids his friend light a candle and see how Sóti takes that. But when the light came on Sóti his power departed and he fell down. This is presented simply as an intelligent use of the magic *náttúra* of candles. But though the belief that light was inimical to evil things may

²⁹ As the title of Einarr Skúlason's poem. According to Paasche, in *Kristendom og Kvæð*, Kristiania 1914, St. Ólaf is associated with supernatural light (i legendevederenen er der nok av lys som tændes av sig selv) in Þórarinn loftunga's poem *Glælognskviða*, but the reference seems to be to no more than ordinary candles burning on an altar, not specifically said to have kindled themselves. The bells *are* said to ring of themselves.

probably have been a feature of Old Norse heathenism (it is a very widely spread belief) a light connected specifically with candles seems more likely to be Christian, and belief in its power likely to be dependent on Christianity.

A light which dazzles one's opponent in a combat must be material and welcome assistance whatever its source. But bearing in mind what is presented in these stories as the surest way of obtaining it, that is prayer, it seems to me that this rationalising explanation is the less likely, and that originally the light was conceived of as the appropriate embodiment of divine intervention. The motif in its essence seems to me Christian; there can be no doubt that its setting is often markedly so. The Faeroese versions of the Ormr story lay great stress on the unsuccessful Ásbjörn's want of thought of the Trinity, and Orm's devoutness is explicitly contrasted with it. Skeggi's first call to Thor does no good, and only his vow to build a Christian church brings the light and its good result. The motif seems almost as characteristically Christian as the Trental of St. Gregory story in Middle English literature, though, like that, it may be found in a variety of settings.

This makes it very unlikely that if *Beowulf* and *Grettis saga* are from a common Scandinavian source, the supernatural intervention in a ray of light was present in it, and its presence in other Scandinavian tales should then be referred to a much more recent origin, just as, if we find it in *Beowulf*, it is more likely to represent an English origin than part of the common inheritance. And if we no longer believe it to have been part of "the original Scandinavian waterfall story" we no longer need to search so diligently for it in *Beowulf*. In any event it should not be used without considerable caution in any theory of the relations between *Grettis saga*, *Beowulf* and the rest. Were one to seek the origin of the episode of the light as it occurs in *Þorsteins þáttur* and the other Norse versions, Chambers's argument that the form in which it

occurs in *Beowulf* is not clear enough to explain the Norse versions is certainly convincing.³⁰

One might regard this part of *Þorsteins þáttur* and the rest (*Gullbrá, Harðar saga, Orms þáttur, Þorskfirðinga saga*) not as survivals of very old Scandinavian folk-tale, but as treatments of a highly propagandist Christian tale, more or less associated with King Ólaf and his introduction of Christianity to the North. Though they have acquired folk-tale tinges (that is, the exemplum situation of the efficacy of prayer has been treated in a folk-tale way, with various folk-tale details which have no significant relationship to one another added)³¹ they are not christianisations of a pre-existing folk-tale, and there is no reason to believe that any of their material is particularly early. They were intended as improving tales, and in *Þorsteins þáttur*, though the tale has many other attractions, the exemplum was prefaced by what must have been most attractive antiquarian legal information which, added to the moral edification and folk-tale entertainment of the rest, seems all that one could expect of a *þáttur*. One might say of it as Sturla's hearers said to King Magnús's queen "It is about a great troll-wife, and it is a good story, and moreover it is well told."

³⁰ The most important Norse story of the group, *Grettis saga* has not this feature, so that if one is convinced by the arguments of Boer, Bugge, Dehmer, Gering, Heusler, Olrik, Panzer and von Sydow that *Grettis saga* was influenced by *Beowulf*, or later English versions of a tale ultimately from the raw material of *Beowulf*, the motif of the light does not tell against such a connection.

³¹ One might compare the story in *Heimskringla, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* cap. 33 where the *landvættir*, a dragon, a bird, a bull, a huge man with staff in hand are equated with Brodd-Helgi, Eyjólfur Valgerðarson, Þórðr gellir and Þóroddr goði. Their shapes however derive from the four heads of cherubs in Jewish belief (man's, lion's, bull's and eagle's) which appear elsewhere as symbols of the Evangelists. See, on this, Björn Þorsteinsson, *Íslenska þjóðveldið*, Reykjavík 1953, p. 119, and his comment "Þar birtist einnig hæfileiki þjóðarinnar til þess að steypa erlent efni, sem henni barst, í íslenzkt mót, svo að eigi verður annað sjáanlegt en um Íslenzka frumsmíð sé að ræða."

EXCURSUS ON ÓLÖF ÁSBJARNARDÓTTIR¹

MANY important Icelanders were descended from Ólöf, Jón Hákonarson himself twice over so to say, since both parents of his paternal great-great-grandmother can be traced back to Ólöf; and the children of Snorri goði, of Þorkell Geitisson, and of Hvamm-Sturla were descendants of Ólöf on their mother's side. But the accounts of Ólöf in texts are differing and confusing. All the texts that mention her make her wife of Klyppr. In *Heimskringla* she is daughter of Ásbjörn, sister of Járnkeggi and niece of Hreiðarr. In *Þorsteins þáttr* she is sister of Ásbjörn and Hreiðarr and aunt of Járnkeggi. In *Þórðar saga hreðu* she appears as the daughter of Ásbjörn in the earlier version and of Skeggi in the later, and this is all this Saga says about her descent; but it mentions, in the earlier version, her daughter Guðrún, not known to the preceding texts, who also appears in *Sigurðar þáttr slesu* in *Flateyjarbók*.² The *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* of *Flateyjarbók* also mentions Ólöf.

What is the relationship of these accounts to one another? Is their common source some text no longer surviving which might contribute to our understanding of the make-up of *Þorsteins þáttr*, or are they all dependent on one of their number, *Heimskringla*? As they are all to be dated after *Heimskringla* it may not seem necessary to seek further, but assuming that Ólöf really existed, I prefer the former view. If she could be shown to be an invention of Snorri's to provide a name for Klypp's wife (who is not named in Snorri's sources, *Fagrskinnna* and

¹ I am grateful to Mr. G. Turville-Petre for demonstrating that my first views on Ólöf were mistaken, and owe to him the references to Snorri's sources and *Sigurðar þáttr slesu*. He is not however responsible for the view here advocated.

² That Guðrún Klyppsdóttir really was Ólöf's daughter can perhaps be seen from the name Járnkeggi given to her child with Einnar þveræingr Eyjólfsson; the only two men of this name known to me are Járnkeggi af Yrjum, Ólöf's brother, and Járnkeggi Einarsson her grandson.

Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum) then clearly the other versions with her name must derive from him, but we have nothing to suggest that this was so. Was Snorri then the intermediary between the others and some earlier text which named Ólǫf? This could not be a complete explanation as far as *Sigurðar þátr slefu* is concerned, for it knows that Klypp's name was Þorkell Klyppr, and this appears in the *Ágrip* but not in *Heimskringla*; it might be maintained that the *þátr* took its material from *Heimskringla*, but it must have got the name elsewhere. *Þórðar saga hreðu* cannot have got its story that Ólǫf had a daughter Guðrún who came to Iceland from *Heimskringla* which does not mention either fact. So though it might be maintained that the saga took the name from *Heimskringla*, it must have got the material elsewhere. It is true that the names given to Ólǫf's family (six of them) are the same in *Þorsteins þátr* as in *Heimskringla*, and though the arrangement is different, the differences might be misunderstandings. But the expression in *Heimskringla* as it stands is clear, and if we are to allow the existence of some other source to which *Þórðar saga* and *Sigurðar þátr* had access, it is worth considering some links which suggest to me that *Þorsteins þátr* might have got Ólǫf from the same source as *Þórðar saga*.

These two are the only sagas of Icelanders to name Ólǫf, and both do so very soon after they have begun with Úlfjótr's Law (*Þórðar saga* immediately, *Þorsteins þátr* after only the Freysteinn and "Þernuness" passage); Hǫrða-Kári was grandfather of Klyppr as well as of Úlfjótr. Both saga and *þátr* survive in manuscripts written for Jón Hákonarson; the end of the earlier version of the saga traces Jón's descent from Ólǫf's daughter Guðrún, and the hero of the *þátr* is said to be the grandson of Ólǫf's brother. It seems possible that the saga and the *þátr* both knew some tract which named Ólǫf and her family and its descendants.

Such a tract would have been of great interest to Styrmir or anyone else compiling a *Landnámabók* (another genealogy at the end of *Þórðar saga* traces the family of Þorsteinn þollótr son of Mela-Snorri Markússon) and might well have found a place among his papers in the library at Helgafell. It would be just such a lost manuscript as Jón Jóhannesson describes.³ "There were doubtless many of them, but now all are lost, except those which were taken up into larger works, or included in collections like *Ævi Snorra goða* and the genealogies in *Melabók*, the genealogies in *Bergsbók*, those in *MS. AM162, fol.* and the end of *Þórðar saga hreðu* in *Vatnshyrna*."

It does not seem possible to show whether this tract was also the ultimate source for Úlfjót's Law in that the *þáttr* and the saga took their texts of the Law either directly from it or from a version of it in *Styrmisbók*. As the latter is lost it is profitless speculation to attempt to determine whether Styrmir accepted or rejected or ignored that potential piece of his material! But if we do not think that the story of Ólǫf Ásbjarnardóttir and her daughter Guðrún was told in a *Landnámabók* (and there seems no reason to believe that it ever was) *Þorsteins þáttr* and *Þórðar saga* had access to some source about her that though not a *Landnámabók* was of a kind most likely to be found among the materials for one.

³ *Gerðir Landnámabókar*, p. 176.

DASENT, MORRIS, AND PROBLEMS OF
TRANSLATION

BY RANDOLPH QUIRK

TRANSLATION is one of the most difficult tasks that a writer can take upon himself, and the problems with which he is confronted far transcend linguistic comprehension. One of the main obstacles that seems to have prevented the growth of a body of doctrine on the subject, a theory and criticism of translation, is that the difficulties vary profoundly according to the manifold combinations of source- and object-languages involved. In translating contemporary languages, for example, it matters a great deal whether we are concerned with languages remote genetically, spatially, and culturally (as English and a Polynesian or American-Indian language), or languages closely related, whose speakers are neighbours, sharing to some extent a single culture (as for example the languages in Belgium, or Switzerland, or South Africa, or Wales). At the one extreme, we are dealing with languages whose structures differ so much that to use King Alfred's expression, translation "word be worde" is quite impossible, and "andgit of andgite" possible only if we deal in large sense-units.¹ Here is a problem extensively handled in the writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf and others. And often, on top of this, we lack the cultural correlates to make translation possible, and we resort to the more or less arbitrary use of technical terms, defined in footnotes which must needs

¹ "In this case, intire words resemble single letters in other words: that is, they have no meaning in themselves, but the phrase composed out of them is the least significant part into which the sentence it helps to form can be divided; as, in general, single words are the least significant parts of a sentence." Joseph Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (Warrington 1762), p. 231; Priestley discusses several important aspects of translation in this book, especially on pp. 227-34.

describe the unfamiliar institution in question. Even at the other extreme — English and Welsh, or Flemish and French — we are deceived if we imagine that we are concerned merely with a single set of referents for which there are exactly equivalent labels available in the two languages; the cultural difficulty may trouble us less, but it is still there, since it is probable that there is never an absolute identity of culture where there is not identity of language.² The French and the English peoples have been close neighbours (and sometimes rather more) for a millennium and a half, yet we had no word that could translate General de Gaulle's "*Rassemblement du Peuple Français*."

Translating the languages of past ages presents the same problems but in a considerably aggravated form, since in estimating all meanings we are restricted to sitting mutely before a relatively small — and certainly finite — body of writings instead of enjoying a two-way traffic with the infinity of readily available data that we have in a contemporary, living language. This erects what is at times an unassailable barrier to gauging the niceness of flavour imparted by a word's rarity or familiarity, its literary, venerable, or colloquial associations, and to determining the nature and significance of unfamiliar habits and institutions. Indeed, even when we have gained an adequate working knowledge of both language and culture of ancient Greece or saga-age Iceland or medieval England, we are left with the incommunicability of the culture as an unsolved problem. Chaucer's grammatical forms can easily be replaced by forms which will be understood by present-day English speakers, but what shall we do with such things as pardoners and summoners and reeves? Even clerks are not what they were. And if we latinise or euphemize four-letter words which once amused rather than shocked, are we translating accurately?

² Cf. E. Sapir, "Language and Environment," *American Anthropologist* xiv. 226-42, and references in E. H. Lenneberg, "Cognition in Ethnolinguistics," *Language* xxix. 463 ff.

But this phrase "translating accurately" brings us to the heart of the problem. What, after all, is accuracy in translation?

Both Dasent and Morris reckoned themselves to be accurate translators: they were so reckoned by their contemporaries, and no one would want to change that verdict to-day. Yet the difference between the work of these two excellent translators is profound, and it reveals a difference of approach to the art of translating which is just as profound and which is the subject of the present paper. Let me refresh your memory of the contrasting styles of Dasent and Morris by presenting a brief excerpt not from the early but from the mature work of each. First, from the famous translation of *Njála*, on which Dasent tells us he worked on and off for 18 years:—

"Shew me to Njal's sons," said the Earl, "and I will force them to tell me the truth."

Then he was told that they had put out of the harbour.

"Then there is no help for it," says the Earl, "but still there were two water-casks alongside of Thrain's ship, and in them a man may well have been hid, and if Thrain has hidden him, there he must be; and now we will go a second time to see Thrain."

Thrain sees that the Earl means to put off again and said, — "However wroth the Earl was last time, now he will be half as wroth again, and now the life of every man on board the ship lies at stake."

They all gave their words to hide the matter, for they were all sore afraid. Then they took some sacks out of the lading, and put Hrapp down into the hold in their stead, and other sacks that were light were laid over him.

Now comes the Earl, just as they were done stowing Hrapp away. Thrain greeted the Earl well. The Earl was rather slow to return it, and they saw that the Earl was very wroth.³

³ G. W. Dasent, *The Story of Burnt Njal* (Edinburgh 1861) II. 30. The corresponding Icelandic is as follows:

Jarl mælti: "Vísi mér til Njálssona — ok skal ek nauðga þeim til, at þeir

Beside this let us place the following excerpt from Morris's noble version of *Eyrbyggja Saga*, published thirty years later than *Njal* but showing no essential features different from the *Grettis Saga* which belongs to the same decade as the work of Dasent already quoted:

"That may be," said Arnkel, "but we will have a ransacking here."

"That shall be as ye will," said Katla, and bade her cook-maid bear light before them and unlock the meat bower, "that is the only locked chamber in the stead."

Now they saw, how Katla span yarn from her rock, and they searched through the house and found not Odd; and thereafter they fared away.

But when they were come a short space from the garth, Arnkel stood still and said:

"Whether now has Katla cast a hood over our heads, and was Odd her son there whereas we saw but a rock?"

"She is not unlike to have so done," said Thorarin, "so let us fare back." And that they did.

But when it was seen from Holt that they turned back, then said Katla to her women:

"Ye shall still sit in your seats, but I will go with Odd out into the fore-chamber." So when they were come through the chamber door, she went into the porch against the outer door, and combed Odd her son, and sheared his hair.⁴

segi mér hit sanna." Þá var honum sagt, at þeir höfðu út látit. "Ekki má þat þá," segir jarl, "enn vatnkeröld tvau vǫru þar við skipit Þráins, ok má þar maðr vel hafa fólgið í. Ok ef Þráinn hefir fólgið hann, þá mun hann þar í hafa verit. Ok munu vér nú fara í annat sinn at finna Þráin." Þráinn sér þetta, at jarl ætlar enn út, ok mælti: "Svá reiðr sem jarl var næstum, þá mun hann nú vera hálfu reiðari — ok liggir nú við líf allra manna þeira er á skipinu eru." Þeir létu allir at leynd; því at hverr var um sik mjök hræddr. Þeir tóku sekka nakkvara ór búlkanum, enn létu Hrapp koma þar í staðinn — fóru nú aðrir sekkar á hann ofan, þeir er léttir vǫru. Nú kemr jarl, er þeir höfðu um Hrapp búit. Þráinn kvaddi vel jarl. Jarl tók kveðju hans ok ekki skjótt. Sá þeir at jarl var allmjök reiðr. (*Njáls Saga*, ed. Vald. Ásmundarson, Reykjavík 1894, pp. 206 f.).

⁴ W. Morris, E. Magnússon, *The Story of the Ere-Dwellers* (London 1892) 45 f. The corresponding Icelandic is as follows:

"Vera má þat," segir Arnkell, "enn rannsaka viljum vér hér." "Þat skal sem yðr líkar," segir Katla, ok bað matselju bera ljós fyrir þeim ok lúka upp buri; þat eitt er þús læst á bænum. Þeir sá, at Katla spann garn af rokki. Nú leita þeir um húsin ok finna eigi Odd, ok fóru brott eftir þat. Ok er

I should like to draw your attention to some points in these excerpts which are characteristic of the two great translators we are considering and which may clarify what I have to say later. In the first passage, the adjective *wroth* strikes us today as perhaps old-fashioned, but in Dasent's time it was not so tinged with archaism and was commonly encountered in popular novels; in his time, too, the past participle *hid* was still in free variation with the analogical formation *hidden*, and so would not be obtrusive to his readers. On the other hand, the use of *sore* in the expression *sore afraid* was already thoroughly archaic in the mid-nineteenth century. One should take note, perhaps, of the good nautical terms *lading* for "cargo" and the verb *stow away* for placing goods in position aboard ship; and one might notice too the use of such idioms as "there is no help for it" and "to give one's word," simply because of their thoroughly familiar character. The most striking feature of Dasent's style, indeed, is that there is little that is striking in it; above all, we note that no syntactical expression here differs from the normal English of educated nineteenth-century usage.

Morris's language on the other hand contains much that is remarkable to us and much that must have been remarkable to his contemporaries too; for example, the rare technical sense of *ransack*, the rarer of the two preterite forms of *spin*, the obsolete and poetical use of *fare* in the sense of "go," the archaic *rock* for "distaff," the fairly rare *garth*. Perhaps more notable than these is *whereas* in the sense of "where" which is a favourite form with Morris but with few other writers in recent centuries, and we should add here the use of *bowen* which

þeir kómu skamt frá garðinum, nam Arnkell staðar ok mælti: "Hvært mun Katla eigi hafa heðni veift um höfuð oss? Ok hefir þar verit Oddr son hennar er oss sýndist rokrinn." "Eigi er hon ólíkleg til," segir Þórarin, "ok förum aftr." Þeir gerðu svá. Ok er sást ór Holti, at þeir hurfu aftr, þá mælti Katla við konur: "Enn skulu þér sitja í rúnum yörum, enn vit Oddr munum fram ganga." Enn er þau koma fram um dyrr, gekk hon í öndina gegnt útidyrum ok kembir þar Oddi syni sínum, ok skerr hár hans. (*Eyrbyggja Saga*, ed. Vald. Ásmundarson, Reykjavík 1895, pp. 40 f.).

is clearly a translation-loan, and the expression *not unlike to* which is likewise a close imitation of the Icelandic. Above all, we have *whether* introducing a direct question; this idiom, which fell into disuse in the sixteenth century, was never a common feature of English, but was in any case characterised by a different word-order from that used by Morris here. Morris's use of *whether* with inversion of subject and verb is again directly modelled on the Icelandic idiom.⁵

Enough has been said to show some of the most obvious areas in which the translation styles of Dasent and Morris differ from each other. It has been common to sum up, even to explain, these contrastive styles in terms of archaism and romanticism. Exponents of the two main traditions of translation which sprang severally from Dasent and Morris have regarded themselves — and have been regarded by others — as using on the one hand English that is contemporary, natural and prosaic, or on the other hand English that is evocatively archaic, romantic and poetical.⁶ But this is to oversimplify the difference of approach. In any case, it is not strictly accurate to contrast Dasent and Morris as respectively contemporary and archaic in style. Dasent is praised by a reviewer in 1866 for his “old-world diction” which is one of the factors contributing to make his style for the sagas “very near perfection”⁷ and, while most contemporaries notice with approval or disapproval Morris's “archaism” and “quaintness”, Sir Edmund Gosse is to be found praising him for his “pure, simple and idiomatic English”.⁸ Certainly, although Dasent

⁵ Other examples could be cited from the excerpt presented, and even more striking ones from elsewhere in *The Story of the Ere-Dwellers*; cf. “door-doom” (*duradómr*), “overtrue is that” (*of satt er þat*), “then shall we take that for sooth” (*þá munum vér þat fyrir satt hafa*), p. 34, “handsel me now the land” (*handsala mér nú landit*), “that shall not be before every penny is first yolden” (*eigi skal þat fyrr enn hværr penningr er fyrir goldinn*), p. 24.

⁶ Cf. Richard Beck, MLN xlv. 485, who praises the “fluent and idiomatic English” of Halldór Hermannson, *Íslendingabók*, in contrast to the “artificial and antiquated language” of Vigfússon and Powell, *Origines Islandicae*.

⁷ *Spectator*, 14 April 1866.

⁸ *Academy*, 17 July 1875, pp. 54-5.

speaks of withstanding the temptation to use old words and expressions,⁹ he does not in fact eschew them. Forms like "sore afraid" (which we have noticed above) and "this was noised about" occur on every page, and they have pleased successive generations of readers, as they pleased his contemporaries, with the air of sobriety and dignity that they impart through their almost Biblical ring. By contrast, many of the most striking and unfamiliar words in Morris are not, properly speaking, archaisms at all: they are rather cases of the re-introduction, with new pronunciations and often with new meanings and into new environments, of words or word-elements from a past so distant that they are virtually new words to the modern reader. One did not call the word *biologie* an archaism when Jean Lamarck coined it in 1815, for all that it was made up of elements of great antiquity, and such native formations as William Barnes's *hearsomeness* for "obedience," or *forstoneing* for "fossil" were just as "new" as the word *telephone* which was coined at about the same time.

Nor were the syntactical constructions or word-order patterns in Morris so much archaic as entirely unfamiliar to the nineteenth-century reader; moreover, they are more directed to simulating the original from which Morris was translating than recapturing arrangements popular in an earlier form of English. The same is true of the so-called archaism in those who have pursued the Morris tradition. The impressively artistic volume prepared by the Chiswick Press which contains Robert Proctor's version of *Laxdæla Saga*¹⁰ begins: "Ketil Flatneb hight a man," using a word-order which had never been common in English even at the time when *hight* was a common enough form; but it is, of course, as close a translation as is conceivable of the Icelandic "Ketill flatnefr hét maðr", — every word being replaced

⁹ Cf. footnote to p. xv, Vol. I of *Burnt Njal*.

¹⁰ *The Story of the Laxdalers*, London 1903.

by a cognate form which is either English now or has been, sometime, somewhere. On the same page, Proctor tells us that Ketill "summoned a thing" and "thus hove up his tale." Similarly, although E. R. Eddison's defence of archaisms is spirited enough to be an apologia,¹¹ what strikes us most in his able and challenging work is not so much archaisms as neologisms in the shape of unfamiliar foreign idioms dressed in English garb. For example, "Sought they then to Thorfinn's at eventime, and gat there all good welcome." And again, "Parted they with things in such case. Fared Arinbiorn home and said unto Egil his errand's ending . . . Egil became all frowning: seemed to himself to have lost much fee there, and nowise rightfully." As Dr. Edith Batho says of this translation, Norse English cannot in itself be any more desirable than the Latinate English that Eddison condemns in some of his predecessors; it may in fact be less comprehensible than it, so far as the general reading public is concerned. Because English and Icelandic are "akin in word, syntax, and idiom", she says, we are in danger of regarding them as identical: "Fared they back" may be close to normal Icelandic syntax but it is not normal English syntax and can only give an ordinary English reader the improper impression that the sagas are mannered.¹² Dr. Batho's reference here to "Norse English" is thus far more apt than the criticism of another reviewer who spoke of Eddison's using an archaic "dialect . . . going back even beyond the age of Biblical English."¹³ The point is that Eddison's "dialect" does not go back to an English earlier or later than "the age of Biblical English": whether consciously or not, Eddison was composing in a new English idiom, based closely upon Icelandic.

The mention of the Bible reminds us that the Authorised Version likewise contains much that is neither the

¹¹ *Egil's Saga* (Cambridge 1930), pp. 239-41.

¹² *MLR* xxvii. 231-2.

¹³ *New Statesman* xxxvi (1930), p. 364.

English of 1611 nor that of an earlier period, but a synthetic blend of archaism and imitation of foreign idiom, with a fair seasoning of what the translators themselves felt was a form of English appropriate to be the vehicle of the Word of God. Dr. E. V. Rieu reminds us, in an important essay, that the starkness and reality of the Greek are to some extent lost in the Authorised Version which was reproducing to a marked extent the older English of Coverdale and Tyndale: it was therefore "already old-fashioned when it was written." But, he says, it is far from being simply archaic. "Unlike the Greek, it was not firmly based on the normal speech of its own or any other period." As an example, Dr. Rieu cites St. Luke 17.8 where the Greek has a colloquial and not particularly polite demand which may be translated as "Get something ready for my supper": the Authorised Version reads, "Make ready wherewith I may sup." While conceding that the words of the AV here "follow the Greek with some exactitude," Dr. Rieu says "I contend that no Englishman alive in 1611 or at any other date would have used such an expression.¹⁴ The beauty of the Authorised Version as against that of other translations is not in question: it is simply a matter of a different approach to translating, and it is to some extent paralleled in the different approaches of Dasent and Morris to translating the sagas.

But so far we have been considering only the different realisations of these contrasting approaches and not the approaches themselves. Earlier, we mentioned that it is commonly held that Morris's approach contrasted with Dasent's in being romantic. But although Morris's work bears abundant signs linguistically of that glorification of things medieval and "Gothick" which characterised the English romantic movement, romanticism alone is not sufficient to mark him off from Dasent. Like Morris, Dasent too had a passionate regard for the literature,

¹⁴ *The Four Gospels* (London 1952), pp. x-xi.

culture, and institutions of the medieval North: indeed, he had an unreasoning love for them which to some extent denied him the facility of critical appraisal. One need mention in this connexion only his free and romantic handling of the *Jómsvíkingasaga*¹⁵ which matched other mid-Victorian novels in more ways than in running to three volumes, and which only a foster-parent's devotion could have induced him to call a "very amusing story". In his address to the reader, he is very far from being the prosy and uninspired writer that Eddison took him to be,¹⁶ inviting the reader as he does to escape with him from humdrum nineteenth-century existence — "for I will not call it life" — and to come "far far away" into the Scandinavian North of the tenth century. A romantic regard for Old Scandinavia will not readily distinguish Morris from Dasent.

Where they differ in their approach to the sagas is over what a translation should be. Dasent sought to make his translation only as literal "as the idioms of the two languages would permit." As a general rule, he says, he "has withstood the temptation to use Old English words" and has been determined to avoid expressions "which are not still in every-day use," though he admits to some lapses from such rigorous principles, namely, *busk*, *boun*, and *redes*.¹⁷ He has learnt a great deal in the eighteen years during which he has been working on *Burnt Njal*, and in the nineteen years since he read Carl Säve's lengthy review¹⁸ which took him severely to task for the artificial and antiquarian diction in his translation of the *Prose or Younger Edda* published in Stockholm in 1842.¹⁹ He is now of the opinion that "The duty of a

¹⁵ *The Vikings of the Baltic*, London 1875.

¹⁶ *Egil's Saga*, p. 232.

¹⁷ *Burnt Njal* I. xiv-xv.

¹⁸ In *Frey* (Uppsala), 1842, pp. 389-97. For this and other references to review literature, I am indebted to Halldór Hermannsson's invaluable bibliographies in *Islandica*.

¹⁹ "Almickle in himself is Utgard's Loki, though he deals much with sleight and cunning spells, but it may be seen that he is great in himself, in that he has thanes who have mickle might" (p. 66).

translator is not to convey the sense of his original in such a way that the idioms and wording of one tongue are sacrificed to those of the other, but to find out the words and idioms of his own language which answer most fully and fairly to those of the language from which he is translating, and so to make the one as perfect a reflection as is possible of the forms and thoughts of the other."²⁰ As a statement of principle, it is not of course very helpful to talk of making "the one as perfect a reflection as is possible of the forms and thoughts of the other", but read in the context of his actual work, Dasent's aim is perfectly clear despite the fact it was by no means always realised. Such an aim was expressed more succinctly and scientifically by Dr. E. V. Rieu in a lecture on his own principles of translation, read before the London Mediæval Society some years ago, when he talked of "the principle of equivalent effect."²¹ Dasent sought to make his translation have upon English-speaking readers the same effect as the sagas had, not upon Icelanders of the nineteenth century, but upon Icelanders of the age at which they were written. Some question-begging is of course involved here, but this would be less obvious in Dasent's time than in our own, after a generation of controversy over the dating, historicity, and mode of transmission of the sagas. For Dasent's purposes, he had simply to achieve an effect equivalent to that upon an age when language, morals, and culture had changed little if at all from the age in which the events

²⁰ Loc. cit.

²¹ A full definition of this approach is now printed in *Cassell's Encyclopedia of Literature* (London 1953) I. 555, where it is stated that "that translation is the best which comes nearest to creating in its audience the same impression as was made by the original on its contemporaries." Similarly, in "The Problem of Translation" (*Literature and Life: Addresses to the English Association*, London 1948), Sir H. Idris Bell says that a translator's aim should be to "produce on readers in his own tongue an effect corresponding as nearly as maybe with that received by readers of the original" (p. 23). At the same time, commenting upon Dryden's claim "to make Virgil speak such English as he would have himself spoken, if he had been born in England and in this present age," he points out that this cannot be pressed too far; Virgil as a seventeenth-century citizen of England is in fact an impossible concept, since his writings will have him no other than a Roman of the Augustan Age (pp. 25-6).

narrated had taken place.²² At the same time, he does not attempt to introduce such idiom of fashionable contemporary colloquy as we might today if we were applying the principle of equivalent effect to a translation of Jean Anouilh: he was a writer too sensitive to lapse into the incongruities that would be presented if Gunnar, armed with bow and arrow in the defence of his life, were to talk in idiom inextricably associated in the nineteenth-century reader's mind with the Siege of Delhi, factory acts, or steam trains. He therefore seeks his equivalence of effect in English words and idiom which are as far as possible timeless and unobtrusive, bearing no outstanding associations with institutions antique or contemporary.²³ His success is shown in a small way by his consequent ability to mark off a proverb (having presumably a distinctive, antique effect on a medieval reader) from the main text by couching it in quaint and gnomic form utterly different from his style elsewhere: "Bare is back without brother behind it."

A language from which we are translating may hold such a fascination for us that we want to reproduce its every verb, compound, and syntactical arrangement with an image which is as faithful as the camera of our own linguistic stock can photograph it: we want our reader to taste the same sequence of exotic semantic delights in his interpretation of our translation as we ourselves taste in the original. The word "exotic" is crucial here. There is a difference between knowing a language so

²² If his basic assumption is that an old text was intended to have an archaic flavour and antiquarian interest for contemporary readers, the translator's task is naturally immensely complicated: cf. Professor J. R. R. Tolkien in *Beowulf* . . . (*A Translation* . . .) by J. R. Clark Hall (London 1940), pp. xiv-xv.

²³ This is not to say that Dasent's style, for all its fame, was more timeless and unobtrusive than that of any other nineteenth-century translator. The history sagas have for the most part been consistently approached with far less self-consciousness and striving after special effect than the more popular and "literary" family sagas; if "timelessness" is taken as an indication of equivalence of effect, the laurels should no doubt go to Jón Hjalteinn and Gilbert Goudie for *The Orkneyinga Saga* (Edinburgh 1873). It is significant that the aim of this volume was to present an annotated historical source-book and not a piece of literature.

well that it is perfectly comprehensible and knowing a language as a native speaker of it. In the former case we can still feel an exotic experience in the order, for example, in which words impinge on our consciousness: in the latter, they are blurred into an unanalysable cliché. "Ketill flatnefr hét maðr" can be "Ketil Flatneb hight a man" to a Proctor, a Morris,²⁴ or an Eddison,²⁵ but not to a Halldór Hermannsson,²⁶ and we find Stéfan Einarsson saying of Eddison's *Egil's Saga*, "to me the language of the translation looked a bit more old-fashioned as English than the language of the original is as Icelandic."²⁷ It is as though a translation of the Canterbury Tales were to seem to us less familiar and idiomatic than Chaucer's own words.

This then is where Morris's approach, as I see it, differs from Dasent's. So far from trying to make his translation convey to his readers an equivalent effect to that conveyed by the sagas to medieval Icelanders, he seeks a transmission of his own experience. He wants to make us share the acute pleasure which the forms and arrangements of the Icelandic have upon him. His readers must be made to share the magic experience of a remote literature, dealing with a remote culture in a remote language; they must read the sagas with just that extra concentration and care that Morris himself had to use; they must find them couched in a language which would be as intelligible to them as Icelandic was to him but which would have the same areas of unfamiliarity too. As one nineteenth-century critic put it admiringly if unflatteringly, Morris's "quaint" English "has just the right outlandish flavour."²⁸ To Morris, as to Eddison, it was a translator's task to tell his readers "something

²⁴ "Ketill Flatneb was hight a famous hersir" (*Ketill flatnefr hét einn ágætr hersir*), *The Story of the Ére-Dwellers*, p. 3.

²⁵ "S. and H. hight two brethren" (*S. ok H. hétu bræðr tveir*) *Egil's Saga* 32; cf. "Biorgolf was named a man" (*Björgólfr hét maðr*), *ibid.* 9.

²⁶ Cf. *Book of the Icelanders (Islandica xx, 1930)*, pp. v-vi.

²⁷ MLN xlvi. 487.

²⁸ G. A. Simcox, *Academy*, 13 August, 1870.

about " the original, to show them not " his judgement " but " his original."²⁹

For this reason, it is not strictly to the point to say, as some present-day critics have said, that Morris's translations are difficult to read *nowadays* " because of the obsolescent language."³⁰ Morris's work can scarcely be more difficult to read now than it was in the nineteenth century nor his language be more obsolescent. Since his forms are not tied as consciously to the nineteenth century as even Dasent's were, it could even be argued that his translations have dated less. At any rate, "easy reading" was less Morris's aim than the poetic transmission of his own experience.

We would not wish to grade these two great translators, and we could not if we wished. Their public and their disciples and their disciples' public have amply demonstrated their recognition and appreciation of both approaches to translation: Dasent's sensitive attempt at equivalence of effect, Morris's equally sensitive attempt at transmitting the experience of a scholar-poet reading the literature of a people and an age that he loved.

²⁹ *Egil's Saga*, p. 238.

³⁰ Stanton A. Coblenz, *New York Times*, 1 February, 1931.

VALÐJÓFR JARL:
AN ENGLISH EARL IN ICELANDIC SOURCES

By FORREST S. SCOTT*

THE poem *Valþjófsflokkr* by Thorkell, son of Thórðr Skalli, and the anonymous stanza *Haraldsstikki*, together with the passages from historical sagas which contain them, provide an interesting example of the treatment of the career of an Englishman, Earl Waltheof, in Icelandic sources. Though his capabilities were probably not above those of the average landowner and war-leader of his day Waltheof was a figure who attracted attention in both English and Norse tradition. The aims of this paper are to set out his career as recorded in Icelandic sources and to examine the evidence they provide. A brief summary of Waltheof's life (from English and Norman sources) (I) precedes an edition with translation, of the two poems (II); this is followed by a statement of what the Icelandic prose histories have to say about Waltheof (III), notes on the sources of these histories and the relations between them (IV), and a discussion of the historicity of the events they describe (V).

I

Waltheof was the younger son of Earl Siward Digri,¹ his elder brother having been killed fighting against Macbeth. On Siward's death in 1055 both his earldom of Northumbria and that in the Midlands passed out of the family to Tostig, Godwine's son, but on Tostig's expulsion in 1065 Waltheof seems to have acquired the East Midland earldom which probably included most of

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¹ See my paper, "Earl Waltheof of Northumbria" in *Archæologia Æliana*, 4th series, XXX (1952), pp. 149-215.

Huntingdonshire, Northamptonshire, Rutland, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The English sources are silent about his part, if any, in the battles of 1066, but he submitted to William soon after Hastings and was taken with William as a hostage when the king visited Normandy in 1067. In 1069 Waltheof took part in the resistance organised in the north of England with the help of a Danish fleet and, according to William of Malmesbury,² played a striking part in the capture of York in September of that year. On the dispersal of the allies by William, Waltheof retreated to the North Riding whither he was pursued by William and he surrendered to him at the mouth of the Tees in January 1070. He was taken into favour and given the king's niece Judith in marriage. On the deposition of earl Gospatric in 1072 Waltheof was given the earldom of Northumbria and was thus in possession of both the earldoms which had been held by his father. He remained in a position of trust and importance until 1075 when he was drawn into a conspiracy by the earls of East Anglia and Hereford. He was encouraged at a wedding feast to join in a plot to dethrone William; whether he ever consented to do so is uncertain but in any case he quickly regretted having become involved in the affair and on Archbishop Lanfranc's advice went to Normandy to see William, revealed the plot and asked for mercy. William made light of it until his return to England, by which time the rebellion had broken out and had been quickly put down. Earl Ralph of East Anglia escaped to his kinsmen in Brittany but Waltheof and Earl Roger of Hereford were imprisoned. After some months of hesitation William had Waltheof beheaded on St. Giles's Hill outside Winchester. English law gave William this opportunity of putting Waltheof to death for treason, as Orderic notes;³ Earl Roger he was able merely to imprison. In

² *Rolls Series* 90, II, 311.

³ Ordericus Vitalis: *Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ Libri Tredecim*, ed. A. le Prévost (4 vols., Paris 1838-55), II, 262 and 264.

any case, however, it was unusual for William to put a man to death for political reasons; he was content to leave alive Edwin and Morkar and Edgar Ætheling who more than once rebelled against him. He probably had little fear of anything Waltheof himself might do, but he was too dangerous and popular a figure to leave alive.

William of Malmesbury's account shows that he became a popular hero and his fame increased when his body was taken to Crowland Abbey for burial. Miracles of healing were performed at his tomb and from the account of them preserved in the *Vita et Passio Waldevi Comitis*, probably written at Crowland in the twelfth century,⁴ his shrine seems to have become the centre of a pro-English spirit. The story of the Bridal Conspiracy itself may have been versified as appears from some lines quoted in the Chronicle account of it, but the main causes of the commemoration of Waltheof in tradition must have been the fame of his father,⁵ his important part in the victory at York and his "martyrdom" at the hands of the Normans.⁶

II

Haraldsstikki

A conventional battle verse, the only surviving stanza of an anonymous poem, in *fornyrðislag*, on King Haraldr.

MSS:

63: Copenhagen, University Library, AM 63, fol. (Ásgeir Jónsson's transcript of *Kringla*).

18: Stockholm, Royal Library, 18, fol. (Jón Eggertsson's transcript of *Kringla*).

⁴ Preserved in MS 852 of the *Bibliothèque Municipale* of Douai. Edited F. Michel: *Chroniques Anglo-Normandes* (3 vols., Rouen 1836-40), II, 99-142.

⁵ One section of the Douai MS contains a partly historical, partly fictitious, account of Siward's career, clearly of popular origin. It is entitled *Gesta antecessorum comitis Waldevi*. It is examined by C. E. Wright in *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England* (Edinburgh 1939), pp. 127 ff. See also A. H. Smith: "Literary Relations of England and Scandinavia" (*Saga-Book*, XI, 225 f.) and A. Örlrik: "Siward Digri of Northumberland" (*Saga-Book*, VI, 212-237).

⁶ Earl Waltheof does not figure in the Anglo-Norman romance *Waldef*, as is suggested in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, I, 287.

- 39: AM 39, fol.
 F: AM 45, fol. (*Codex Frisianus*).
 E: AM 47, fol. (*Eirspennill*).
 H: AM 66, fol. (*Hulda*).
 Hr: Copenhagen, Royal Library, Gamle Kongelige
 Samling, 1010 (*Hrokkinskinna*).

The first five are *Heimskringla* MSS.

Lágu fallnir
 í fen ofan
 Valþjófs liðar,
 vápnum hoggnir,
 svá 't gunnhvatir
 ganga máttu
 Norðmenn yfir
 at nám einum.

line 8: at — á, F, H, Hr.

“Waltheof’s host, struck down by weapons, lay fallen in the fen, so that the battle-keen Norwegians were able to walk across treading only on corpses.”

Valþjófsflokkur

This elegy, in *dróttkvætt*, is by Thorkell, son of Skalli (Thórðr skalli (“the bald”) according to *Fagrskinna*). He is identified by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and F. York Powell⁷ with the Thorkell hamarskáld, author of a *Magnússdrápa* and mentioned in *Skáldatal* as a poet of Óláfr kyrri and Magnús berfœttr, but the identification is not certain. Despite its typically skaldic vocabulary, kennings and parenthetic phrases, the poem does succeed in expressing personal feeling in the second stanza, which earned from Vigfússon and Powell⁸ the comment, “Very fine and gentle.” According to *Fsk* Thorkell was a retainer (*hirðmaðr*) of the earl.

⁷ *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, (Oxford 1883) II, 222.

⁸ *Ib.*, II, 598.

MSS:

63, 18, F, E, H and Hr as above. Also:

J: AM 38, fol. (*Jöfraskinna*).

Fsk B: Norske Riksarkiv, Oslo, 51 (*Fagrskinna* B — from the only surviving leaf of this MS).

Fsk A: AM 303, 4to. (the best of Ásgeir's three copies of *Fagrskinna* A).

63, 18, F, J and E are *Heimskringla* MSS. The two *Fagrskinna* MSS contain only the first four lines of the second stanza.

Hundrað lét í heitum
 hirðmenn jöfurs brenna
 sóknar Yggr (en seggjum
 sviðukveld vas þat) eldi.
 Frétt's at fyrðar knáttu
 flagðviggs und kló liggja;
 ímleitum fekksk áta
 óls blakk við hræ Frakka.

Víst hefr Valþjóf hraustan
 Vilhjalmr, sá's rauð malma,
 hinn er haf skar sunnan
 hélt, í tryggð um véltan.
 Satt's at síð mun létta
 (snarr en minn vas harri;
 deyrat mildingr mærrí)
 manndráp á Englandi.

line 3: Yggr — Uggr, H, Hr.

8: óls blakk — ols blacs, J; aulblackr, F.

9: hraustan — austann, 18.

10: malma — hialma, 63, 18.

13: mun — man, 18; munu, J, E. létta — hætta, Hr.

14: en minn vas — elþrimo, F.

“ The warrior caused a hundred of the king's retainers to burn in the heat of the fire; that was a night of roasting for men! It is told that the warriors had to lie

beneath the wolf's claw; from Frenchmen's corpses food was got for the dusky wolf.

"It is certain that William, the reddener of weapons, he who from the south clove the foamy sea, has kept bad faith with valiant Waltheof. Truly it will be long before slaying of men ceases in England — but my lord was gallant! There will not die a more famous chief than he."

(*sóknar Yggy*, "Óthin of attack," "god of battle," "warrior." *flagðvigg* and *óls blakkr*, "troll-woman's steed," "wolf").

III

The historical sagas deal with only a few events in Waltheof's life — his share in the battles of 1066, his feats performed against the Normans and his death. The chief works in which he is mentioned are *Morkinskinna* (*Msk*), *Fagrskinna* (*Fsk*), and Snorri's *Heimskringla* (*Hkr*), in each case towards the end of the section dealing with King Haraldr Sigurðarson harðráði. Of these *Msk* is the oldest and both *Fsk* and *Hkr* in all probability made use of it or rather of an earlier recension of it than the surviving one.⁹ That Snorri made use of *Fsk* is not certain though likely.¹⁰ In *Msk*¹¹ King Haraldr in company with Tostig Godwine's son, having ravaged Cleveland and Scarborough sails up the Humber and the Ouse. Against him come the earls of Northumbria, Morkar and Waltheof, both called sons of Godwine, with a large army which they had been gathering all summer and autumn. Waltheof is described as "Valþjófr af Hundatúni." Haraldr goes ashore and draws up his army in two wings, one along the bank of the

⁹ Gustav Indrebø: *Fagrskinna* (Kristiania 1917), p. 19 and *passim*; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson: *Om de Norske Kongers Sagaer* (Oslo 1937), p. 173.

¹⁰ Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

¹¹ Ed. Finnur Jónsson (*Samfund til Udgivelse af Gammel Nordisk Litteratur*, Copenhagen 1928-32) pp. 267 ff.

Ouse and the other along the bank of a ditch running into it¹² from a deep marsh full of water. The riverside section was the more numerous; the other was thin and less reliable. The English left wing, under Morkar, attacks across the ditch but Haraldr turns his main forces round against them; after heavy fighting Morkar is killed and so many men with him that the ditch becomes full of corpses.¹³ Verses by Steinn Herdísarson from his poem on Haraldr's son Óláfr are quoted, one of which refers to the death of young Morkar; some verses of Arnórr jarlaskáld are also quoted. The battle is said to take place on the eve of St. Matthew, this saint's day (21st September) falling on a Wednesday. Most of the English submit and Haraldr comes to terms with the men of York. He moves his army to Stamford Bridge (on the Derwent) and it is when setting out from there to hold a *thing* in York on the following Monday that he encounters the army of the English king, Harold Godwine's son, who had arrived in York late on Sunday evening. The battle then takes place in which the king of Norway is killed. Waltheof does not feature in this battle nor at all again in *Msk*.

The account of the battle of Fulford in *Fsk*¹⁴ is substantially the same. The opposition to Haraldr is first called "Motokari (*sic*) af Hundatune" but this is clearly a scribal error as Waltheof is mentioned later as if he had been introduced together with Morkar. *Msk*'s verses are omitted except the one which mentions Morkar. The day of the week on which St. Matthew's Day fell is given as Thursday instead of Wednesday. In addition to his part in this battle Waltheof appears after the battle

¹² Presumably the stream called Germany Beck which runs into the Ouse at Fulford. The siting of the battle at Fulford is from an insertion by the author of the Durham chronicle *Historia Regum*, popularly ascribed to Symeon of Durham, in a passage copied from Florence of Worcester (*Rolls Series* 75, II, 180) and also appears in Gaimar: *Lesorie des Engles*, line 5215 (*Rolls Series* 91 I, 221). Fulford fits the *Msk* account perfectly well.

¹³ Compare the statements of the C MS of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (s. a. 1066) and Florence of Worcester (ed. B. Thorpe, *English Historical Society*, 2 vols., London 1848-9, I, 226), that many of the English were drowned.

¹⁴ Ed. Finnur Jónsson (*Samfund*, Copenhagen 1902-03), pp. 284 f.

between Harold Godwine's son and William (Hastings).¹⁵ With his men Waltheof comes across some Frenchmen who after a short fight flee into a nearby oak-wood to which Waltheof sets fire. *Fsk* then goes on to tell of Waltheof's submission to William and of the latter's treachery:

Immediately after that, William the Bastard was chosen king of England. A little later, Waltheof went to the king's presence. He had already obtained quarter for himself from the king; two knights rode with him. King William received him well and at parting granted him an earldom in Northumberland over which he had been earl previously. And when the earl had received writ and seal-ring he went away and came to a certain moor. There twelve fully armed knights with many attendants came against him. These knights King William had sent after him to have him killed. The earl leapt from his horse, as he had no armour; he drew his sword and defended himself for a while. But because many men were engaged against him the earl was captured and one of the knights prepared to kill him. And when the earl knew which one was going to kill him he wholeheartedly forgave that knight, and thus the king and all the others who had come after him him. And as a token he gave his silk kirtle to the knight who was about to kill him. Then he lay down on the ground in the form of a cross, stretching out both his arms, and was then beheaded. And many men have been healed through his blood. Waltheof is a true saint. Thorkell, son of Thórðr Skalli, tells about these deeds in detail; he was a retainer (*hirðmaðr*) of Earl Waltheof and composed a poem (*kvæði*) after the earl's death and this is contained in it:

Then follow the first four lines of the second stanza of *Valþjófsflokkur*.

Snorri's version of the battle of Fulford¹⁶ is not very different from that of *Msk* and *Fsk* except that, as might

¹⁵ *Ib.* pp. 298 ff.

¹⁶ Ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (3 vols., *Íslensk Fornrit* 26-28, Reykjavík, 1941-51), III, 179 ff.

be expected, the matter is rearranged. Some of *Msk's* verses are omitted, as in *Fsk*, but after Steinn Herdísarson's stanza Snorri quotes the verse from *Haraldsstikki*. It is of interest here because the fallen English are called *Valþjófs liðar*. *Hkr* mentions a Wednesday but gives it as the actual day of the battle, not the day the feast of St. Matthew fell on: Snorri thus agrees with *Fsk* here, not with *Msk*.

Snorri also recounts the later adventures of Waltheof mentioned in *Fsk*.¹⁷ The incident about the hundred knights burned in the wood is almost identical but the first stanza of *Valþjófsflokkr* is added. The description of Waltheof's death is rather different:

William had himself elected king of England. He sent word to Waltheof the Jarl that they should make peace and that he would give him quarter for a meeting. The Jarl went with a few men; and when he came on to the heath north of Castle Bridge, two stewards came towards him with a troop of men, seized him, and set him in chains; and after this he was beheaded. Englishmen called him "holy."¹⁸

The whole of the second stanza of *Valþjófsflokkr* is quoted.

In addition to these three historical sagas Waltheof features also in a few other Icelandic sources. There are the two manuscripts¹⁹ *Hulda* and *Hrokkinskinna* which contain composite texts made up largely from *Msk* and *Hkr*²⁰ and have nothing fresh to offer. *Orkneyinga saga*²¹ gives a very brief summary of the campaign which does however mention the place-names Cleveland, Scarborough, Holderness, York, and Stamford Bridge and the personal names Waltheof and Morkar. The date

¹⁷ III, 194 ff.

¹⁸ Translation from E. Mosen and A. H. Smith: *Heimskringla*, p. 569.

¹⁹ Printed in *Fornmanna Sögur* (12 vols., Copenhagen 1825-37), vols. VI and VII, mostly from *Hulda*. The battle is at VI, 406 ff.

²⁰ Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson: *Om de Norske Kongers Sagaer* p. 136, n. 1.

²¹ *Rolls Series* 88, I, 61.

of the battle (of Fulford) is given as the Wednesday before St. Matthew's Day, the move to Stamford Bridge is on the following Sunday and the battle there on the Monday.

Then in *Hemings þáttr*²² is given a circumstantial, though from its tone a clearly unhistoric, account of Waltheof's part in the battle. It is attached to the tale of Heming, a hero who left Norway because of the enmity of Haraldr, served under Edward the Confessor, and joined the English armies who fought against Haraldr and William. There is in *Hemings þáttr* a considerable supernatural element attached to the last days of Haraldr Harðráði; as his end draws near he is made to behave in a very "fey" manner; portents and prophetic women abound. Tostig Godwine's son tries to brush aside the king's growing trepidation at the omens and grumbles at his rash generosity. After Morkar's death in a battle which has been transferred to Cleveland, Haraldr takes Waltheof prisoner. Tostig, his "brother," demands his death but Haraldr insists on being magnanimous.

The king replied, "You may kill those whom you capture, but I will have my way about him." The king said to Waltheof, "I will give you quarter if you will swear never to fight against me and to send me word the same day if you are aware of any treachery plotted against me." "I will not swear," said Waltheof; "and I will not to save my life fail to support my brother Harold as long as I can. But I will send you word if I am aware of any treachery plotted against you and that will I do to save my life, but I will swear no oath, for it looks to me as though Tostig will mean me to have little inheritance." The king left Waltheof free to go wherever he pleased. "A foolish action," said Tostig, "to set free a man who thinks himself too good to swear an oath to you." The king said, "I value his word more than your sworn oath (*handspl*)."

²² The relevant portion is preserved in *Hauksbók*; *Hemings Þáttr* is printed in *Icelandic Sagas* ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon (*Rolls Series* 88) I, 347-387, trans. G. W. Dasent, ib., III, 374-415.

Considerably later, when Haraldr and his men are at Stamford Bridge, Harold Godwine's son's army approaches. Out of the dust rides Waltheof to keep his promise by warning the Norwegian king of danger.

“There goes my brother Waltheof,” said Tostig; “he must be killed.” This the king forbade. Waltheof rode up before the king, greeted him and urged him to turn back as quickly as he could to his ships, “for King Harold my brother is coming against you with an overwhelming army; you would not have the strength to withstand him if you were armed; still less now.” The king said, “Farewell, Waltheof; support your brother well. You have kept your word well.”

Still later, after prolonged fighting against William, Waltheof and his companions decide to surrender and William's treatment of Waltheof is made to contrast sharply with Haraldr's in similar circumstances.

Then said William, “I will give you quarter, Waltheof, if you will swear allegiance to me: you shall have your inheritance and earldom.” Waltheof replied, “I will swear you no oaths, but I will promise allegiance to you if you will carry out that agreement.” “We will come to an arrangement on those terms,” said William . . . Waltheof answered, “It is better that we should be overthrown than trust in no-one; no more men shall lose their lives for my sake.” They gave up the fight and accepted the king's peace. Then William was chosen king and they rode to London. Waltheof asked for permission to go home, obtained it and rode off with ten men. The king watched them and said, “It is bad policy to let a man ride away free who is not willing to swear us oaths; ride after him and kill him.” And this they did. Waltheof dismounted and forbade his men to defend themselves. He went to a church and was killed there; there he is buried and people think him a good man.

Finally, in *Játvarðar saga*,²³ a life of Edward the Confessor, the story of the wood appears in a garbled form caused perhaps by a hasty reading. In this work it is William who causes Waltheof and a hundred men with him to be burned.

IV

Of the three main historical works concerned, *Msk*, *Fsk* and *Hkr*, *Msk* is the oldest (c. 1220). It has been supposed that it rests on a series of separate kings' sagas though their existence cannot be considered proved. In this particular instance it makes little difference whether we are to regard the writer of *Msk* as adapting a lost *Haralds saga harðráða* or putting together the material for the first time. This material is based to a large extent on skaldic poetry with which the writer must have been very conversant, on prose commentary accompanying the verses, and also on oral tradition — that is, short accounts of incidents in the lives of kings and great men. It may also be that the writer had at some time access to some English source or sources. The most striking parallel between *Msk* and English sources is that three days of the week are mentioned during Harald's campaign in Yorkshire — a Wednesday, a Sunday and a Monday: these same three days are mentioned in the 1066 annal of the C MS of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and two of them (Wednesday and Monday) in Florence of Worcester. Whatever the means by which the author of *Msk* came upon them he misunderstood the Wednesday to refer to St. Matthew's Day instead of its vigil, 20th September, which was a Wednesday in 1066. The events for the Sunday in the *Chronicle* and *Msk* are not quite the same.²⁴ As has been

²³ *Rolls Series* 88, I, 388-400; trans., III, 416-428.

²⁴ These days of the week occur also in *Orkneyinga saga*. However the account of Harald's English campaign in the extant version of *Orkneyinga saga* is very succinct and reads like an abstract — of *Hkr* (not *Msk* or *Fsk*

mentioned the accounts of the battle of Fulford in *Fsk* and *Hkr* show few differences from *Msk* but Snorri by quoting the verse from *Haraldsstikki* shows that the tradition that Waltheof fought at Fulford depends on skaldic verse. *Fsk* corrects *Msk*'s dating by stating that St. Matthew's Day fell on a Thursday (*Þosdæghi*), Snorri by saying that the day of the battle (St. Matthew's Eve) was a Wednesday (*miðvikudag*).

The story of Waltheof's burning the hundred knights in *Fsk* and *Msk* is from the first stanza of *Valþjófsflokkr* and from prose tradition which accompanied it from an early period. In all probability the poem really refers to Waltheof's exploits against the Normans "among the burning ruins at York,"²⁵ though it just conceivably might refer to some otherwise unrecorded exploit of Waltheof's. G. Indrebø has pointed out this story as an instance of how the truth can be perverted in the historical sagas even where they are based on skaldic verses.²⁶ Snorri here probably drew on the common tradition rather than on *Fsk* since he quotes the stanza, which *Fsk* does not.²⁷

The same may be said of the account of Waltheof's death, based on the second stanza of *Valþjófsflokkr*: the

because of the reference to Holderness) or possibly of the hypothetical lost *Haralds saga Harðráða*. However in any case the suggestion remains that there may have been an English source for these events available in Iceland where *Ork* was in all probability written. The accurate naming of days of the week usually indicates a near-contemporary source. They sometimes occur in skaldic verse (e.g. *Heimskringla*, III, 51 (Sunday), 142 (Saturday) *Orkneyinga saga* (*Rolls Series* 88, vol. I), p. 175 (Friday)) and if an English source is not admitted one would have to postulate lost verses of a poem as the source for these days of the week, although it would seem unlikely that such a poem quoted all three that occur in the Chronicle.

Other points which suggest ultimate English or Norman sources are: the correction in *Fsk* and *Hkr* of the space of time which elapsed between Stamford Bridge and Hastings from twelve months to nineteen days, the chronological details about the death of Edward the Confessor and the accession of Harold, the accurate lengths of reign given for Harold (*Fsk*), William I (*Hkr*) and William II (*Msk*), and the references to Waltheof's sainthood. Cf. also Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla*, III, pp. xxviii f.

²⁵ E. A. Freeman: *The Norman Conquest* (5 vols. and index, Oxford 1867-79), IV (2nd edn.), 267, n. 5.

²⁶ *Fagrskinna*, p. 211.

²⁷ *Fagrskinna* was almost certainly written in Norway and the author knew Norway well, especially the Trondheim district, but his education was that of Iceland (G. Turville-Petre: *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford 1953) p. 219).

version in *Hkr* is not sufficiently similar to that of *Fsk* to suggest a direct borrowing; in particular Snorri mentions the place-name Kastalabryggja and he quotes the whole of the stanza and not merely the first half as *Fsk* does. Whatever the time at which this stanza acquired its prose accompaniment it must have been after Waltheof became famous as a saint since his saint-hood is referred to. In the *Fsk* account Waltheof decidedly behaves like a martyr, distributing clothing before his execution, and this suggests at least a reminiscence of an English or Norman account.²⁸ The most detailed account of Waltheof's execution, that of Orderic, who was a friend of the monks of Crowland, Waltheof's burial place, is as follows:

Early in the morning, while people were still asleep, Waltheof was led outside the city of Winchester on to the hill where the church of the abbot and confessor St. Giles now stands. There he piously distributed his clothes in which he was honourably dressed as an earl to the clergy and to the poor who chanced to be present at the scene. Then lying on the ground he called upon the Lord for a long time with tears and sobbing.

And when the executioners began to fear that the incensed citizens might prevent the carrying out of the king's command and, in support of so noble a countryman, might kill the king's officers, they said to the prostrate earl, "Get up, so that we may carry out the command of our lord." He said to them, "For the mercy of Almighty God wait a little while so that I may say the Lord's Prayer for myself and for you."²⁹

Orderic then relates how the executioner, growing impatient with the sobs which interrupted the prayer,

²⁸ Indrebø (*Fagrskinna*, p. 16), uses the absence of the story of Waltheof's death in *Msk* and its presence in *Fsk* as one of the arguments to show that *Msk* cannot have used *Fsk*. This story was just the sort of tale that the author of *Msk* liked and he would have been unlikely to have left it out if he had known it. It is, incidentally, somewhat uncharacteristic of the author of *Fsk* to include it; he usually keeps to matter closely associated with the king whose reign is being dealt with.

²⁹ Orderic, II, 266 f.

cut off his head when he had reached "And lead us not into temptation," but his severed head in a clear voice continued, "But deliver us from evil. Amen."

The source of the place-name Kastalabryggja is puzzling. Mosen and Smith suggest an identification with Castleford on the Aire.³⁰ This is reasonable enough philologically but it does not of course explain how it came into the tradition or source used by Snorri — unless by any chance it is connected with the fact that late in 1069 William when marching northward to recapture York from Waltheof and the other Northumbrian leaders, was considerably delayed at the crossing of the swollen river Aire near Castleford.³¹

Hemings þáttr consists of an Icelandic tradition which remembers the intolerant and tyrannical side of King Haraldr, a number of folk-tales, and a skeleton of real history taken from some version of the kings' sagas. Like several other incidents in the *Þáttr* the story of Waltheof is almost a complete short tale in itself. Perhaps the best example of a popular tale attached to a historical character is the use of an Æsopic fable when Tostig Godwine's son tempts Sweyn Estrithson, king of Denmark, with a second crown in England. One day Sweyn's dog goes over a bridge holding a loaf in his mouth; he sees a reflection in the water and in grasping at the second loaf loses the first. Sweyn declares that such would be his own fate if he were to attempt to gain the English throne. It may be taken that *Hemings Þáttr* has no fresh historical matter about Waltheof to contribute. The tale of Heming formed the basis of later Icelandic *rimur* and the story of Stamford Bridge was still being retold three years after the battle of Trafalgar.³²

³⁰ *Heimskringla*, p. 569.

³¹ Orderic, II, 195.

³² Sir William Craigie: *Sýnisbók Íslenskra Rimna* (3 vols., London and Edinburgh 1952), III, 3-19.

V

The question of the historicity of the Icelandic sources now arises: do they contribute anything to the life of Waltheof? As far as his death is concerned they clearly do not: the different version given by the English sources³³ is clearly much nearer the truth. The same applies to the episode of the oak-wood.

There remains the question of Waltheof's presence at the battle of Fulford. There are of course mistakes in the *Msk-Fsk-Hkr* account of the battle: neither Morkar nor Waltheof was a son of Earl Godwine; Morkar was not killed in the battle; Haraldr's men did not land at the site of the battle but were making their way to York from Riccall along the road which at Fulford passes very near to the river bank.³⁴ But these events do not invalidate the whole account of the battle of Fulford;³⁵ it convinces partly by the very way it lacks the heroic atmosphere of the account of Stamford Bridge which as the last battle of a great Norwegian king has attracted what are probably unhistorical elements.³⁶ The description of the fighting in the former battle fits in quite well with the topography of the area and the English accounts.

However as far as Waltheof is concerned there is the silence of the English sources to reckon with. This does not necessarily prove his absence. Nor was he necessarily too young to fight as is sometimes stated;³⁷ he seems to have been capable of negotiating business during Harold's reign³⁸ and he was certainly an important man at the capture of York only three years later.

³³ E.g. Florence of Worcester, II, 12.

³⁴ *Ib.*, I, 226.

³⁵ Cf. the mistaken assumption of some English sources that the Norwegian king concerned was Haraldr *hárfagri*.

³⁶ E.g. Tostig's remark that he would rather be slain by his brother than be his brother's slayer and Haraldr's remark on his ominous fall from his horse, "Fall er fararheil," together with other impressive speeches and heroic defences.

³⁷ E.g. Sir Charles Oman: *History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* (2 vols., London 1924), I, 150.

³⁸ See *Archæologia Æliana*, 4th series, XXX, 155 f.

E. A. Freeman³⁹ tentatively explains Waltheof's name by suggesting that it really represents Edwin, Morkar's brother and earl of Mercia, who is not mentioned in the Norse accounts but who did take part in the battle according to English sources,⁴⁰ a more familiar name replacing a less familiar one. This is possible, but if so the substitution goes as far back as *Haraldsstikki* where the name Valþjófr occurs and is used to alliterate; just how far back this is depends on when this very simple and conventional stanza was composed. If the poem was composed more than, say, ten years after the battle, when Waltheof had become generally famous, then the substitution may have taken place in oral tradition between the date of the battle and the composition of the poem.⁴¹ But if the poem was composed within a few years of the battle, as is quite possible, by someone who had been in Haraldr's army or who relied directly on tradition supplied by members of that army then it must really have been the belief of the survivors of the expedition that they had fought against Waltheof. And if so they were probably right, for Waltheof's name would not be famous enough in 1066 to have replaced Morkar's.

The possibility that the Icelandic sources are right in making Waltheof take part in and escape from the battle of Fulford does thus remain, and if they are right in this it is the one original fact which they contribute to our knowledge of the life of earl Waltheof.

³⁹ Norman Conquest, III (2nd edn.), 352, n. 2.

⁴⁰ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, C, D, E, s.a. 1066.

⁴¹ Vigfússon and Powell (*Corpus*, II, 222) suggest that the expression Valþjófs liðar " is a mere kenning for "Northumbrians." If so the poem cannot antedate his tenure of the Northumbrian earldom (1072-6). But the suggestion of the kenning does not seem to me particularly likely.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF *MERLÍNÚSSPÁ* AND
GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH'S *HISTORIA*

By J. S. EYSTEINSSON

THE *Merlínússpá* is a translation of the *Prophetia Merlini*, which forms Book vii, 3 and 4 of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* in most editions, or Chapters III-III7 of Faral's edition of the *Historia*,¹ which is not divided into Books.² Since Faral's edition is probably the most authoritative, it has been chosen as a basis for the comparison of the Icelandic translation with its Latin original.

A question which confronts the student of Geoffrey and of Old Icelandic literature alike is in what form Gunnlaug found his original. Did he have the whole of Geoffrey's *Historia* before him, or was his exemplar merely a separate edition of the *Prophetia*? This question is also linked with that of the authorship of the *Breta Sögur*, the Icelandic prose translation of the *Historia* proper. If Gunnlaug only had access to a separate edition of the *Prophetia*, the *Libellus Merlini*, which Geoffrey is believed to have circulated before he wrote the *Historia* proper, he obviously cannot have translated the *Breta Sögur*. If, on the other hand, he was acquainted with the original of the *Breta Sögur*, his authorship is not proved, but possible.

An attempt has been made to use the *Merlínússpá* as evidence for the existence of a separate edition of the *Prophetia*. In an article entitled *De Libello Merlini* H. G. Leach maintains that "Iceland furnishes further

¹ *La Légende Arthurienne* (Paris, 1929), vol. III.

² There is apparently no evidence in early MSS. of the *Historia* for Book divisions, for which scribes and editors seem to be wholly responsible. For a full discussion on this point see Griscom's Introduction to his edition (New York, 1929), pp. 26-30.

proof of a separate edition: the *Prophecies* apparently came to Iceland and were translated there, before the *History* was known."³

The chief argument Leach advances for Gunnlaug's ignorance of the *Historia* proper is his representation of Merlin. The finding of Merlin and his refutation of the magi is omitted in the Icelandic version of the *Prophetia*. "Instead," Leach goes on to say, "Merlin appears among the wise men as one wiser than the rest 'the king's friend,' 'the friend of men'."⁴ These are, of course, references to the expressions *yingva vinr* in Part II, 9/5 and *gumna vinr* in Part II, 20/1.

Leach thinks that such expressions show that Gunnlaug did not know Merlin's character as it is depicted in the *Historia* proper, but he overlooks the stereotyped nature of Old Norse poetic terminology. Anyone familiar with the vague and generalised features of the laudatory circumlocutions of the scalds will realise how dangerous it is to draw conclusions from expressions like "the king's friend," and "the friend of men." Gunnlaug's Merlin, however, is far from being the warrior type so frequently met with in scaldic poetry. He is referred to as a "noble prophet" (Part I, 1/4), "the wisest man on earth" (Part I, 2/7-8), "the excellent one" (Part II, 9/7), "teacher of the people" (lit.: "one who makes people wise," Part II, 20/6), "poet," "speaker" (lit.: "offerer of poetry," Part II, 21/3), "the learned man" (Part II, 93/6, and Part II, 96/6).

Although some of these, like "the king's friend" and "the friend of men," are merely stereotyped circumlocutions for Merlin, they are fully consistent with Geoffrey's general representation of Merlin as a man certainly wiser than the rest, and friendly to King Vortigern.⁵ These circumlocutions, of course, are in

³ *Modern Philology* (Chicago, April 1911), p. 607.

⁴ The edited text referred to is that of Finnur Jónsson in *Den Norske-islandske Skjaldedigtning*, vol. II B pp. 10-45 (Copenhagen and Kristiania, 1915).

⁵ Any elaboration on the supernatural aspects of Merlin's origin as related in the *Historia* proper, would have lengthened the poem beyond all proportion.

accord with Gunnlaug's treatment of the prophecies, which, while different from Geoffrey's, was not due to a misunderstanding through any ignorance of the *Historia* proper, but was quite deliberate.

Merlin is also referred to as "a generous man" (lit.: "hater of gold," Part II, 10/2, "destroyer of rings," Part II, 93/4), "the instigator of battle" (Part II, 94/11), and "spear-tree" (Part II, 11/8). From the first two of these kennings one might infer that generosity, an attribute of the great warrior kings and vikings, was a prominent feature of his character as represented by Gunnlaug, and from the two last that Gunnlaug thought of him as a great heathen viking.

But the numerous references to Merlin quoted above show beyond all doubt that Gunnlaug did not think of him as of the warrior-type. He represents Merlin first of all as a wise man, endowed with prophetic gifts. He uses kennings like *spillir bauga* ("destroyer of rings," "generous man") and *fleinþollr* ("spear-tree," "man") probably because analogous kennings for "man" had been used by earlier generations, not with any full significance. The best poets undoubtedly took the real meaning of the kennings into account to emphasize some particular aspect of the object referred to. But after the expressions became more or less stereotyped the regard for the original meaning of the constituent parts of the kennings often disappeared.

Leach's other main argument to prove that Gunnlaug did not know the *Historia* is that in the concluding strophes of Part II he compares Merlin with the prophet Daniel. "Those who read will see how the prophetic words come true; if they read Scripture they will find that Merlin prophesied like the saints of old. He turns a moral lesson, and ends with a blessing upon his readers."⁶

Gunnlaug's own additions to what he found in the *Prophetia* do not prove that he was ignorant of the *Historia*,

⁶ *De Libello Merlini, Modern Philology* (April, 1911), p. 609.

even if he did not always base these additions on it. We shall see later that some of his additions are in fact based on the *Historia* proper. The comparison of Merlin and Daniel, which must of course be Gunnlaug's own, has thus no relevance to the question whether or not he knew the *Historia*. It is prompted by Gunnlaug's didactic purpose and his anxiety to add the authority of the Old Testament prophets to the prophetic utterances.

Let us next see whether there is anything in the text of the *Merlínússpá* which suggests that Gunnlaug knew the *Historia* proper. In the first hundred-and-twenty lines of Part II Gunnlaug summarizes the events of British history dealt with in previous chapters of Geoffrey's *Historia*. To explain this Leach maintained that the *Libellus* used by Gunnlaug contained a short historical preface. If there was a separate edition it is, of course, not unlikely that it was prefaced with a short account of the origin of Merlin and of Vortigern's attempts at building the tower. But Gunnlaug makes no reference to the origin of Merlin. Instead he gives a clear picture of the earliest relations between the British and the Anglo-Saxon races. The country was inhabited by the British, and it bore a British name until the Anglo-Saxons invaded it in force.⁷ It is not likely that a preface to a separate edition of the *Prophetia* would contain just this information.

It could be said, of course, that this is merely general knowledge which Gunnlaug could have had from other sources, e.g. the historical works of Bede, which he probably knew. But the fact remains that all this information is to be found in the *Historia* proper.

There are other indications that Gunnlaug knew the *Historia*. Some of Gunnlaug's own additions and his shrewd understanding of the obscure symbols of the *Prophetia* can only be explained by his knowledge of the *Historia* proper.

⁷ Part II, stanzas 2-4.

There are, for instance, many indications that he identified Geoffrey's *Aper Cornubiae* with King Arthur. As soon as he refers to him he calls him king (*lofðungr*, Part II, 24/2), although he is not referred to as such in the *Prophetia*. He even comments aside that "he is the most magnificent" of kings (Part II, 24/3), which suggests that the prominent place given to King Arthur in the *Historia* was familiar to him.

Then Gunnlaug goes on to enumerate the countries subjugated by this British king. In the *Prophetia* he is merely said to conquer "the islands of the ocean and the forests of Gaul."⁸ Gunnlaug mentions the islands in the ocean and the wide lands of the Gallic peoples, but to these he adds the lands of the Irish, the English, and the Scottish as well as the Scandinavian countries.⁹ These very countries are included among King Arthur's conquests in the *Historia* proper, Chapters 153-155. Gunnlaug would hardly have added the Scandinavian countries to the British king's conquests if he had not had the authority of the *Historia* for it.

In Part II, stanza 26/5-6 Gunnlaug claims to know many other things about the generous king (King Arthur). Since this has no parallel in the original Gunnlaug may well be referring to the great prominence given to King Arthur in the *Historia* proper (Chapters 143-178).

The reference in the *Prophetia* to the successors of the *Aper Cornubiae* ("sex posterius ejus sequentur sceptrum, sed post ipsos exsurget germanicus vermis"¹⁰) seems to be connected with Geoffrey's account later in the *Historia* of the reigns of King Arthur's successors, i.e. Constantinus (Chapters 179-80), Aurelius Conanus (Chapter 181), Vortiporius (Chapter 182), Malgo (Chapter 183), and Careticus (Chapter 184),¹¹ who in turn succeed

⁸ "Insulae oceani potestati ipsius subdentur et gallicos saltus possidebit." Chap. 112, ll. 10-11.

⁹ See Part II, 25.

¹⁰ Chap. 112, ll. 14-15.

¹¹ Cf. É. Faral, *La Légende Arthurienne*, vol. II, p. 54., who speaks of "les deux Constantins."

King Arthur on the throne and precede a second phase of the Saxon invasions. In the *Prophetia* there is no mention of conquests of foreign lands in connection with these successors of the *Aper Cornubiae*. Gunnlaug, however, makes the express statement that the relations (descendants?) of the excellent king will conquer lands and subjects.¹² And according to the *Historia* proper, conquests, surpassed by those of King Arthur only, were made by Malgo, one of King Arthur's successors.¹³

Gunnlaug could not have known that conquests were associated with the successors of the *Aper Cornubiae* from any other source than the *Historia* proper. It even suggests that he was fairly intimately acquainted with it.

Gunnlaug translates Geoffrey's symbol *affricana nemora* as *Affrikar* ("Africans") just as if he had read Geoffrey's account in the *Historia* proper of the invasion of the African Gormund.¹⁴ Gunnlaug's reference to the conversion of the English to Christianity is still more significant. There is no mention of it in the *Prophetia*, but Gunnlaug inserts an account of it exactly where we should expect it from its place in the *Historia* proper.¹⁵ When he has described the ravages of the African Gormund and the overthrow of the British Church,¹⁶ Geoffrey gives an account of the missionary activities of Augustine.¹⁷ Gunnlaug could, of course, have learned about the Christianization of the English from other sources, from Bede for example, but the place of his reference to it in the *Merlínússpá* coincides too closely with that of the *Historia* proper to be accidental.

¹² Part II, 28/1-4.

¹³ "Hic etiam totam insulam obtinuit et sex provinciales oceani insulas, Hyberniam videlicet atque Hislandiam, Godlandiam, Orcades, Norguegiam, Daciam, adject durissimis proeliis potestati suae." Chap. 183, ll. 5-8.

¹⁴ See Geoffrey's *Historia*, Chap. 184 and 186.

¹⁵ Part II, 29/7-10.

¹⁶ This consequence of the African invasion is mentioned in its proper place in the Icelandic version. See Part II, 29/5-6.

¹⁷ "Interea missus est Augustinus a beato Gregorio papa in Britanniam, ut Anglis verbum Dei praedicaret, qui, pagana superstitione caecati, in illam insulae partem quam habebant totam deleverant christianitatem." Chap. 188, ll. 1-4.

In Part II, stanza 30, Gunnlaug translates Geoffrey's *Dignitas Londonia* as "episcopal see" (of London). It is difficult to see how Gunnlaug could derive this meaning from *Dignitas Londonia*, since in fact there had never been a British archbishopric in London, unless he had access to the *Historia* proper, which has a reference to such a one.¹⁸

In the *Prophetia* there is no indication that the "brazen man" mentioned in Chapter 112, ll. 29-31 is a king. Gunnlaug, on the other hand, refers to him repeatedly as a king.¹⁹ It is unlikely that Gunnlaug would have been so definite about this if he had not read Chapter 201 of the *Historia*, which gives the identity of the brazen man as Cadvallo, king of the British. The epithet *lofsæll* ("rich in praise," "honoured") in Part II, 34/10, which has no counterpart in Geoffrey, seems also to indicate that Gunnlaug knew how much King Cadvallo was revered by the British.²⁰

When Geoffrey says in the *Prophetia* that the red dragon "will return to his own ways and labour to exercise wrath upon himself,"²¹ Gunnlaug does not hesitate to state that civil dissensions, such as have ruined them before, will break out, and lead to a time of suffering and woe.²² So accurate an interpretation would hardly have been possible if he had not known the rest of the *Historia*. In Chapter 202, ll. 1-5, which immediately follows the brazen statue episode, Geoffrey has the following to say about this dissension: "Suscepit itaque regni gubernaculum Cadvalladrus, filius suus, quem Beda Chedwaldam juvenem vocat, et in initio

¹⁸ "Tunc igitur archipraesules, Theonus Londoniensis et Tadioceus Eboracensis, cum omnes ecclesias sibi subditas usque ad humum destructas vidissent, cum omnibus ordinatis qui in tanto discrimine superfuerant, diffugerunt . . ." etc. Chap. 186, ll. 7-11.

¹⁹ Cf. *aldar stjóri* in Part II, 34/4, *hilmir* in II, 34/6, and *konungr* in II, 34/10.

²⁰ After his death they embalmed his body with balsams and sweet-scented condiments, set it within the brazen statue mentioned above, and built beneath it a church in honour of St. Martin. See Chap. 201 of the *Historia*.

²¹ "Exin in propriis mores revertetur rubens draco et in seipsum saevire laborabit." Chap. 112, ll. 32-33.

²² Part II, stanzas 35-36.

viriliter et pacifice tractavit. At, cum xii annos post sumptum diadema praeterisset, in infirmitatem cecidit et civile discidium inter Britones ortum est."

And a few lines later (Chapter 203, ll. 1-9) Geoffrey gives a more detailed account of the calamity that befell the British people, which indicates that Gunnlaug wrote Part II, 35ff. with this part of the *Historia* in mind: "Quo igitur, ut dicere coeperam, languente, discordio afficiuntur Britones et opulentam patriam detestabili discidio destruunt. Accessit etiam aliud infortunium quia fames dira ac famosissima insipienti populo adhaesit, ita ut totius cibi sustentaculo quaeque vacuaretur provincia, excepto venatoriae artis solatio. Quam vero famem pestifera mortis lues consecuta est, quae in brevi tantam populi multitudinem stravit, quantam non poterant vivi humare," etc. It is easier to account for Gunnlaug's clear understanding of Geoffrey's symbolic language if we assume that he had these passages before him when he translated the *Prophetia*.

In Part II, 39/1-4 Gunnlaug translates fairly closely Merlin's prophecy of the resurgence of the white dragon and his invitation of the "German lady" (*snót saxneska*).²³ But in the second half of the same strophe, which has no counterpart in the *Prophetia*, Gunnlaug adds that the "German lady" accepts the invitation, coming with a great multitude to settle down in the country. Here, again, Gunnlaug is apparently drawing on information from the *Historia* proper; compare especially Chapter 204, ll. 11-15: "Quod cum ipsis indicatum fuisset, nefandus populus ille (i.e. the *Saxones*), collecta innumerabili multitudine virorum et mulierum, applicuit in partibus Northumbriae et desolatas provincias ab Albania usque ad Cornubiam inhabitavit."

When Gunnlaug translates Merlin's prophecy that a limit (*terminus*) will be assigned to the white dragon

²³ "Exsurget iterum albus draco et filiam Germaniae invitabit." Chap. 112, ll. 39-40.

beyond which he will not be able to fly,²⁴ he adds *i tali ára* ("as to the number of years" he will reign) to *takmörk* (the Icelandic equivalent of *terminus*) to make it clear that the limit mentioned by Geoffrey is one of time. And then he adds that he (i.e. the white dragon) "will not reign in, nor rule, the beautiful country longer than the mighty fate will allow."²⁵ This has no direct parallel in the *Prophetia*, so that it is by no means unlikely that, when writing this, Gunnlaug had in mind a passage towards the end of the *Historia*, in which the resurgence of the British is predicted in much more concrete terms:

"Dicebat (vox angelica) etiam populum Britonum per meritum suae fidei insulam in futuro adepturum, postquam fatale tempus superveniet, nec id tamen prius futurum quam Britones, reliquii ejus potiti, illas ex Roma in Britanniam exportarent."²⁶

Just as Gunnlaug in the *Merlínússpá* represents the reign of the white dragon as subject to the will of fate, so does Geoffrey in this passage refer to the time of British re-emergence as *fatale tempus*. Once more the similarities are too strong to be accidental.

Although not all these points taken separately offer conclusive evidence of Gunnlaug's acquaintance with the *Historia* proper, taken together they have considerable weight. When translating the *Prophetia* Gunnlaug probably had the rest of the *Historia* on his desk, frequently consulting it in his attempts to solve the riddles of the prophecies. The *Merlínússpá*, therefore, affords no evidence of the existence of a *Libellus Merlini* in Iceland.

It is worth noting that doubts seem to be emerging as to whether there ever was a separate edition of the *Prophetia*. J. S. P. Tatlock has maintained in a recent book²⁷ that there never was one, apart perhaps from an

²⁴ "Terminus illi positus est, quem transvolare nequibit." Chap. 112, l. 43.

²⁵ Part II, 42.

²⁶ Chap. 205, ll. 11-15.

²⁷ *The Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1950), pp. 418-21.

advance copy for Bishop Alexander and his circle. For a different version, he maintains, there is no conclusive evidence whatever. The chief evidence for a separate and different (lost) edition of the *Prophetia* is to be found in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Book xii, Chapter 47) by Ordericus Vitalis. He gives extracts "de libello Merlini," which can be recognized to be from Geoffrey's *Prophetia*, but seem to be different from it as it appears in the *Historia*.²⁸

Tatlock maintains that the differences between Ordericus's extracts from the *Prophetia* (which he believes to be a later interpolation into his *Historia Ecclesiastica*) are due to embellishment, forgetfulness and direct references to Nennius and Bede. Ordericus also reveals direct knowledge of the *Historia*.

Since it appears reasonably certain that Gunnlaug knew the *Historia* proper, the question inevitably arises whether he did not translate it also; whether, in fact, he is not the author of the *Breta Sögur* as well as of *Merlínússpá*, which appear as one work in *Hauksbók*. The question is beyond the scope of this paper and will perhaps never be solved with certainty. But a few misleading remarks by A. G. van Hamel, which have a bearing on this problem are worth considering in some detail. In his paper *The Old-Norse Version of the Historia Regum Britanniae and the Text of Geoffrey of Monmouth*,²⁹ he begins by suggesting that Hauk Erlendsson received the Old Norse translation at Bergen, since he spent a large part of his life there, and that it was only natural that a manuscript of Geoffrey should find its way to Norway, presumably through trade channels. Throughout he refers to the author of the *Breta Sögur* as "the

²⁸ On this point see in particular H. L. D. Ward: *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1883), vol. I, p. 207 ff.; R. H. Fletcher: *Two Notes on the Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, in P.M.L.A. 1901, p. 461 ff.; E. K. Chambers: *Arthur of Britain* (London 1927), p. 26 ff.; and R. Taylor: *The Political Prophecy of Britain* (New York, 1911), p. 14 ff.

²⁹ *Études Celtiques*, vol. I (Paris, 1936).

Norwegian translator," as if he had proved his nationality to be Norwegian. Although his theory seems to be based on extremely slender evidence it has been accepted by no less a scholar than Jan de Vries.⁸⁰

Let us examine some of van Hamel's arguments. The *Breta Sögur* differ in various ways from the *Historia* as we know it. Particularly noticeable are the numerous omissions, especially in the second half of the work. But there are additions also, some of which may already have been present in the Latin original of the Old Norse translation.

According to the *Breta Sögur* Hengest and Horsa, when landing in Britain, were accompanied by a certain Þiðrik, whom van Hamel identifies with Thidrik of Bern. Since he is not mentioned in the *Historia* van Hamel maintains that he must have been "introduced into the story at Bergen, where the Old-Norse *Þiðrekssaga* was written."

Even if we accept the identification of the Þiðrik of the *Breta Sögur* with Thidrik of Bern, and admit that the *Þiðrekssaga* was written in Bergen (of which there is no conclusive proof), we have to remember that German legends, which naturally included accounts of the celebrated Thidrik of Bern, were well known among the early Icelanders before the *Þiðrekssaga* was written. This is clear from the heroic lays of the *Elder Edda*, some of which concern Gothic personages. One of these lays, *Guðrúnarkviða III*, deals with an alleged love affair between Guðrún, Atli's wife, and Þjóðrekr, i.e. Thidrik of Bern. Although the original may not have been written in Iceland, early redactions of the *Þiðrekssaga* were made in that country, as can be seen from the many manuscripts of it preserved there and from the prologue, which was apparently written by an Icelander. It has also been used by the authors of the *Völsunga Saga* and

⁸⁰ See his *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, vol. II, p. 355.

Ragnars Saga.³¹ A reference to a Þiðrik in the *Breta Sögur* appears, therefore, to be very unreliable evidence of Norwegian origin.

Then van Hamel observes that the translator had a special interest in Norway and the city of Bergen. Thus on two occasions he prefers *Hvøðaland*, the name of a province, to *Nóregy*, the Norse name of the country. Van Hamel detects national pride in the phrase: "but the Norsemen would not have a British king ruling them," which is a translation of Geoffrey's account of the Norwegians' refusal to accept a king appointed by Arthur (*indignati illum* (i.e. Loth) *recipere*, Chapter 154, ll. 18-19). Then van Hamel points out that the river Douglas is called *Ðverá* (how this could point specifically to Norway is obscure, since this is one of the commonest river names in Iceland), and that Loth of Lodonesia, who is made king of Norway by Arthur, has his residence at *Álreksstaðir*, which was identified with Aarstad near Bergen by Finnur Jónsson.

Even if all these points revealed Norwegian interest, we have to bear in mind that interest in Norway and Norwegian affairs was not unusual for twelfth- and thirteenth-century Icelanders. In fact, the literature that has come down to us from these two countries would indicate that at this time the Icelanders were more interested in Norwegian affairs, or at least more anxious to commit accounts of them to parchment, than the Norwegians themselves. Their knowledge of Norway was intimate, not only from hearsay, but from frequent visits to that country, which to a certain extent they still regarded as the land of their fathers. We should have to take too much for granted and ignore some important historical facts if we jumped to the conclusion that the

³¹ For the provenance and date of the *Þiðrekssaga* see Unger's edition (Christiania, 1853), pp. iv and xii, Bertelsen's edition (Copenhagen, 1905-11), pp. liv-lvi, G. Jónsson's edition (Reykjavík, 1951), pp. xi-xiv, G. Storm: *Sagnkredsene om Karl den Store og Didrik af Bern* etc. (Kristiania, 1874), p. 93 ff., and F. Jónsson: *Den Oldnorske og Oldislandske Litteraturs Historie*, vol. II, pp. 851-54.

translator was Norwegian, merely because one of the two extant manuscripts was written by a man who spent parts of his life in Norway, and because some vague interest in Norway is revealed by the translator himself. We would not only have to ignore the great interest in Iceland at this time in everything Norwegian, but also the fact that the *Hauksbók* contains such genuine Icelandic pieces as the *Landnámabók*, *Kristni Saga* and *Fóstbræðra Saga*. We have seen how Gunnlaug used the *Historia* for interpreting the *Prophetia*, and how, in fact, parts of the *Merlínússpá* are dependent on it. The fact that the *Historia*, therefore, must have been known in Iceland by the beginning of the thirteenth century must not be overlooked. On the other hand we have no evidence of early knowledge of the *Historia* in Norway.

Van Hamel remarks that the tendency to introduce the characteristics of Old Norse saga style into Geoffrey's pseudo-classical narrative is most striking.³² This he says is particularly noticeable in the first half of the text where the translation is more leisurely. But it was Iceland, not Norway which was the home of the sagas, so that this feature rather suggests an Icelandic origin.

Van Hamel ascribes many of the differences between Geoffrey's *Historia* as we know it and the *Breta Sögur* to the Latin exemplar used by the translator. We know that there were variant versions of the *Historia*, so that some of the differences may be due to them. On the other hand the methods of the Old Icelandic translators were not comparable to those of modern translators. They had no scruples about adding information from other sources or altering the text they were translating in accordance with their own tastes and ideas. They did not feel the same responsibility to their originals as modern translators do. Thus it was probably the translator who added nearly five chapters to the beginning of the *Breta Sögur* containing information about Æneas of Troy, ultimately derived from Virgil.

³² See *Études Celtiques*, vol. I, p. 200.

Van Hamel says that the Latin original of the *Breta Sögur* "shows an interest in English geography and history, especially ecclesiastical history, and an acquaintance with books current in England at the time that cannot possibly be expected from the Norwegian translator."³³ In particular van Hamel detects an interest in the see of Canterbury.

A close study of the Icelandic translation of the *Prophetia* confirms beyond all doubt that as early as the end of the twelfth century there was in Iceland a lively interest in English affairs in general and English ecclesiastical history in particular. The Þingeyrar library contained not only Geoffrey's *Historia*, but probably also the works of Bede and William of Malmesbury. There are various indications that even before the end of the century Icelanders were well acquainted with the see of Canterbury and took special interest in it because of its association with Thomas Becket, who evidently was held in great honour in Iceland. During Thomas Becket's time as Archbishop of Canterbury the Icelander Þorlák Þórhallsson studied at Lincoln. His nephew and successor to the see of Skálholt, Páll Jónsson, also studied in England. Missionaries from the British Isles had been working in Iceland in the eleventh century. The *Hungrvaka* tells us of three such missionaries: Bishop Jón the Irishman, Bjarnvarðr Vilráðsson (Bernard Wilfrid's son?) "called the Bookwise, who some people say came from England," and Bishop Rúðólfr (Rudolph), "who some people say was called Úlfr (Wolf) and came from Rúða in England."³⁴ He stayed for nineteen years in Iceland and lived at Bœr in the Borgarfjörð."³⁵ This Rudolph later appeared in England as Abbot of Abingdon.³⁶ These missionaries may have started the interest we find in Iceland in English history

³³ *Études Celtiques*, vol. I, p. 207.

³⁴ Rúða is the city of Rouen, which of course is not in England, but in Normandy.

³⁵ *Biskupa Sögur*, vol. I, pp. 64-65.

³⁶ See E. N. Wharton: *Anglia Sacra* etc., vol. I, p. 167.

and letters, the result of which may be seen in various sagas derived from English sources, such as those of St. Oswald, Edward the Confessor, St. Dunstan and Thomas Becket. Iceland was thus by no means as isolated from the outer world at this period as it is sometimes supposed to have been. Through the Icelandic students who sought learning in England and the English missionaries who worked in Iceland, knowledge of English ecclesiastical history was almost bound to reach Iceland, and the Icelanders were eager to learn about, and write on, other peoples at this time.

The interest of the early Icelanders in the see of Canterbury is testified by the account of Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson of Eyrr who as early as 1195 made a vow to St. Thomas, which involved a subsequent journey to Canterbury,³⁷ and by a fragment of a poem by Kolbeinn Tumason, dating from 1208, in which he compares Bishop Guðmund with Thomas Becket.³⁸ It is thus highly probable that some of the material which was later used for the compilation of the great Icelandic life of the English martyr of Canterbury was already known in Iceland before 1200. It is, therefore, not necessary to ascribe the interest revealed in the *Breta Sögur* in English history in general and Canterbury in particular to an English redactor of Geoffrey's *Historia*, since we know that such interest was active in Iceland as early as the end of the twelfth century.

If it is possible to believe that the *Historia* was translated in Iceland before the middle of the thirteenth century we may wonder whether Gunnlaug did not translate it as well as the *Prophetia*. This question involves a detailed comparative study of the two texts of the *Breta Sögur*, the Latin original, and the works of Gunnlaug, of which the *Merlínússpá* is of primary importance. Although such an investigation is beyond

³⁷ See *Biskupa Sögur*, vol. I, pp. 641-42.

³⁸ See *Biskupa Sögur*, vol. I, p. 491, note 2.

the scope of the present study, attention may be drawn to a few significant facts.

First of all we have seen that Gunnlaug had access to a version of the *Historia*, which is more than we know about any other identifiable person in the North. From Gunnlaug's *Life of St. Jón* it seems that he also knew the works of other English historians (Bede and William of Malmesbury), thus having the knowledge of English history revealed by the translator of the *Breta Sögur*.³⁹ That of course bears out the reputation he had for being the most learned man in Iceland at this time. Van Hamel draws attention to the clerical spirit evinced in the *Breta Sögur*.⁴⁰ Gunnlaug shows a similar interest in the Church and ecclesiastical history in all his works.

Verbal similarities between the *Breta Sögur* and the *Merlínússpá* might, if well established, point to common authorship, although mere influence of the *Merlínússpá* on the *Breta Sögur* could not be excluded. The following example, which in its isolation cannot prove much, may have some significance. In the *Hauksbók*, p. 300, ll. 25-26 we have the following sentence: *Var þá úáran mikit, ok sultr ok manndauðr svá mikill, at eigi varð hálfst jarðat* ("Then there was such a bad year, a famine and so many deaths, that not half of the dead could be buried"). For this cf. *Merlínússpá*, Part II, 36/7-12: *megut dauðan her| dróttir hylja,| liðr sultr ok sótt| at sigrviðum,| missir manna,| mǫrg strið hǫfug*; and Part I, 25/5-8, where the similarity is still closer: *Sultr verðr ok sótt,| sé ek þat fyrir,| manndauðr mikill,| mein gengr um þjóðir*.

³⁹ Van Hamel has pointed out several passages which seem to be directly dependent on Bede, the Saxon Chronicle and even Henry of Huntingdon. See *Études Celtiques*, vol. I, pp. 238 ff.

⁴⁰ "Typical of his predilection for English (*sic!*) ecclesiastical history are such passages as Hb. (i.e. *Hauksbók*) 264, 16-20 (description of early Christianity in Rome), Hb. 267,35 - 268,8 (the clerical form of the Ursula legend), Hb. 293, 1-2 (Arthur has mass celebrated after the battle against the Romans and consecrates a churchyard for his fallen soldiers), Hb. 294,34 - 295,2 (King Arthur is buried at Canterbury and is exalted as a prop of the Christian faith), Hb. 301, 16-22 (Cadvalladrus' pilgrimage to Rome and his consecration as a bishop by the pope)." *Études Celtiques*, vol. I, p. 237.

An important argument that could be advanced against Gunnlaug's authorship of the *Breta Sögur* is that he is specifically named as the author of the *Merlínússpá* immediately before the poem in the *Hauksbók*.⁴¹ If Gunnlaug translated the *Breta Sögur* he is not likely to have inserted such a reference to himself in the third person. Translators and scribes, however, sometimes interpolated references of this kind to the authors of the originals to make it quite clear that they were not referring to themselves. In the case of scaldic poetry the names of the authors were usually quoted although no obligation to do so was felt when prose works were concerned. In the present case, however, this seems hardly a satisfactory explanation of the reason why a scribe should interrupt the text, if it was already translated by Gunnlaug, to tell the reader that the next section, even though it was different from the rest by reason of its being in verse, was translated by Gunnlaug the monk. Only if we assume that the scribe did not know who translated the prose, can this explanation be really tenable.

Another argument which could be brought forth against Gunnlaug's authorship is that the translation reveals a few misunderstandings of the Latin text. We know, on the other hand, from the *Merlínússpá*, and from the fact that he wrote his known historical works in Latin, that Gunnlaug was a great Latinist. But the translator of the *Breta Sögur* uses his original with great freedom. Some of the misunderstandings may, therefore, be due to the translator's hasty reading of his original and to his feeling that he had no obligation to render it faithfully, rather than to his ignorance of the Latin tongue. Secondly we do not know in what state, or how legible, his Latin exemplar was, but difficulties in reading it may have caused some of the apparent misunder-

⁴¹ "Síðan sagði Merlínús langt fram um konungaævi ok mörg önnur stórtíðindi, þau er enn eru eigi fram komin. Hér eftir hefir Guðlaugr munkr (Gunnlaugr munkr Leifsson in A.M. 573) ort kvæði þat, er heitir Merlínússpá." *Hauksbók* (ed. F. Jónsson), p. 271.

standings. This aspect of the *Breta Sögur* certainly needs a careful study and is one of the many problems which await the next editor.

Finally it must be said that although the *Merlínússpá* contains some allusions which can only be understood in the light of the *Breta Sögur* (or the *Historia*), it can stand more independently than the original, because of the new didactic purpose with which Gunnlaug infuses the poem. In this respect it stands on a plane different from that of the *Breta Sögur*, which is a more objective, though by no means a literal, translation. Gunnlaug has also reduced the dependence of the *Merlínússpá* on the *Historia* (or the *Breta Sögur*) by his interpretative renderings, and by giving to it a historical setting and summarizing a few preceding chapters of the prose *Historia*. Whether he is less likely to have done this if his translation of the *Merlínússpá* was merely a stage in a translation of the *Historia* as a whole is a matter of opinion.

GEORGE E. J. POWELL, EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON
AND JÓN SIGURÐSSON

A CHAPTER IN ICELANDIC LITERARY HISTORY

By R. GEORGE THOMAS

I. INTRODUCTORY

IN January 1949 while I was searching for the birth-place of the Welsh author of an eighteenth-century commonplace book I came across a book by the Reverend George Eyre Evans of Aberystwyth.¹ The end papers stated that the author had "transcribed from the originals" twenty-one letters from "Dr. E. Magnússon, Jón Sigurðsson, J. Hjaltelen and Matt. Jocumsson to Geo. E. J. Powell during the years 1864-1874." It also said that he had bound them in two volumes together with transcripts of letters from Swinburne to Powell and that at the author's death both volumes would be deposited in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth (N.L.W.). When I sent for a microfilm of this copied correspondence the originals had been deposited for some years in the National Library of Wales by their owners — the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth (U.C.W.) — and I received a film of the original letters. Later, all the material used in this article was checked against the originals and against G. E. Evan's volume of transcripts which contained material for a projected life of Powell.²

¹ *Lloyd Letters 1754-1796*. Edited with notes by George Eyre Evans, Aberystwyth, 1908.

² I wish to record here my thanks for the kindness and courtesy shown to me at Aberystwyth by the following gentlemen: Dr. Thomas Parry, the Librarian, and his staff at the National Library; Mr. Maelgwyn Davies, the Registrar, and Mr. Arthur ap Gwynn, the Librarian, at the University College of Wales. My sincere thanks are also due to the authorities of the National Library and the College for permission to quote from the letters and to reproduce the letter from Jón Sigurðsson included in this article.

Powell's Icelandic correspondence consists of eighteen letters from Eiríkr Magnússon (nine of which were written between 17 January 1864 and 28 May 1867 chiefly from Leipzig), one undated letter from Matthías Jochumsson sent from Iceland, one from Dr. J. Hjaltalín headed "Reikjavyk, 29 April 1864," and, most important of all, a unique letter written in English to Powell by Jón Sigurðsson which is reproduced here by courtesy of the University College of Wales and the National Library of Wales. My immediate purpose in this article is to print those extracts from the letters which tell the story of the part played by Powell in Jón Sigurðsson's projected "History of Iceland" and which describe Magnússon's early collaboration with William Morris. These extracts will be supplemented by a long letter from Magnússon to G. Eyre Evans which is a necessary gloss on the Sigurðsson-Powell transaction, and by a short interim account of George E. J. Powell.

II. LETTERS AND EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN TO G. E. J. POWELL BY EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON³

I.

Leipzig,
Jan. 17th 1864.

My Dear Friend,

I wrote to Jón Sigurðsson an answer to his letter the contents of which I communicated to you in my last. I inquired of him in what form he intended to eternize your name in connection with this historical undertaking, and today I have got a letter again the contents of which I hasten to communicate to you.

"As I understand Mr. Powell's proffer, it is a proffer of generosity only, where our benefactor leaves it an open

³ Of the letters printed here number 1 is the first, number 2 the fourth, number 3 the sixth, number 4 the sixteenth and number 5 the eleventh of the eighteen letters from E.M. which are preserved in the Powell Correspondence. I have retained throughout the faulty spelling and English of the originals.

and undecided question whether gain can be looked for or not. Were it only a mercantile undertaking with sure prospect of gain the generosity of the thing is passed and we enter the province of gain and calculation. But, as I said before, apparently or as far as I can see from your letters I have here to do with an offer both generous and disinterested and nothing else. Therefore it is that I will give you some information of what my ideas are about honouring the man and eternizing his name. You know that few are more liberal in spending honours upon their friends than I am. I need not tell you, that if we both should live to see his fosterchild fullborn, I full of esteem and you full of affection for our friend, we will manage to propagate his glory and make his fame worldwide. For this end it is a matter of course that the work must be dedicated to him *only* with an address on behalf of Iceland. I undertake to write to Reviewers of Scandinavia, Russia, Germany and Holland and even Paris in order to inform them privately what thanks not only Iceland but all the literary world owe to the young gentleman. In the same way I would trust to you to write to English reviewers, American ones and if possible Australian and Indian too, which you might easily do by obtaining introductions to the principal Newspaper Editors in London. In the year 1874 (the 1000th year from Icelands discovery by Ingólfr Árnason for the festivities of which Icelanders are now by all accounts preparing themselves⁴) both Editions of the book the Icelandic and the English should be laid before a general meeting of the Icelandic nation, and a National address should be written to him, and a committee of three members should be chosen to deliver it up to him, provided he should be in Europe, and the place of his sojourn known . . . This is the general outline of my ideas at present. But you know we must ever be ready to use any opportunity to propagate his glory in every way that becomes us as gentlemen and

⁴ I believe the sentence in brackets is E.M.'s gloss for Powell's benefit.

obliged friends to him. There is no private egotism in the matter, it is a national pride and duty becoming us as sons of Iceland we perform thereby.”

“ One thing I must observe, that our friend may know it beforehand, viz: that my work convey strongly my English theories, and prove without fail that we are fully as related to England as we once were to Norway, and this is no little thorn in the eyes of the Danes and a thing which they would have kept silent for all the worlds coming ages if they could only bind the thoughts of Icelanders and every hand that might stretch itself in favour of them and their country.”

“ I believe however, that our friends proposal conveys a good omen for this matter. And I shall tell you a little tale that comes curiously into the history of our efforts in historiographical matters, and it is thus: Short before the arrival of your first letter upon this subject, Rafn, the Secretary of the Archeological Northern Society would by all means have me to undertake the writing of a History of Iceland *in Danish*; upon this I was not very much bent; yet it got so far, that I made Plan for the work, and it was laid before the Society where it is yet and awaits for decision. But now I find in a bad dilemma. I do not like to write the history in Danish as well as to write in Icelandic. Yet, as it is a work so very much needed, I would not refuse doing it in Danish. But another thing is far worse and it is to have the work done under Danish Auspices; for it would be impossible and only to ruin the whole undertaking to write anything against the will of these one-eyed people and then again is the truth disguised and the name of the historiographer blotted, if he yields. — What is then to be done? Before I can expect a letter from our friend or from you the Society will bring forth some proposal for me; but owing to the understanding now existing between ourselves and Mr. Powell, I will try to delay my definitive answer as long as possible till I have received your or Mr. Powells

definitive views of the matter. — As yet I am in no way bound to the Society as I have received no pay yet.”

Now my Dear Friend, what do you think of the great work? The first idea of having an Icelandic history brought out in print is yours. Perhaps the last hand will be laid on the undertaking by you also. Undoubtedly there are hundreds of reasons why you should undertake the great labour. The man you engage is *the one* of all mortals to do it. The work is assuredly the best and grandest you can do . . . And nothing would so much ensure the speed of it as to pay the salary or honorary to Sigurðsson beforehand, for thereby you could perhaps induce him to have the work done in 4 to 5 years instead of 6 to 7 . . . I fancy if you could pay all beforehand, or half, it would make it easier for him to give up so many other businesses he has to take care of

One opinion I beg yet to express: You have thought of eternizing your name by a Museum and Fund for Iceland etc., none of which however will make your name so worldwide as it would be in connection with the Historical undertaking, and none so near at hand and sure . . . ”⁵

2. Extract from a letter from E.M. at Leipzig, 31 Jan. 1865.

E.M. reports to Powell the favourable reception which Professors Möbius and Maurer have accorded his scheme to finance “ a history of Iceland written by Jón Sigurðsson (who alone of all men knows the history of the country down to its bottom).” He then quotes from a further letter from Jón: “ But as you have urged that the whole work should be done in 4-5 years, I think I will be able to keep my promise, if I enter upon this proposition.

⁵ Except for one letter, dated Sept. 29, 1873, from 26 Bateman Street, Cambridge, Magnússon begins his letters with “ My Dear Friend ” and ends them with “ ever yours affectionately ” or “ your sincere and true Friend. ” In the 1873 letter he begins “ My Dear Powell ” and ends “ Yours ever most truly and affectionately. ” In the early letters he signs himself *Eiríkur* but after 1866 he consistently uses the form *Eiríkr*.

But you understand that I must then give up nearly all other works, and the payments must then be according to my wants. But all this, when this is a free understanding between us, will of course be gentlemanly arranged on all sides. — At present I should wish our undertaking to be kept secret. — When you write to Mr. Powell will you tell him how sorry I am not to be able to write to him in English. — What cannot be done for Iceland by the assistance of such men that know liberty, regard it and help it forward even when approved by despotism. Don't forget Iceland, it is an Island well worth being remembered."

The rest of this letter deals with the Magnússon-Powell project for an Icelandic-English dictionary, the publication of their Icelandic Legends Second Series, and the introduction to their translation of *Hávarðar saga*.⁶

3.

Leipzig, 17th March, 1865.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Having communicated to Jón Sigurðsson the contents of letter last but one, he has sent me an answer today as follows:

"The plan of our friend, as to the pay of the £700 is in every respect excellent and I have nothing to add to it, and for the sake of discretion it is undoubtedly the best plan that the money be sent to your name at Tregers. You need make no excuses for having told Professor Möbius of our united efforts in the point of the historical undertaking. He will not destroy a good work, indeed he has already written to me a long letter of praises over our friend's generosity and grand desire of doing good and great deeds. Between ourselves, I tell you

⁶ Writing from London on 28 May, 1867, E.M. had asked Powell for news of his progress with "the MS of the *Hávarðar saga*" and hopes it "will be out next season." From the same address on 9 July, 1869 he sent Powell "the visur of Havard" and states that he has asked for estimates for printing the saga and that he will "try as soon as possible to knock together a preface and introduction for you to laugh at and lay into proper folds." It was never published.

that he has already offered to undertake *for nothing* the translation of the work into German, assuring that in Germany the work will be eagerly desired and largely read. Of course he will grasp that opportunity for the praises of our generous friend as I will do in Scandinavia. Although I wished to keep the undertaking in the background till the due time comes, it arises from no fear of our friends want of firmness in carrying the work through, but only from the desire to come suddenly out with his name when all was settled as to our plans. I shall thus certainly not be the last to have his renown and glory made known so wide as my power affords, — his glory so well deserved as it certainly is, will and shall be of equal age with the existance of our nation, our history, and our new era in progress and developpiment. There is one point which I have not called your attention to before, viz. that our friend knows nothing of my character and might by thereby be tempted to distrust me. Now I want not to be represented to him in any golden colours as you might perhaps be tempted to do, I want you only to tell him that I am a man who keep my promise whether it is written or verbal and that in relation to him I shall do my best to deserve his full confidence. I go no further. You know I am not a man of many words. To act, if I only had the power thereto as I wish, is my sole desire. Another point I must ask you to discuss with Mr. Powell is, if he by his undertaking is ready to suffer the loss of popularity amongst some fractions of diplomatic Denmark which inevitably will be the result of his great work. He has surely no popularity to lose now, but he can thereby become unpopular. This however, I suppose, is with him a very secondary and subordinate consideration, I only mention it to you that he may know that I do not like him *to lose* anything but money by the grand work, and even there his loss ought to be none at all — no he will have no loss if we are both spared, you to cooperate with him in the English translation and I to get the book

sold here, and to sell the copyright of it to Scandinavian publishers — you may be sure, that in Scandinavia the work will be eagerly read — and to the German ones by the kind aid of Möbius. But in order to settle all our long plans, and various things relating to them I want you so much to come to me here for a few days. You shall have to incur no expense by it save loss of time, which however you will be able by your industry to make good again. The small expense will be defrayed by a small fund which stands to my disposal the nature of which you will learn to know later.’

4.

9, South Crescent,
Bedford Square, W.C.
Jany. 21 '69.

My Dear Friend,

I would have acknowledged your kind letter, and cheque, for which accept my heartfelt thanks, if it had not been my evil fate to be laid up a fourtnight with my whole family in an awful influenza. And even yet I am so shaky that I am hardly fit to wield a pen. I wrote however without delay to the insurance office and gave you such character as I think they gladly welcomed: and you will welcome none the less. What I said against you was that your habits had been somewhat sedentary as you lead a studious life, but that when I knew you personally, you had been in the habit of taking regular exercise. All the rest was *extremely* in your favour.

In the last Fortnightly Review appeared “Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu or the Saga of Gunnlaug the Wormtongue” by E. Mags and William Morris. I have not been yet able to get down to Chapman and Hall to get a copy for you, but will do it as soon as I can. We are publishing now “Grettirs Saga” or the story of Grettir the Strong. A lengthy one and in many places a pretty and peculiar saga. Morris is the greatest glutton of work I ever knew. I had the sad news this afternoon that he must be off

tonight to Rome with a friend of his who is out of sorts; he came here himself to announce the sudden mishap, so in the meantime I have to conduct the edition of *Grettirs saga* to which I am now writing the preface. It will be rather a handsome volume. And a map is being made to it in a medieval sort of style which I have traced and Morris decorated. Then there is going to preface the whole volume a Sonnet of Morris's with an Icelandic translation by me in the heroic metre of the olden Saga time. Then follows a long introduction and after the saga a list of proverbs occurring in it and an index of great completeness. But I suppose a month will pass by yet ere it ever be out. It is a pity that you don't know Morris, he is as good a fellow as ever I met, with tastes very much like yours only he is a pre-raphælite in his views about art, yet with a very good judgement. I hope you will make a point of getting acquainted with him when next you come to London. He is the sincerest of men and his powers as a poet are of a very wide range. He has in the lapse of three months mastered the language (Icelandic) in a marvellous degree and his convictions as to the literary merit of the Icelandic Sagas are very strong and decided. He is now preparing the second volume of the "Earthly Paradise." He writes usually 120 lines of his work, a day, yet with a constantly sustained vigour and freshness. I am sure he would receive you exceedingly kindly for I have so often mentioned your highly gifted self to him, and all who take an interest in Northern lore are born friends of his irrespective of everything else. He is beside a Welshman like yourself . . . I should like much to hear what progress you make in the translation of the legends into French. I wish it might succeed. But why do you not make an earnest start and publish some of your extremely fine lyrical poems in England. Surely I fail not when I consider them equal to many of the best things of Browning, Swinburn, Morris etc. Don't keep your light under the bushel

longer. You know I am no flatterer and what I say of your poems is sincerely meant. I know well, that if you should have read them to Swinburn, and if he should not have expressed his admiration of them, that that would be even their best recommendation, for he never liked Morris's works much, yet Morris is a name now almost on a level with Swinburn. Your lyrics seemed always to me to breathe of more health and harmony — no wonder by the way — than Swinburn's glowing imagery, great though I confess he is in many respects. In Morris's publisher you would find an honest man and if Morris should advise him to go halves with you in the cost of publication that would ensure the works being pushed. Stir up, friend, and busk thee and start into the field of English Poets at once! With affection from us all, yours ever sincere and true friend

Eiríkr Magnússon.

5. Extract of a letter from E.M. to Powell.

26 Bateman street
Cambridge, Sept. 29 1873.

As to Jón Sigurðsson's affair I don't wonder that you are getting impatient to see the contract carried out. Not one volume has appeared in print of the book, of course, and I am completely in the dark as to how far it has progressed at present; but I have little doubt that a great deal of it must be ready for press. I am persuaded that the delay is not a wilful act of omission on Jón Sigurðsson's part; he is far too honourable a man for that. And the best you can do is to put yourself in direct communication with him. If I can be of any use in the matter, I need not say that my services are at your disposal. I do not apprehend for a moment any difficulty arising in this matter between you and Mr. Sigurðsson; a complete guarantee against such an

George E. J. Powell, Esq.

Copenhagen, Østervold S. 2.
March 4. 1874.

My Dear Sir

I duly received your friendly letter of
27. Febr. and hope in a short time to
reply with a more complete notice
concerning our projected History of
Ireland. I hope, that I will be happy
enough to deserve your friendly atten-
tions and interest for the matter, and
for

Your most affectionate
Jón Sigurdsson

eventuality I conceive his honor to be and your readiness to deal with him in a spirit of fairness and generosity .⁷

6.

George E. J. Powell, Esq. Copenhagen, Ostervold S.2.
March 7. 1874.

My Dear Sir,

I duly received your friendly letter of 27 Febr. and hope in a short time to reply with a more complete notice concerning our projected History of Iceland. I hope, that I will be happy enough to conserve Your friendly attentions and interest for the matter, and for

Your most affectionate

Jón Sigurðsson.

III. EXPLANATORY LETTER FROM E. MAGNÚSSON TO
THE REV. G. E. EVANS⁸

University Library,
Cambridge.

March 23rd, 1905.

Dear Mr. Evans,

My acquaintance with George E. J. Powell began in July 1862 when we were both passengers in the mailboat *Arcturus* from Reykjavík to Leith; he returning from a short tour in Iceland; I delegated to carry through the

⁷ See note 5 above. In the preliminary paragraph, omitted here, E.M. hints at an "apparent estrangement in our relations."

⁸ In 1905 the Rev. G. E. Evans seems to have been planning a life of Powell. (I believe that about this time the Powell correspondence was placed on the open shelves of the U.C.W. Library). His first letter to E.M. early in that year produced a short answer saying that Magnússon was just recovering from influenza and would reply later. This he did in this letter dated March 23, 1905. Evans then sent him his transcripts of the Powell correspondence for comments and corrections. M.'s reply from the University Library Cambridge is dated "May 2, 1895," but the envelope is included in Evans' bound volume of transcripts and bears the clear postmark "1905." Magnússon says that he "felt tempted in many places to improve upon my English, but refrained." The rest of this second letter recalls his visit to Nanteos in 1862 and describes the people he met there; in conclusion he adds that he has failed to find any letters from Powell to himself.

press a revised edition of the Icelandic Bible for the B. & F. Bible Society.

On the voyage I was engaged in preparing, to order, a review of "Íslenskar Þjóðsögur," Legends of Iceland, a large collection of which had just been published. Powell got very interested in these stories, many of which I translated to him as well as I was able to. In the course of the summer (1862) I had an invitation to come down to Nant Eos for a few days stay, and I spent Christmas of that year with him. He now proposed that we should do into English the best of the stories: I translating them from the original, he putting my translation into his own English style. Thus originated the "Legends of Iceland" first series 1863; there was a large second collection published in 1866.⁹

In the course of 1863 he frequently returned, in conversation with me, to what he considered a great desideration in English literature: A dictionary of the Icelandic language. He was very enthusiastic on the subject. His idea was that we two might, in comparatively short time, compile out of existing printed dictionaries and glossaries an Icelandic-English Dictionary. I agreed to his proposal and went to Thiers in Auvergne in France, where he had established himself for the time being. I worked on this Dictionary at Thiers, Paris, Leipzig until 1866 hoping that he might find time to go through the joint revision which was so essential. But other interests intervened one after another. His intense love of music and of art generally caused him to spend much of his time in travel, and sustained sedentary application to the

⁹ *Legends of Iceland*. (Collected by Jón Arnason). George E. J. Powell and Eiríkr Magnússon - Second Series. London 1866. With Notes and Introductory Essay.

It was published by Longmans. The preface ran from pp. v-xvi, the introductory essay from pp. xvii-clii, the Legends from pp. 3-653 and an Appendix of proverbs and sayings from pp. 654-664. On page x the authors assert: "We hope shortly to produce, should a kind reception of these Legends encourage us, other works of our kinsmen in far-off and little known Iceland. f.n. *Egils saga*: *Hávarðar saga*; etc. (which are nearly ready for press), with Introductory Essay, Notes, and Illustrations. A copy of this rare, much-praised and much-abused work is in the N.L.W.

somewhat dry work of lexicographical interpretation was not congenial to his ardent spirit. Then, 1866, came the decision of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press to publish an Icelandic-English Dictionary from the MS collections of Richard Cleasby and my friend thought it was no good going on; there were various considerations besides which decidedly pointed the same way. So there I sat stranded on a pile of MS, three years labour thrown away; yet nobody's fault.¹⁰

Concurrently with this work I brought out the Icelandic Bible and New Testam. and Psalms in the course of these three years.

In the course of the summer of 1863 my friend visited Scandinavia. At Copenhagen he made the personal acquaintance of Jón Sigurðsson, the Liberator of Iceland. Powell came to learn what then formed a topic of much indignant conversation among the Icelanders at Copenhagen, that the Danish authorities there were bent on starving the great patriot into submission and had so far succeeded that he could no longer afford the expense of going from Copenhagen to R'vík as a member of the biennial Diet, the "Althing." This same summer I went to Iceland, and when I returned in the Autumn I met him in London full of the most sympathetic enthusiasm for the cause of Icelandic Home rule and Jón Sigurðsson's classical patriotism. "I have decided to defeat the Danes" were Powell's words, "by enabling Sigurðsson to attend to his parliamentary business in spite of them." He had then the idea of making Sigurðsson the gift of £2,000. This I thought was unnecessarily liberal and suggested £1,000 or £1,500. Eventually I believe the gift amounted to £1,100. But with his delicate tact and feeling P. wanted to make the gift acceptable to the receiver without, per chance,

¹⁰ However, some of this work was probably put to good account in his notes to the translations in the *The Saga Library*, and also in his review of the Cleasby-Vígfússon Dictionary which, according to Magnússon's letter dated 13 December, 1869, appeared in the *Saturday Review*.

wounding his pride; therefore he suggested that it should be accompanied by an intimation to the effect that in return Jón Sigurðsson should write the History of Iceland. But it was distinctly understood that the money was a perfectly free gift to Sigurðsson, whose life-work was entirely devoted to the history of his country. This transaction took place in 1865. Then came the great Sturm and Drang Period in the political affairs of Iceland and Denmark. Sigurðsson went on collecting materials, accumulating an enormous mass until 1872 that his health broke down; in which broken state he lingered till 1879, when he passed away. All his collections were purchased by his country and are now at Reykjavík. I would not be sure, but I believe there was no correspondence between me and Powell on this subject. We were mostly in personal contact during the years 1863-65 and often talked over the matter but I do not recollect any correspondence passing on it. However, if I find any note relating to it of course you are quite welcome to see it. But my epistolary collections are in a sadly imperfect state in consequence of a burglary done in my house ten years ago and the accidental upsetting of a paraffine lamp on the masses of my papers strewn all about the floor of my study.

I spent the months of Oct. to Jan. 1882 in Iceland. Not until long afterwards did I hear the news of Mr. Powell's death! I never saw any obituary notice of him.

A nobler or more generous heart than his seldom beat in the bosom of man. His gifts of mind were great and beautiful. His musical talent was extraordinary. His poetical talent if it only had been assiduously cultivated would certainly have ranked high among his contemporaries. His love of art was wonderfully intense and his tastes very sound at least in his earlier years.¹¹ Like

¹¹ On the evidence of Powell's scrapbook, entitled *Gleanings* and still preserved in the U.C.W. Library, I should like to suggest that in music at least Powell's taste was sound to the end. Perhaps this observation by E.M. is a reflection of the "apparent estrangement."

other mortals he had his weaknesses, but he really had an immense store of good in him for a counterbalancer.

Excuse bad composition: I am not up to much just yet,
and Believe me,

Yours very truly
Eiríkr Magnússon.

IV GEORGE ERNEST JOHN POWELL OF NANTEOS
NEAR ABERYSTWYTH

If Powell is known at all to English readers it is from references made to him by biographers of A. C. Swinburne, particularly by Sir Edmund Gosse in his D.N.B. article on the poet.¹² Welsh readers may meet his name in the "Welsh D.N.B."¹³ as one of the Powells of Nanteos and also through a series of anecdotes about him recorded by Herbert M. Vaughan.¹⁴ Most of the material used in this article was obtained from the correspondence preserved in the National Library of Wales, from the notes made by G. E. Evans in his volume of transcripts of the letters and from one of Powell's numerous notebooks, entitled *Gleanings*, which is in the library of the University College, Aberystwyth.

He was born on 10 February 1842, the only son of Colonel William Thomas Rowland Powell (d. 13 May 1878) of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire; he inherited Nanteos on the death of his father and died there on 17 October 1882. On Tuesday 10 May 1881 he married a Miss Harries of Goodwick (Fishguard) — a marriage which caused some stir among the correspondents from whom the Rev. G. E. Evans solicited material for a life of Powell. (She was a *housekeeper* and later emigrated

¹² D.N.B. Supplement 1901-11, p. 460.

¹³ I.e. *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig* 1940, edited by Sir J. E. Lloyd, R.T. Jenkins and Sir William Llewellyn Davies, London 1953. The article on Powell occurs under the title *Powell (Teulu) Nanteos*, pp. 726-7.

¹⁴ In *The South Wales Squire: A Welsh Picture of Social Life*, London 1926. The references to Powell (pp. 82-5) are part of the chapter on "Some Literary Squires" and opposite page 82 there is a snap of Powell and Swinburne.

to America where she re-married.) On Powell's death the estate passed to a cousin¹⁵; the Powells no longer live at Nanteos.

G. E. J. Powell was educated at Eton and then at Brasenose College, Oxford, where he matriculated "23 May, 1861, æt. 19" (*Foster*). He had already published *Quod Libet* (1860), a paper-backed collection of widely different tales, and *Poems by Mjolnir Nanteos* (1860) and *Poems, Second Series, Mjolnir Nanteos* (1861)¹⁶. The poems were dedicated to Longfellow, and Powell corresponded with him, sent him books and discussed with him his projected tour round the world. Longfellow advised him instead "to stop in Copenhagen and translate the old Poetic Edda into English, in the unrhymed metre of the original; no paraphrase but a real translation in short ringing lines."¹⁷

Legends of Iceland, Second Series (1866) was dedicated to Lord Dufferin and to Algernon Charles Swinburne and thus began the correspondence and friendship which has kept Powell's name in works of reference. Begun with much formality, their letters quickly became intimate and Swinburne soon visited Powell at Aberystwyth and later at his establishment at Etretat, where they both made friends with the younger Comte Guy de Maupassant. Powell spent much of his thirties in France and supported many lost causes of a political nature, but his preference was for the generous private patronage of refugee and

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 82: "Nanteos is a stately Georgian mansion of grey stone, some four miles from Aberystwyth, and is by far the most notable house in Cardiganshire." Powell's successor was William Beauclerk Powell (1824-1911), cf. *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig* 1940, p. 727.

¹⁶ All three volumes were printed privately at Aberystwyth and each contains some charming personal notes to the reader which suggest that they were primarily intended for an intimate family circle.

¹⁷ Notebook 3 of the Powell Correspondence (N.L.W.) contains five letters from Longfellow to Powell written between 1862 and 1867. Three of them, dated April 29, 1863, March 25, 1866 and December 15, 1867, are of considerable interest in showing the poet's delight in Old Norse and Old English literature and they also contain comments on the poetry of Powell and Swinburne. The letter of March 25, 1866, was composed while the American was translating Dante's *Divina Commedia* and contains some comments on the task which are outside the scope of this article. The quotation in the text is from a letter dated April 29, 1863, and is in reply to Powell's letter sent to Longfellow from Iceland.

neglected artists. When he succeeded to his father's estate there were high hopes at Aberystwyth that he would assume the cultural leadership of the town and sponsor the new and struggling venture of the university of Wales. In 1878/9 the College reports further gifts by him to the Museum: "A large number of original wood blocks which have been engraved in illustration of Icelandic sagas not yet translated." These I have failed to find in the present Museum at the University College of Wales and I assume that they were lost in the fire that partially destroyed the original College buildings.

Powell was a man of sensibility and taste but, as the Magnússon correspondence suggests, he was eager to perpetuate his name. He has left to the University College, Aberystwyth, nearly sixty volumes of articles and reviews, bound uniformly in black morocco with gilt lettering; his notebook *Gleanings* and the seven volumes of correspondence in the custody of the National Library of Wales are in similar binding with his own name prominently displayed. It seems that the orotund sound of the title "George Ernest John Powell, Squire of Nanteos" had an increasing attraction for him in his maturity and there is some evidence of a slight tetchiness after he succeeded his father. Of his poetry, other than the two early Mjólnir volumes, nothing remains and it seems that the projected Magnússon-Powell translation of *Hávarðar saga*, nearly complete in 1865, was never published, nor the edition of *Egils saga* which also was promised in the introduction to *Legends of Iceland, Second Series* "with Introductory Essay, Notes, and Illustrations."¹⁸

Longfellow thought his early poetry "shot through and through with poetic thought and feeling"¹⁹ and in 1864, according to Swinburne, Mr. William Morris, author of *The Defence of Guenevere*, was "a great admirer

¹⁸ *Op. cit.* p. x.

¹⁹ Powell Correspondence (N.L.W.) Notebook 3, letter dated 29 April, 1862.

of your work and talents."²⁰ Alas for such fine promise; in January 1922 Professor Beasley of Aberystwyth sums him up in *Notes and Queries*²¹ as follows: "A Welsh squire of literary and artistic tastes; an unconventional character in other ways, and an intimate friend and contemporary of Swinburne." Readers of the correspondence here published and of his *Icelandic Legends* will prefer to remember him as a true friend of Iceland and, possibly, as an indirect contributor to the Jón Sigurðsson collection in the National Library of Iceland. With his own hand Powell wrote the index to his correspondents in volume 4 of the bound letters: two are of special interest for us:—

"*Jón Sigurðsson*:— Historian, Essayist and savant. President of the Icelandic Parliament. (Althing).

Eiríkr Magnússon:—A Learned Icelander and well-known scholar. Now sub-librarian of the University of Cambridge. My collaborator in the "Legends of Iceland" and two (unpublished) sagas. Collaborator with William Morris in various sagas. Corrector of the Icelandic text of the Bible; Lecturer: author of numerous essays, poems etc. in various languages: Linguist etc. etc."

²⁰ Letter from Swinburne to Powell, dated 19 April, 1867.

²¹ Twelfth Series, X, Jan.-June 1922, p. 54 in reply to a query in the Twelfth Series, IX, July-Dec. 1921, p. 529. See also *Notes and Queries*, Twelfth Series, X, p. 53 where John B. Wainewright states that Powell left Oxford in 1862.

PROFESSOR GEORGES DUMÉZIL

BY G. TURVILLE-PETRE.

Among the books published by Professor Dumézil on the mythology and legends of many peoples are three which deal with the myths and legends of the Germans and Scandinavians. Although not yet well known in this country, these books will prove interesting and stimulating to specialists and non-specialists alike.

If they are to be fully appreciated, these three books should be read in the order in which they were published. The first (*Mythes et Dieux des Germains*, Paris, Leroux 1939, pp. 159) is a slender volume, which could well serve as an introduction to northern mythology, although the author interprets the myths in a distinctly personal and individual manner. Dumézil's views cannot be called revolutionary; they are better described as counter-revolutionary, for he develops the opinions of great scholars of the nineteenth century, giving them new life and a new form.

As Dumézil sees them, the Norse gods fall into three classes: foremost is Óðinn, the magician, second Þórr, the warrior, and third Njǫrðr and Freyr, gods of fertility and agriculture. These gods are seen as the representatives of an exceedingly ancient tradition, reflecting a stage in Indo-European civilization, in which men were divided into three classes, the priest-magician, the warrior and the tiller of the soil. Dumézil observes comparable division, although in more rigid form, in the divine hierarchies of Celts, Romans and Indians, and he emphasizes the similarity between Óðinn and the Indian Varuna.¹ The system, as applied to Germanic gods, is worked out logically and lucidly. The reader might ask why it was that Cæsar denied that the Germans had any systematic or organized religion, saying that they had no priests (*druides*) and knew no gods other than the Sun, Vulcan and the Moon. Dumézil contends that in a dynamic revolutionary society, as that of the Germans of the first century B.C. must have been, classes of men were nearly abolished, and with them the classes of gods, nearly but not quite. A more static civilisation re-established the conceptions of Indo-European peoples, and allowed them to develop in Germania on independent lines. This book contains valuable observations on the war of the Vanir and the æsir, the cult of the obscure god Ullr, and on the secret warrior societies,

¹ Dumézil's views on Indo-European mythology are conveniently outlined in his *Les Dieux des Indo-Européens*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1952.

represented by the berserks in this world and by Óðinn's *einherjar* in the next.

The most controversial of these three works is that on the myths of Loki (*Loki*, Paris, G. P. Maisonneuve et Cie. N.D., pp. 293). A great part of this book consists of analysis of Icelandic and Danish sources, in which stories of this god are told. Although he often agrees with the scholars of the nineteenth century, Dumézil is uncompromising in his strictures on many of the present century. The monumental *Ragnarök*, in which A. Olrik drew attention to the value of Caucasian and near-eastern myths in interpreting those of the north is, for Dumézil, "le colosse aux pieds d'argile," although he may owe more to this book than he is himself aware. Dumézil's criticism of E. Mogk is keener and founded on more solid argument. The differences between his views and those of Mogk appear chiefly in evaluation of Snorri's *Edda* and the *Ynglinga Saga* as sources of mythology. Mogk, and a few scholars who followed him, conscious of Snorri's excellence as a story-teller, had hastily concluded that he was nothing else. Snorri's evidence on questions of mythology was said to be no evidence at all, unless supported by other records. Consequently, some scholars lost sight of the problem of Snorri's sources, concluding that he had few if any other than those which we now possess. Skilfully assembling the myths of other Indo-European peoples, Dumézil argues that several stories told by Snorri alone have a firm basis, not only in Germanic, but even in Indo-European tradition. One of these is the story of the creation of Kvasir and the sacred mead of poetry, which bears a striking resemblance to an Indian story about the creation of *Mada*, whose name means "intoxication", a monster threatening to swallow up the world. Mogk and some hyper-critical scholars of the present century doubted the authenticity of Snorri's story about Loki's part in the murder of Baldr. In this story, as Dumézil points out, Snorri is supported strongly, not only by the *Völuspá*, which was his chief source, but also by the *Lokasenna* and by Saxo, although Saxo's story contains superficial differences.

Dumézil does not only use Norse sources in support of Snorri. His researches have covered legends about a strange group of heroes, the Narts,² which were current among peoples of the Caucasus, and especially among the Ossetes, until recent times. In 1930, Dumézil published a valuable survey of these legends (*Légendes sur les Nartes*, Paris, Champion). The Narts, as it seems, are not gods but supermen, who had probably been gods

² On the origin of this name see H. W. Bailey, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1953, pp. 103 ff.

at an earlier stage in their evolution. Among them are two, Soslan (or Sosryko) and Syrdon, antitheses of each other. Soslan is fine, noble and loved no less than Baldr, but Syrdon resembles Loki. The other Narts treat Syrdon as a menial; he accompanies their great heroes as Loki accompanies greater gods. Like Loki, Syrdon gets his masters out of difficulties, but he is cunning, teacherous and gifted, as Loki was, with power to change his shape. As Loki brings about the death of Baldr, Syrdon causes Soslan's death, although he uses very different means. Baldr was proof against all weapons but the mistletoe; Soslan's body (like that of Sigfrid) was invulnerable except at one point, the legs or knees. Syrdon, in one of his disguises, discovered Soslan's weakness (just as Loki discovered that of Baldr), and by a series of ruses, Syrdon caused a mysterious toothed wheel to cut off Soslan's legs. The wheel may symbolise the sun and the story of Soslan's death may, in origin, be a nature myth, as that of the death of Baldr may well be too.

It is impossible to disagree with Dumézil's conclusions, for he draws none. He does not believe that the one figure is modelled on the other, nor even that they derive from a common prototype, and yet he denies that similar social conditions among Scandinavians and Ossetes are sufficient to explain the similarities between Syrdon and Loki. There are great differences between the two; Syrdon was slaughtered for his crime, but Loki was only laid in chains, and his great day is yet to come, when he will break loose and join the giants in the Ragnarök. Querulous readers may wonder whether comparable social and cultural conditions in early times might not be sufficient to explain the similarities between the two evil figures. At the same time, considering how early were the contacts between Germans and tribes of western Asia,³ the possibility that the character of Loki was influenced by that of Syrdon, or his ancestor, cannot be ruled out.

In a third book (*La Saga de Hadingus*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1953, pp. 175), Dumézil turns to the story of Hadingus, related by Saxo (*Gesta Danorum* I). Here again, he joins company with Grimm, Müllenhof and other scholars of the nineteenth century. Rejecting the attempts of Olrik and Heusler to explain this story on the basis of history, Dumézil returns to older views, according to which it should be explained as a myth, and Hadingus should be drawn into the world of the Vanir. After enumerating points of similarity between Hadingus and Njörðr, Dumézil decides that the stories which Saxo tells about Hadingus were based chiefly on stories about Njörðr.

³ Cf. G. Vernadsky in *Saeculum* II (1951) pp. 364 ff.

Just as Njörðr grew up among the Vanir and later joined Óðinn, so Hadingus grew up among giants and was later "converted" by Óðinn. Both Njörðr and Hadingus had contracted incestuous, or nearly incestuous unions before their conversion, and such was the practice of the Vanir; but both of them afterwards contracted respectable marriages with women who came from the giant world (Skaði, Regnhilda). Each one's temperament was incompatible with that of his wife. Njörðr and Hadingus loved the sea, but their wives found the screeching of gulls unbearable, and they preferred the hills and forests with their howling wolves.

Why should stories about Njörðr be transferred to Hadingus? Dumézil finds partial answers to this question in the works of scholars of the nineteenth century. Hadingus and his obscure brother (Gutthormus) are equated with the *duo Haddingi* of Saxo (Book V), and with the *tveir Haddingjar*, the twins of Icelandic tradition, who together had only the strength of one man. These are seen as a divine pair, as Njörðr and Freyr, the Haddingjar are also said to be. Like Njörðr and Freyr, the Haddingjar are regarded as gods of fertility and wealth. Obscene stories of effeminacy are often told of such gods. According to Snorri (*Ynglinga Saga* Chapters IV and VII), the magical practices which the Vanir introduced were accompanied by *ergi* unfit for a man, and Saxo associates revolting customs with the cult of Freyr. The Haddingjar are also associated by Dumézil with the two *Alcis*, whose worship, according to Tacitus (*Germania* XLIII), was conducted by a priest dressed as a woman.

If these conclusions are accepted, the name of the Haddingjar may be associated with that of the (H)astingi, said to be the royal house of the Vandals, who were led by two legendary brothers, Raos and Raptos. Following this line of thought, Dumézil returns to the old etymology of the name *Haddingjar*; they are those who wore the coiffure of women (Old Icelandic *haddr*). It was once said of Helgi Haddingjaskati (prince of the Haddings), that he took refuge in the disguise of a woman.

In these three books, Dumézil shows how lightly and with how little reason some of the conclusions of nineteenth-century scholars have been rejected. He does not write as a specialist on Scandinavian tradition or philology but, as he explains, he writes as a *compariste* and, indeed, as one who has vast experience. Errors of detail and grammatical solecisms which may be found in these works are few and of trifling consequence.

EGILL SKALLAGRÍMSSON IN ENGLAND. By GWYN JONES. *Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture 1952. Proceedings of the British Academy XXXVIII.* London: Geoffrey Cumberlege. 18 pp.

Professor Gwyn Jones deals with those episodes in Egils saga which have an English setting, the Vínheiðr battle and the delivery of *Hofuðlausn* before Eirík Blood-axe at York. These episodes he retells with enthusiasm, emphasizing their main dramatic elements and giving a vivid impression of the characters involved. Of most interest are the samples of translation, both prose and verse, which he gives from the saga; this is not the place to attempt a general appraisal of their style, but we look forward to the opportunity of doing so when his complete translation is published. Professor Jones offers no fresh facts or theories relating to the many controversial points in the episodes he considers, but this was not perhaps to be expected. Indeed, I am sure that the author would be the first to agree that his paper is chiefly significant because it is the first in this distinguished series of memorial lectures to have been delivered on a theme which combines English and Northern studies.

P. G. FOOTE.

VESTERVEJEN: OM VIKINGERNES SEJLADS. By CARL V. SØLVER. *Copenhagen: Weilbach & Co. 1954.* 136 pp.

Captain Sølvér, who has long been a Corresponding Member of the Society, has all the practical knowledge necessary to write a book on the seafaring methods of the early Scandinavians. After a short introduction, he takes the reader on a refreshing imaginative voyage from Denmark to Greenland in a *knorr* about A.D. 1100. In this chapter his identification and description of the use of many items of gear and rigging will be very valuable for students and translators. He goes on to speak of early maps of northern waters and then discusses particularly the map by Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson and the one attributed to Sigurður Stefánsson (ob. 1595), rector of the school at Skálholt. (Sigurður's book on Iceland is not lost, by the way, — *Qualiscunque descriptio Islandiæ* was published by F. Burg in 1929). Captain Sølvér makes much of the latter's map: it appears to be practically uninfluenced by the sixteenth-century Continental productions and its distances and courses, when reproduced on a normal projection, are remarkably accurate. A chapter is then devoted to a description of a fragmentary wooden object found in Greenland in 1948. It has been identified as part of a bearing-dial and is thought to date from about 1200. The author's reconstruction

of the object and its use seems plausible and we hope that it may be confirmed by further finds. What is quite impossible is Captain Sølver's belief that such a wooden bearing-dial could be identical with the *sólarsteinn*. Here, as elsewhere, the author's investigation of literary sources is far from adequate.

There is no need to repeat here the main findings which have resulted from the application of Captain Sølver's practical experience to the study of old Scandinavian navigation: they coincide in the main with the excellent description of navigational methods given by Dr Marcus in his article in this volume. Captain Sølver ends with two chapters on the Vínland problem, making use of Stefánsson's map and arguing that Þorfinn karlsefni reached the Quebec region on the St. Lawrence. Enthusiasts will follow him at their pleasure. Finally there is a full clear English summary and some notes on people and realia mentioned in the main text; these are not always reliable in detail. The book is commendably short and well illustrated.

P. G. FOOTE.

ISLENZKA ÞJÓÐVELDIÐ. By BJÖRN ÞORSTEINSSON. *Reykjavík: Heimskringla; Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1953.* 330 pp.

This history of the Icelandic Republic attracts first by its scope. The author is not content with two simple pictures labelled "Saga Age" and "Sturlung Age," but traces the roots of Icelandic society back into prehistory (his first chapter is on the Ice Age) and shows the seeds of the aristocratic-clerical rule (*kirkjugodaveldi*) already present in the first generation after the Conversion. This scope and unity have to be paid for by compression and generalisation in the early part of the book, and the fifty pages which take us from the Ice Age to the Vikings are its weakest part, with some errors which a future edition might easily remove.

The main part of the book deals however with the period from the settlement of Iceland (well set against the background of the other great movements of the Viking Age) to the end of the Republic in 1262. It has the very great merit of contriving to show historical processes in detail, as well as their results, and to retain at the same time a sense of their relation to their background and of narrative flow. The section on the Saga Age is not simply a compilation from attractive sagas. It begins with a careful analysis of the social organization involved in the *hreypr* and *þing*, considers the nature of the *godord* and the effects of the breaking-up of the large family-estates, and leaves one with a

sharp picture of the structure of Icelandic society. The originality in this approach also demands its price; the rewarding use of materialist analysis made by the author need not dispose us to accept his view that Snorri Sturluson shared it and in writing *Egils saga* aimed, amongst other things, at presenting the evils of class society and "the realities of royal power as affecting the rights of ordinary people." There are other places where the author's enthusiasm does not carry the reader with him, but that enthusiasm is to be thanked for such attractive contrasts as that between Gissurr of the Haukdœlir and Snorri: "two corners of Icelandic society, one the conservative well-born chief who stuck at nothing and counted himself with the foreign nobles, the other the newly-rich, well-read and liberal-minded chief who counted himself with the great yeomen and laboured so long as leader of the Republic."

Íslenska Þjóðveldið should be read for its interpretation and for the many valuable sidelights which it throws; it will often be referred to for the apt examples and striking comments that make it such a pleasing and stimulating book to read; perhaps it is not dull enough (or, if you prefer, "safe" enough) to become a standard work. There is a good index of names: it is more likely to lead its user to penetrating comment on a man's part in the ruin of Iceland's original commonwealth than to his dates, for that is the preoccupation of this history, and it is with reference to it that its virtues and defects are best understood.

A. L. BINNS.

TIDRANDE OCH DISERNA. By DAG STRÖMBÄCK. Lund: Carl Bloms Boktryckeri A.B. 1949 (100 copies only). 57 pp.

In this remarkable little book Dag Strömbäck, Professor of Folklore in the University of Uppsala, studies the puzzling story of Thidrandi, son of Sfdur-Hallr. While staying in his father's house at Hof, in south-eastern Iceland, Thidrandi was killed by the *ðísir* or *fylgjur* — the guardian spirits of his own family. Shortly afterwards, the German priest, Thangbrandr, landed in the same district, bringing his Christian message.

The female spirits who slew Thidrandi appeared as nine women dressed in black, and they approached on horses from the north. Nine other female spirits, dressed in white and mounted on white horses, rode from the south. These, the "better *ðísir*", attempted to rescue Thidrandi, but they arrived too late. As is explained in the Icelandic text, the cruel, black women were the familiars of Thidrandi's family. They could foresee the approach of

Christianity, and they knew that they would soon be cast off. They would take Thidrandi as the tribute due to them.

This story is included in the great, conflated Saga of Ólafr Tryggvason.¹ As Professor Strömbäck shows, it must first have been written early in the thirteenth century, and most probably by Gunnlaugr Leifsson, although it may well be based upon older tradition. It is a story of conflict between the Christian and pagan religions, between good and evil.

The *ðisir* or *fylgjur*, as they are variously called in the text, have assumed characteristics of good and evil angels, the divine and Satanic guardians of Christian legend. They are like the hosts of angels who proceed from Heaven and Hell, struggling for possession of a man's soul at the time of death. The better *ðisir* resemble the armies of *Revelation* (Chapter XIX), mounted upon white horses, clothed in linen pure and white.

Professor Strömbäck cites examples from the visionary literature of the north in which pagan *ðisir* have been identified, or nearly identified, with the guardians of Christian legend. He quotes a strophe in which Björn Hítöelakappi spoke of prophetic *ðisir* (*framvísar ðisir*), who warned him of his approaching end:

Undr's, ef eigi bendir,
opt vakir drengur at lengrum,
ógn hefk fyrða fregna,
framvísar mér ðisir;
þvíft armleggjar orma
Ilmr dagleygjar hilmis
heim ór hverjum draumi
hjalmfaldin býðr skaldi.²

The *Ilmr dagleygjar hilmis* (goddess of the Lord of the Sun), even though she is a *ðis*, may fill the place of the guardian angel.

In a paper published some years ago,³ I had suggested that the two women, the good and the evil, who appeared to Gísli Súrsson in dreams, had more in common with the good and bad guardian angels of Christianity than they had with the *fylgjur* of pagan belief. I pointed out that the conception of two opposing angels, assigned to every man, was well known to early Christians of the North. I find strong support for this view in Professor Strömbäck's book.

¹ Published in *Flateyjarbók*, ed. G. Vigfússon and C. R. Unger, Oslo 1860, I, pp. 418 ff. and in *Fornmanna Sögur*, Copenhagen 1825, II, pp. 192 ff.

² Published in *Borgfirðinga Sögur*, ed. Sigurður Nordal and Guðni Jónsson (*Íslensk Fornrit* III), Reykjavík 1938, pp. 196 f. Translation: It is strange if prophetic *ðisir* are not giving me a sign, and I often stay the longer awake. The goddess of the serpents of the arm (goddess of rings, woman), the goddess of the Lord of the flame of day (God) calls the poet home in every dream.

³ *Modern Language Review* XXXIX, No. 4, 1944, p. 387.

The good dream-woman enjoined Gísli to cast off the pagan religion with all its spells and witchcraft, while her wicked sister smeared him with blood, perhaps the blood of sacrificial beasts (*roðra*). The good woman was called the *dís lægis elds*, and she rode upon a white horse (*gyðr blakkr*). Gísli spoke of her in lines strangely reminiscent of those in which Björn Hítédælakappi spoke of the woman who visited him in sleep:

Heim bauð með sér sínum
saum-Hljókk gráum blakki,
þá vas brúðr við beiði
blíð, lofskreyti ríða . . .⁴

Like the story of Thidrandi, that of Gísli shows how northern Christians could adapt traditional pagan beliefs to their own purpose.

Professor Strömbäck's book is rich in learning and suggestion, and beautifully presented. Although difficult to obtain, it will not be without influence.

G. TURVILLE-PETRE.

⁴ Published in *Vestfirðinga Sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson (*Íslensk Fornrit VI*), Reykjavík 1943, pp. 94-5. Translation: The embroidery-goddess called the adorning of song (the poet) to ride home with her on her white horse — then she was kindly to the beseecher (me, the poet).

THE BATTLE OF THE GOTHs AND THE HUNS

By CHRISTOPHER TOLKIEN

THE conclusion of the *Hervarar Saga*¹ is contrived from a poem, or rather the ruins of a poem, now commonly called in English "The Battle of the Goths and the Huns", in which is told in moving though much-damaged verse, interspersed with prose-links, how *Hlödrr*, the bastard son of King *Heiðrekr* of Reiðgotaland by a mistress named *Sifka*, whom he had taken from the people of the Huns, set in movement a monstrous war against his half-brother *Angantýr* for the recovery of his portion of the Gothic inheritance.

It is enough to mention that this poem is commonly referred to as one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, pieces of heroic poetry in the Norse language to suggest its very great intrinsic value and interest. Evidence that some parts at least of it are very ancient is to be seen in its metrical form, in certain uses of words (in which an earlier, "pre-Norse" layer of language has been discerned), and in the substance of the poem itself.

But I propose to restrict myself to that aspect of the poem which has in fact received the most attention and excited the most curiosity, namely: if elements of "The Battle of the Goths and the Huns" do indeed descend from so remote a past, do they derive from any actual event under the sun, recorded in any book that may still be read to-day? The question is indeed one of great interest, and many writers have sought an answer to it.

According to the prose of the saga, King *Heiðrekr* had been slain by certain slaves of his, who, being nobly born, fretted against their captivity; and *Angantýr*

¹ The standard edition is *Heiðreks Saga, udgivet for Samfund til Udgivelse af Gammel Nordisk Litteratur ved Jón Helgason, København 1924.*

his son vowed that he would never seat himself in the high seat of his father until he had avenged him. He came upon the slayers one evening as he walked down to the sea by the river called *Grafá*; they were fishing from a boat, and he watched one of them cut off the head of a fish with his father's sword, *Tyrfingr*. The man then uttered a verse of four lines, preserved in the saga, in which he said that the pike he had slain by *Grafá*'s mouth had paid thus for the death of King *Heiðrekr und Harvaða-fjöllum*, "beneath the Harvath-Mountains". This name is of the greatest importance; for there cannot, I think, be any doubt at all that they are the Carpathians, and that the Norse form *harvað*-represents the same name after the operation of the Germanic consonant-shift, whereby original **karpāt-* was regularly transformed into **Xarfaþ-* in Germanic. This is certainly a clue, and provides a fixed point in the geography; but it narrows down the field only to a mountain-range of vast extent, which in any case occurs in a part of the saga dealing with events that occurred long before the action of "The Battle of the Goths and the Huns". It is, nonetheless, highly significant; for I do not doubt that this remarkable half-strophe is a fragment of a lost poem (concerned, perhaps, with the death of *Heiðrekr*), of which maybe all other specific traces had been lost even at the time of the composition of the saga. The name *Harvaða-fjöll* is otherwise unknown in Germanic, and such a survival is hardly conceivable except in poetry.

When *Hlōðr*, the bastard brother, learnt of the downfall of his father, and learnt too that *Angantýr* had been taken as king over all the dominion that their father had held, he resolved to go to *Angantýr* to claim his inheritance. Now *Angantýr* held his court, according to the prose, at a place called *Arheimar*, in the region of *Danparstaðir*.²

² This is the way the best text (the vellum 2845 ("R") of the Royal Library in Copenhagen) puts it; the 17th-century paper manuscript ("U") belonging to Uppsala University has it the other way round, with *Danparstaðir* a place in *Arheimar*.

Most writers have either abandoned *Árheimar* as so far unexplained, or else have regarded it as a purely fanciful invention; while the element *Danpar-* has been related to Jordanes' form *Danaper* for the river Dnieper, and to the elusive figure *Danpr* who appears in *Rígsþula*, in *Ynglinga Saga*, and in Arngrímur Jónsson's reproduction of the lost *Skjöldunga Saga*.³

When Hlōðr arrived in Arheimar, he said to his brother:

I'll have the half-part
of Heiðrek's riches,
of cow and of calf
and creaking handmill,
tools and weapons,
treasure undivided,
thrall and handmaid
and their children.

He demanded too "the renowned forest that is named *Myrkviðr*", "the holy grave that stands *á Gotþjóðu*", and "the fair stone that stands *á stöðum Danpar*". To this Angantýr replied:

The bright buckler
shall break, kinsman,
men unnumbered
in the grass lying,
ere I grant the half
to thee, Humlung,
or ever Tyrþing
in twain sunder!

He then made Hlōðr a handsome offer in recompense, but the taunts of the aged *Gizurr Grýtingaliði*, the fosterfather of King Heiðrekr, sent him home in a great rage; and in the spring a vast army was gathered by Hlōðr and his grandfather *Humli* the Hun-king, so vast that afterwards the land of the Huns was utterly despoiled of all its fighting-men. This huge force moved through *Myrkviðr*, which, as we have seen, was included by Hlōðr in his demands upon Angantýr, and which,

³ *Rígsþula* 49; *Ynglinga Saga* cap. 17; *Bibl. Arnam.* IX, 1950, p. 336.

according to the saga-prose, divided the land of the Huns from the land of the Goths;

“and when they came out of the forest they were in a land of broad populous tracts and level plains.”

In these plains there stood a frontier fortress defended by *Hervor*, Angantýr's sister, and her fosterfather *Ormarr*.

“One morning at sunrise *Hervor* stood on a watch-tower above the fortress-gate, and saw a great cloud of dust rising southwards towards the forest, which for a long time hid the sun. Presently she saw a glittering beneath the dust-cloud, as though she were gazing on a mass of gold, bright shields overlaid with gold, gilded helms and white corslets; and then she saw that it was the army of the Huns, and a mighty host.”

After the defeat and death of *Hervor*, *Ormarr* rode day and night back to *Árheimar*. He told the king of these things; and Angantýr, looking round at his small company, replied:

Full many we were
at the mead-drinking;
when more are needed
the number is smaller.

But the aged *Gizurr Grýtingaliði* leapt upon his horse as if he were a young man, and asked the king where he should challenge the Huns to battle; and Angantýr replied that he was to challenge them *at Dylgju, ok á Dúnheiði ok á þeim öllum Jassarfjöllum*:

There often Goths
have given battle,
renown gaining
in noble victories!

When *Gizurr* actually utters the challenge to the Hunnish host afterwards, he says, not “*on* all the *Jassar-fells*” in the words of King Angantýr, but “*under*” them (*undir Jassarfjöllum*).

The great battle was fought out on *Dúnheiðr*, according to the prose, and lasted for many days, and all the time men thronged in to join Angantýr. After colossal carnage, so that:

“ the rivers were choked and rose from their beds, and the valleys were filled with dead men and horses ”

Angantýr slew Hlōðr with the sword Tyrfingr. Finding his half-brother's corpse, he spoke the verses with which the *Hervarar Saga* proper comes to an end:

Treasures uncounted,
kinsman, I offered thee,
wealth and cattle
well to content thee!
But for war's rewarding
thou hast won neither
new boundaries
nor bright armrings.

A curse was on us, brother,
thy bane have I wrought thee!
'Twill be never forgotten;
the Norns' doom is evil.

The various attempts that have been made to identify the names of the battlefield will emerge when I come to review the attempts to identify the battle itself. But first there is one vital piece of evidence to be mentioned, which lies in certain lines of the Old English poem *Widsith* (ll. 119 ff.), reading:

(. . sohte ic . . .)

Heaþoric ond Sifecan Hliþe ond Incgenþeow (line 116)

followed two lines later by:

*Wulfhere sohte ic ond Wyrmhære; ful oft þær wig ne alæg,
þonne Hræda here heardum sweordum
ymb Wistlawudu wergan sceoldon
ealdne eþelstol Ætlan leodum.*

This may be rendered:

“ Wulfhere I sought and Wyrmhære; seldom was warfare stilled, when the host of the Hrædas [i.e. Goths] in the Vistula forest had to defend with their hard swords their ancient dwelling-place from the people of Attila.”

The fivefold coincidence that must here be supposed, if *Heaþoric*, *Sifeca*, *Hliþe*, *Incgenþeow* and *Wyrmhære* do not correspond to *Heiðrekr*, *Sifka*, *Hlōðr*, *Angantýr*

and *Ormarr*, has led some scholars to assume (despite the lack of precise phonetic agreement in all cases) a fivefold correspondence; but not all.

It is now time to turn to the consideration of what this event on *Dúnheiðr* may have been.

The first full-dress "identification" was produced by C. C. Rafn in 1850, in the introductory notice to the edition of the saga in *Antiquités Russes*.⁴ Rafn thought that the Battle of the Goths and the Huns was a legendary transformation of the battle between the Gothic king Ostrogotha and the Gepid king Fastida at the place called *Galtis*, past which flowed the river *Aucha*, which Jordanes describes in the seventeenth chapter of his history, a finding which Rafn based on various rather dubious similarities, among them the fact that the dispute in either case was over the possession of land.

In 1887 appeared Richard Heinzel's massive study of the saga as a whole.⁵ In this work he took up a suggestion made by P. E. Müller fifty years before, and identified the Battle of the Goths and the Huns with the great battle of the year 451, the *bellum atrox, multiplex, immane, pertinax* of Jordanes, fought out on the Mauriac or Catalaunian Plains and commonly called the Battle of Châlons-sur-Marne, in which Attila, together with the Ostrogoths, the Gepids under Ardaric, and all the other nations subject to the Huns, with their "ruck of kings" (*turba regum*), as Jordanes calls them, met the Visigoths and the Romans under Aetius the Patrician, together with the Alans under their king Sangiban, and their other allies.

Heinzel's theory, however, is extremely complex, and I have not space to go into all his equations and parallels, which compel admiration but not belief. Hlǫðr derives his name from the Frank *Chlodio*, who was defeated by Aetius in 428, while Angantýr derives in

⁴ *Antiquités Russes*, Vol. I, Copenhagen 1850; pp. 115 ff.

⁵ *Über die Hervararsaga*. In *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften CXIV Band*, Vienna 1887; pp. 417-519.

part from Aetius. At the same time, an element in Hlōðr's make-up or legendary constitution is the figure of *Litorius*, the Roman general and rival of Aetius, who laid siege to the Visigothic capital of Toulouse with the aid of Hunnish auxiliaries in 439, but was defeated and put to death by the Visigoths. The element of brotherhood in the Hlōðr-Angantýr complex is provided by two Frankish princes, disputing over the Frankish throne at the time of Attila's drive into the west, one of whom turned for help to Attila and the other to Aetius. The origin of Gizurr Grýtingaliði is found partly in the Vandal king Geiseric, who early in 450, it is said, was instigating Attila to attack the Visigoths, partly in Saint Anianus, Bishop of Orleans, who organised the defence of that city against the Huns, and who by spitting from the walls precipitated a three days' fall of rain, which held up the operations of the besiegers, and partly also in a certain prophetic anchorite, who informed Attila on the eve of the battle of 451 that this time he would come to grief.

To explain the place-names of the Norse poem, which no one has thought of seeking in Gaul, Heinzel was obliged to postulate a subsequent easterly movement of the tradition of 451 and accretions to it among the Varangians at a much later period. Taking *Dúnheiðr* to contain *Dúna*, the Norse name of the Danube, and connecting *Danparstaðir* with the Dnieper, he further found the "fair stone" of Hlōðr's demands to Angantýr in the renowned cave-monastery at Kiev, dating from the eleventh century, while the "holy grave" mentioned in the preceding line of the poem is no doubt the grave of Saint Antonius, the founder of the monastery.

Two years later, in 1889, Rudolf Much developed a new theory,⁶ in which he related the two battles of the *Hervarar Saga*, that in which the "Amazonian" Hervor was slain, and the great battle on *Dúnheiðr*, to two battles recorded by Paul the Deacon between the *Vulgares* (i.e. Bulgars) and the Langobards. In the first of these battles

⁶ *Askiourgion Oros* in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 33 (1889), pp. 1-13.

Agelmundus King of the Langobards was killed, and his daughter carried off a prisoner. The daughter relates to Angantýr's sister Hervor, while Agelmundus is the Agelmund who appears in *Widsith* immediately after the mention of Incgenþeow and Hliþe. In the second battle the Langobards under their new king Lamissio were victorious; and this is the Battle of the Goths and the Huns. Much was also prepared to allow influence of traditions from the battle of 451.

What is most significant in Much's discussion, however, is his placing of the events. He held that the *Jassarfjöll* of the Norse poem is the mountain-chain in Silesia now called the *Gesenke* — that is (roughly speaking) the continuation of the line of the Carpathians to the west, beyond the chief pass out of the Danube region. Both *Gesenke* and the first element of the Norse name have, he thought, the same origin: they are recastings of the Slavic name *Jesenik*, *Jasenik*, itself a derivative of *jesen*, *jasen* "ash (tree)", and meaning "Ash-Mountain". This will then be equivalent to the *Askibourgion Oros* of Ptolemy the Geographer; and the name *Dúnheiðr* Much explained from the tribal name *Lougioi Didounioi*, a people referred to by Ptolemy as dwelling to the north of the *Askibourgion Oros*. Arguing that the Langobards must have been at this time dwelling north of the Carpathians, Much supposed that the Huns came upon them through the gap in the mountains east of the *Gesenke*, and that the battle of which Paul the Deacon tells must have taken place to the north of the range, that is, in the modern territory of Cracow.

During the next half-century many eminent scholars wrote at greater or lesser length on the problem. For some time Heinzel's "Catalaunian theory" held the field, and was regarded very much as a proved fact. Thus we find Andreas Heusler, Eugen Mogk and Finnur Jónsson accepting it without apparent question.⁷

⁷ Jónsson in *Lit. Hist.* II, p. 839; Mogk in *Altnord. Literaturgesch.* in *Paul's Grundriss*, 2. Aufl., pp. 837-9; Heusler in *Eddica Minora* (1903), introduction to *Das Lied von der Hunnenschlacht*.

Later, in the writings of Gudmund Schütte and Gustav Neckel,⁸ a lip-service, so to say, is paid to the "Catalaunian Dogma", while the real underlying basis of the tradition is sought in quite different times and places; Neckel raising again the negotiations and subsequent fighting between Ostrogotha and Fastida, and Schütte looking to events *after* the death of Attila, to the later wars of the Huns against the Gepids, Ostrogoths and other subject peoples, and seeing in the name Heiðrekr or Heaþoric transformations of the name of Ardaric, the famous Gepid king, once the confidant of Attila, who led and inspired the revolt of the subject tribes against Attila's sons. Schütte adopted Much's localisations, and so sought for the Battle of the Goths and the Huns where Much had sought for it, approximately in the region of the head-waters of the Oder and the Vistula; for both these writers Widsith's *ymb Wistlawudu* was of course of prime importance.

With the discussions of R. C. Boer and Henrik Schück⁹ a clean break was made with both Heinzel and Attila. The credit for taking the plunge is usually given to Schück, who did indeed the same thing as Boer and equally resolutely, but seven years later. The "Catalaunian Theory" found its last exponent in Gudmund Schütte, who was still defending it in 1933.¹⁰

However, the debate continued vigorously between those who sought the underlying event at the western end of the Carpathians (that is, in modern Czechoslovakia and southern Poland), and those who looked rather to a region lying beyond their furthest eastern foothills; between those who looked to events after Attila's death, and those who looked to events before it.

Thus Schück provided the most positive localisations

⁸ G. Schütte, *Angantý-Kvadets Geografi* in *Arkiv for nord. filologi* 21 (1905), pp. 30-44. G. Neckel, *Beiträge zur Eddaforschung*, Dortmund 1908, pp. 256 ff.

⁹ R. C. Boer, *Om Hervararsaga* in *Aarbøger for nord. oldkyndighed og hist.*, 1911, pp. 1-80. H. Schück, *Studier i Hervararsagan*, *Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift*, 1918.

¹⁰ *Acta Phil. Scand.* 1933, pp. 254 ff.

of persons and places. Believing, with Boer, that the Gotho-Hunnic war and the battle between brothers were originally quite distinct legends, he found the historical prototype for the strife of the brothers in the fighting between the Amalung *Winitharius* and the Hun King *Balamber* allied to the Goth *Gesimund*, after the death of Ermanaric; but the origin of the Gotho-Hunnic war in the victory of the Ostrogoths under Walamir over the Huns after the death of Attila. For Schück, the place-names point clearly to southern Russia.

Boer on the other hand was extremely sceptical, and placed no trust in any of the place-name identifications at all except *Dúnheiðr*, which he associated with the Russian river Dvina, and so looked for the battlefield in the neighbourhood of the Valdai Hills, northwest of Moscow, where the Volga, Dnieper and Dvina rise from the central plateau in relatively close proximity.

Otto von Friesen in 1920 and Arwid Johannson in 1932¹¹ both looked to the western end of the Carpathians; von Friesen's Huns moving north from the middle Danube by much the same route as the Huns of Much and Schütte had taken, and falling upon the "Nest-Goths" — i.e., the *Hreiðgotar* — of the Vistula valley. These were Goths who had never migrated into the south-east, but had remained, according to von Friesen's etymology of the name, in the "Nest"; their kingdom, with its centre in East Prussia but at times extending up the Vistula valley to the western Carpathians, and once united with the great empire of Ermanaric, survived, according to von Friesen, the onset of the Huns in the fourth century; and in the years following the overthrow of the southern parts of that empire the more northerly "Nest-Gothic" realm had to defend itself against the concentration of Hunnish power in Hungary. To these battles the Norse poem, and Widsith, refer.

For Johannson, however, as for Schück, the mis-en-

¹¹ O. von Friesen, *Rökstenen*, Stockholm 1920. A. Johannson, *þiaurikr miR Hraiþkutum* in *Acta Phil. Scand.* 1932, pp. 97-149.

scène is the period of the wars between the Pannonian Ostrogoths and the Huns under the sons of Attila. His Huns followed the same route as those of Much, Schütte, and von Friesen, but in the reverse direction; they came round on the northern flanks of the Carpathians, passed down the March valley, crossed the Danube, and invaded Pannonia. But where Schück had taken *Dúnheiðr* fairly vaguely as "the Danube plain", "the lower course of the Danube", Johannson identified it specifically with the *Marchfeld*, east of Vienna, at the confluence of the Danube and the March. Moreover, under the name *Dylgja* the March is probably concealed. An obvious difficulty here is that the words of *Widsith*, *ymb Wislawudu*, must refer to a more northerly region.

In 1934 Hermann Schneider¹² concluded in favour of the fourth century and the Gothic kingdom on the Black Sea; in 1941 Jan de Vries¹³ asserted that the poem deals with an episode after the death of Attila.

Ironically enough, a remark of Schneider's, to the effect that we must not think that we know much about a deeply obscure period from the meagre informations of a Jordanes, provided the starting-point for a completely new theory, the latest contribution (I believe) to the subject, providing the most precise historical foundation, not only for the poem, but for most of the *Hervarar Saga* too, which is treated as virtually an entity of equal antiquity throughout. In 1946 N. Lukman¹⁴ set out to examine the whole matter afresh, starting from the assumption that the history of Jordanes had so far figured much too largely in the investigation of the Battle of the Goths and the Huns, to the exclusion of other earlier and better sources of information, chief among them the History of Ammianus Marcellinus.

I cannot possibly do justice here to Lukman's complex theory; but I must attempt to convey an idea of it. The

¹² *Germanische Heldensage*, II. 2, pp. 96 ff.

¹³ *Altnordische Literatur-Geschichte* I, pp. 36 ff.

¹⁴ *Goterne i Heidreks Saga: En Tradition om Athanaric? in Aarbøger for nord. oldk. og hist.* 1946.

source of the Norse poem is now found primarily in the events of the year 386, when a vast swarm of Goths, of the race of the Greutungi, appeared on the Danube; their leader was an Ostrogoth named Odotheus, but it is not clear to what extent the swarm was made up of other peoples besides. Since we are explicitly told that among the barbarians were men either too old or too young to fight, this was clearly not a descent upon the Empire by an army bent upon plunder, but a tribal migration; what set it in motion is unknown. The migrants on the northern bank of the great river asked permission to cross; the permission was refused, and the Roman army of the Danube frontier, under Promotus, prepared to resist their crossing. Spies were sent by Promotus to Odotheus offering to sell the Roman army for a price; but by accepting their offer Odotheus fell into a trap. Crossing the Danube by night in their innumerable boats, thinking to fall on the Romans unawares, the Goths were crushed by the great Roman ships which bore down upon them. The Danube was choked, it is said, with the wreckage and the corpses.

Odotheus, according to Lukman, is Hloðr. Odotheus demanded, in effect, the same treatment from the Empire as had been accorded to the Visigoths under Alavivus and Fritigern earlier; Hloðr demanded an equal share in the Gothic inheritance. The activity of Gizurr in the saga corresponds (Lukman seems to imply) to that of the false spies sent out by Promotus, though later in the demonstration we learn that he is also Gesimund, leader of the Ostrogoths. Ormarr is a reflection of a certain chieftain *Arimerios*, who dwelt north of the Danube at this time but whose fate is unknown. Heiðrekr is Athanaric, ruler of the Visigoths; and Humli contains the name of the Amal kings, and should really therefore be a ruler of the Goths, not the Huns. The two Gothic lords *Alatheus* and *Safrax*, who crossed the Danube in Rome's despite in 377, two years after Ermanaric's

death and a year before Adrianople, taking with them the young Amalung prince *Wideric*, also appear in Lukman's reconstruction: Alatheus is Hlǫðr once more, *Humlungr* of the poem (in Angantýr's address to his half-brother) refers to the child *Wideric*, and Safrax is Sifka of the saga, the mistress of King Heiðrekr and the mother of Hlǫðr. The evil end that overtook Sifka in the saga is due to confusion with the story of Saint Sabas the martyr, one of the victims of Athanaric's persecution of the Christians. Finally, the appearance of the Emperor Theodosius at the scene of the battle in the Danube, and his generous terms to the survivors, is echoed in Angantýr's words over his half-brother's body, when he repeated in regret his unavailing offer. I do not propose to follow Lukman further, into his identification of Haraldr of Reiðgotaland (who plays a part elsewhere in the *Hervarar Saga*) with Ermanaric, and so forth.

From this mass of speculation and discussion some of what has been said can I think be rejected out of hand with the greatest confidence. In the first place, I think that those scholars who have said that the "Catalaunian" hypothesis must be abandoned are unquestionably right; and moreover, it must be unconditionally abandoned; that is to say, once that hypothesis has been rejected from its position as the kernel of the whole tradition, there can be no sufficient grounds for retaining it at all. I would base this rejection primarily on this consideration, among others. Such similarity as there is between Heinzel's construction and the situation in the poem is most visible, or least invisible, when we consider the dispute of the two princes over the Frankish throne. Here certainly there are two brothers, one of whom turns for help in his claim to the Hun King. But in the first place, they were not Goths. And in the second place, their situation was in all other respects wholly different. Both princes were quite subordinate

characters in the great event, their quarrel caught up into a vast struggle that extended far beyond the borders of their own kingdom. And if their names and nationalities were sucked in and absorbed by the far larger figures of Aetius and Attila, it is strange indeed that their quarrel, enormously enlarged, should survive, together with their relationship, and be made into the circumstance whereby the lords of East and West, now likewise become brothers, were brought into collision. This consideration brings us to the most formidable objection of all: we are asked to believe that Humli has replaced Attila. If the Norse tradition really descended from that battle on the Mauriac plain, it would be simply incredible that Attila, *the Hun* par excellence of Germanic legend, should have been dispossessed of his rightful position as leader of the Huns in a battle in which he was, in historical fact, present. Whatever battle or battles may underlie the final portion of the *Hervarar Saga*, we may be sure that the Huns were not then commanded by Attila. (The words of *Widsith*, *Ætlan leode*, do not I think necessarily mean more than "Huns").

Heinzel was of course well aware of this difficulty, and attempted to guard against it. It was a poetic necessity, he said, that the Hun King conquered in so colossal a battle should not remain alive; but it was nevertheless generally known that Attila did not as a fact die on the Mauriac plain. "Man brauchte also einen anderen Hunnen-könig", he wrote, somewhat ingenuously. The weakness of this argument merely serves to underline the objection.

Moreover, I think that all theories based on an un-evidenced assertion of "mixture of tradition" should be rejected. By this recipe some of the primary features of the Norse poem are simply explained away; but when seeking for an historical basis for an ancient poem which concerns a great war between Goths and Huns, one may reasonably be unimpressed by a solution that offers a

battle between quite other peoples, and enquire at once whether there is any cogent evidence, any really pointed resemblance, to support it. Thus, Much tells us that the Langobards have been replaced in the course of time by the more famous Goths. If there were a name in common between the two accounts; or one single feature in common not of a vague and general nature; his proposal might stand some chance of acceptance. But there is none.

The same is true of Lukman's historical river-battle between Roman troops and a migratory swarm of Ostrogoths and their allies. Lukman indeed outdoes Heinzl in perverse ingenuity. I do not think that it should need to be said, that to pick about in old histories, looking for names that begin with the same letter or contain one or two of the same consonants as those in one's text, will attain nothing. If heroic legend really evolved in this way, with the most chance and casual accretions and distortions — so that Safrax the Ostrogothic lord was "fused" with Sabas the martyr, and then (keeping nothing save a violent death connected with a river and the initial consonant of the name) developed into a Hunnish concubine — then, with our fragmentary materials, the chances against our hitting upon the correct combinations are so monumental that we may as well give up the game at once; or, at least, admit that it is only a game. And since the game has virtually no rules, I cannot be breaking any if I propose the theory that Angantýr is a legendary transformation of Constantine the Great. Hlōðr is then Licinius, the Eastern Emperor, and the Battle of the Goths and the Huns descends ultimately, no doubt, from the battle of Chrysopolis on the Bosphorus in 323, whereby Constantine made himself sole ruler of East and West, after twenty-five thousand men had been slaughtered. Here is the "South-Eastern colouring" plain to see; and what makes the theory particularly attractive is that Constantine and Licinius were *brothers-in-law*. Lukman quite failed

to produce any brothers. Admittedly, Licinius was not killed; but we have been instructed by Heinzel in the handiness of "Poetic Necessity". Heiðrekr is of course Diocletian; it may even be possible to work in the Council of Nicea.

Fundamental to this discussion are the lines of Widsith. It must be admitted at once that when in an ancient Norse poem Angantýr, Hlōðr and Ormarr are involved in a battle between Goths and Huns, it would be an astonishing coincidence that an Anglo-Saxon poem should mention Ingenpeow and Hlipe, followed after a very brief interval by Wyrmore and a reference to battles between Goths and Huns, and have nothing to do with the former composition. But the fighting referred to in *Widsith* took place *ymb Wislawudu*. We are therefore faced with a dilemma: either the Norse poem refers to fighting in the same region (in which case the localisations favoured by Much, Schütte, von Friesen and Johannson have some prospect of acceptance), or it does not; and if it does not, then either we must rule out any connexion with *Widsith* and reconcile ourselves to a coincidence of a very curious kind — or *Widsith* has, so to say, got the facts wrong.

In favour of the view that the Norse poem does *not* refer to fighting in the Vistula valley is the major consideration of the name *Danparstaðir*. It is clear that the Vistula-region theories can find no place for this name; yet of all the names in the poem it is one of the only ones that can be localised with something like certainty.¹⁵ This name is also known from a verse of *Atlakviða*, (5), where Knefrōðr, bearing the errand of Atli, tells Gunnarr that Atli will give him, among other things,

stóvar meiðmar ok staði Danpar,
hrís þat it mæra er meðr Myrkvið kalla.

¹⁵ The name *Harvaðafjöll* is yet more certain, and *Dúnheiðr* seems likely to mean the plain of the Danube, yet the Carpathians and the Danube are of vast extent, and it is only the connexion of them with the Dnieper that gives any sort of limited localization.

The latter of these two lines is almost identical with one in the Battle of the Goths and the Huns. But whether or not this verse of *Atlakviða* has been consciously imitated from the other poem, as has been commonly supposed, I do not think that *staði Danþar* in *Atlakviða* sheds any light on the original significance of the name; while the genealogical cardhouses gravely erected by some scholars in an endeavour to make the verse in *Rígsþula* about *Danr* and *Danþr* square with what Snorri says on the subject in the *Ynglinga Saga* and with what Arngrímur Jónsson says in his abstract of the lost *Skjöldunga Saga* only go to show the hopelessness of trying to construct definite "trees" from such manifestly contradictory material.

That *Danþarstaðir* contains the Gothic name of the river Dnieper, which appears in Jordanes as *Danaper*, was suggested long ago, first I believe by P. A. Munch, and this I think is unquestionably right. I do not think that the elusive character *Danþr* need be taken into account in a search into the remote origins, for I believe he owed his name and his very existence simply and solely to the name *Danþarstaðir*, which was itself known in all probability from the Battle of the Goths and the Huns. I am strongly inclined to think that the original significance of the phrase, *á stöðum Danþar*, was "on the banks of the Dnieper", taking *stöðum* to be the dative plural of O.N. *stöð*, fem. "landing-place", corresponding to a Gothic dative plural **staþam*, a word whose existence is vouched for by the dative singular *staþa*, occurring twice in Wulfila and signifying "bank" or "shore", cognate with Old English *stæþ*.

As to the "holy grave" and "the fair stone that stands beside the Dnieper", I have already mentioned Heinzl's identifications of these things with the cave-monastery of Kiev and the tomb of its founder. Beyond the fact that Kiev is on the Dnieper I do not see any circumstance in favour of Heinzl's view'. I think it is

far more probable that by the "holy grave" is to be understood a burial-place where rested a Gothic king, or kings.

The "stone" beside the Dnieper seems likely to have been a high stone in the chief place of the Goths, upon which stepped the king to whom homage was to be done, that he might be seen by all the people. That such was an ancient custom is beyond question. Thus the Chronicle of the Kings of Lejre, descending probably from the latter half of the twelfth century, tells that the Jutes led Dan to the stone which was called *Danaerygh*, and set him upon it, giving him the title of king. Olrik has shewn reason to believe that the *Danaerygh* lay in Viborg in Jutland, and that there also was the mound in which Dan was buried, and in which he sat upright and saddled on a horse within the tomb. It is not incredible that the "stone" of Hlōðr's demand was (so to say) the "Lia Fail of the Black Sea Goths", and that the "grave" was the burial place of their kings, in or near the same place. It would be fruitless to search for its name; but it is remarkable enough — if this opinion is correct — that the memory of such things, and the name of the river by which they lay, should have survived in the North for a thousand years.

On this view, *Dúnheiðr* must contain *Dúna*, the Danube; while *Dylgja*¹⁶ seems not improbably to be explained simply as the noun *dylgja* "enmity", or, in the context "battle"; in which case *Angantýr* must say, not

Kendu at Dylgju ok á Dúnheiði

but rather

Kendu dylgju á Dúnheiði.

As to *Árheimar*, is it perhaps conceivable that it is an invention on the lines of *ár-dagar*, "days of old" (Old English *gear-dagas*), and meaning "the ancient abode", used of a Gothic king's court in South-Eastern Europe when the original name had been forgotten?

¹⁶ Assuming that *Dylgja* is correct; another reading is *Dyngja*.

If then this fundamental decision is made, the questions remain: what are we to think of the evidence of *Widsith*? And further: can we pin the legend to any particular event?

We have no choice but to suppose that the author of *Widsith* had heard tell of a Gothic people dwelling in the Vistula valley, and indeed von Friesen has shewn that the assumption of such a people is tenable. There, *ymb Wislawudu*, there was fighting against the Huns, so the author of the Old English poem had heard. If we wish to connect the two traditions, then we must (on the fundamental assumption I am here making) suppose that the English tradition has transferred the legendary echoes of ancient battles in Southern Russia to a region closer at hand; if we are prepared to abandon the connexion, then we can admit that the reference in *Widsith* is quite possibly to historical battles between Goths and Huns in the Vistula valley; but they have no connexion with the Hun-battle of the saga. In that case, we must suppose that the mention of Hliþe and Incgenþeow together with the fighting *ymb Wislawudu* is pure coincidence; it is after all true that their names are not mentioned in direct connexion with the wars against the Huns. This is not to say that Hliþe and Incgenþeow do not correspond to Hlōðr and Angantýr; but simply that the Hun-battles do not correspond. — But is this credible?

On the whole, I am driven to conclude that ultimately both the Norse and the English reflect the same events, and that the latter has undergone a change as regards the setting of them. One may perhaps feel a certain reluctance to accept a view of the matter which proposes that a very corrupt and imperfectly-transmitted Norse poem, preserved in a late saga, is “right”, while an English poem of the antiquity of *Widsith* is “wrong”. One might well argue, indeed, that the *Widsith*-tradition has misplaced the *theatre* of war, but preserved a truer

picture of the events themselves; that the situation implied in the Anglo-Saxon words:

þær ful oft wig ne alæg

— with its suggestion of repeated battles in a defensive war, as the heroes withdrew in the forests — has more the stamp of truth than the earth-shaking battle and colossal carnage of the Norse tradition. This may well be so; but I do not think that it necessarily conflicts with what has been suggested above about the clues which point to a much more easterly, and older, theatre of war.

We are led, then, to the Gothic kingdoms on the Northern shores of the Black Sea, and to the years after the first appearances of the Huns and their Alan subjects moving west across the South Russian plains. I do not see any cogent reason for following those who have turned rather to the following century, and the events after the death of Attila.¹⁷ Now it goes without saying that such records as are preserved from the former period have been combed and combed again with the object of finding a situation which fits with or without forcing the data of the ancient poem set into the *Hervarar Saga*; and that one has no hope of discovering some new parallel, hitherto passed over unnoticed, unless it be some parallel that is in reality no parallel at all.

I believe that some sort of an "historical basis" did exist, in that period and in that region, and that it is to be looked for in the area roughly defined by "Lower Dnieper — Dniester — Eastern Carpathians — Danube mouths". Conceivably, if the historians of the Empire

¹⁷ One of the arguments used in this connexion seems especially misleading. Schütte, for instance, urged that the fact that the Huns, according to the Norse poem, could not raise more than a beggarly 50,000 men, and that with boys of twelve years old, suggests that the smaller Hunnic armies of the years after Attila's death are referred to, not the great host of 451. (On the numbers of the Hunnish armies see E. A. Thompson, *A History of Attila and the Huns*, Oxford 1947, pp. 46 ff.). But the author of the saga obviously took a very different view. For him, the detail about the twelve year old boys was a sign, not only that the Huns assembled their entire war-strength, but also that their army was of the most colossal size imaginable. The supposition that the writer was correct in his figures but wrong in his interpretation of them is utterly improbable.

had been able, or had wished, to cast their net wider, we might have found in their writings some reference to a battle between Goths and Huns which fitted the data we possess. Certainly no scholar who has turned his attention to that age and that region has succeeded in making an identification remotely plausible. But it is clear that vast obscure upheavals were taking place during those dark years among the nations dwelling to the north-east of the Danube mouths, about which we know next to nothing; for these disturbances meant little enough to the Empire, until thousands upon thousands of fleeing Germanic tribesmen were clamouring for admittance on its northern frontiers. And thus the supposition that, had we more voluminous records of that time, we might find a reference to a Gotho-Hunnic war brought about in the main in the way the Norse poem describes, is not demonstrably false.

Yet is it probable? Behind the ruinous poem as it exists in manuscripts of the *Hervarar Saga* today there lie centuries upon centuries of transmission, of alteration and refashioning. Would it not be contrary to all experience and precedent if we *could* turn up the right passage in Jordanes, Olympiodorus, or Ammianus Marcellinus, writing a millenium before, for a cross-check? This might indeed seem to be an argument in favour of those forced "historical bases" I have dismissed. But, in dismissing them, my point was primarily that it is not useful to pile up these elaborate identifications unless they are, indeed, *extremely* plausible. Otherwise we enter a region of speculation where from the nature of the case there can be no possible form of testing or proof; a world of unarguable assertions.

Thus it may well be that crumbling verse-memories of the first Hunnic attacks upon the Goths, with some remote names preserved in the amber of a traditional poetry, is all that is really there, so far as the "History of the Black Sea Goths" is concerned. Certainly, if

we suppose that the names *Tyrfingr* and *Grýtingaliði* contain the ancient Gothic tribal nomenclature of *Tervingi* and *Greutungi*, the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths; and suppose too that Humli the Hun-king of the saga contains the Amal name, and that Hlōðr, who in the saga is half-Hun, half-Goth and is referred to as *Humlungr*, is also the reflection of an Amalung prince, then we cannot possibly think that the "plot" of the Norse poem is "historical". Rather we should have to conceive of an inheritance-feud between a West Goth (Angantýr) and an Ostrogoth. But then of course not all these identifications are of equal value; though the equations *Tyrfingr/Tervingi* and *Grýtingaliði/Greutungi* seem highly likely, with the corollary that *Tyrfingr* was not originally the name of a sword in this poem at all.

One thing at least is clear: the search for a definite, historical underlying event should be called off. And once the attempt to fix upon such an event has been given up, the question whether the contending brothers were there from the start, as historical persons, or whether they represent an early intrusion of legend — though certainly a very early intrusion — becomes unanswerable. One may compare the case of the death of Ermanaric, and the long debate as to whether Jordanes knew more about the matter than Ammianus, or whether Jordanes' account is a legendary amplification of a later time.

In this paper I have attempted in brief compass firstly to give an impression of a discussion that has lasted for the better part of a century, and is scattered in many books and periodicals in many languages, and secondly to see what has emerged from it. If the facts are few, the possible speculations they give rise to are not; and it is inevitable that in attempting to set out the essentials clearly I should have done very much less than justice to the detailed arguments with which particular theories have been defended. Moreover, it has been necessary to leave quite out of consideration various allied questions,

such as for example that of the relationship between Saxo's story of the war between Frotho and the Huns,¹⁸ which is undoubtedly connected with the present poem; but it seems quite clear that Saxo's account will not in fact cast any light on the ancient origins.

¹⁸ Ed. Holder pp. 154 ff.; trans. Elton pp. 190 ff.

LITERARY TRADITION IN THE OLD NORSE AND CELTIC WORLD

By NORA KERSHAW CHADWICK

IN the heart of ancient Northern Ireland, near the south-western corner of Lough Neagh, stands a little hamlet called Drumsnat. Here in the sixth century we are told that the famous saint Molua founded his first church, and here a famous Celtic monastic site must have flourished, for a version of the saint's *Life* seems to have been written here.¹ And here was probably compiled the earliest Irish secular manuscript that we hear of. It is believed to have been put together as early as the first half of the eighth century, possibly even earlier.² It was called from the earliest times the *Cín Dromma Snechta*, "The Book or Codex of Drumsnat", evidently from the name of St. Molua's monastery in Monaghan, to which we undoubtedly owe its compilation, or preservation, perhaps both.

The manuscript is lost; but it is often referred to in our earliest Irish Codices, especially the *Book of the Dun Cow*, and the *Book of Leinster*, and so many texts tell us that they were copied from it that we can form a fairly full idea of its contents. These are chiefly texts of sagas, but the sagas contain much poetry, and in some cases they seem to owe their origin to the poems, and to be paraphrases and expanded commentaries on them. The nature of the list of sagas³ which the *Cín Dromma Snechta* evidently contained is very surprising.

¹ For the evidence, see J. F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland*, Vol. I (New York, 1929), p. 397 f.

² For the *Cín Dromma Snechta*, see R. Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, Halle (Saale), 1921, p. 16. Thurneysen subsequently changed his mind in favour of a tenth-century date (*Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, Vol. XX, p. 218); but G. Murphy has produced convincing evidence in favour of the earlier dating (*Ériu*, Vol. XVI (1952), p. 144 ff.).

³ For this list see Thurneysen, *op cit.*, p. 17.

There is no reference to the great Irish prose epic the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ("The Cattle Raid of Cualnge"); or to the Cycle of stories of Finn and his warriors, so popular among story-tellers and poets in the Middle Ages; no stories of the heroic deeds of the heroes of the Red Branch, the court of Conchobar mac Nessa. In fact there are no heroic stories at all, strictly speaking. The stories are all concerned with the supernatural. The heroes of the stories are nevertheless the heroes of the Irish Heroic Age, the ancient kings of Tara and of the Red Branch; but the stories themselves do not relate to heroic warfare or heroic valour. In fact they do not really relate to valour at all, but to intercourse between these heroes and heroines and supernatural beings, called in Irish the *Side*, "*Sid* folk". The collection has the appearance of a repertoire of a *fili*, one of the ancient Irish class of poets and story-tellers, especially such as have supernatural knowledge and inspiration; and the contents of the Book of Drumsnat look like the lore of a *fili* transformed into literature of entertainment. This is not an early stage of the stories. It is a collection of already developed sagas. They have a long history behind them.

In these stories we can trace all the principal phases in the life of the ancient kings and heroes, and the ritual and beliefs connected with them, their birth, education and fosterage, the fosterage being especially important. We can trace their intellectual initiation; even their marriage. One important saga relates to the dangerous magic to which the High-King Conaire Mór is subject. We are left with an impression that the collection is the late expression of ancient pagan beliefs, of the spiritual forces governing human life, but related to entertain and amuse when the old faith was no longer alive.

What is this supernatural world to which the collection from this early Irish monastery introduces us? What are the stories about? Here are stories of magical voyages, of knowledge acquired in lands outside normal

geography, of *geis* or unavoidable, unescapable magical doom (*tabu*), of supernatural visions, of fairy visitors, of dress rehearsals for the after life, or trial trips to the land of immortals, the Land of Promise. But of realistic normal experience never a word! Yet the land of mystery to which the little book transports us is itself so real, so concrete, so perfectly consistent, it is a region and an experience so perfectly conceived, that actuality is never felt to be missing. The illusion is complete. It must have been a concept widely accepted among those versed in the supernatural in ancient Ireland; and the stories in their final form are the creations of master artists who have left us the fine fruit of a long tradition.

The first thing of importance about the contents of this our earliest Irish manuscript, then, is their exclusively spiritual or supernatural character. The next thing, perhaps of equal interest, is that the stories which it contains are in the form of fully developed prose saga. There is no narrative poetry in it; and indeed the earliest Celtic stories are never in the form of poetry. They are always in prose, though the characters habitually speak in poetry. Indeed there is no narrative poetry, no epic poetry, anywhere in the earliest Celtic literature. All narratives are in prose. Narrative poetry, stories told in poems, is only introduced in later times, in the Middle Ages. Ireland is unique in having a high development of early prose, such as the ambitious and sustained prose epic of the *Táin*. Elsewhere prose on such an elaborate scale only appears at a later date, for example in Scandinavia. It is very possible that both Wales and Scotland possessed early prose; but it has not been preserved.

The only other country in what the Irish call "The Western World", which shares with ancient Ireland the distinction of a highly developed prose, carried on in the vernacular for the purposes of telling a story, is Iceland.

Here, it must be admitted, prose saga is on a very much higher level as a narrative medium. As literature it has gone much farther. It is perhaps the finest prose in the world. Irish prose can not compare with it in intellectual quality — flexibility, wealth of idiom, brevity and fitness, epigrammatic gift and masterly understatement — all the qualities which combine to make it a perfect vehicle of expression for every emotional and intellectual mood and utterance. The great body of the sagas of Icelanders are Classic in quality.

In comparison the Irish prose style is laconic. The great development of Icelandic narrative prose is attributable in part to their wealth in calf-skins for the vellum of their manuscripts. But the *Táin*, "Cattle Raid of Cualnge", shows the Irish to have been great cattle breeders, as were all the Celtic peoples. The seventeenth-century version of the Scottish Gaelic Bible translated the opening of the twenty-third Psalm "The Lord is my shepherd", by the expression "The Lord is my Cowherd", (*Bó-chaille*, "Cow-herd").

The Irish sagas read much like summaries, aids to memory of the story-tellers, while the Norse are fully developed literary works intended to be read. The difference is perhaps partly one of date. In both countries great collections of heterogeneous secular stories were written down in the Middle Ages in big volumes, like miniature libraries; but in Iceland the Viking Age had transformed men into travelled and experienced people, whereas society in Ireland was in some respects less developed, and much more conservative.

In both countries the writing down of the sagas is undoubtedly indebted to the habit of writing introduced by the Church, at a time when the Church was still liberal in outlook. The great collections of prose sagas in vast volumes compiled in the Middle Ages were in many cases the work of ecclesiastics. The most ancient of the Irish collections which has survived is the

Lebor na h'Uidre, "Book of the Dun Cow", so called from its binding in cow-skin. It was compiled in the monastery of Clonmacnoise c. 1100. One of the largest and most important, the *Book of Leinster*, was compiled by Finn mac Gorman, bishop of Kildare, who died in 1160. But not all these compilers were ecclesiastical in their milieu. Each Irish family had its "writing man" who combined the duties of family lawyer, genealogist, librarian, and clerk, somewhat like Dominic Sampson in Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*. In 1814 some workmen discovered one of these codices in a wooden box in a walled-up passage in the Castle of Lismore in Co. Waterford. It contained not only Lives of Saints, but also poems and tales of Fionn mac Cumhaill, the legal tract called the *Book of Rights*, Marco Polo's Travels, and a romantic *Life of Charlemagne*. The manuscript is known to have been compiled for Finghin mac Carthy Reagh and his wife Catherine. In Iceland also similar compendia or one-volume libraries of secular matter were compiled in monasteries. The great *Flateyjarbók* seems to have been compiled in the latter part of the Middle Ages close to the monastery of Þingeyrar, which stood near the Húnaflói on the north coast of Iceland. It is significant that in both Celtic and Norse countries the ancient sagas have been preserved in much the same way; but the priority is with the Book of Drumsnat by several centuries.

In many cases it is clear that the monasteries had the support of the great secular chiefs, for whose delectation and amusement they would ensure a permanent supply of good stories. In medieval times the monastic guest-houses would also be responsible for affording evening amusement for their guests if they hoped to be well paid for their hospitality. But ultimately in both Ireland and Iceland, and in Wales also, the nucleus of the traditions must have owed much to the habit of telling stories in the halls of the chiefs during the long evenings

of autumn and winter. In the saga of the *Battle of Allen*,⁴ which tells of a historical battle fought in 722, we read that the army of Fergal, son of Maelduin, the High-King, expressed their readiness to follow him in his campaign against Leinster if a certain Dunn-bó went with them; for, says the saga-teller:

“Dunn-bó was the best teller of king-stories in the World”, and his colleague Hua Maiglinni could recite “the heroic combats between the High-kings and Leinster from the story of the *Destruction of Dind-Righ* down to the kings who reigned in his own time”.

The story of the *Destruction of Dind Righ* is probably the earliest heroic story that we possess — or at least refers to the earliest period, the destruction itself being dated according to tradition c. 341 B.C. The *Battle of Allen* is the latest heroic story, referring as it does to c. 722 A.D. The saga-teller means us to understand that the repertoire of Hua Maiglinni was comprehensive and covered the whole field of early Irish history. It must have been comparable to an expanded version of Snorri Sturluson's history of the kings of Norway, known as the *Heimskringla*; perhaps like the longer and widely variant version preserved in the *Flateyjarbók*.

Among the stories known to have been contained in our little manuscript of Drumsnat, we have a series relating to Mongán, a historical king of Antrim, whose death is entered in the Irish *Annals of Ulster* in 624 A.D. One of these stories represents the king as both a connoisseur, and a severe critic of sagas of prehistoric Irish kings. It opens by telling us that Mongán was ruling in Antrim, and the *filí*, i.e. poet and story-teller (doubtless Mongán's *filí* Forgall) recited a story every night to him. “So great was his lore”, adds the saga-teller, “and the repertoire was so extensive that it lasted from Hallowe'en till May-Day; and the poet received his food and remuneration from Mongán”. Later a dispute on a point

⁴ Edited and translated by Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, Vol. XXIV (1903), p. 41 ff.

of the accuracy of the tradition arose, and Mongán shows himself an authority on the heathen traditions. The matter is interesting because his father is traditionally represented as a valued ally of St. Columba's king Aedán mac Gabráin. Can this Mongán have been ultimately responsible for stimulating the monastery of Drumsnat to compile our little manuscript, so largely concerned with Mongán himself? The distance between Antrim and Drumsnat is not great across Lough Neagh, and Drumsnat must have been situated in the territory of the Dál nAraidi, ruled by Mongán. I have already suggested that the repertoire of the Book of Drumsnat may well represent the compilation of a *fili*. Was he a *fili* of the Dál n Araidi court? Was it Forgall or his successor.

A close parallel in Icelandic literature to the story of Mongán and his *fili*, and the stories told every evening at the court from Hallowe'en till Yule, is that of Harold Harðráði (king of Norway 1047-1066), and a young Icelandic story-teller,⁵ who arrived at the court of King Harold Harðráði in Norway and was received into his following on condition that he should tell stories whenever he was asked to do so. His repertoire lasted all through the Autumn, but towards Yule he grew depressed, and the king, guessing that his supply of stories was running dry, taxed him with it. The Icelander admitted that he had only one story left, and that he dared not tell because it was about the adventures of King Harold himself in foreign lands. The king declared that that was the story he would be most delighted to hear, and he tactfully timed the story-telling briefly enough each evening to make the recital last over the festival of Yule.

Our evidence for the love of saga-telling is abundant in early Norse literature. In the text of the *Dáttir of Nornagestr* contained in the great *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason* in the *Flateyjarbók* we have a picture of the whole court listening spellbound while Nornagestr

⁵ *Saga Haralds konungs harðráða* (Fornmanna Sögur VI, 1831), ch. 99.

entertains them with stories and poems from the Sigurðr Cycle. At the close of his account of Brynhild's suicide on the pyre, and when he has chanted for them her death-song on her way to Hel, the delighted court cry: "That is fine. Go on and tell us some more". And it is only after the Christian King Olaf has listened to the whole Cycle all evening that he develops scruples when the 'Hel-ride' is completed, and suggests that perhaps the entertainment has gone far enough.

In the *Saga of Þorgils and Haflíði*, ch. 10, we learn that at a wedding at Reykjahólar in Iceland in 1119 there was fun and merriment and story-telling. Hrólfur of Skálmarnes told a story about Hröngviðr the Viking, and Olaf the Sailors' King, and about the rifling of the barrow of Þráinn the Berserkr, and about Hrómundr Gripsson, and included many verses in his story. King Sverrir used to like this story, and declared that *lygisögur* ("fictitious stories") like this were the most entertaining of any.

But all these Icelandic texts are many centuries later than that of Mongán in the *Cin Dromma Snechta*, and doubtless than that of the *Battle of Allen* also. Did the Norsemen learn the art of elaborate story-telling from the Irish in the first place?

It is in these *lygisögur*, or "fictitious sagas", and the early poems of the *Edda* to which they often refer, and on which they are sometimes based, that the closest parallels with early Irish sagas are to be found. The *Íslendinga Sögur*, the "Sagas of Icelanders", relating chiefly to the period after the settlement of Iceland had been completed, are like historical novels, and depend for their effect largely on the literary power or pre-occupations of the authors. Yet even here we find motifs which show that Irish literature was well-known to the Icelanders.

As an example I may cite the *Laxdale Saga*, the author of which evidently knew that supernatural horses should

have red ears. At least Bolli offers to give Kjartan such horses. Now we know from many Celtic sources, e.g. from the the Irish *Cattle Raid of Fraich*, and also from Welsh stories, both secular and ecclesiastical, that animals described as white with red ears are supernatural. Again, in ch. 63 of this same Icelandic saga occurs the motif, extremely common in Irish literature (e.g. *The Intoxication of the Ulstermen*, *Bricriu's Feast*, *Da Derga's Hostel*, and the *Cattle Raid of Cualnge*), in which a hero or king or queen, when about to be attacked, orders one of his faithful servants (Bolli orders his shepherd in the *Laxdale Saga*; Queen Medb orders her prophetess Fedelm in the *Cattle-Raid*) to enumerate the approaching foe, attaching to each a brief description by which the person to be attacked recognises every one of his foes and names them by name. It is a catalogue device to let us know who are the heroes about to be engaged in the coming onslaught. This motif is common in Irish; but in Norse it seems to occur only here, where other Irish elements are also prominent.

In ch. 10 of the *Saga of the Confederates* the flyting between Egill and the discomfited confederates is a perfect parallel to the flyting between Cet mac Mátach and the Ulster heroes in the Early Irish *Story of Mac Dathó's Pig* (chs. 8-16), the dispute in the latter being as to which is the best champion and the one who has the right to divide up the pig at the banquet. The formula in each case of defeat — "Thereupon the other sat down" — is identical in both the Icelandic and the Irish stories.

In comparing motifs — as distinct from formulae — common to the two literatures, we are faced with a difficult question at the outset. When are we dealing with a direct literary borrowing? When are both literatures making use of a widespread folk-tale or folk-motif? Further, when we suspect that both are making use of a widespread folk-tale, how are we to recognise it if it is a comparatively early one, and only a sporadic survival?

For example, Grimm has preserved a large number of folk-tales which spread widely in the Middle Ages, and with which we are naturally familiar, such as Red Riding Hood. But a number of others spread over Europe in earlier times, for example in the Dark Ages, and these are less fully and widely preserved because later strata of the Middle Ages have overlaid them. An undoubted example of a folk-motif, as everyone would allow, is that in the *Saga of Hrólfr Kraki* (ch. 11), in which King Helgi takes a wretched and ragged woman into his bed one stormy Yule eve out of pity, who thereupon appears transformed into a beautiful maiden. She is in fact an *álfkona*, literally an "elf woman", or supernatural being, and by her the king has a daughter. We shall see later that in Norse the *álfar* are the souls of the unborn. But this is only a variant of the *cailleach*, the ugly old woman who appears in the Irish *Saga of Eochaid Mugmedon*, the hag whom none of the royal princes will kiss at her request, save only Eochaid, and who thereupon turns into the beautiful supernatural maiden of the Irish *baile*, or supernatural vision stories, and symbolises the *Sovereignty of Ireland*, which she promises to Eochaid as his reward. Such motifs are common both in early literature and in our modern fairy tales.

There are, however, in both Irish and Early Norse, certain motifs which we now know from Grimm and Russian *byliny* (short narrative poems) as common folk motifs, but which appear in Celtic and Norse traditions as an elaborate part of a complicated story. These stories are themselves too complex, too similar and too individual to be regarded as folk-tales. Here we have to deal with actual borrowing from one language into another, though it may not be possible to say with certainty which way the borrowing has gone. I will give an example, this time not from Irish but from Welsh.

The medieval collection of Welsh prose sagas, derived from much earlier material, and known as the *Mabinogion*,

opens with the story of *Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed* (Pembrokeshire). One night Pwyll sets out from his palace in Arberth in Pembrokeshire on a hunting expedition. He only gets as far as Llwyn Diarwyd when he is overtaken by darkness; but next morning early he reaches Glyn Cuch, where he sets his hounds on a stag which has just been brought down by a pack of beautiful hounds coming from the opposite direction:—

“And of all the hounds that he had seen in the world, he had never seen any that were like unto these. For their hair was a brilliant shining white, and their ears were red; and as the whiteness of their bodies shone, so did their ears glisten”.

By this we may know at the outset that these are supernatural hounds, for white animals with red ears are recognised as supernatural in Celtic legend.

But Pwyll drives away the hounds and sets his own upon the stag. And as he does so he sees a huntsman riding towards him on a large light-grey steed, who reproaches him for his discourtesy in driving away the hounds which have brought down the stag. Pwyll offers to make amends, and the huntsman announces himself as *Arawn*, a king in Annwn, the Welsh abode of the dead, and exacts from Pwyll in expiation of his fault that he shall spend a year in Annwn in the semblance of Arawn himself, and slay his rival Hafgan, who is described as another king of Annwn. Meanwhile Arawn undertakes to fill Pwyll's place as prince of Dyfed in the semblance of Pwyll himself. The story concludes with the overthrow and death of Hafgan at the hands of Pwyll, and the return of Pwyll and Arawn each to his own sphere.

“And thenceforward they made strong the friendship that was between them, and each sent unto the other horses, and greyhounds, and hawks, and all such jewels as they thought would be pleasing to each other. And by reason of his having dwelt that year in Annwn,

and having ruled there so prosperously, and having united the two kingdoms in one day by his valour and prowess, he lost the name of Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed, and was called Pwyll chief of Annwn from that time forward”.

The Norse *Saga of Egill and Ásmundr* contains a *Þáttur* or inset story which closely resembles that of Pwyll and Arawn. Ásmundr is a prince of Hálogaland — that favourite realm of marvels. One day when out hunting he fails to bring down his quarry and is overtaken by night. Next day a thick mist surrounds him (a sure presage to a supernatural experience in both Celtic and Norse), and after wandering for three days in the woods he sees a tall man approaching him dressed in scarlet (the Norse supernatural colour). The stranger calls himself Arán (“*Arawn*”), a prince of Tattaría. The two swear brotherhood together and make a mutual compact that whichever dies first shall be accompanied by the other alive into the tomb. Shortly afterwards Arán dies and is buried with horse and hawk and hound; and in fulfilment of the compact Ásmundr is buried with him alive. But at night Arán comes alive and on the third night attacks Ásmundr, who after a fearful struggle overcomes the animated corpse and makes his escape.

It will be seen that the Norse and the Welsh stories have much in common. In both a living prince is out hunting and overtaken by night, and loses his companions. At dawn he has an encounter with a supernatural being, in both stories called *Arawn* (*Arán*), with whom he makes a strange compact to spend a stated period of time in the supernatural regions, the details of which vary according to the variation between Norse and Welsh pictorial representation of the abode of the dead. In both stories a combat takes place in the abode of the dead between the living man and a dead one, though again there is a slight variation here because the Welsh story has introduced a second king of this abode.⁶ In both stories

⁶ As in the Irish *Echtra Nerai* (“*Adventures of Nera*”), edited and translated by Kuno Meyer, *Revue Celtique*, Vol. X, p. 212 ff.

the living man succeeds in dealing a mortal wound to his dead (supernatural) adversary, and in subsequently making his way out of the world of the dead to his own home and his own people.

The motif of the compact between two people by which the survivor pledges himself to accompany his dead comrade alive into the tomb is widespread, and may be called a folk-motif today. It is the subject of a famous eighteenth-century Russian *bylina* recorded from Perm and elsewhere, where the compact is made between husband and wife. Today we know it in this latter form from Grimm. But it is also recorded by the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus (who flourished in the second half of the twelfth century); and in this version the hero bears the name *Ásmundr* as in our saga, but his companion is not *Arawn* but *Ásvitr* (*Asuitus*), and here *Ásmundr* is rescued by passers-by. But the striking feature in the similarities between the Welsh and the Norse stories is that in each case the folk-motif of the compact and subsequent burial of the living with the dead, as well as the mortal combat between living and dead, is the sequel to a hunting encounter, in which the huntsman is lost and overtaken by night. Most striking of all is the fact that in both the Welsh and the Norse stories the supernatural huntsman is called *Arawn*. The name has no obvious meaning and appears to be unknown elsewhere in the language or literature of Welsh⁷ or Norse. This fact, and the general similarity in the outline of the two stories, can not be due to folk-tale, though the story contains folk-motifs. The correspondence must be due to direct oral borrowing, apparently not in written form, to judge by the spelling of the Welsh name *Arawn*, which exactly represents the later pronunciation of the Norse *Arán*, but not the written form.

Which is the borrower? The precise geographical indications of the Welsh, as against the manifest fictitious

⁷ For the Welsh see W. J. Gruffydd, *Rhiannon* (Cardiff, 1953), p. 35.

geography of the Norse, must not deceive us. But it is to be remembered that the name *Hafgan* appears in an obscure early Welsh poem apparently in relation to *Caer Sidi*,⁸ the Welsh name of the supernatural court or stronghold in the supernatural regions, perhaps beyond or under the sea. Perhaps, therefore, the story is not unknown elsewhere in Welsh. A somewhat obscure Icelandic story, which appears to be a variant of a Latin version related by Saxo Grammaticus, appears in the *Hauksbók* (ch. 60) text of the *Landnámabók*, which tells of a certain *Ásmundr* buried in his ship in Iceland with his living thrall, who is rescued by passers-by; but this *Ásmundr* is stated to be a descendant of a Norse member of the bodyguard of King Harold the Fair-haired, who had been a settler in the *Suðreyjar*, the Inner Hebrides. It is here therefore a family saga. Is it originally a Hebridean saga? And could this account for the unique occurrence of the name *Arán* in an identical story in the Icelandic *Saga of Egill and Ásmundr* and in the Welsh story of Pwyll?

Unfortunately we possess no corpus of literary tradition from the Hebrides; and the Welsh sagas are for the most part recorded only in a late form. It is in the contents of our earliest Irish MS., the *Cin Dromma Snechta*, the *Book of Drumsnat*, that more than anywhere else we find ourselves in a milieu which is strangely familiar to us from Norse traditions relating to the earliest times and to the sphere of the supernatural. Here the similarities between the two literatures are of a different order from those which we have so far considered. They are neither folk-tales, nor direct literary borrowing. They appear rather to be common themes, developing independently in the two countries, Ireland and Scandinavia or Iceland, but sufficiently close to suggest a close relationship in origin. The same supernatural themes are current,

⁸ For the text see Gwenogvryn Evans, Facsimile and text of *The Book of Taliesin* (Llanbedrog, 1910), p. 34, l. 18 ff. For a discussion, see Sir John Morris Jones, "Taliesin," *Y Cymmrodor*, Vol. XXVIII (1918), p. 236.

and the same spiritual forces are emphasised in both the early Celtic and the early Northern world.

Among the most attractive of these spiritual themes and of the stories based on them in both Celtic and Norse are the stories of rebirth. Of these the *Cín Dromma Snechta* included the "Wooing of Étaín", an Irish princess born in at least three generations. The story is preserved only in a fragmentary form, but the course of the narrative may be related briefly as follows.⁹ In the first generation Étaín, the daughter of Ailill, a king of north-eastern Ireland, becomes the wife of Midir, king and god of the *sidh* mound of *BriLéith*, and is preserved from the jealousy of his wife Fuamnach by the god Oengus of Brug na Boyne, the great Bronze Age Barrow of New Grange on the Boyne near Drogheda. Fuamnach, still jealous of Étaín, transforms her into a butterfly, and after more than a thousand years of airborne wanderings she falls into the drinking-cup of the wife of a certain Étar in Ulster, and is reborn as his daughter.

In this her second existence Étaín becomes the wife of Eochaid Airem, high-king of Ireland, whose brother Ailill Ánguba falls into a pining sickness for love of her. To save his life she consents to a union with him in her husband's absence, though not in his house. Her honour is saved, however, by the god Midir, her former husband, who comes to her three nights in succession in Ailill's guise, while Ailill sleeps through the tryst unaware of what takes place. When she returns to the house, however, she finds Ailill cured of his sickness, and strangely enough her husband Eochaid appears to think no harm when she relates the whole incident to him on his return. In fact he thanks her for her care of his brother.

At a later stage she is claimed from Eochaid by Midir, her former husband, who seizes her by the waist and carries her off through the roof, and the two are seen

⁹ The text is preserved in a portion of the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, and in a fragmentary state in the *Book of the Dun Cow*.

circling above the dwelling in the form of swans. Eventually Eochaid destroys Midir's *síd* and wins back Étaín. The whole story of this second existence of Étaín resolves itself into a contest between the High-King and the god.

Eventually it appears that a third and even a fourth Étaín are born, though of the third Étaín no story is told and she is represented as indistinguishable in appearance from her mother, the second Étaín. It may be doubted if she had any place in the original tradition. On the authority of Midir in a speech to Eochaid she is said to have been a daughter of Eochaid and Étaín; and on the same authority the fourth Étaín is the daughter of the third Étaín by her own father Eochaid. This last Étaín becomes the wife of the great Conaire Mór, the legendary peace-king of Ireland, the hero of *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*, and the victim of hostile magic. It is possibly to the hostility of the *síde*, and these early contests between the *síde* and the line of the High-Kings from whom Conaire claimed descent, that we owe the hostile magic of which Conaire Mór perished. It may be added that the story of *Da Derga's* hostel also formed a part of the contents of the *Cín Dromma Snechta*.

It is a confused story, and in fact it is nowhere preserved intact. We possess only variant versions of different parts of the whole; but certain facts emerge.

(1) A woman apparently of *síd* origin, wife of a god Midir from the *síd mound* of *Brí Léith*, is twice, or perhaps three times, reborn as the wife of a mortal, retaining her own name and personal identity throughout.

(2) The daughter of the third Étaín becomes the wife of the great prehistoric peace-king, Conaire Mór, with whom the *Cín Dromma Snechta* is seriously concerned.

A similar trilogy is associated in Norse tradition with Helgi, the eponymous legendary king of Hálogaland, in the great Norse trilogy of the Helgi poems contained in the Poetic *Edda*, and also in the prose *Saga of Hrómundr Gripsson*. The first poem, the *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*,

relates that Helgi, the son of a certain King Hjörvarðr and Sigrlinn, daughter of Sváfnir of Sváfaland, apparently herself a valkyrie, grew up "silent" (*þögull*) or lacking in polished eloquence, and also nameless, till one day as he is sitting on a barrow¹⁰ (the recognised way to experience a marvel in both Norse and Welsh literature) he sees nine valkyries "who rode through air and water", one of whom bestows on him his name and also the gift of eloquence. She is the valkyrie Sváfa, whom Helgi afterwards marries, and who "often protected him in battle".

Strangely enough Helgi's brother Heðinn swears a rash oath to possess his brother's bride; yet Helgi expresses no resentment, and before expiring as a result of wounds incurred in battle, he bids Sváfa wed Heðinn after his death. The situation has much in common with the situation between Étaín and her husband Eochaid and his brother Aillil. The prose colophon tells us that Helgi and Sváfa were said to have been reborn.

The *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, the second of the Helgi lays, relates that Helgi, son of Sigmundr and Borghildr, marries a valkyrie Sigrún. The prose introduction to *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* says that this Helgi was called after Helgi Hjörvarðsson; and the valkyrie Sigrún, is said to be Sváfa reborn. And again the prose colophon adds:

"It was a belief in ancient times that men were born again; but this is now regarded as an old wives' tale. Helgi and Sigrún are said to have been reborn. He was called Helgi Haddingjaskati and she Kára, Hálfdan's daughter, as is said in the songs of Kára" (now lost); "and", adds the commentator, "she also was a valkyrie".

We can form some idea of the lost *Kárukjóð* from ch. 7 of the *Saga of Hrómundr Gripsson*, where during a battle

¹⁰ It is while Pwyll is seated on the mound at Arberth that he has his first encounter with Rhiannon, riding by on her white horse. His retinue warn him as he goes on to the top of the mound that it is a magic quality of the mound that whoever sits on it can not leave it without first receiving wounds or blows, or else seeing a marvel.

a "witch named Kára" (*fjölkyngiskona*) flies overhead in the likeness of a swan, singing and working powerful spells by which Helgi is successful in battle, till alas! he brandishes his sword so high that he cuts off the swan's leg, and then his luck departs from him. These valkyrie lovers seem to perform the functions of a *fylgjukona*, a female guardian spirit. It will be noted as a curious fact that both here and in the Irish story of Eochaid and Étaín the lady subject to rebirth assumes the form of a swan and circles overhead.

How are we to explain the process of rebirth? In both Norse and Irish it appears to be connected with the barrows of the dead, and in Norse something of the ritual associated with this spiritual process is revealed to us. When Helgi Hundingsbani receives his death-wound in battle he will not stay quietly in his barrow, but comes out and walks about in the evening, till his valkyrie lover Sigrún enters the barrow and spends a night with him there. — Again the same motif of the living interred with the dead; but here, as in the Russian *bylina* referred to above, the living and the dead are husband and wife. In the Norse poem it is a ritual interment of a single night, at once a ritual burial of the living with the dead and at the same time a ritual marriage. Sigrún spreads a bed for her lover as if he were still alive, placing herself in his arms. The ghastly atmosphere of the meeting of the lovers in the barrow, the living with the dead, is relieved by the unhesitating devotion of Sigrún and the poetical beauty of the dialogue, unsurpassed elsewhere in Norse literature. Helgi cries:

"Now let no one sing a keen for the wounds on my breast, for women are enclosed in the burial mound, kings' daughters have come among the dead".

It is interesting to compare this story with the Irish trilogy of Étaín. In the Norse, both the supernatural woman and her mortal husband are reborn in two later generations, and in each case identical pairs re-marry,

in contrast to the Irish, where we do not hear of the re-birth of the man, except, possibly, the god Lug in the story of the birth of Cuchulainn. In Norse it is the man who retains his name throughout, Helgi; in the Irish it is the woman, Étaín. It is remarkable that in both the Irish and the Norse stories the brother of the hero has love relations with the hero's wife, and that the hero, so far from resenting such a union, gives it his blessing. In both stories the heroine is seen in the air in the form of a swan before her final disappearance.

Almost the most remarkable common feature in the Irish and Norse stories is the fundamental association with the barrow. Its association with a man of the name of Helgi is also apparently constant in Norse, for in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 52, Helgi (Hölg), the eponymous king of Hálogaland, is said to have had a barrow built for him and Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr (or ? Hörgabrúðr), one layer of gold and silver and another of earth and stones.¹¹ I shall return to the connection of the barrow with the belief in rebirth later. Here it is enough to note that in Norse the man subject to rebirth is commonly, though not invariably, known as Helgi.

Other stories, both Celtic and Norse, testify to the belief in rebirth, or at least to its popularity as a literary motif, and its association with the barrows of the dead. In Irish one of the most outstanding is the *Dialogue of the Two Swineherds*, which was known to the compiler of Cormac's Glossary, and must therefore be at least as old as the ninth century. In Norse the belief in rebirth is implied in many stories and poems. Thus in strophe 45 of the poem *Sigurðarkviða en Skamma* contained in the *Elder Edda*, when Brynhild is about to take her own life, Högni cries:

“Let no one hinder her from her long journey, and may she never be re-born (*aptrborin*)”.

This belief in re-birth is explicitly stated in connection

¹¹ Is this a trace of the tribute money collected by Helgi Haddingjaskati?

with *Starkaðr*, the grand old hero of the North, who is said to be the grandson of *Starkaðr Áludrengr*, "re-born" (*endrborinn*). His connection with re-birth is made clear on other grounds also. In the *Edda* poem *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, the hero *Starkaðr* is the brother of *Guðmundr*, who dwells on *Svarinshaugr*. He is also descended from the *álfar*, *Starkaðr Áludrengr* having married *Álfhildr*, the daughter of *King Álfr of Álfheimar*,¹² the region of *Olaf Geirstaða-Álfr*, as we shall see. *Álfhildr* had chosen a giant for husband, thus angering *Thor* who decreed that *Starkaðr* should have neither son nor daughter, and that his line should thus come to an end;¹³ but *Óðinn* counteracted this by declaring that he should live for three generations.¹⁴ Despite his heroism and *Óðinn's* patronage, he did not always get the better in a fight, for in single combat with *Sigurðr Fáfnisbani*, *Sigurðr* struck him on the jaw so that three of his teeth fell out, and *Nornagestr*, to whom we are indebted for the tale, picked up one of them and carried it off with him. "It is now used on a bell-rope at Lund", he gravely assures his audience, "and weighs seven ounces; and people go and look at it there as a curiosity".¹⁵

We have seen that in the Irish Cycle of *Étaín* the association of the barrows is connected with the gods *Midir* and the *Mac Óc*, the son of the *Dagda*, the greatest of all the Irish gods. In Norse the most striking illustration of the association of barrows with this belief in rebirth is the story of *Olaf Geirstaða-Álfr*, brother of *King Hálfdan the Black*, and uncle of *King Harold the Fair-haired*. His name means "Elf" (i.e. the soul of one awaiting rebirth) of *Geirstaðir*. In the version of this story contained in the *Flateyjarbók*, he is later re-born as *St. Olaf*, the son of his collateral descendant, and the

¹² *Heiðreks Saga (Hervarar Saga)* ed. Jón Helgason, 1924, ch. 1 in the version of *Hauksbók*.

¹³ We may compare the traditions of the Irish king *Mongán*, and also that of the *King of the Hebrides* related on p. 188 below.

¹⁴ For the whole story of *Starkaðr*, see H. M. Chadwick, *Cult of Othin*, (Cambridge, 1899), p. 68 f.

¹⁵ *Báttir of Nornagestr*, ch. 7.

re-birth has only been made possible by a ritual visit to the barrow of Olaf Geirstaða-Álfr himself. This visit is made, not by Harold Grenski, St. Olaf's father, for he has been killed in battle, but by Harold's foster-brother, his spiritual substitute, who cuts off the head of the corpse and conveys his personal property to Harold Grenski's wife, thus acting as a *psychopompos*.

What follows makes it clear that St. Olaf was regarded in popular opinion as Olaf Geirstaða-Álfr re-born, and the name Olaf which was given to him supports this. St. Olaf was a Christian, and one day, after he had become king, as he was riding with his men past the barrow, one of them said: "Tell me, sire, were you buried here?" The king indignantly replied that his soul never had two bodies, nor could have till Resurrection Day. But the man persisted: "It is said that when you came to this place formerly you said 'We have been here before too'." But the king declared: "I have never said this, and never will I say it". And he was much disturbed, and rode from the place as quickly as possible.¹⁶

An interesting parallel to the reluctance of St. Olaf to acknowledge his own former self and his own rebirth occurs in the story from the *Cin Dromma Snechta* where it is related of the early seventh century King Mongán of Antrim, (fl. c. 621) to whom, or to whose *fili* Forgall,¹⁷ we may actually be indebted for the compilation of the collection, and whose antiquarian interests in ancient Irish heathenism is manifest in a whole cycle of stories relating to him in this compilation. These sometimes led him into difficulties with his *fili*. According to one of these stories Mongán and Forgall quarrel on one occasion on a point of oral tradition, and the king is forced to buy himself off by forfeiting his wife. In the nick of time the ancient poet of the Fenians, Cálte mac Rónáin, appears from the dead, declaring that Mongán

¹⁶ *Flateyjarbók*, ed. G. Vigfússon and C. R. Unger, 1860-8, II, 135.

¹⁷ Zimmer, however, attributed it to Flann Mainistrech. For Mongán's *fili*, see the story in A. Nutt, *The Voyage of Bran I*, p. 52 ff.

was right, and that he, Cálte, had been present on the occasion under discussion in company with Mongán, "that is with Finn", and that he had come from Scotland. Mongán at once protests against the disclosure that he is identical with Finn mac Cumail; but the saga-teller has no doubts on the matter, and adds significantly:

"Mongán however was Finn, though he would not let it be known". It looks as if beliefs and stories of rebirth persisted into the Christian period, but that Christians, both Norse and Irish, were ashamed of being associated with them.

Yet according to another story once contained in the same *Cín Dromma Snechta*, Mongán is actually the son of the god Mannannán mac Lír, who visits his mother during her husband's absence at the court of Aidán, St. Columba's king in Argyll. It is in accordance with Mongán's divine parentage that he is fostered in *Tír Tairngeri*, the Irish "Land of Promise", till he is seventeen years of age, and that he is translated there in mature age in a super-natural vision known as a *baile*. This is a sufficiently remarkable history for a Christian king. But the other stories of Mongán are all of this supernatural caste.¹⁸ And the difficulty was apparently recognised by the Irish story-teller; for although the stories of Mongán and his supernatural fosterage and experiences are precisely in line with a whole large class of such stories in Irish literature, yet those told of Mongán, especially of his transformations, are largely satirical in tone. In the story of the *Conception of Mongán and of Dubh Lacha's Love for him*, among other satirical themes Mongán's servant upbraids him with having learnt nothing in the *Land of Promise* save eating and drinking and amusing himself — which, of course, means with women. This, then, is what, satirically speaking, the king's fosterage

¹⁸ It is claimed at the opening of the *Dialogue of the Two Swineherds* (see p. 182 above) that "They used to shape themselves into any shape, as did Mongán, the son of Fiachna." The text is edited by Windisch, *Irische Texte*, III, I, 230; partly translated into English by Kuno Meyer in *The Voyage of Bran* by A. Nutt, II, p. 58 ff.

by his true father, the god Manannán mac Lír amounted to. Like father, like son! Yet, strangely enough, he is said to have had no heirs. A special tale bears the title: "Why Mongán is deprived of noble issue".

It is claimed in another story from the *Cín Dromma Snechta* generally known as *The Voyage of Bran* that as a certain Bran is on a voyage seeking the Islands of the Blest, he meets the god Manannán mac Lír riding on a chariot in mid-ocean, and talking lightly of the flocks and herds which he sees all around him. He is, in fact, exercising his gift of what we also find as a constant Norse supernatural accomplishment, i.e. making things appear different from what they are — creating illusion, in Norse referred to as *sjónhverfing*. We may compare also Mongán's gift of illusion, just referred to. Manannán is coming from Argyll through the Inner Hebrides. He informs Bran that he is on his way to visit the mother of Mongán; and, as we know, the birth of Mongán himself is the result of his visit. In Cormac's *Glossary* we learn that Manannán was regarded as a renowned merchant of the Isle of Man, very wise in weather lore. He is almost certainly identical with the Welsh *Manawydan*, son of Ller, who, in the *Mabinogion*, ruled at Harlech on Cardigan Bay. The *Ller* of the Welsh story, the *Lír* of the Irish story of the *Fate of the Children of Lír*, located on the Antrim coast, is thought of primarily, therefore, not as a god of any land area, but of the sea. It would seem probable that in origin he is identical with the Norse god *Hlér*, or *Ægir*. His sphere seems to be the Inner Hebrides and Man, the kingdom known to the Norsemen as *Suðreyjar*, (later *Sodor*). Like Mongán, Manannán is never said to have sons of his own in propria persona; but in late Irish tradition the god Lug is said to be Manannán reborn, and he inherits his armour. Lug, Manannán and his fosterling Mongán, seem to be responsible for the birth of sons, but not themselves to figure as their fathers.¹⁹ Stories of Mongán show that

¹⁹ Except, in some versions, Lug as father of Cuchulainn.

there is not a pin to choose between him and Manannán in this, and Mongán's *fili* perhaps shares their functions, possibly even acting in their place.

The picture of Mongán, and still more of his fosterer Manannán, recalls the Norse god *Heimdallr*, as we picture him from scattered notices in the *Edda* and elsewhere, and more especially in the Norse poem *Rígsþula*. Like Manannán, Heimdallr is closely connected with the sea, and is a sage, a poet, and a magician who recites the *Heimdallargaldr*. He has the gift of *sjónhverfing*, and the power of shape-changing. In the *Gylfaginning*, ch. 27, he is referred to in a poem called the *Heimdallargaldr*, "Heimdallr's Incantation", in which he claims to be the son of nine mothers, all sisters, and as their names seem to suggest, waves of the sea, and identical with the nine daughters of Hlér or Ægir, the god of the sea who is very proficient in magic, and probably identical with Lír, the father of Manannán. Like Manannán in his gift of shape-changing, Heimdallr fights with Loki as a seal. Like Manannán he has prophetic foresight, and he is a great begetter of children. In *Völuspá* he is the begetter of "all holy kindreds, the greater and lesser sons of Heimdallr".²⁰

It is chiefly in the Norse poem *Rígsþula* that the similarity between Heimdallr and Manannán is most noteworthy. This poem is commonly associated with Ireland, and indeed its title suggests the Irish word *rí*, "a king". In the prose introduction Heimdallr, under the title *Rígr*, makes a journey along the seashore, apparently with the object of begetting children, for he visits three married couples in turn, representing three classes of society — thralls, free-men, and nobles. With each couple he spends three nights, and in each case the woman gives birth to a boy who becomes the progenitor of his class. The refrain in each case is specific:

²⁰ For a fuller discussion of Heimdallr, reference may be made to the *Note* at the close of my paper on "Early Celtic Marriage Customs" in the current issue of *Scottish Gaelic Studies*.

“ He lay down in the middle of the bed with one of the married couple on each side of him.”

And here, as in the Irish stories noted above, we are struck by the husband's complaisance. The poem is quite unlike any other in Norse, but resembles the poems and stories of Manannán, with the addition of an antiquarian “ origin ” touch — itself a very Celtic feature. But the two outstanding characteristics of both the Norse god Heimdallr and the Irish god Manannán are their close association with the sea — apparently the Hebrides — and the peculiar nature of their relations with women, taking the place of the husband, yet claiming no offspring of their own. And in this feature the historical king Mongán differs from them not at all. Indeed one of the stories in the *Cín Dromma Snechta* claims to explain why Mongán had no son who could succeed him (i.e. of his own rank).

Various indications connect, not only Manannán mac Lír, but also Mongán, with the Hebrides, and in this connection I can not forbear quoting a gloss, probably made by an Irishman or a Hebridean, on the text of Solinus, a Latin writer of the third century. The gloss itself was probably made during the eighth century (though possibly earlier), perhaps at the time of the compilation of the *Cín Dromma Snechta* and about a century after Mongán's death. In this passage the commentator tells us that all the *Ebudes* (i.e. Hebrides) are subject to one king, for they are all separated from one another by narrow straits.

“ The king has nothing of his own; but all the property of all his subjects belongs to him. He is forced by definite laws to act properly, and in order to prevent his being deflected by avarice from the right course, he learns justice by poverty, since he has no private possessions, but is supported at the public expense. No woman is given to him for his own wife; but he takes on loan, one after another, any woman of whom he may become enamoured. So he is not allowed to either pray or hope for children.”²¹

²¹ Is it possible that some practice such as is implied here may have been in

Did such a custom really exist? Or has the commentator created it from his knowledge of some such Cycle of stories as that which we have been examining? In either case we may be sure that such temporary marriages, in which, so the commentator gravely assures us, the king was forced to act properly, must have been accompanied by some form of ritual, and we may expect to find literary traces of it.

I think we do. In the *Cín Dromma Snechta* there is a story of a supernatural journey made by the high-king of Ireland, Conn Cétchathach, in the company of the god Lug, to Lug's supernatural palace. Here the king finds a beautiful maiden seated beside a vat of ale, who ladles out drinks to him, and with every drink she prophesies to him the name of one of his descendants, all of which he writes in ogams on wood — an interesting testimony to the use of this most ancient Celtic alphabet for recording genealogies. The lady is called the "Sovereignty of Ireland". And after his interview the king finds himself on his royal *rath* at Tara. A similar visionary story is told of the High-king Cormac mac Airt; but here the god is not Lug, but Lug's fosterer Manannán. There are other stories relating to such supernatural experiences in Irish tradition. A story is told of Mongán himself which relates to such a vision, known as the *Baile Mongáin*; and a story of the kind was evidently told of the prehistoric king Crimthann Nia Náir,²² whom the *Annals of the Four Masters* represent as reigning when Christ was born.

In Norse it is not always easy to distinguish such temporary visits to the supernatural regions — a brief visit and a permanent return, known in Irish as a *baile* — from those stories in which the hero departs for ever.

existence in early times in Norway? The excessive proneness to women for which Snorri censures Jarl Hákon of Hlaðir bears, in the traditions which have come down to us, a general resemblance to the conduct of Midir and Manannán, which could best be explained by some such code. And here *Rigsbula* would be in no alien milieu.

²² See my recent article referred to above.

But I would like to call attention to a Norse supernatural fosterage story, and its sequel, the *baile* of King Harold the Fair-haired, recorded in Snorri's account and also in the longer version contained in the *Flateyjarbók*. Harold ruled Norway in the second half of the ninth century. The first incident is narrated by Snorri²³ as taking place when Harold is a young boy, and relates how at his father's Yule-feast all the food and drink vanish, obviously by supernatural means. A certain Finn, who is captured and tortured, cries out to Harold who releases him and follows him to his home where a feast is being held. From the version in the *Flateyjarbók*²⁴ we learn that the thief and the owner of the feast are identical. He is there called *Dofri*, and is described as a giant. Harold remains there for five years — a supernatural fosterage story like that of Manannán — and on his departure it is foretold to him by *Dofri* that he will now be king of Norway, and after his accession it is briefly stated²⁵ that a certain *Svási* came and cajoled Harold into marrying the Finn maiden, *Snæfríðr*.

The theft of the food and drink by the supernaturally gifted Finn recalls the Irish story in which *Culdub* from the *síd* or "Elfmound" three times steals the food of Finn ua Baiscne (i.e. Finn mac Cumail) and the Fian, and is pursued by Finn himself to the door of the mound. Are we to suppose that the coincidence of the names Finn in each case is accidental? Is it possible that the similarity between the Norse and the Irish incidents are due to a closer literary connection than could be accounted for by a common folk-motif?

We now come to Harold's *baile*. In ch. 25 of Snorri's text of Harold's saga we hear again of a Yule feast, and here also a Finn, whose name is given as *Svási*, sends in a summons to the king to come outside, indicating that they had had friendship earlier, and apparently that *Svási*

²³ *Saga of Hálfðan the Black*, ch. 8.

²⁴ Vol. I, p. 563 ff., (*Pátr of Hálfðan the Black*).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 567.

had been Harold's former supernatural fosterer. Harold is conducted by Svási to his dwelling, and there he is received by Svási's beautiful daughter Snæfriðr, who presents the king with a cup of mead. That night the king weds her, and falls so completely under her spell that even after her death he cannot be induced to leave her side till Þorleifr Spaki, his royal sage, exposes the state of corruption into which the corpse has decayed. We may suspect a cautionary note in the conclusion, quite in accordance with Snorri's courtly tone and habitual respect for the dynasty of the Ynglingar to which Harold belonged. As is usual elsewhere also, however, the *Flateyjarbók* here adopts a cruder tone. In this text also Harold's fostermother is referred to in another passage as *Heiðr*, the usual name for a common sorceress, and she is described like a greedy and common troll. Elsewhere in the same text, however, Dofri has a daughter Friðr who is described as tall and beautiful, and who is manifestly the same person as the *Snæfriðr* of Snorri's story, and as a *Friðr* mentioned elsewhere in the *Flateyjarbók* as a daughter of Dofri.

Taken together these relations of Harold with his supernatural fosterer suggest that we have before us the variant versions of a story closely resembling the *baile* of the Irish kings, especially the *Baile Chuinn* from the *Cín Dromma Snechta*. This story of Harold would seem to relate that the king received supernatural fosterage, that he received a cup of mead from the beautiful daughter of his fosterer, that her father promises him the sovereignty on his departure, and that he marries the lady, who has alternatively beautiful and also hideous and baleful aspects. The close relationship of these supernatural experiences of Harold to those of the Irish High-King Conn Cétchathach, and still more to those of Conn's descendant, Niall Noígiallach, and their relations with the maiden calling herself the *flaithiusa h-Ereenn* ("the

Sovereignty of Ireland") requires no demonstration.²⁶

So far we have reviewed rapidly the stories in Irish and Norse relating to the birth or rebirth of a hero, his supernatural fosterage or spiritual education, his *baile*, or visit to *Tír Tairngeri* or some alternative supernatural region, and his supernatural marriage to a lady who seems to be in some mysterious way identified with the "sovereignty", and finally his return to the world of men. There remain two other important classes of story in the *Cin Dromma Snechta* which claim a close relationship to the Norse. These are the *Imrama* and *Imthechta* or "Voyages"; and the stories of the final disappearance of heroes in the *síd* mounds in Irish, in *Ódáinsakr* in Norse, there to be reborn, as the stories seem clearly to imply. The two classes of story are very closely connected, as we shall see. In the second class, however, in both the Norse and Celtic stories, the return is only a brief and temporary one.

We have seen that in the *Baile* or supernatural vision of the High-King Conn Cétchathach, the king is conducted by the god Lug on a temporary visit to his palace, and apparently to a temporary marriage with the lady who is called the "Sovereignty of Ireland"; and that a similar experience befalls his grandson Cormac mac Airt, whose visit is to *Tír Tairngeri* to the dwelling of Manannán mac Lír. Those, however, who visit the Land of Promise at the invitation of its supernatural or *síd* women do not always return. Conn's own son, Connla the Fair, departed in answer to such an invitation, and was never seen again. His story, like that of his father Conn, was contained in the *Cin Dromma Snechta*. It relates that one day, while Connla is on the Hill of Uisnech with his father, he sees a woman who says she has come from the

²⁶ Those who care to follow up such themes of supernatural fosterage in Early Norse, of which there are many, may consult Hilda Davidson (née Ellis), "Fostering by Giants in Old Norse Sagas," *Medium Ævum*, Vol. X, 1941. The *Saga of Bárðr Snæfellsás* is particularly valuable for comparison with such Irish supernatural themes as those discussed above, all the more so in that it is itself a pastiche of traditional motifs.

“Lands of the Living” (*a tírib béo*),²⁷ where there is neither death nor sin.

“We have everlasting feasts without their needing to be served. We have goodwill without strife. We live in a great *sid*-mound, and so we are called the people of the *side*”

Only Connla can see the woman, but Conn, who can hear her, asks who she is. She replies that she is a young and beautiful woman of “the race of the *side*”²⁸ (*aes side*), who expected neither death nor old age, and she invites Connla to the plain of delights, ruled for ever by a king in whose land is neither weeping nor sorrow, and she promises, moreover, that if Connla will go with her his form shall never lose its beauty or its youth.

Conn summons his druid who is able to make her withdraw; but she first throws an apple to Connla, and for a month he will eat no other food, and longing for the woman seizes him; and she comes again, crying —

“On a high throne sits Connla . . . waiting for fearful death. The Immortal Living await you. They summon you . . . There is another land which rejoices the heart of everyone who goes there. None are there save women and girls.”

And she invites Connla to go with her in her crystal boat.

“Then,” adds the saga-teller, “Connla sprang away from them into the crystal boat. They saw them going away from them; scarcely could their eyes follow as they rowed away over the sea. They have not been seen from then till now.”²⁹

One of the most beautiful of the Irish stories of supernatural voyages is the *Voyage of Bran, son of Febal*.³⁰ In its simplest terms the story tells of a supernatural

²⁷ “Aus den Ländern der Lebenden,” Pokorny, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, Vol. XVII, p. 202.

²⁸ So also Fann and Liban are addressed as women of the *side* in *Cuchulainn's Sick-bed*.

²⁹ K. H. Jackson attributes the text to the eighth century (*A Celtic Miscellany*, London, 1951, p. 157).

³⁰ In the *Mabinogion* Bran and Manawydan are brothers, sons of Llyr. See *Branwen*, and the opening of *Manawydan*.

woman who comes to the house of Bran, and gives him a branch of blossom and sings to him of blessed islands in which sorrow and sickness and death are unknown, islands inhabited by women, where all is full of freshness and the voices of birds and beautiful steeds and Spring weather, without sin, or old age. We have already seen how Bran, passing over the sea to discover the islands, meets the god Manannán mac Lír coming over the sea in his chariot to visit Mongán's mother Caintigern in her husband's absence. Bran must presumably, therefore have been going to the Hebrides. Bran passes on his way, and eventually spends what is believed to be a year on an island inhabited only by women; but when he and his companions return home they find that no one knows them, though they tell him they have a story called the *Voyage of Bran* in their ancient stories. One of the crew, a certain Nechtan mac Collbrain, who sets foot on land, immediately turns to dust. The land of the ever young where Bran and his companions have been is the land of the dead; and again they set out sorrowfully over the sea and are never more heard of.⁸¹

The sea is a very common feature in these stories, but it is by no means an essential one. In the *Echtra Nerai*, "The Adventures (supernatural) of Nera",⁸² a Connacht prince enters the *sid* mound of Cruachain hard by the palace of Ailill and Medb. No lady invites him, but one Hallowe'en Nera takes the opportunity of bringing up the tail end of a procession of dead men who are entering the *sid* mound, and there a wife is given to him by the king of the *sid* with whom he seems to spend three days and nights. However it is but an hour or so by human time, and his supernatural wife aids him to return to Cruachain to warn Ailill and Medb that in a year's time the *sid* folk will come and destroy them unless they

⁸¹ In the story of Laeghaire mac Crimthainn he and his followers similarly return from Mag Mell, the *sidh* under the loch, to bid farewell to their own people, after which they disappear into the *sid* for ever.

⁸² Edited and translated by Kuno Meyer, *Revue celtique*, Vol. X, p. 115 ff.

themselves first destroy the *síð* mound; and to prove his knowledge to them of the *síð* folk and their intentions he takes with him some wild flowers from the underworld of the *síð*, primroses and fern, and wild garlic. But after a year in Cruachain we are told that Nera goes back to his wife in the *síð*, and she bids him welcome. The men of Cruachain come and destroy the *síð* mound, but the story ends with the words:

“ Nera was left with his people in the *síð*, and has not come out until now, nor will he come till Doom.

The stories of supernatural ladies who court a young prince, afford the closest parallel of all between Celtic and Norse sagas. With Connla's lady lover from the *síð* mound, which she frankly calls the “ Land of Living Men”, of youth and eternal life, and her fatal gift of the apple to Connla, we may recall the Norse story related in *Völsunga Saga*, ch. 2, where the childless king Rerir goes in his desire for an heir and sits on a barrow of the dead. Then a supernatural maiden, Freyja's handmaid, comes flying to him with an apple which she drops into his lap. “ And the king took the apple, knowing well its meaning and its power”, and he goes home and shares it with his wife, and eventually they have a son who is the great Völsungr, the ancestor of Sigurðr the dragon-slayer. But he is not born in the natural way, and both his father and his mother die immediately. It is a strange feature of these stories, whether Irish or Norse, that offspring are rarely born of the unions of the prince and his supernatural lover, and the prince himself is doomed to an early death; or, like Connla, and Bran son of Febal, he disappears for ever, no-one knows where.

This is the fate of the Norse hero in the *Saga of Eric Víðförli*, “ Eric the Far-Traveller”, who, after a brief and very happy sojourn in Ódáinsakr, “ The Field of the not-dead”, *Jörð Lifandi Manna*, “ The Land of Living Men ” (chs. 1, 2) returns to his own people for ten years, but then suddenly disappears, never to be heard of more.

This also is the fate of Helgi Þórisson, whose story is told in the *Flateyjarbók*³³ immediately after the story of *Nornagestr*. Helgi and his brother Þorsteinn, who live in friendly relations with King Olaf Tryggvason, have gone north to Finnmark, trading butter with the Lapps. On their return journey they land and enter a wood where Helgi is benighted. As darkness comes on he sees twelve supernatural women approaching, dressed in red, and riding on red horses, with gold armour, clearly valkyries. They dismount and pitch camp, preparing beds and tables and rich food, and Helgi spends three nights with the most beautiful of them, who at parting gives him two chests full of treasure. But when Yule comes on Helgi disappears in a supernatural gale, and a year later he reappears at court, but now blind. He tells the king that he has spent a year at the court of king Guðmundr of Glasisvellir, where he has been well-treated and splendidly entertained, but that before allowing him to return to the world of men Guðmundr's daughter has torn out his eyes, that he may not be beloved by the daughters of Norway. Helgi lives only till the same day a year hence.

The motif of Guðmundr's daughters, and the fatal nature of their embraces, was widespread in the North. In Saxo's account of the Voyage of Gorm and Thorkill from Denmark to Guðmundr's realm we have a story resembling in many ways the Irish *Voyage of Bran*; but the grave moralist Saxo would have us believe that those who do not return from Guðmundr's realm are themselves to blame, and his narrative is a vivid account, full of picturesque detail, of a kind of trial trip to Guðmundr's realm, made by the Danish prince Gorm, under the guidance and safe-conduct of Thorkill, a skilled mariner, who has safely made the journey many times before. It is, in fact, Gorm's *baile*. Everything depends, Thorkill warns them, on their refusing to eat of the fruits of Guðmundr's beautiful garden, or to hold

³³ Vol. I, p. 359 ff.

any kind of intercourse with the people there, and above all to avoid Guðmundr's daughters when he offers them in marriage. In the event, those who actually succumb lose their wits. The supernatural world of Guðmundr is fatal to those who do not resist its charms. They may return for a short time, like Eric Víðförli, and Helgi Þórisson, and like the Irish hero Nera; but after that they disappear mysteriously, no one knows where.

Yet strangely enough Guðmundr's realm is not thought of as the land of the dead. Both the Norse sagas and Saxo emphasise that it is the land of the "Not dead", *Óddínsakr* (Norse), *Undensakre* (Saxo), the "Land of Living Men", (*Jörð Lifandi Manna*). The *Hervarar Saga* tells us categorically that —

"Guðmundr and his men lived for many generations, and so heathen men believed that *Óddínsakr* lay in his realm; and whoever went there cast off sickness or old age and could not die."

Saxo has an interesting story which illustrates this very well. Hadding, the prehistoric king of Denmark, is visited in his home, like Connla and Bran in Ireland, by a supernatural woman. In Saxo's story she is said to come from the Underworld ("underground") and she offers the king fresh hemlock "as if asking him in what part of the world such fresh herbs had grown in Winter". She takes Hadding with her underground, in order, so Saxo tells us, "that he shall pay a visit in the flesh to the regions whither he must go when he dies". In fact it is Hadding's *baile*, his trial trip to the land of the dead, like that of Gorm and Thorkill; or rather to *Undensakre*, the land of the "Not dead". After passing through a mist they come to a high wall which cuts them off from the object of their journey. The woman wrings off the head of a cock which she is carrying, and flings it over the wall, and it comes to life again, "and testified by a loud crow to its recovery of its breathing". But Hadding and his wife turned and went home.

This then is the promise held out by the women who invite the heroes to the land of the *síð* in Irish, to Guðmundr's realm in Norse. They may return, perhaps only for a short time; or they disappear mysteriously for ever, apparently to continue their existence in perpetual youth. Where? How?

I think that the answer to the first question would seem to be: in the barrows of the dead, the *haugar* of Norse, the *síð* mounds of the Irish. This is the *óðáinsakr*, the *Jörð Lifandi Manna* of Norse, the *Undensakre* of Saxo,³⁴ *Tír Tairngeri*, *Tír Béo* of Irish. Here are the flowers and fruits of the earth awaiting their time to bloom on earth, the primroses, and garlic and fern which Nera brings from the *síð* of Cruachain to the palace of Ailill and Medb to prove where he has been. Here are the hemlocks offered by the woman of the Underworld to King Hadding in Winter, the unwasting apple given by the *síð* woman to Connla. And here is the garden of Guðmundr of Glasisvellir, of which he is so proud, with its flowers and its fruits, which his visitors must not eat if they would return safe to earth. And here are the *síð* women and the valkyries who tempt men to enter the mounds alive with them, promising them that they shall not die.

And here are the *álfar*, the souls of the unborn, who, like the Irish *Étaín*, the Norse *Geirstaða-Álfr* and *Starkaðr*, and *Helgi*, live again in other members of their families in later generations. Thus in fact these heroes do not die, but re-live for ever, having married the *síð* women, the daughters of Guðmundr, as *Helgi* marries *Sigrún* (finally, ritually, in the barrow). We never hear of a corpse or a ghost in the barrows in either Norse or Irish. The occupant is always a *draugr* in Norse, an animated corpse; in Irish a *síð* or supernatural being.

But of course the question in all our minds is that of

³⁴ 'The tale is that Fialler retired to a spot called *Undensakre*, which is unknown to our peoples.' (Saxo, IV, 105. English translation by Elton, p. 129). Here Fialler is referred to as the governor of Skaane.

origins. Which people first developed this belief in rebirth, and all the mythology to which it has given rise, and of which Norse and Irish alike have preserved for us only entertainment stories? And that is just the question which as yet we cannot answer. Did either borrow it? Or did each develop it independently from something which had been widespread over north-western Europe in the far past? — or from new influences coming into Europe from the East in the Dark Ages across the Steppe? The Irish evidence is recorded earlier than the Norse, and for the most part is thrown back to the prehistoric period, and involves the gods; but it is still living late enough to be related in all its fulness of the early seventh century historical king Mongán. The Norse was not recorded till later, but, like the Irish, it also involves heroes of the latest days of heathenism and even of Christianity, though it also relates to Norse heroes of the Migration Period. Perhaps therefore the roots of both lie in the beliefs and mythology of the earliest period of the Dark Ages; but we can hardly doubt that throughout this period and the Viking Age the Norse developed under literary influences from the Celtic peoples, perhaps through the Hebrides, where the two peoples seem to have met originally as friends.

A NOTE ON THE WORD FRIÐSTÓLL

BY JACQUELINE SIMPSON

IN the twelfth chapter of *Guðmundar saga dýra* there occurs, for the only time in Old Icelandic, the word *friðstóll*, "chair of peace". It occurs in a passage which tells how, in 1196, Guðmund, a chieftain in Eyjafjörð, lost much of his prestige and authority because he passively accepted insulting behaviour from a follower of his rival, Önund Þorkelsson:

En Guðmundr lét sem hann vissi eigi, ok þurru mjök metorð hans ok þóttu mjök saman ganga um þat, er til kom, ok kǫlluðu menn Önundar, at hann sæti á friðstóli uppi í Øxnadal . . .¹

The general sense of this is obviously that Guðmund has taken refuge on his own farm in Øxnadal, and will not come out to face his enemies. However, "to sit on a chair of peace" is so concrete an image that one is driven to seek the origin of the phrase in some specific object or custom. It is therefore interesting to examine the Old English cognate *friþstōl*.

The word *stōl* and its compounds have various meanings in O.E., both literal and figurative. The simple meaning "stool, seat" does occur, but the sense "throne" is more frequent, and there is a group of ecclesiastical usages derived from the various senses of the Latin *cathedra*. The various meanings can be classified as follows:²

I. *Stōl*: "seat, stool"; cf. *fildestōl*, *gangstōl*.

II. *Stōl* in the sense of "throne" occasionally occurs in prose, and is frequent in *Genesis B*, where it is used of the throne of God and of that which Satan wished to set up for himself in Heaven. Similarly in poetry

¹ *Sturlunga Saga*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and Kristján Eldjárn, 1946, I.185.

² For detailed references and quotations, see Bosworth and Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and Toller's *Supplement*, s. vv.

several compounds in *-stōl* are used of thrones, both of earthly kings and of God or Christ or saints. Such are: *cynestōl*, *ealdorstōl*, *gīfstōl*, *gumstōl*, *heofonstōl*, *rodorstōl*, *þēodenstōl*.

III. In some poetic compounds the sense "throne" has developed into that of "power, kingship". Such are *bregostōl*, and *þēodenstōl* in *Widsiþ* 13.

IV. *Cynestōl* is often used, both in prose and poetry, in the sense "royal city", "capital".

V. In certain poetic compounds *-stōl* has been further generalized into "home" or "place". Such are *ēðelstōl* "ancestral home", *frumstōl* "original or principal dwelling-place", *hlēowstōl* "protecting home" or "protecting city", and probably *glēowstōl*, which seems to mean "joyful home". *Frumstōl* can be used of the "true place" of things as well as of people; thus it is said that the four elements each have their "proper station" (*Boethius Meters*, 20/63, 125), and that all created things "do the Lord's will in their own places" (*The Wonders of Creation* 51).

VI. *Stōl* is used to gloss the Latin *cathedra*, and in ecclesiastical usage its compounds range in meaning from the actual throne of a bishop to his "see" and "authority". Thus *ærcebiscopstōl* is used both in the concrete and the abstract sense; *arcestōl* means "archiepiscopal see"; and *biscopstōl* has the meanings "authority" or "see" of a bishop, and also "cathedral town" and "bishop's palace".

The compound *friþstōl* is recorded six times in O.E.; it is unknown in other Germanic languages, apart from its single appearance in Icelandic.

I. It appears in the entry for the year 1006 in four MSS. of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*:

Se here com to his friðstole Wihtlande, MSS C, D.

Se here com to his fryðstole to Wihtlande, MS E.

Se here ferde to his fryðstole into Wihtlande, MS F.³

³ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. B. Thorpe, *Rolls Series* 23, 1861, I 256 cols. 1 and 2, 257 cols. 1 and 2.

II. In a legal text of the early eleventh century, known as *Grið*, (which is an ecclesiastical compilation), it is said:

And gyf forworht man friðstol gesece and þurh þæt feorh geyrne, þonne sy þreora án for his feore, bute man bet gearian wille: wergyld, ece þeowet, hengenwitnuncg.⁴

III, IV, V. The metrical version of the Psalms in the *Paris Psalter* three times uses *friþstól* to translate *refugium*:

Du eart friðstol us fæste, drihten.
 Du me friðstol on þe fæstne settest.
 Forðon me is geworden wealdend drihten
 to friðstole.⁵

VI. In a homily falsely attributed to Wulfstan this word is applied to the throne of Christ in Heaven; much of this homily is based on Latin originals, but no source has so far been discovered for the conclusion, in which this sentence occurs:

We wæron þider gehatene and geladede to ðam halgan ham and to ðam cynelican friðstole þær drihten Crist wunað and rixað.⁶

In the last quotation *-stól* obviously is used in the sense "throne", but in the others might well have the generalized sense "place"; *friþstól* is translated "place of refuge, asylum, sanctuary" by Thorpe and in Bosworth and Toller's *Dictionary*. It would in that case be the equivalent of *friþstow*, which is used of the Jewish cities of refuge in the *Pastoral Care*, as a translation of *refugium* in the prose psalms of the *Paris Psalter* and in *Boethius*, and with the meaning "sanctuary" in the Introduction to Alfred's *Laws*.⁷

However, in view of the special sense attached to the word *fridstool* in medieval documents relating to sanctuary, it seems justifiable to draw a distinction between *friþstól* and other O.E. terms for sanctuary. Thus Liebermann

⁴ *Grið* 16, F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 1898-1916, I 471.

⁵ *The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius*, ed. G. P. Krapp, *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* V, 1932, 60, 62; Psalms 89/1, 90/9, 93/19.

⁶ *Wulfstan*, ed. A. Napier, 265/18.

⁷ *The Anglo-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, ed. H. Sweet, E.E.T.S. 52, 72, 1872-9, 167/2. *Libri Psalmorum* ed. B. Thorpe, Ps. 9, 9; 17, 1; 30, 3. *Alfred* 13, Liebermann op. cit. I 30.

translates *Grið* 16 as: "wenn ein verwirkter Mensch einen (kirchlichen) Friedenstuhl aufsucht . . .", and notes in his Glossary: "Nur *fríðstól* hat neben *refugium* allgemein diese Sonderbedeutung des Stuhls in den fünf Nordengl. Kathedralen: York, Hexham, Ripon, . . . Beverley, Durham, . . . während *fríðgeard*, *-hus*, *-socn*, *-splott*, *-stow* nur Asyl allgemein heissen".⁸

The five churches mentioned above possessed in the Middle Ages unusual privileges of sanctuary, which they claimed had been bestowed on them by Anglo-Saxon kings, and which, except at Durham, were associated with certain stone seats near the high altar, which were called *fríðstool*. Those at Beverley Minster and the Abbey of St. Andrew at Hexham still exist, and are generally agreed to be of Anglo-Saxon workmanship.

According to Canon Law, every consecrated church possessed the right of sanctuary and so protected any fugitive who could reach it; the limits of the sanctuary usually included the churchyard. The *Laws* of Alfred give a detailed account of the conditions in which sanctuary is granted, and they clearly state that every church is a sanctuary. However, in the *Laws* of Ethelred it is said that, as all churches are not equal in dignity, the fines for breach of sanctuary should vary according to the importance of the church concerned.⁹ This principle was carried further in the course of the Middle Ages, when at least twenty-two of the chief cathedrals and abbeys of England possessed special privileges of sanctuary conferred on them by royal charters. Such sanctuaries were protected by heavier penalties than an ordinary church, their power extended for a considerable distance from the actual building, and there was no limit to the length of time a criminal could shelter in them.

The earliest medieval document in which the *fríðstoll* is named is a charter of Henry I confirming the privileges of York Minster; these privileges, according to the charter,

⁸ Liebermann, op. cit. I 471, II Gloss. s.v. *Asyl* 21.

⁹ *VIII Eth.* 4.1, 5; Liebermann, op. cit. I 264.

date from the time of Edward the Confessor and Aldred, Archbishop of York — that is, between 1060 and 1066:

Sub Edwardo rege et Aldredo archiepiscopo, fuit ecclesiæ S. Petri consuetudo egregiæ libertatis; si quis enim quemlibet cujuscunque facinoris aut flagitii reus convictum infra atrium ecclesiæ caperet et retineret, universali judicio sex centum emendebat. Si vero infra ecclesiam, duodecem hundreth; infra Eboracum octodecem. Pœnitentia quoque de singulis, sicut de sacrilegiis injuncta. In hundreth, octo libræ continetur. Quod si aliquis, vesano spiritu agitur, diabolico ausu, quemquam capere præsumperet in cathedra lapidea juxta altare, quam Anglici vocant *Fridstoll*, id est Cathedra quietudinis vel pacis, hujus tam flagitiosi sacrilegii emendatio sub nullo judicio erat, sub nullo pecuniæ numero clauderetur, sed apud Anglos *Boteles*, hoc est sine emenda, vocabatur.¹⁰

The date of this charter is probably soon after 1106, for in that year Henry ordered an inquiry to be held to investigate the customs and privileges of York Minster, which were being challenged by the Sheriff of York. The evidence given by jurors at this inquiry has been preserved in a letter from the Chapter of York to the Chapter of Southwell. This letter unfortunately cannot be exactly dated; A. F. Leach, who printed it, thinks it may be c. 1330. It assigns the institution of the privileges to King Athelstan, and gives an account of them which is virtually identical with that of the charter. The only substantial differences are: *infra Chorum* for *infra Eboracum* and *In hundreth sex libræ continentur* for . . . *octo libræ* . . . The Anglo-Saxon word is here spelt *Fritstol*. In a later section of the letter, which does not correspond to anything in the charter, there is an interesting allusion to the privileges of Beverley, Ripon, Hexham, and Durham:

Quod si aliquis ex necessitate urgente inde (i.e. from York sanctuary) discedere voluerit, conductu Canonicorum cum signo pacis ecclesiæ, pacificare poterit ire ad vicinam Ecclesiam similem libertatem pacis habentem, viz. ad Ecclesiam Beati Johannis in Beverlaco, ad Ecclesiam Beati Wilfridi in Ripun,

¹⁰ *Carta Regis Henrici primi, de Libertatibus Ecclesiæ S. Petri Ebor.*, printed by William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* VIII 1180 (1846 edition).

et Beati Cuthberti in Dunelmo, et ad Ecclesiam Sancti Andreae in Hestodelsham. Similem emendationem pro pace fracta habent prefatae Ecclesiae. Ecclesia vero Beati Johannis in Beverlaco miliare unum circa se habet liberum et quietum ab omni regali consuetudine, et ab omni reditione pecuniae, et ab omni gildo, quod regi per universam Angliam persolvitur. A principio illius miliarii usque ad crucem Alestani regis, si quis pacem fregerit, reus erit i hundreth; a cruce Alestani usque ad cimiterium, de iii hundreth; qui in cimiterio pacem fregerit de vi hundreth; qui infra ecclesiam de xii hundreth; qui infra chororum amissa omni possessione sua, corporis sui subjacebit periculo, absque omnia satisfactione nominatae pecuniae. Simili modo eadem libertate miliare suum habet circa se Ecclesia Beati Wilfridi in Ripun. A cujus principio usque ad cimiterium, pacis violator reus erit de iii hundreth; in cimiterio de vi; in choro ut de aliis praediximus.¹¹

The Abbey of St. Andrew at Hexham is built on the site of a church founded by St. Wilfrid, and it contains a stone seat which may well be of the period of Wilfrid, and which is traditionally named the "fridstool".¹² It may originally have been a bishop's chair, for Hexham was the see of a bishop from 681 until it was destroyed in the Viking raids of the ninth century. Its privileges are described by Richard, Prior of Hexham, in a work written c. 1141. He claims that they were granted to Wilfrid by King Ecgfrith of Northumbria (671-85), but he describes them in phrases so similar to Henry's charter that he may well be imitating it:

Si quis igitur quemlibet cujuscunque facinoris aut flagitii reum et convictum infra quatuor cruces quae sunt extra ipsam villam de Hestaldasham capit et retinet, universali iudicio ij hundreth emendabit. Si vero infra vallam iiij hundreth. Si vero infra muros atrii ecclesiae vj hundreth. Si autem infra ecclesiam xij hundreth. Si vero infra valvas chori xvij hundreth. Pœnitentia quoque de singulis sicut de sacrilegiis injuncta. In hundreth viij libræ continentur. Quod si aliquis, vesano spiritu agitatus diabolico ausu, quemquam capere præsumpserit in cathedra lapidea juxta altare quam Angli vocant *Fridstol*, id est cathedram quietudinis vel pacis, vel etiam ad feretrum

¹¹ From the *Liber Albus* of Southwell, in *Visitations and Memorials of Southwell Minster*, ed. A. F. Leach, Camden Society N.S. XLVIII 1891, 192-4.

¹² See C. C. Hodges, *The Abbey of St. Andrew, Hexham*, 1888, 21.

sanctarum reliquiarum quod est post altare, hujus tam flagitiosi sacrilegii emendatur sub nullo judicio erit, sub nullo pecuniæ numero claudetur, sed apud Anglos *botolos*, id est, sine emendatione vocatur.¹³

The extensive privileges of Beverley Minster are first described in a list of miracles appended to Folcard's *Vita S. Johannis Beverlacensis*,¹⁴ but the word *fridstol* does not appear. The author says that the privileges were granted by King Athelstan in thanksgiving for his victory over the Danes in 937, which he ascribed to the intercession of St. John of Beverley. Athelstan set up crosses one mile outside Beverley to mark the limit of the sanctuary and established increasing fines for the violation of each sanctuary boundary; the innermost boundary was the chancel arch, and he who "profaned the presence of the relics of the holy Confessor" there, could not be absolved by a fine and could be forgiven only by God.

The first mention of the actual *fridstol* of Beverley is in a document known as the *Libertates Ecclesiæ Sancti Johannis de Beverlaco*, which is ascribed to "Master Aluaredus, sacrist of that church".¹⁵ Alured of Beverley wrote a history c. 1150, but it is doubtful whether this document can justifiably be attributed to him.¹⁶ It ascribes the institution of the privileges to Athelstan, and gives an account of the boundaries of the sanctuary which is similar to that in the *Miracles*, but which concludes:

Sexta, id est ultima pacis meta, infra presbyterium, ubi erat summum altare cum sacrosancto corpore Domini, et sanctorum reliquiis, et precioso corpore Sanctissimi Johannis confessoris, ejusdem loci patroni, et juxta altare sedem lapideam quæ ab Anglis dicebatur *Fridstol*, id est pacis Cathedra, ad quam reus fugiendo perveniens omnimodam pacis securitatem habebat.

¹³ *Brevis Annotatio Ricardis prioris Hagulstadensis ecclesiæ, de antiquo et moderno statu ejusdem ecclesiæ*, printed by Sir Roger Twysden in *Decem Scriptores*, 1652, I 307.

¹⁴ Folcard's *Vita* was written between 1065 and 1070, but the list of miracles is probably to be dated 1170-80; see *Historians of the Church of York*, ed. James Raine, *Rolls Series* 71, 1879, I lii-lv, 297-8.

¹⁵ Ed. James Raine, in *Sanctuarium Dunelmense et sanctuarium Beverlacense*, *Surtees Society* 5, 1837, 99-100.

¹⁶ See A. F. Leach, *Memorials of Beverley Minster: the Chapter Act Book*, *Surtees Society* 98, 1893, xxv-xxvii.

The next paragraph of the document shows great similarities to the charter of Henry I, and may well be derived from it:

Itaque sicut leucam pacis per metas distinxit, ita ejusdem pacis violatæ emendationem regali providentia per incrementa constituit: qui enim infra primam leucæ metam pacem Sancti Johannis violaverit unius hundreth reus erit; qui infra secundam ij hundreth persolvat; qui infra tertiam vj; qui infra quartam xij; qui infra quintam xvij reus erit; qui vero diabolica presumptione infra sextam pacis metam capere vel ledere quemcunque ausus fuerit, hujus sacrilegii emenda non erit determinata, sed dicebatur ab Anglis *botalaus*, id est sine emenda. Tantæ transgressionis emendatio sub nullo cadebat pecuniæ numero, sed in misericordia ecclesiæ ponebatur ejus reatus. Estimatio unius hundreth octo libras continet.

Since this document cannot be exactly dated, it is not certain how early the term *fridstol* was applied to the Anglo-Saxon stone chair in Beverley, but from the sixteenth century it was well-known to antiquarians by this name. The first such reference which I have been able to trace is in the first version of William Camden's *Britannia* (1586). On page 415 there is a marginal note *Vita J. de Beverley*, and the following account of the privileges granted in his honour:

Hujus memoriam adeo sanctam habuerunt reges, et præcipue Athelstanus, qui illum ut Deum tutelarem ita coluit, postquam Danos fudisset: ut multis et magnis immunitatibus locum dotaverint et asyliis concesserint, FREEDSTOOLE illa ætas vocavit, id est libertatis cathedra, quæ obærat, et rerum capitalium suspectis liberum et tutum erat perugium.

On page 578 of the edition of *Britannia* published in 1590, this sentence is repeated, with the addition:

In quo statuebatur cathedra e saxo cum hac inscriptione: Hæc sedes lapidea FREEDSTOLL dicitur, i. pacis cathedra, ad quam reus fugiendo perveniens omnimodam habet securitatem.

This alleged inscription is clearly related to the sentence from the *Libertates* quoted above; unfortunately there is no way of knowing how old the inscription was when Camden wrote of it. It is also mentioned in Sir Henry

Spelman's *Glossarium Archaiologicum*,¹⁷ but in such a way as to leave it doubtful whether he had seen it himself. Later antiquaries quote the inscription, but say that no trace of it can be seen; it was presumably painted on the stone, not carved.

Finally, the word *grithstole* appears in a Middle English rhyming charter, which purports to be a grant of privileges by Athelstan to the church of St. Wilfrid at Ripon; the relevant lines are:

Wyttyn al that is and is gan
 Yat ik Kyng Attelstane
 Has gyven as frelich as ich may
 To kyrk and chaptel of seint Wylfray
 Of my free deuocon
 Thar pees at Rypon
 On ylke syde ye kirke a myle
 For al ille deedes and ilke gyle
 And wythinne thay kyrk yate
 At ye stane yat grythstole hatte
 Withinne the kyrke dore and ye quere
 Thay have thayre pees for less and mare.¹⁸

The fourth church mentioned in the letter from the Chapter of York as having privileges similar to those of York is Durham; there were indeed extensive sanctuary privileges there, but they were traditionally associated with the door-knocker to which fugitives clung, and I have not found the word *fridstol* used in connection with this church.

There is no doubt that by the twelfth century at the latest, *fridstol* meant a sacred chair which gave inviolable protection, but it is more difficult to determine whether this specific and technical sense was already present in the O.E. passages I have quoted. Of course, if the medieval documents are correct in attributing the institution of the privileges to Ecgrith and Athelstan, there would

¹⁷ s.v. *Fridstoll*; the entries A-L were compiled c. 1626.

¹⁸ *Duchy of Lancaster Records*, Div. xxv Roll A no. 23; printed by Walter de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonium* no. 859; cf. no. 647. See also J. T. Fowler, *Memorials of the Church of SS. Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon*, Surtees Society 74, 1882, 89-93.

be no reason to doubt the antiquity of the specific sense; unfortunately, ecclesiastical claims in such matters are not always reliable. However, Henry I's charter would suggest that the word was known in the specific sense in the time of Edward the Confessor, and the occurrence of O.E. words in this charter would seem to show that it is based on some older, Anglo-Saxon, document.

It is significant that the places which had a *fridstol* were all at one time episcopal sees, and it has been suggested that these seats were originally used as the bishop's throne.¹⁹ This is supported by the use of the word in the Pseudo-Wulfstan Homily, where it is applied to Christ's throne; this image seems to prove that it was not fugitives alone who sat on these seats. If they later acquired the power of conferring sanctuary, this may have been the result of the growing devotion to Saints Wilfrid and John of Beverley. The customs connected with the *fridstol* probably developed gradually; for instance, the setting up of crosses round the church is not mentioned in Henry I's charter concerning York, and the Beverley crosses said to have been erected by Athelstan are actually of medieval, not Anglo-Saxon, workmanship. Even if the origin of the custom is Anglo-Saxon, it is dangerous to assume that it was fully developed by the time the word *friþstól* appears in *Grið*. It is probable that the general and the specific uses of the word existed side by side in Old English, and that the latter alone survived.

Icelandic law does not mention sanctuary, but there are many passages in the sagas to show that it was known there and that the violation of sanctuary was a crime.²⁰ This, however, only applies to the common right of sanctuary as defined by Canon Law; I have found no evidence that the Icelanders adopted the English custom of setting up a *friþstól*, though they may well

¹⁹ C. C. Hodges, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ See K. von Maurer, *Vorlesungen über altnoräische Rechtsgeschichte*, V 128-35.

have known of it at second hand. The occurrence of the word in Icelandic at the end of the twelfth century provides a clear example of the influence of English ecclesiastical vocabulary on Icelandic.

In conclusion I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Dorothy Whitelock for her generous help in making many suggestions and corrections in the Anglo-Saxon material of this article, and for directing my attention to the evidence contained in the *Liber Albus* of Southwell Minster. I wish also to thank Mrs. J. Turville-Petre for her valuable suggestions.

NORTHERN RESEARCH IN THE NETHERLANDS

By B. J. TIMMER

THE history of Northern Research in the Low Countries begins in the second half of the sixteenth century. At this time, however, attention was not yet focussed on any of the Scandinavian languages in particular: they were drawn in to serve as examples to illustrate the origin and general development of language. In 1569 Goropius Becanus (1518-1572), a doctor in Antwerp, who gave up his practice to devote himself entirely to the study of languages, published his *Origines Antwerpianae*, in which one can read, among other queer notions, that Dutch was the parent language of mankind, and was spoken in Paradise. This idea, the result of an ingenious argument based on the story of the settlement of Noah's sons in various parts of the world, is also found in the author's later book, *Hermathena*, published posthumously in 1580. The interest of the *Origines* for our purpose lies more in the fact that Goropius was the first to print the Lord's Prayer in Old Scandinavian, or, as he calls it, *Suedanica* (*Origines*, p. 738). *Hic* — he says — *radices Cimbrices licet videre, sed misere et distorte pullulantes*. He then comments on each word in this way: "*Fader* integrum est: *War* pro *unsar*, sive *aunsar*, sive *onser*, sive *ons* irrepsit quod Angli *our* dicunt; ut hinc detur intellegi apud Britannos antiquos, et Suedanos et Danos, magnam fuisse sermonis viciniam . ." This is perhaps the first example of comparative philology. The passage occurs in the seventh chapter of the book, bearing the title *Gotodanica*, which also testifies to Goropius's ideas of the relationships of languages. It is of interest to note that in this same chapter we find the Lord's Prayer in Gothic, printed in ordinary characters for the first

time from the *Codex Argenteus*, which had only recently come to the attention of scholars.

In 1597 Professor de Smet, better known as Bonaventura Vulcanius, Professor of Greek in the University of Leiden (1538-1615), edited a treatise, by an anonymous writer, called *De Literis et Lingua Getarum sive Gothorum*. On p. 4 of his introduction Vulcanius mentions that the anonymous author of this treatise called the Werden manuscript of the Gothic Bible *Codex Argenteus* — the name by which it is still known to-day: “quas ille se e vetustissimo quodam Codice MS. quem Argenteum nominat desumsisse testatus”. Vulcanius does not know anything about the author of this treatise, but he mentions a certain Antonius Schoonhoven, of whom he possesses a treatise called *De Origine Francorum*, and adds that he does not know whether he might make him the author of the treatise. In a letter to F. Junius, written in 1651, James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, suggested that A. Morillon was the author, and his name has found its way into the Catalogue of the British Museum, although in 1841 Massmann suggested that Mercator, son of the geographer, was the author. Now Vulcanius added certain pieces, which he had received from friends, “ad illustrationem huius linguae pertinentia”. One of these is an example of Crimean Gothic, which he had received from the Dutch scholar Busbecq. A survey of Vulcanius’s additions will show the development in the comparison of languages since Goropius: Crimean-Gothic, Old High German, French, Old English, Persian, Spanish, Frisian, Welsh and Icelandic, of which he prints the beginning of a translation of the Bible. He also adds Runic Alphabets, one of which was taken from Olaus Magnus’ *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*, published in Rome in 1555, but frequently printed in excerpts in Holland. It is important to note the inclusion of Persian and Vulcanius’s comments (p. 87) on the relationship of Persian and Germanic. This step forward in the study of philology

is due to the fact that the University of Leiden, founded in 1575, soon became the main seat of learning in Western Europe, especially in the fields of the classical and oriental languages, and theology.

In the meantime Goropius had already incurred the ridicule of scholars for his fantastic theories of the origin of languages, but the Amsterdam professor Abraham Van der Myll still allowed nationalistic feelings to influence his judgement of languages in his book *Lingua Belgica* (1612), in which he calls the Dutch language at least equal to, perhaps better than the classical languages. He also maintained that languages do not change much, for, as he says on p. 150: "I have a little book of prayers in manuscript, very old, but the language in it is as similar to our present-day Dutch, as the water which then flowed through the Scheldt river is similar to that which now flows through it" He also included Persian among related languages, but as he does not give examples of the Scandinavian languages, *er hann nú ór sǫgunni*.

So far, then, we have seen scholars in the Low Countries groping towards a better understanding of the relationship of languages and simply giving specimens to illustrate their theories. The second period in the history of Northern Studies in Holland is the period of systematic study, the period in which a system in the relationship of languages gradually emerged, which cleared the ground for the magnificent building that Jakob Grimm was to erect in the nineteenth century. It is therefore the period of the making of Glossaries, and the pioneer in this field was Franciscus Junius (1589-1677), whose father, of French extraction, came to the University of Leiden as Professor of Theology in 1592. Franciscus the younger was educated in Leiden, where he read first mathematics, then theology. In 1619 he became involved in the theological quarrels of the time and the Synod of Delft forbade him to preach, unless he came over to the right side. This he refused to do, and after a stay in France

he went to England where he became librarian to the Earl of Arundel and tutor to his son. In 1640 he became tutor to Aubrey de Vere, the young Earl of Oxford, whose father had married a Frisian lady, and in 1642 he accompanied de Vere to Holland, where he stayed till some time in 1648. During this period — I hope to show elsewhere in which particular years — Junius lived in Friesland, where he copied manuscripts and poems and learned Frisian under the guidance of the Frisian poet Gysbert Japicx. After a short stay in England Junius went to live in Holland in 1651, where he stayed till 1674, in which year he went to Oxford. It is safe to say that this remarkable man, of whom his nephew Isaac Vossius, Canon of Windsor, said that he was “a man without vices”, did not devote himself to the study of philology till after 1640, when he was over fifty years of age: before then he had been a mathematician, a theologian and an art historian. His book *De Pictura Veterum* appeared in 1637, his English translation in 1638 and his own Dutch translation in 1641,¹ and his philological studies may very well have started with Frisian. In 1650 he obtained the so-called Caedmon manuscript, which he edited in 1655. From unpublished letters in the University Library of Amsterdam and from a letter to John Selden published in the Preface to Hickes' *Thesaurus* we know that in 1653 he lived in Frankfurt and the result of his labours there appeared in 1655: *Observationes in Willeramii Abbatis Paraphrasin Francicam Cantici Cantorum*. In the preface he shows his idea of the relationship of languages. There were three languages, he says, in the South and West of Europe, which gave rise to other languages: from Gothic came the old Cimbrian language handed down to posterity in Runic monuments, and also modern Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic. From Anglo-Saxon came English, Scots, Dutch, but above all Frisian. From Frankish came Old High German.

¹ Not by de Brune, as is often assumed; see de Brune's Preface to the Reader.

To Junius, therefore, Gothic was one of three parent languages, not *the* parent language, as his friend and helper, Janus Vlitius, maintained. Junius's *Observationes* show clearly his systematic method of comparing languages. In his letters there are frequent allusions to his preparation of Glossaries, which are now in the Bodleian Library. In 1665 appeared his edition of the *Four Gospels*, including the first edition of the *Codex Argenteus*, to which a *Gothicum Glossarium* was added "quas pleraque Argentei Codicis vocabula explicantur, atque ex Linguis cognatis illustrantur". Among these cognate languages is Cimbrian, or Scandinavian. In the preface, however, Junius admits that he had no first-hand knowledge of old Scandinavian: "Cimbricarum antiquitatum nihil quicquam vidi, praeter ea quae publici juris fecit Olaus Wormius. Runicum Lexicon. Fastos Danicos. Monumenta Danica. Duplicem regum Danicorum seriem. Runicam literaturam, et in ea Epicinium Egilli Skallagrimi, et Epicidium regis Regneri Lodbrog. Quod vero ad alios Septentrionis dialectos attinet, paucissima et valde tenuia earum monumenta pervenerunt ad manus meas; ex quibus tamen conjecturam facio, vetus Borealium idioma clarum in plerisque facem praelucere Anglosaxonica Alemannicaque studia tractantibus; atque adeo ipsos quoque Septentrionales vice versa plurimum lucis ex veteribus Anglosaxonum Alemannarumque monumentis posse mutuari". Here we see clearly the systematic study of comparative philology in its early stage and, what is perhaps even more remarkable, Junius's method of going to the sources as much as was possible for him, to work with his own observations on the manuscripts themselves. In this work, too, Junius gives the Runic Alphabet, taken from Ole Worm's books but with remarks of his own, and, occasionally, with a frank admission of his lack of knowledge in this field in the words: *sed reliqua non intellego*. The interest in runes was then still of fairly recent date: O. Worm (1588-1654)

was the first to deal with them thoroughly, and he had become interested in them through the works of the Swede, J. Bure, who published between 1599 and 1624. Junius, the pioneer textual editor and lexicographer, as an alumnus of Leiden University, was steeped in the tradition of classical philology and in his etymologies he was still too much influenced by mere similarity of sound. Although his field was not language in general, but the Germanic languages, his work must certainly have produced a clearer picture of the relationship of these languages, and also, through his editions and those of others, of the internal structure of the languages. Round about 1660 Junius was in constant touch with Janus Vlitius (1620-1666) of Breda. As early as 1643 van Vliet became interested in Frisian and afterwards widened his knowledge of Germanic dialects, including Gothic and Old Icelandic. His friends, especially Isaac Vossius and N. Heinsius, who were classicists first and foremost, did not approve of Vlitius's new studies and wrote mockingly about them. Vlitius made a journey through Holland and Friesland in 1643, of which he wrote a Diary, now preserved in MS Lambeth 783 and edited by J. H. Brouwer and Alistair Campbell in *Modern Language Review* vol. XXXIV, 1939. There is evidence that Vlitius and Junius worked together and Junius even thought it possible that Vlitius might edit some Frisian laws. In February 1662 Vlitius wrote to N. Heinsius, then in Stockholm, asking him for Danish and Swedish Dictionaries and Icelandic books, at the same time reassuring his friend: "Noli credere me Boxhornium aut Becanum . . . velle imitari. Solidiora ex Gothicis Francisque habemus Evangelicis, quae liberaliter mecum communicavit amicissimus et candidissimus Junius". There was then a close collaboration between Junius and Vlitius, but the work which shows Vlitius to have been a pioneer of comparative philology appeared in 1666 (though the preface was written as early as 1664):

't Vader Ons in XX Oude Duytse en Noordse Taelen, met d'uytlekkingen etc. It was printed anonymously, but Vlitius has long been accepted as the author, and this is confirmed by an unpublished letter written by Junius and preserved in the Amsterdam University Library. In this little book Vlitius prints versions of the Lord's Prayer in twenty languages, among which are Old Swedish (in runic letters), Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic. The explanations deal with cognate words in the various languages. In the preface Vlitius draws up a pedigree of languages. He takes Gothic as the origin of all Germanic languages. The Gothic mother-language has three daughters, Runic (whence the Scandinavian languages), Anglo-Saxon (whence Frisian, English and partly Dutch), and "Teuts" or German (whence Frankish, Alemannic and partly Dutch). That the science of etymology was still in an undeveloped stage is clear when we see Vlitius linking up the name of the Goths with the Dutch adjective "goed", like God's name.

The first to find a system in the internal structure of Germanic languages was a well-to-do corn-merchant in Amsterdam, who gave private tuition in literature and physics, Lambert ten Kate (1674-1731), whose work foreshadowed the systematic language work of Jakob Grimm. He published two works: *Gemeenschap tussen de Gottische spraecke en de Nederduytsche vertoont*: (*The Relationship of Gothic and Dutch* (1710)) and *Aenleiding tot de Kennisse van het Verhevene deel der Nederduitsche Sprake*: (*Introduction to the sublime Part of the Dutch Language* (1723)). It is the monumental *Aenleiding* which will engage our attention for a moment. It consists of two volumes. In the first volume, which was started in 1711, ten Kate first traces the history of each tribe whose dialect he is going to describe. In his remarks on the close relationship of Frisian and English one can see the beginning of the difficult problem of Ingvaeonisms.

He then describes the grammar of each dialect, and draws up a pedigree of languages. In his large section on the "Regularity and Arrangement of the Dutch Verbs" he includes for comparison the verbs of all the Germanic dialects (except Old Saxon, then still unknown), and here he may be said to have virtually discovered the Ablaut System in the Germanic verbs, in which, as also in his statement that there are no exceptions to linguistic laws, he is the immediate fore-runner of Grimm and the "young-grammarians" of the nineteenth century. The rule of no exception to linguistic laws must have been considered important at the time, for the book contains a frontispiece on which an angel tears up a piece of paper with the words on it: there is no rule without exception. His sources for Scandinavian were Hicckes' *Thesaurus*, Runolph Jonas's *Rudimenta Grammaticae Islandicae* and Worm's works on runes. In the second Appendix he gives Ragnar Loðbrók's death-song with Worm's Latin translation, and his own much more literal one in Dutch, with notes on comparison of words in Icelandic and Dutch. The second Volume contains etymologies of some 22,000 words, with references to Icelandic. Most of the aspects of modern linguistic studies, such as dialects, spelling, proper names, phonetics, historical grammar, syntax, style, are dealt with in this remarkable work, a full evaluation of which has not yet appeared (but see T. A. Rompelman, *Lambert ten Kate als Germanist. Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederl. Akademie van Wetenschappen. Afd. Letterkunde. Nieuwe Reeks. dl. 15, no. 9, 1954*). After ten Kate no important contribution to the study of languages, particularly Scandinavian, was made in the eighteenth century. The *Society for Dutch Literature*, founded in 1766, had invited answers to the prize-question of how far the Dutch language is fundamentally related to and derived from the Gothic and Anglo-Saxon languages, and an anonymous author was considered worthy of the prize, but he did not make

himself known to the Society. His work was therefore published anonymously in 1788 (Vol. VII of the *Werken van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letteren*).

In the nineteenth century the interest in Scandinavian in Holland shifted to the fields of literature and mythology, again at the instigation of the Society. In 1800 the University of Copenhagen had invited answers to the prize-question: Would it be more useful for literature in the North, if Old Norse Mythology were introduced and generally accepted in place of Greek Mythology? This question, adapted to Dutch literature, led the Society to offer a prize for an essay on the subject: What use can be made of Norse Mythology in Dutch literature? The winning answer was published in 1830 (*Nieuwe Werken van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letteren*, Vol. II), and was written by N. Westendorp (1773-1836), a clergyman and inspector of schools, who in 1815 had won the Society's prize for his answer to a question on the Giants' Graves, their age and origin (reprinted 1822). Westendorp's treatise ("A brief survey of Norse Mythology, derived from the original texts, with indications as to what use could be made of it by Dutch poets"²) was the first handbook of mythology to appear in Holland. After an exhaustive survey of Norse mythology, the writer deals with the Dutch poets who have used it in their works, from the seventeenth-century poet P. C. Hooft down to the author's contemporary A. C. W. Staring, and also with foreign poets such as Ossian (*sic*), Gray, Shakespeare and others. Staring himself contributed translations of Gray's poems *The Fatal Sisters* and *Descent of Othin*, which can be found in a later revised form in Staring's collected works.

The same industrious clergyman, Westendorp, founded a periodical, *Antiquiteiten* (Vols. I-III, 1820-26), and in 1824 published a treatise on Runes: *Over het Oud runisch*

² Verhandeling over de Vraag: Eene beknopte voordragt van de Noordsche Mythologie, ontleend uit de oorspronkelijke gedenkstukken en met aanwijzing van het gebruik, dat hiervan in de Nederlandsche Dichtkunde zou kunnen gemaakt worden?

letterschrift en ontdekte sporen van hetzelfde in ons land. In the late eighteenth century J. van Lier from Assen had published his *Oudheidkundige Brieven* (1760), but the study of archæology was really started by the first occupant of the chair of archæology in Leiden, Professor Reuvens, who died in 1835. An improvement on Westendorp's works was L. Ph. C. van den Bergh's book: *Proeve van een kritisch Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Mythologie*, a mythological dictionary, which appeared in 1846. In the preface he criticizes Westendorp's work as being too much influenced by the German scholar Mone's *Geschichte des Heidentums im nördlichen Europa*: a tendency to see symbols everywhere and to ascribe to the myths a hidden meaning. But van den Bergh praises Westendorp for including the popular fairy tales, legends and superstitions, of which his own dictionary contains many examples as well. For a really scholarly work in this field, however, we have to wait till 1900 and the appearance of Chantepie de la Sausaye's *History of the Religion of the Teutons* (title of the English translation, 1902).

Westendorp's attempt to arouse interest in mythology in the Dutch poets seems to have had little effect, apart from Staring's translations of Gray's poems, undertaken at Westendorp's request. The Dutch and Flemish poets who made use of Norse mythology in their works did so under German influence, especially after Simrock's translation of the two Eddas had appeared (1851; 9th ed. 1892), and also, of course, stimulated by Richard Wagner (H. Gorter's poem *Mei*).

We are now, however, rapidly approaching the third stage in the history of northern research in Holland: the professional stage. With philology put on a firm basis of systematic investigation at the universities, Scandinavian is now also drawn within their sphere, and in 1878 the University of Groningen established a lectureship in German, which in 1881 became a chair comprising

Old High German, Middle High German, Old English and Old Norse. The obvious choice for these appointments was Barend Symons (1852-1935), who had received his University education in Leipzig, where he had been the contemporary of H. Paul, E. Sievers, and W. Braune. In 1877 Symons had published an article on Old Norse in the periodical *Taalkundige Bijdragen*, Vol. 1, at the end of which he expressed the wish "that soon Holland would devote part of its philological talents to the study of a language which, both because of its relationship to Dutch and because of its literary products, can command our warm interest". In 1879 he contributed some studies of Edda poems to the same periodical. In 1876 his doctoral thesis on the *Völsunga Saga* had appeared in Paul and Braune's *Beiträge*, vol. III, in which he arrived at the conclusion that on the whole the *Völsunga Saga* represents fairly faithfully the songs that are lost owing to the gap in the *Codex Regius*, and thus for our knowledge of these lost songs the *Völsunga Saga* is of inestimable value, a conclusion generally accepted by scholars. About this time he and his friend H. Gering resolved to make a new edition of the poetic Edda. This ambitious plan was to engage him to the end of his life. The first two volumes containing the text of the poems, which was Symons's work, appeared in 1887. The complete Glossary, which was compiled by Gering, came out in 1903. Symons also wrote the general Introduction, his *Einleitung*, which is really his masterpiece and which is still largely indispensable. It appeared in 1906. By this time, however, it had become clear to the scholarly friends that they did not see eye to eye on fundamental principles of Edda scholarship and so Symons left the commentary, to which originally he would have contributed separate introductions to the poems, to Gering. The two volumes of this commentary appeared in 1927 and 1931, edited by Symons, for Gering had died in 1925. In the arduous task of seeing Gering's manu-

script through the press, Symons left Gering's work unaltered, but added frequent remarks of his own, putting his point of view. In the field of heroic legend he had also published very valuable work, a study on the *Hild* legend, and an edition of the Middle High German poem *Kudrun*. To Paul's *Grundriss der Germanischen Philologie* he contributed a survey of heroic legend, a beautifully written and very careful study, but naturally in the school of Müllenhoff with a good deal of nature-mythology. Here, too, his views changed in the course of his life, but then he had been taught in the school of Grimm, who had been the subject of his inaugural lecture in 1881, and of Müllenhoff, and in textual matters he based his work on Sievers's metrical system, and it is precisely in these fields that scholarly opinion underwent general change: in the field of heroic legend Axel Olrik came forward with new views, while in textual matters the tendency was more and more towards conservatism and preservation of the manuscript readings wherever possible. If Symons had not been prevented by serious illness from revising his *Einleitung* to the Edda, such revision might well have saved the ill-fated Symons-Gering Edda edition.

Symon's pupil R. C. Boer (1863-1929) was a Lecturer in Old Norse in the University of Groningen and in 1900 he became Professor of Germanic and Sanskrit in the University of Amsterdam. He had obtained his doctor's degree with his edition of the *Qrvar-Odds Saga*. This was followed by an edition of the *Bjarnar Saga Hitdæla Kappa* in 1893, dedicated to his teacher Symons. Boer's interest in the sagas for purposes of research was of short duration. On the whole the Dutch have worked more on the Edda or, as nowadays, on aspects of the modern Scandinavian languages. Only one scholar before Boer had worked on an edition of a saga under Symons's supervision, and this scholar's interest was not in language or literature, but in theology. In 1886 E. H.

Lasonder published his doctoral thesis: *De Saga van Thorwald Kodransson den Bereisde*, with the subtitle: "A page from the history of Christian Mission in the tenth century". This is an edition of the text with a translation into Dutch and notes mainly illustrating church history. Boer's interests soon turned to wider fields. While in Amsterdam he devoted himself to the study of the development of the Niblung legend and to Edda studies. His Niblung studies appeared in three volumes in 1906, 1907 and 1909. His line of approach was to examine all sources of the legend and compare them: an incongruency meant a double source. This led him to the ultimate conclusion that the Niblung story was originally Saxon, not Frankish, but that the Northern and the German tradition had been mutually influenced. This meant that the original area where the Niblung story arose must have been one where Germans and Scandinavians were close together: the Saxon district around Soest.

These views met with considerable opposition in Germany, which embittered Boer so much that after 1914 he published only in Dutch and in Danish. Hence also his series of *Handbooks for Students* was written in Dutch, for which he himself wrote the *Handboek van het Oud-Noorsch*, after he had opened the series in 1918 with his *Oer-Germaans Handboek*. In 1913 he completed his edition of the Edda, which was written in German. Owing to the war its publication was delayed till 1922. It consists of two volumes. The text is treated with more conservatism than Symons's, but his sharply logical mind led him to distinguish in some poems a succession of poets that had handled the text, and in such cases he prints more than one "version" or distinguishes poet from interpolator by different printing-type. The "historical-critical" commentary does not, like Gering's, give a running commentary line by line, but deals more with the historical growth of each poem.

In 1916 Boer published his *Studien over de Metriek van het Alliteratie Vers*. His aim in this work is to get away from Sievers's scansion on paper to the *reading* of the texts, to their poetry. In place of Sievers's syllable counting Boer puts the rhythmic unity of the musical bar. The metrical nature of each verse in each position is established and the rules used by the poets are derived from statistical investigations. Its final conclusion corroborates his theory of the North German origin of the Niblung-legend: alliterative poetry arose in an area where the North and West Germanic peoples were in close contact.

Boer's most outstanding pupils bring our story up to the present day. A. G. Van Hamel (1886-1945) was a member of the Viking Society and contributed articles to the Saga-Book. He combined the study of Scandinavian with that of Celtic, and in most of his work he shows how the one field can help to throw light on the other. It is to be hoped that his collected papers, published and unpublished, will soon be printed, for he had always something interesting to contribute to his subject. He was a lover of Iceland and he gave his impressions of the island in a book, *Ysland, Oud en Nieuw*, which appeared in 1933.

Boer's son-in-law, W. Van Eeden Jr., published an edition of the *Codex Trajectinus* of the *Snorra Edda* in 1913, a valuable work containing a long introduction and a careful edition of the text. In the Introduction he deals at length with the relationship of the Utrecht manuscript and the other codices: Wormianus, Regius and Upsaliensis. He has contributed many interesting articles on Icelandic and Scandinavian subjects to the periodical *Neophilologus*.

Jan de Vries brings our story to an end. This active worker in the field of Scandinavian Studies, especially in literature and mythology, is the author of two contributions to the third edition of Paul's *Grundriss*, a

history of Old Norse religion and a history of Old Norse literature. The former in particular is an invaluable work. His excellent metrical translation of the poetic Edda into modern Dutch, which appeared first in 1930 and has since been reprinted at least twice, has done much to stimulate the interest of a wider public in the magnificent old poems and legends.

Scandinavian, old and modern, and Old Icelandic are nowadays taught in all Dutch universities, but in most cases it is the modern Scandinavian languages that draw students: the study of Edda and Saga seems to be on the wane. No doubt this is largely due to the deplorable fact that Dutch universities do not provide sufficient opportunities for budding scholars to continue their researches after taking their degree: in far too many cases they are forced by financial necessity to take up posts as school teachers and they are then robbed of the leisure and sympathetic atmosphere necessary for the continuation of their scholarly interests.

Note: In the field of religion the relations between Iceland and the Netherlands may even go back to the eleventh century. At least, in the Old High German poetic fragments of a description of the world (*Merigarto*, Müllenhoff-Scherer, *Denkmäler*, pp. 70-75), the writer says that he visited the episcopal see of Utrecht and there met a priest who had been in Iceland. In 1150 Bishop Hall Teitsson of Skálholt died in Utrecht on his way from Rome to Iceland. In the fifteenth century there was a Dutchman at the head of the Church in Iceland: Gozewijn Comhaer, whose father had settled in Denmark, was then Bishop of Skálholt for about ten years; he died in 1446 (see W. Moll and J. G. de Hoop Scheffer, *Studien en Bijdragen* IV, pp. 145-207).

SAGNASKEMTAN: REYKJAHÓLAR 1119

By PETER G. FOOTE

FOR the purpose of the present essay it is necessary to quote yet once again this famous passage:¹

Þar var nú glaumur ok gleði mikil ok skemtan góð ok
margskonar leikar, bæði dansleikar, glímur ok sagna-
3 skemtan. Þar var sjau nætr fastar ok fullar setit at
boðinu, af því at þar skyldi vera hvert sumar Óláfsgildi,
ef korn gæti at kaupa, tvau mjólsáld, á Þórsnessþingi,
6 ok váru þar margir gildabroðr. Á Reykjahólum váru
svá góðir landskostir í þann tíma at þar váru aldri
ófrævir akrarnir. En þat var jafnan vani at þar var
9 nýtt mjól haft til beinabótar ok ágætis at þeiri veizlu,
ok var gildit at Óláfsmessu hvert sumar.

Frá því er nokkut sagt, er þó er lítil tilkoma, hverir
12 þar skemtu eða hverju skemt var. Þat er í frásögn haft
er nú mæla margir í móti ok látask eigi vitat hafa,
því at margir ganga duldir ins sanna ok hyggja þat satt
15 er skrökvat er, en logit þat er satt er. Hrólfr af
Skálmarnesi sagði sögu frá Hróngviði víkingi ok frá Óláfi
liðmannakonungi ok haugbroti Þráins berserks ok
18 Hrómundi Gripssyni, ok margar vísur með. En þessari
sögu var skemt Sverri konungi, ok kallaði hann slíkar
lygisögur skemtiligastar; ok þó kunnu menn at telja
21 ættir sínar til Hrómundar Gripssonar. Þessa sögu hafði
Hrólfr sjálfr samsetta. Ingimundr prestur sagði sögu
Orms Barreyjarskálds ok vísur margar ok flokk góðan
24 við enda sögunnar, er Ingimundr hafði ortan, ok hafa
þó² margir fróðir menn þessa sögu fyrir satt.

¹ Ursula Brown, *Porgils saga ok Hafliða* (1952), 17-18 (ch. X); quoted with some modification of the editor's punctuation. I append here a translation, as little tendentious as possible, of the second paragraph, which forms the principal matter of this paper: 'Something is told, though it is of small importance, of who the entertainers were and what their entertainment was. What is related is now contradicted by many, who maintain that they have never accepted it, for many are blind to the truth and think what is false to be true and what is true to be a lie. Hrólfr from Skálmarnes told a story about Hróngvið the viking and Ólaf liðmannakonungr and the mound-breaking of Þráin the berserk and Hrómund Gripsson, with many verses in it. This story was used to entertain King Sverrir and he declared that such "lying sagas" were most amusing; men can however trace their genealogies to Hrómund Gripsson. Hrólfr himself had composed this saga. Ingimundr the priest told the story of Orm Barreyjarskáld, including many verses and with a good *flokkur*, which Ingimund had composed, at the end of the saga. Nevertheless, many learned men regard this story as true.'

Most commentators have detected in this puzzling passage the work of an interpolator, although they assess the extent of the interpolation differently. In many ways Heusler's theory remains the most plausible, but his reconstruction alters the arrangement of the given text so radically that it creates almost as many difficulties as it solves.³ Since he wrote, however, literary historians have generally been content to accept the factual statements in the passage at their face value and to attribute the comments to an interpolator, without discussing earlier conjectures and related problems. A new theory of interpolation, however, has recently been proposed by Knut Liestøl, although he also considers the statements of fact to be true.⁴ He argues first that the saga was written before A.D. 1200, dismissing the references to Sverrir and Bishop Magnús Gizurarson⁵ as interpolations. No one, he says, has doubted the authenticity of the opening sentence (lines 1-3), and he does not either. He then allows that a single author could have written both the above paragraphs, but only in a form which some later re-arrangement, as Heusler conceived it, has obscured. What, in his opinion, is impossible is that an

³ *þó*: *þá* 440, H. Vigfússon gives the reading of H as *þó*, *Sturlunga Saga* (1878), I 20, but Miss Brown informs me that *þá* is the true reading. If H and 440 are independent copies of Sk, the coincidence of their readings would outweigh the evidence of Br, the third manuscript copied from Sk. Miss Brown has suggested that this is the case in *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* XXII 1 (1952), 33 ff., but in a forthcoming article by Mr. I. R. Hare and Miss J. Simpson it will be argued, from an examination of other parts of the *Sturlunga*-text, that 440 and H are both derived from the same earlier copy of Sk. *þó* and *þá* have thus equal manuscript authority and the former gives the better sense; cf. Heusler, *Die Anfänge der isländischen Saga* (1914), 24.

⁴ *Die Anfänge*, 20-27. As will be recalled, Heusler suggests that the original passage consisted of lines 1-3, 15-18, 21-24 (ending at *ortan*), 3-10, in that order. An interpolator first introduced lines 12-15, 18-21, 24-25, and then placed lines 12-25 (some original, some interpolated) after 3-10, the original conclusion. To introduce this new concluding paragraph, the interpolator finally inserted lines 11-12. According to Heusler, the interpolator was a *Gugläubiger*, with a firm faith in the historicity of the subject-matter of the stories told. Despite Heusler's objection, *loc. cit.*, the theory seems still more plausible if one follows A. L. Andrews (*Modern Philology* IX (1911-12), 386-88) in ascribing the postulated interpolation to the compiler of *Sturlunga saga*, who introduces the work with the *Geirmundar þáttr*, which contains much legendary material, and refers there to a *Hróks saga svartá* (similar to, if not the same as, the *Hálfs saga* we now possess) as a source.

⁵ "Til spørsmålet om dei eldste islenske dansekvæde," in *Arv* I (1945), especially 70-75.

⁶ Ursula Brown, *op. cit.* 30/10.

interpolator could have written both the first paragraph and the second in their present form, because, if all the information in the passage were from an interpolator, he would have introduced his details of the entertainment immediately after the reference to *sagnaskemtán* in the first sentence. Liestøl concludes then that the first paragraph (lines 1-10) is original, but a scribe, writing soon after 1200, has introduced the whole passage from line 11 to the end. This man knew details of the wedding entertainment which had lived in the local memory and he included them with an introduction and polemic comments. Liestøl finds that the interpolator was not a practised writer: "there is a certain lack of connection and clarity in what he himself contributes." Finally, to show that remarkable wedding-entertainments could be long remembered, Liestøl adduces two modern examples: in the one case, the report of an eyewitness could be quoted 100 years after the event by a man who had heard it from him; in the other case, the interval was 130-140 years.

If one believes the saga to have been written before 1200, then Liestøl's theory may be accepted as possible. Most people, however, now assign the saga to a later date and find no difficulty in accepting the reference to Sverrir as an original feature. Such a late date by no means precludes the writer's use of a lively oral tradition, as Liestøl's own examples show. We remember that Aron Bárðarson who was almost certainly a guest at the wedding, lived until 1193,⁶ and a detailed second- or third-hand account derived from him could be available at any time down to about 1250. Liestøl's argument that an interpolator, if he had written the first sentence of the whole passage, would have gone on at once to describe the *sagnaskemtán*, may be sound, but it scarcely strengthens his case for considering the passage from line 11 onwards as interpolated. The copyist, to whom

⁶ See Halldór Hermannsson, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* (*Islandica* XXXI; 1945), xxi.

he ascribes the interpolation, did not, it is true, compose that opening sentence, but one might expect him to have had "this subject . . . in the forefront of his mind" as he copied the sentence, and so go on straight away to introduce his extra material. Arguments drawn from the style of such a short passage are as difficult to refute as they are to prove.

It is not proposed to consider in detail any of the other earlier interpretations of the passage. These have been summarised in Liestøl's essay (pp. 72-3) and elsewhere. But the large body of respected critical opinion which has declared in favour of interpolation would seem to deserve a reasoned answer from anyone who holds a different view. It will be generally agreed that a reasonable explanation of the passage as it stands is to be preferred to a theory of interpolation. The latest editors of the saga do not apparently believe in interpolation,⁷ but they have not elaborated the reasons which lead them to this conclusion. In the following, therefore, an attempt will be made to interpret the passage as the work of one writer, undoubtedly the author of the saga, who was not less consistent than most of us.

A brief word must be said on the saga and its author. As was mentioned above, most recent writers assign it to the first half of the thirteenth century,⁸ so that the reference to Sverrir need not be an interpolation. The text of the saga makes a unified impression, and although one may be inclined to regard the reference to the death of Bishop Magnús as a later addition,⁹ there is nothing else which is obviously secondary.¹⁰ Miss Brown has

⁷ Jón Jóhannesson, *Sturlunga saga* (1946), II xxiv-xxv; Ursula Brown, *op. cit.* ix-xxix.

⁸ See note 7; Sigurður Nordal, *Nordisk Kultur* VIII:B (1953), 215-6; cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson in *Skirnir* CX XVI (1952), 251-2. Halldór Hermannsson, *op. cit.* xviii-xxv, believes the saga was written near the end of Sverrir's reign or soon after his death; he does not consider the reference to Sverrir an interpolation.

⁹ Cf. P. G. Foote in *Medium Ævum* XXII (1953), 125-6.

¹⁰ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie* (1920-24), II 548, assumes that the second of the two verses quoted at 43/20 is a later addition, because only one is introduced in the prose; but cf. Miss Brown's note *ad loc.*

shown that the writer was a subtle and self-conscious narrator, who must have considered with some care the proportions of his narrative and the delineation of his characters. He invents speeches with great skill and places his own construction on events for the sake of dramatic effect, but there is no evidence of falsification of facts. He was closely in touch with oral sources, especially in Saurbœr and thus, as a matter of course, in Reykjanes. Whether that means he was writing sixty, ninety or one hundred and twenty years after the events cannot of course be decided. But the passage on the wedding-entertainment at Reykjahólar is, as far as we can judge from the rest of the work, likely to be a faithful repetition of what the writer had from his informant; and there is no reason why that report should not be substantially correct. In this one can agree with Heusler and most writers since his time.

It is however the introduction to the second paragraph and the interspersed comments which have proved the stumbling-block. The passage must be examined afresh, first the opening sentences, then the facts they introduce, finally the comments on those facts.

Frá því er nökkut sagt, er þó er lítil tilkoma, hverir þar skemtu eða hverju skemt var (lines 11-12).

Liestøl thinks this the opening sentence of the interpolation. It is however unusual for interpolators to be so aware of the proportions of the narrative they are expanding: their activity generally implies just the opposite. It seems, on the other hand, much more likely that these are the words of an author who is introducing an excursus, whose small importance or relevance in the saga he recognises.¹¹ The phrase is moreover similar in kind to one or two other remarks in the saga, where the author comments in one way or another on the information he is giving.¹² Liestøl

¹¹ On the interpretation of *tilkoma*, cf. Ursula Brown, *op. cit.*, note to 17/26.

¹² Sá kynþáttir Þorgils Oddasonar er sumum ókunnari en Reyknesinga (2/9); at því sem mik minnr (43/19).

also argues that this introductory sentence refers to the whole of the following passage, since everything there concerns precisely the story-tellers and their stories. Consequently, he continues, Heusler's theory that some part of what follows is original and some part interpolated is not justified. This seems undeniably correct, but Liestøl then stands committed to making sense of the whole passage as we have it. This he has not tried to do and as a result he has become involved in some inconsistency.

Þat er í frásögn haft er nú mæla margir í móti ok látask eigi vitat hafa, því at margir ganga duldir ins sanna ok hyggja þat satt er skrökvat er, en logit þat er satt er (lines 12-15).

In this second sentence the writer is defending the accuracy of a report in which he fervently believes, but the truth of which has been denied. As it stands, it is most natural to take this sentence with what immediately precedes it: *hverir þar skemtú eða hverju skemt var*. The writer is then asserting emphatically that what he has to report of the entertainers and their entertainment is true. The phrase *hverju skemt var*, which stands nearest the denunciation, and the subsequent remarks on the sagas suggest further that what was principally at issue was not the identity of the entertainers but the nature of the stories told.

The language in this sentence may seem unnecessarily elaborate, but there is perhaps a conventional element in the phrases and in any case it need not be surprising that the author should become fervent at this point, when he is defending the truthfulness of a particular source — a source moreover from which he may well have drawn much more material for his saga. It may be too that more is implied in the latter part of the sentence than has hitherto been suspected, a point to which I shall return in a moment.

•From the words *ok látask eigi vitat hafa* one must assume that the report here given of the entertainment

was at one time comparatively common knowledge, but the truth of it is now contradicted, people denying that they ever gave credence to the story. Why they should have done this is impossible to ascertain. It is natural to conclude, on the other hand, that the writer's own belief in the truth of the report is due to the fact that he had heard it himself from someone whom he held in great respect. At the same time, the writer can scarcely have known why his informant was in a position to know the truth: if he knew, for example, that his informant had been present at the wedding, or if he had made use of some *fróðleiksgrein*, as has been tentatively suggested,¹³ he could have settled the matter beyond all doubt. It seems unlikely that the writer knew more about the wedding-entertainment than the facts he gives, and probably he was not able to learn more had he wished to do so. The use of *nøkkut* in *frá því er nøkkut sagt* probably implies this limitation. This is a point to be borne in mind when considering the date of the saga's composition.

It may also be noted, as has often been done before, that the expressions here are similar to those in the prologue to *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*.¹⁴ This saga is thought to have been written *c.* 1230 and is thus roughly contemporary with *Dorgils saga*; there is consequently no need to regard the style of the remarks in *Dorgils saga* as indicative of a "post-classical" period. *Hrafns saga* is a defence of its hero; in the prologue the author claims in effect that his knowledge of events is better than that possessed by other men; he is also counteracting false reports. It seems most likely therefore that the writer in *Dorgils saga* is doing the same thing, although we can deduce no more than that he

¹³ Sigurður Nordal, *op. cit.* 216.

¹⁴ *Biskupa sögur* (1858), I 639: Atburðir margir, þeir er verða, falla mönnum opt or minni, en sumir eru annan veg sagðir en verit hafa, ok trúa því margir, er logit er, en tortryggja þat satt er. En fyrir því, at aprt hverfr lygi, þá er sönnu mætir, þá ætlu vær at rita nökkura atburði, þá er geyrzt hafa á vorum dögum, á meðal vor kunnra manna, sem vér vitum sannleik til.

was repeating a tradition which had come to him from a source he respected greatly. Insofar as this passage is a defence of a traditional account, it can have only an indirect bearing on the question of the historicity of the sagas told at the wedding-feast.

In the rest of the passage there are the following statements of fact concerning the wedding-entertainment. This is the information which some of the writer's contemporaries had dismissed as untrue.

- (1) Hrólfr af Skálmarnesi sagði sögu frá Hrøngviði víkingi ok frá Óláfi liðmannakonungi ok haugbroti Þráins berserks ok Hrómundi Gripssyni, ok margar vísur með (lines 15-18).
- (2) Þessa sögu hafði Hrólfr sjálfr samansetta (lines 20-21).
- (3) Ingimundr prestr sagði sögu Orms Barreyjarskálds ok vísur margar ok flokk góðan við enda sögunnar, er Ingimundr hafði ortan (lines 22-24).

It will be seen that in each case three facts are given: the name of the entertainer, the subject of the stories told, and an attribution of authorship: of the saga to Hrólfr, of a *flokkur* at the end of a saga to Ingimund. It is not explicitly stated but it seems probable that the writer also regarded the *margar visur* in each case to have been the work of these two men.¹⁵ It seems certain that of the statements made it was the claims concerning authorship that had been met with incredulity. It is difficult to imagine that it had been objected that it was not Hrólfr but someone else who told the story; or that it was not this story but a different one that had been told. There is also a certain emphasis implied in *Hrólfr sjálfr*. Someone, it seems, must have protested that while Hrólfr may have told the saga of Hrómund, he could not have composed it himself.¹⁶ The reason for such a protest

¹⁵ The *visur margar* in line 23 is clearly accusative; the construction is probably the same in the sentence, lines 15-18.

¹⁶ *Setja saman* (*samsetja*) = Lat. *componere*. In Old Icelandic the term is generally used of professedly historical works, where the writer would not be credited with invention; at least, it would be accepted that he wrote what he believed to be true. To many historians in the period, of course, truth meant what they felt to be appropriate as well as attested fact (cf. Magnús Þórhallsson's words, *Flateyjarbók* (1860-68), III 248). Less frequently the term seems to mean primarily no more than "collect" (cf. H. Gering,

must have been that the objector believed the saga to be a true history. In reply, the writer in *Dorgils saga* resolutely adheres to his source and states firmly that it had been composed by Hrólfr. With this in mind, we may return to the latter part of the second sentence: *þvi at margir ganga duldir ins sanna ok hyggja þat satt er skrökvat er, en logit þat er satt er*. It is possible to take the verb *skrökva* here as a simple synonym of *ljúga*, and then the sentence appears to be little more than an expression in general terms of the writer's lack of faith in the critical judgement of his contemporaries. But *skrökva* has usually a more innocent meaning than *ljúga*; it implies rather the exercise of the imagination, cf. the glosses in Cleasby-Vigfússon ("to tell or invent a story"), Fritzner ("opdigte"), Hægstad ("skrynja, dikta"). Latin *fabula* is often translated by *skröksaga* (cf. Fritzner s.v.). The sentence in *Dorgils saga* might then be translated: For many are blind to the truth, believing what is fabled to be true and what is true to be a lie. "What is fabled" could be the saga told by Hrólfr; "what is true" would then be the report of the composition of that saga by Hrólfr. Belief in the truth of one necessitated disbelief in the truth of the other. If this is so, *þat er skrökvat er* would doubtless refer to the whole saga, but it might be also that the saga contained some particular reference, which made it appear as if one character in it had originally told it¹⁷

Íslensk Æventýri (1882-3), II xxii-xxv), but on the other hand, a degree of independent composition could be implied in its use, cf. *Den tredje og fjerde Grammatiske Afhandling* (ed. B. M. Olsen, *Samsfund* 12 (1884)), 119 note 336; *Biskupa sögur* (1858), I 221/3 (of music); *Heilagra Manna Sögur* (ed. C. R. Unger, 1877), I 447/5 (both the latter translated works); D. Ö. Zetterholm, *Studier i en Snorre-text* (1949), 36-37. Nothing can be concluded as to the writer's opinion of the historicity of Hrólfr's saga from the use of the term here in *Dorgils saga*; indeed, it is difficult to think of any other verb that could be used in this early period referring to a work that was not written. The writer clearly did not believe that the story of Hrómund had ever been "put together" before Hrólfr told his version of it. This saga that could be attributed to a known man doubtless stood in marked contrast to the anonymous stories, many of them probably not unlike the saga of Hrómund, which were current at the same time.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. the situation in *Norna-Gests þáttur* (*Flateyjarbók*, I 346-59), or the end of *Orvar-Odds saga* (ed. R. C. Boer, 1892; 95/12-15).

(cf. below on the poetry), and this had led to the denial that it could have been by Hrólfr.

Liestøl accepts the second sentence (lines 12-15) as a reference to the facts of the *sagnaskemtan*, since he adopts Kålund's translation of the passage.¹⁸ It has just been shown that this sentence must have been called forth by objections, whatever their cause, made to the statements that Hrólfr himself had composed the saga and so on. But Liestøl also says that the passage contains polemic asides to sceptics ("polemiske sidemerknader til tvilarar"). By this he doubtless means the clauses: *ok þó kunnu menn at telja ættir sínar til Hrómundar Griþssonar* (lines 20-21), and *ok hafa þó margir fróðir menn þessa sögu fyrir satt* (lines 24-25). By the "sceptics" he seems to mean, as other commentators have done, people who doubted the historicity of the sagas told. But the writer of the second sentence (lines 11-14) is just such a person, since he is emphasising the truth of the report that the stories were composed by given men at a given time, and it is also possible that he used the verb *skröfva* to indicate the nature of the stories. Why then should he, if he is in fact the writer of the whole passage as Liestøl believes, include comments which, again according to Liestøl, are designed to defeat his own claims about the composition of the works in question? One can agree with Liestøl that the whole passage is the work of a single writer (the author of the saga rather than an interpolator), but it is scarcely possible to agree that these comments are meant to support the claim that these sagas were historically true. If these comments could be interpreted in no other way, then it would be better to regard them, and them alone, as the work of an interpolator. But it remains to be seen whether a straightforward reading of them, in conjunction with the other material, may not show that they can be

¹⁸ "Der går det frasagn . . . at Rolv fra Skalmarnæs fortalte —"; Kr. Kålund, *Sturlunga Saga i dansk Oversættelse* (1904), I 25; see Liestøl *loc. cit.* 72.

interpreted quite differently, as the remarks of a man who is maintaining that the stories were fiction rather than history.

En þessari sögu var skemt Sverri konungi, ok kallaði hann slíkar lygisögur skemtiligastar; ok þó kunnu menn at telja ættir sínar til Hrómundar Gripssonar (lines 18-21).

If the writer is maintaining that the story told by Hrólf was of his own composition, then it is obviously to his interest to quote the opinion of such a distinguished critic as Sverrir. He is presumably repeating Sverrir's remark in the form he had heard it, and there is ample support for his claim in the words *slíkar lygisögur*. Why then should he continue with *ok þó kunnu menn* — ? If, as has usually been maintained, this is calculated to refute the description of the story as a *lygisaga*, it seems a remarkably mild and oblique form of disagreement. But need it mean more than it says? We can paraphrase: “nevertheless, Hrómund Gripsson figures in the genealogies of some men.” That is, the author is admitting that, although it was not a historical tale, it yet had a recognised historical figure as its hero. Clearly, he could not fly in the face of the genealogical evidence of Hrómund's existence, but the admission does not weaken his general position. Someone might well admit the historical existence of King Alfred while refusing to believe that he burnt the cakes.

(ok flokk góðan við enda sögunnar, er Ingimundr hafði ortan), ok hafa þó margir fróðir menn þessa sögu fyrir satt (lines 23-25).

This could be paraphrased in Heusler's words: “Dennoch, obwohl das Schlussgedicht vom Erzähler selbst war, also keine Altersurkunde darstellte, halten viele die Saga für wahr.”¹⁹ Even so, however, it is clearly possible to take the sentence, “And yet many learned men believe this story to be true,” in three ways: it may imply agreement or disagreement, or it may be

¹⁹ *Die Anfänge*, 24.

non-committal. If the preceding exposition of the whole passage is correct, then the sentence can scarcely express the writer's wholehearted agreement with the learned men. The remark may be non-committal²⁰ in the same way as his admission of the historical existence of Hrómund — the respectful use of the word *fróðir* might suggest that this is the true reading, and there is no obvious reason why he should have regarded the saga of Orm in the same way as the *Hrómundar saga*. He knew Hrólfr had composed the latter, but his source apparently told him no more than that Ingimund had composed the *flokkr* at the end of the former. On the other hand, if the sentence implies disagreement, as seems equally possible, we are to take it that the writer is shaking his head over the lack of perspicacity displayed by these learned men who, despite what is known of the composition of the *flokkr*, still believe the saga to be true.

Whichever of these two latter interpretations is accepted, there was clearly room for doubt in the writer's mind, doubt caused by the fact that he knew (even though other people denied it) that the *flokkr*, and possibly the *visur margar*, had been composed by Ingimund. It may be of interest to consider briefly why this should be so. It is generally accepted that much of the verse in the later *fornaldarsögur* was composed in the period c. 1050-1200. In these later sagas typical poems found *við enda sögunnar* are "death-lays," like those of Ragnar loðbrók, Þrvar-Odd and Ásbjörn þrúði, "in denen die Aufreihung der Taten des Helden mehr oder weniger die Dichtung füllt."²¹ Similar to these are the retrospective monologues attributed to Starkað, *Vikarsbálkr* in *Gautreks saga* and a section of the poem given by Saxo just before Starkað's death.²² These biographical poems were often the main sources for the later prose

²⁰ For a parallel phrase cf. *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar af Oddr Snorrason* (ed. F. Jónsson, 1932), 89/1-2; this is certainly non-committal, see *ibid.* 91/5-7.

²¹ Heusler-Ranisch, *Eddica minora* (1903), XLI.

²² *Saxonis Grammatici Gesta Danorum* (ed. A. Holder, 1886), 272-3.

narratives. It seems most likely that Ingimund's poem was of the same type and purported to have been composed by Orm Barreyjarskáld or some other legendary character. Later generations who knew the poem and its connection with the story might well take it at its face value. It seems likely, for example, that at least some people in the thirteenth century believed that *Krákumál* really was the work of Ragnar loðbrók, and the evidence we have of the thirteenth-century attitude to Starkad is illuminating.²³ If, as Miss Ursula Brown has maintained,²⁴ the verses were the main constituents of the saga, then there would be still more reason to doubt the authenticity of the story, when characters are all the time speaking verses put into their mouths by a known author.

It might be objected that such a poem composed, say, in the twelfth century would not necessarily imply invention on the part of the poet (beyond the dramatic first person singular), because he was only versifying the story already current. This is impossible to ascertain, but the heroic poetry of the period seems generally to have been composed under liberal canons: the poet could invent, alter, enlarge, adapt and embellish to suit his purpose and contemporary taste. In a poem like the *Ævikviða* of Orvar-Odd, for example, there are elements in the narrative which could scarcely have been introduced before the twelfth century; in the extant *Orvar-Odds saga* the prose account of the adventures in Aquitania and Hungary are based on these verses.²⁵ It is at any

²³ Starkad is named first in *Skáldatal*, as the oldest poet whose verse was still remembered; he is followed by Ragnar (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (1880-87), III 251). Verses are introduced in the *Gautreks saga* by *Svó segir Starkaðr frá*. Cf. especially H. Schneider, *Germanische Heldensage* (1933), II Bd. I Abt. II Buch, 182: "Die für Starkad neugeschaffene Gattung des monologischen Liedes brachte einen hartnäckigen Irrtum bei den Gelehrten des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts zuwege: man hielt Starkad für einen grossen Dichter der Vorzeit".

²⁴ "The Saga of Hrómund Gripsson and Þorgilssaga," *Saga-Book XIII* 2 (1947-8), 51 ff.

²⁵ See Heusler-Ranisch, *op. cit.* XLV-XLVIII; J. de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte* (1941-2), II 219. Cf. F. Jónsson, *Litt. Hist.* II 150-151, who considers the poem to have been composed in the latter half of the thirteenth century; he sees in it "et af de digte, som fremsagdes ved sagaens slutning," an allusion to the passage in *Þorgils saga*. He agrees that it forms a source for the saga.

rate clear that it was the poetry that was remembered and regarded as authoritative.

By the interpretation proposed above, nothing in the passage in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* need be derived from anyone other than the author of the saga. He was perhaps chiefly concerned with the vindication of his source, but, in so doing, he had to counter an opinion which had challenged it and to venture into the field of literary history. Despite the trouble he has caused, we have reason to be grateful to him.

BOOK REVIEWS

NORDISCH-ENGLISCHE LEHNBEZIEHUNGEN DER WIKINGERZEIT.
By DIETRICH HOFMANN. Bibliotheca Arnarnagnæana XIV.
Copenhagen: Munksgaard 1955, 296 pp.

This thorough study of the influence of Norse on English and English on Norse down to 1066 will be received with gratitude. All loanwords and other traces of Norse influence in the principal Old English documents are considered. Similarly a great body of skaldic and Eddaic poetry, which can be assumed to have some connection with England, is examined for signs of English influence. So far as Hofmann's subject is the influence of the two languages on each other, he is on uncontroversial ground where he is only to be challenged on occasional details.¹ But his use of Old Norse poetry as a main source brings him against a problem long broached and always difficult, the possible influence of Old English on Old Norse poetry in poetic technique. In a well-known article² H. Kuhn has pointed out certain technical similarities between the verse of the Old English epics, and that of most Old Norse poems on native subjects (as distinct from Eddaic poetry on South Germanic sagas, and certain panegyrics influenced by this). He has also traced the intrusion into Old Norse verse of West Germanic technical peculiarities brought by the same spread of heroic lays which brought the South Germanic legends (mainly the Niflung cycle) to Scandinavia. These peculiarities appear to have come from continental West Germanic rather than from English. They are partly syntactic (relaxation of the "sentence-particle" law) and partly metrical (e.g. free use of words of the form $\cup \times \times$, as OE. *fremede*, ON. *svaraði*, and of A* lines). Hofmann now, partly following up the work of earlier scholars on the Helgi lays, collects much material to show that there was a vigorous influence of the diction of English poetry upon that of Norse poetry in the tenth and eleventh centuries and, while his view on this or that individual point might be challenged, his case can be regarded as made. Poetical meanings like *harðr* (bold), compounds like *verþjóð*, *bekkþili*, kenning compounds like *brindýr*, and expressions like *mengi mikit* are shown to correspond frequently with Old English usage.³

¹ For example, the late Old English demonstrative and relative *þæge* is hardly to be separated from Old Norse *þeir* (cf. Hofmann, pp. 213-4).

² *Westgermanisches in der altnordischen Verskunst*, P.B.B. LXIII, 178-236.

³ Hofmann regards as due to English influence irregular alliteration of the second lift of the second half-line, quoting parallels from *Finnesburg* and

Hofmann clearly understands that the Old English book epics which survive could not influence Norse poetry of the pre-literate period. He attributes the influence which he demonstrates to the oral survival among the English of short heroic poems similar to *Beowulf* in vocabulary, prosody, and style. This is practically to assume a late survival of the heroic lay. Twice in propounding this theory Hofmann uses the word "offenbar," but it is hardly that. It would be reasonable to assume that the heroes of Germanic legend suffered early eclipse in England, and that this was due to the decline of the heroic lay, the vehicle of their exploits. At least their absence from Middle English romance⁴ would seem to indicate this, especially when contrasted with their popularity in late romance in Germany, where long survival of the heroic lay is not disputed. In England the old legends seem to have been replaced by tales about historical and semi-historical characters of the Viking Age, and examples of these are embedded in profusion in the literature of the period and in later chronicles. Yet to judge from the surviving English evidence alone, poems on these new subjects seem to have been in an entirely new technique: the poems on Archbishop Ælfheah and Prince Ælfred (the events to which they allude belong to 1011 and 1036) would at least suggest this. Such verses could not be a medium through which the older technique could influence Norse poets. The scholarly panegyrics of the *Old English Chronicle* and the *Battle of Maldon* represent types of book verse also unlikely to influence Norse verse, and (as Hofmann admits) they are themselves without clear signs of Norse influence. The Old English verse which was the medium for the transference of technical peculiarities to Old Norse verse seems to have vanished entirely. We can only assume that it lay between classical Old English verse and the verse of Layamon, and that

Maldon. But this appears in *Finnesburg* because that poem exhibits the technique of the Germanic heroic lay, which was less severe in certain respects than that of the Old English book epics; while in *Maldon* it is due to incipient collapse of the severe rules of alliteration altogether. Other peculiarities of the ancient Germanic lays seem to have been: (1) alliteration of the verb in the second half-line; (2) alliteration of the second element of phrases, e.g. "folc sceotantero," "wælslihta gehlyn"; (3) alliteration of the second of two words linked by the verb "to be," e.g. "tot ist Hiltibrant"; here belongs "kominn er Helgi," regarded by Hofmann as an instance of the irregular alliteration of the second lift of the second half-line discussed above. These peculiarities are to be regarded as marking the heroic lays because they are found in the only non-Scandinavian extant examples of such lays (*Finnesburg* and *Hildebrand*); (3) is not found in *Finnesburg*, and in Scandinavian lays. But they are in the main eliminated by the severe technique of the Old English book epic, though relicts of them all appear in *Beowulf*, e.g. "ða gebeah cyning," "he is manna gehyld," "mæl is me to feran."

⁴ On the tenuous references to the old heroes in the Middle English period see R. M. Wilson, *The lost literature of medieval England*, pp. 1-26.

its subjects were heroes of the Viking Age, not figures of Old Germanic legend.

Hofmann is on still more delicate ground when he suggests that the Icelandic narrative style arose among Scandinavians in Britain, and that this style, which found its way to Iceland in a manner not clearly defined ("ist nach Island gewandert"), shows its British origin by the influence which it exerts on the later parts of the *Old English Chronicle*. As actual instances of the results of this influence he is able to mention only vivid presentation and objectivity, common peculiarities when professional chroniclers and historians dwell at length on particular incidents. It is accordingly not strange that Hofmann finds further examples of his assumed incipient Icelandic style in the *Gesta Cnutonis* and in the early Russian chronicle. But the historical methods of the *Gesta Cnutonis* are those of Norman historiography, and shed no light on the history of Norse prose, except in so far as the Norman historians may have ultimately exerted a direct literary influence on the Norse saga style. It is beside the point when Hofmann points to Norse linguistic peculiarities in the section of the *Old English Chronicle* under discussion: the mutual influence of the *languages* at that time is not disputed.

Hofmann's book lacks a subject index, but there is a useful bibliography. This is not free from slips: for example, the reviewer is credited with a non-existent edition of the *Battle of Maldon*, while his editions of the *Battle of Brunanburh* (London, 1938) and the *Encomium Emmae* or *Gesta Cnutonis* (Camden Series, 1949) are not mentioned. Other regrettable omissions are Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske kongers sagaer* (Oslo, 1937; on the relationships of the sagas in which most of the Norse verse used by Hofmann is preserved), J. C. H. R. Steenstrup, *Normandiets Historie* (Copenhagen, 1925; relates the *Gesta Cnutonis* to Norman historiography), G. Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford, 1935; regards the Icelandic saga style as originating in Iceland under the influence of Latin religious prose).

A. CAMPBELL

VÆRINGJASAGA. By SIGFÚS BLÖNDAL. *Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja* 1954, 409 pp.

Dr. Blöndal's *Væringjasaga* sums up for Icelandic readers all that is known of the Scandinavian elements in the Varangian Guard. It is possible, and Dr. Blöndal considers it probable, that archæologists may add something to this story if ever

systematic excavations are undertaken, particularly on the sites in Byzantium once occupied by the imperial palaces and the barracks and church of the guards.

This is not a history of the whole of the Guards; it would have been a pleasure to have a more general account, especially of the Norman and English Varangians, in this effortless, eminently readable prose. But Dr. Blöndal specifically restricts himself to those of Scandinavian origin and has collected from Russian, Arabic, Greek and French sources, as well as the sagas, runes, etc., all that can be discovered of their way of life, their terms of service and their exploits. It is unlikely that anyone will be able to add to his account unless archæology yields a great deal of new material.

It is unfair to criticise a posthumous work for matters which the author would probably have arranged otherwise had he lived to see his work through the press, nevertheless I cannot but feel that some kind of maps or maps of the places and countries mentioned might have been contributed with advantage to the general reader.

MARGARET BENEDIKZ

AN INTRODUCTION TO MODERN FAROESE. By W. B. LOCKWOOD. *Færoensia Textus et Investigationes* . . . edidit Christian Matras, Vol. IV. *Copenhagen: Munksgaard* 1955. XII 244 pp.

All students of Germanic and especially of the Scandinavian languages will be grateful to Mr. Lockwood for his pioneer work in modern Faroese. His grammar of modern Faroese is the first to be published in English, and we are fortunate indeed that this work has been undertaken by somebody who both knows the modern language well and who also has a sound general knowledge of linguistics and of the Scandinavian languages. Not that Mr Lockwood has allowed his historical philological knowledge to dominate his presentation of the material. On the contrary, he has rigorously excluded, wherever possible, references to earlier stages, and his grammar is therefore a concise statement of present-day usage. After a short introduction there is a very adequate phonetic description of Faroese sounds both in isolation and in groups, and some attention is paid to a feature of pronunciation frequently ignored in grammars: intonation. There follows a well-arranged accidence (pp. 28-84) and a full treatment of conjunctions and prepositions (pp. 85-101) which leads over to syntax. This is treated on pp. 102-152. Syntactic analysis leads to some remarks on word-order (pp. 153-157) which is precisely presented. There follows a very welcome bi-lingual

conversational text (pp. 158-167) and then further Faroese excerpts (pp. 168-200). There is an excellent glossary (pp. 201-244).

It is perhaps a pity that Mr. Lockwood has stuck so very strictly to his modern last and has told us nothing of the linguistic background and of the people who still speak the language. There are good reasons for his reticence; however, knowledge of Faroese is not so widespread that one would not welcome further information of a rather more extensive character than that given by Ernst Krenn in his *Föroyische Sprachlehre*, Heidelberg 1940.

This book is Volume IV of the Faroese series. No information is given about the previous three volumes to appear. They are:

- Vol. I: Grüner-Nielsen, H.: De færøske kvadmelodiers tonalitet i middelalderen. 80 pp. + 7 plates. 1945.
- Vol. II: Tarnovius, Thomas: Ferøers beskrivelser. 104 pp. + 4 plates. 1950.
- Vol. III: Matras, Christian: J. H. Schrøters optegnelser af Sjurdar kvædi. 172 pp. + 1 plate. 1951-53.

It is to be hoped that, now that Mr. Lockwood's grammar is available, a number of scholars will take the opportunity of studying this very fascinating language.

F. NORMAN

BRENNU-NJÁLS SAGA: Edited by EINAR ÓL. SVEINSSON (Íslenzk Fornrit XII). *Reykjavík*, Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, pp. CLXIII + 516.

Few have contributed more to the study of Icelandic literature and civilisation than Professor Einar Ól. Sveinsson. His published works are of very various kind; some of them are devoted to cultural history and folklore, others to aesthetic evaluation of literature, and others to such technical problems as manuscripts relations. All of his works are profound, instructive and stimulating, and they include editions of several sagas and no less than three books on the *Njáls Saga*.¹

In the present monumental edition of *Njáls Saga*, Einar Ól. Sveinsson summarizes the results of his earlier researches. Perhaps his greatest service was to show that this saga must be regarded as a single whole, and as the work of one man, rather than as a compilation of various sagas and other books, as older scholars had argued. Since this has been demonstrated so plainly, few

¹ *Um Njálu*, I, 1933; *Á Njálsbúð*, 1943; *Studies in the manuscript tradition of Njáls saga*, 1953.

readers can fail to appreciate the masterly structure of the *Njáls Saga*, and to see how narrative strands run through the story like the silken hair of Hallgerðr, which is described in the first chapter, and leads to the death of Gunnarr in Ch. LXXVII.

Although *Njáls Saga* must be regarded as the work of a single artist, it is not a work of fiction, but rather an imaginative recreation of history. The author has drawn upon historical sources of many kinds; some of these were oral, but the greater number were written. The present editor shows with close precision what these written sources were. They included sagas which we know, such as *Laxdæla* and probably *Eyrbyggja Saga*, and others which are unknown to us, such as *Brjáns Saga* and *Gauks Saga Trandilssonar*. No less interesting is the influence upon *Njáls Saga* of a lost book of genealogies, which differed in many particulars from the existing "Books of Settlement." Recent researches² have demonstrated the importance of lost genealogical writings and summary lives, written early in the twelfth century, as sources of classical sagas. Our confidence in these sagas as records of history is thereby strengthened.

Few will now doubt that the *Njáls Saga* is a monument of history as well as of art. The excavations of Matthías Þórðarson and of Kristján Eldjárn,³ concluded in 1951 have proved that there was, indeed, a fire at Bergþórshvoll, probably about the beginning of the eleventh century. Poems and records written many generations before the *Njáls Saga*, contain allusions to the burning of Njáll and the last battle of Gunnarr.

Njáls Saga is the work of a man who had read much and heard much. His reading and knowledge, and even the limitations of his knowledge help to establish the age of his work. He knew the *Laxdæla* and the *Eyrbyggja Saga*, and probably the *Alexanders Saga*, so his work must be younger than these. The author was fascinated by the law of the Icelandic Commonwealth, but his knowledge of it was defective. With consummate skill, Einar Ól. Sveinsson shows that *Njáls Saga* was written after the collapse of the Commonwealth (1262), and after the introduction of the Norwegian law-code, *Járnsíða* (1271-3), and he reaches the year 1280 as the approximate date of its composition.

The reader will inevitably ask who was the author of the *Njáls Saga*. Attempts have been made to identify him as Abbot Brandr of Þykkvabær (died 1264), and as Þorvarðr

² See, e.g. Einar Ól. Sveinsson's edition of the *Eyrbyggja Saga*, 1935, Introduction §2; Jón Jóhannesson's edition of *Austfirðinga Sögur*, Introduction, pp. LXV ff.

³ See *Arbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags*, 1951-2, pp. 1-75.

Pórarinnsson (died 1296), but it is improbable that such attempts will ever be successful. But if we cannot name the author, we can at least learn something about his education, tastes and social background.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson shows, as I believe conclusively, that the author of the *Njáls Saga* did not live in the region of Fljósthlið, for his knowledge of its topography was not exact. There are reasons to believe that he lived further to the east, in Skaptafellssýsla, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson once suggested that he was a member of the family of the Skógverjar.⁴

It has often been said that the author of the *Njáls Saga* was a monk or a cleric, but the present editor refutes this suggestion emphatically, stating that he is certain (fullviss) that *Njála* is the work of a layman.⁵ His conviction commands respect but arguments must necessarily be subjective. I do not think it possible to decide such a question on the evidence available, for clerics could think as laymen, laymen as clerics. Abbot Brandr showed in his *Alexanders Saga* that he was well-acquainted with the style of the native saga and the technique of writing it, and he has been keenly described by Einar Ól. Sveinsson⁶ as a lay cleric (veraldarklerkur), sharing the interests of laymen. Abbot Karl played some part in the composition of *Sverris Saga*, but this betrays no monastic bias. Hardly any saga of an Icelandic hero is more pious in tone than *Njáls Saga*, as the present editor shows in his analysis, although laymen as well as clerics could be pious.

Among the evidence for lay authorship of the *Njáls Saga*, the editor quotes the story of Ámundi the Blind (Ch. CVI). After compensation had been refused, sight was miraculously granted to Ámundi, so that he might exact vengeance for his father. Following Finnur Jónsson, Einar Ól. Sveinsson describes this story as unchristian, and even as a blasphemy. But many pious Christians have looked upon vengeance as a right and even, as Flosi did, as a duty, in which God's help might be invoked.⁷ Bishop Guðmundr did not blaspheme when he

⁴ *Njála og Skógverjar* in *Skírnir* CXI, 1937, pp. 15-45. In this paper it was suggested that Þorsteinn Skeggjason (died 1297) was the author of *Njáls Saga*. The suggestion is repeated in the present edition, but in no way pressed.

⁵ The editor afterwards allows that *Njáls Saga* could have been written in a monastery, but not in a monastic spirit. He concludes finally that its author belonged to the best educated class of laymen, although he can hardly have been a *goði*.

⁶ *Skírnir* CXI, p. 22.

⁷ In a pocket edition of the New Testament (Imprimatur Herbertus Cardinalis Vaughan, 1896). I find a note on Matthew V, 39 (if one strikes thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other), stating that these words do "not strictly oblige according to the letter, for neither did Christ nor St. Paul turn the other cheek" I believe that this represents a Christian tradition.

cried out: "hefn þú nú, dróttinn, eigi má vesalingr minn," nor did the crusaders who shouted: "Vindica, Domine, sanguinem nostrum, qui pro te effusus est." Christian or not, those who lived in a land without legal executive must assert their own rights and exact penalties for trespasses committed against them.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson devotes an excellent chapter of his Introduction to the art and structure of the Saga, demonstrating the author's mastery of the many-stranded story. The chapter on the author's outlook on life (lífsskoðanir) is no less fruitful. It is shown that the author's outlook was in many ways traditional; he believed strongly in *hamingja*, *gæfa*, *ógæfa*, but his outlook was not restricted by these concepts. As he faced death, Njáll saw far beyond this limited horizon, and died like a martyr, placing his hopes in a better life.

Einar Ól. Sveinsson has dealt in other works with the unusually complicated manuscript traditions of the *Njáls Saga*. His researches seem to show that the words which the author wrote are preserved in one manuscript or another, although it is not always possible to say which reading is original. A fully critical edition of the Saga on the lines suggested by the editor in his *Studies*⁸ could perhaps be made, but it would be outside the scope of the *Fornvit* series, and might take longer to prepare than the span of one man's life. Einar Ól. Sveinsson has based his text, where possible, on the *Móðruvallabók* (1316-50), which is slightly fuller and probably closer to the original than the text of the older manuscript, *Reykjabók* (c. 1300), which has been favoured by previous editors.

This edition contains excellent maps and illustrations and is beautifully produced. It is a fitting tribute to the greatest of all sagas.

G. TURVILLE-PETRE

⁸ See Footnote 1 above.

AN ICELANDIC LIFE OF ST. EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

By H. L. ROGERS

WHAT Professor Nordal has called "the fairy tale of Old Iceland as a Sleeping Beauty in the middle of the ocean, producing and preserving great literature as in a dream"¹ has now lost most of its appeal. Nordal's own researches, and those he has inspired in others, have shown how medieval Icelandic literature is a part of medieval European literature.

In particular, two kinds of writings are now seen to have had considerable importance for the development of the Icelandic classics, the family sagas. These are the saints' lives and Kings' sagas written in Norway as well as in Iceland.² Undoubtedly, the writing of them originated under European influences; and it might be said that northern authors left their foreign models further behind, the more their literary skill increased.

It is in this context that the work known by the not entirely appropriate title of *Játvarðar saga hins helga*, or "Life of St. Edward" (referred to below as *JH*) acquires an interest greater than its far from entertaining contents would suggest. As literature, *JH* is poor stuff, full of unattractive miracles and improbable history. Its style is flat, lifeless, and of a learned flavour. It contains hardly anything original: almost all its subject-matter derives ultimately from foreign sources (chiefly English). In structure however *JH* is reasonably well balanced, and in spite of the legendary nature of much of its material, its tone is sober and restrained. The author must have been a credulous man, but not a romancer, for what is fantastic in his work was not his own invention.

¹ "The Fate of the Gods," *The Listener*, 25 July 1957.

² cf. G. Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford, 1953), p. 231

The title of the saga is not quite appropriate because only about half the contents actually concern St. Edward, his life and his miracles. The rest is about the chief figures of English history round about the Norman Conquest — Harold II of England, Harold Hardrada, King of Norway, and William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy. The final section of *JH*, nearly a fifth of the whole, is about the emigration to Byzantium of Englishmen dissatisfied with William's rule. These contents display an interest in kings and great events as much as in saints and miracles.

It cannot yet be decided how far this double interest is due to the author's own tastes, and how far it is due to his immediate source or sources. On the one hand, the saga does give an impression of unity. A patriotic English tone is maintained with a consistency that an Icelandic author putting a number of diverse sources together would hardly produce. For example, the saga echoes the Anglo-Norman attitude, first common during the twelfth century, of wanting to have the best of all possible worlds: praising the English but praising the Normans not much less, and making the Danes the whipping-boys. Again, *JH* is like many works of English origin in its insistence upon the right of Edward the Confessor, who came of the ancient line of English kings, to rule. This preoccupation with the right to rule is especially noticeable in the reign of Henry II, who included both Edward and William among his ancestors: he was the corner-stone of the English and Norman peoples,³ and he had a distinctly political interest in the canonization of Edward, which he secured in 1161.⁴

On the other hand, there are many passages in *JH* which correspond not only to passages in Anglo-Norman

³ Ailred of Rievaulx, Prologue to *Vita S. Edwardi*; Migne, *Patrologia Latina* vol. cxcv, col. 738. Henry II's maternal grandmother was the daughter of Malcolm of Scotland and Margaret, "of the rightful royal house of England," Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, E. 1100.

⁴ M. Bloch, "La Vie de S. Édouard le Confesseur par Osbert," *Analecta Bollandiana* xli. (1923), pp. 14-15.

writings, but also to passages in one or other of the Kings' sagas. Hence it is possible that *JH* may contain interpolations from the Kings' sagas. Finnur Jónsson thought the saga was a list of miracles, with interpolations from *Heimskringla*: like many other scholars he believed that *JH* was written in the fourteenth century, when borrowing from *Hkr.* would of course be very likely.⁵

The problem is of such complexity that it will be best to leave it on one side for the present. Whatever the final solution, it is still possible that parts of *JH* are older than 1300, and that some of the material about Scandinavian kings derives from sources other than the Norse Kings' sagas. In this paper, as far as practicable, discussion will be confined to the foreign sources of *JH*, particularly those of the material about St. Edward himself. It will be suggested that part of the saga was written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, and that the Icelandic scholar, author, and lawyer, Gizurr Hallsson, who died in 1206, had a hand in it.

There are two main texts of *JH*: probably because the saga is about saints and kings, it was copied into two of the large fourteenth-century Icelandic collections of saints' lives and Kings' sagas, the *Byskuþa sögur* codex (*Bps.*) and *Flateyjarbók* (*Flb.*) respectively.⁶ The latter has the title "Saga ens heilaga Eduardar"; the former has no title, but some of its paper copies have titles in some respects more apt than that in *Flb.*, e.g. "Þattur Af Wilhiälme Bastharde Og nockrum Ødrum Eingla Köngum," "A short account of William the Bastard and other kings of England."⁷ Between the two texts there are differences of a word here and a sentence there, but both must go back to a common original.

⁵ *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie* (second ed., Copenhagen, 1923), ii. 875-6. The *ævi Nóregs konunga* referred to in *JH* are not necessarily *Hkr.* as we now know it.

⁶ *Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Ævi*, vols. xix and i (Copenhagen, 1950 and 1930) respectively.

⁷ Royal Library Stockholm, Papp. fol. nr. 55 (V. Gödel, *Katalog öfver Kongl. Bibliotekets Fornisländska och Fornnorska Handskrifter*, Stockholm, 1897-1900). For an account of the MSS of *JH*, see the ed. cited below.

The standard edition of *JH* is that published in 1852 by C. C. Rafn and Jon Sigurdsson, with the *Bps.* text as its basis.⁸ Most of the manuscripts, parchment and paper, were utilized; but Rafn and Sigurdsson did not tackle the fundamental editorial problem of establishing the original text, and the relationships to it of the various manuscripts. There can be little doubt that the *Bps.* text must remain the basis of any edition; it is not only the oldest, but seems the best in many ways. The *Flb.* version appears modernized in details of words and syntax, as though it had been made to read more smoothly by a later scribe; also, it is slightly longer, and the extra matter could have been added during copying: there is no absolute need to adopt the alternative explanation, that the *Bps.* text has been slightly abbreviated. Nevertheless, a new edition of *JH* is desirable.

For one thing, a number of the paper manuscripts with affinity to the *Flb.* text contain some distinctive variants traceable to neither *Flb.* nor *Bps.* Rafn and Sigurdsson noticed the existence of this group, but otherwise paid little attention to it.⁹ It may well be unimportant, as they considered, but the dangers of neglecting paper manuscripts are obvious.

A more serious fault in the 1852 edition is the almost total failure to compare *JH* with other Icelandic writings, and to use the results of comparison to elucidate the history of the text. The relevance of the Kings' sagas to *JH* has already been touched upon. This relevance becomes more immediate in the light of the fact that one manuscript not used by Rafn and Sigurdsson contains a passage not in the *Bps.* or *Flb.* texts of *JH* but corres-

⁸ *Annaler for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* (Copenhagen, 1852), pp. 3-43. Another ed. by G. Vigfusson, *Icelandic Sagas* (Rolls Series, London, 1887-94), i. 388-400; English translation vol. iii. 416-28. For *Flb.* text, see G. Vigfusson and C. R. Unger, *Flateyjarbók* (Christiania, 1860-8), iii. 463 ff.

⁹ *loc. cit.*, p. 9. Some paper copies now in the National Library of Iceland belong to this group. The distinctive variants may derive from A.M. 663 b, written by Jón Gizurarson, who was a notoriously bad copyist — see Jón Jóhannesson and others, *Sturlunga saga* (Reykjavik, 1946), ii., p. xiv; U. M. Brown, *Dorgils saga ok Hafliða* (Oxford, 1952), p. liv.

ponding fairly closely to a passage in *Fagrskinna*, the collection of Kings' sagas thought to have been written soon after 1220 by an Icelander in Norway. This unused manuscript dates from the early years of the fifteenth century; it is A.M. 238 fol., xvi, a fragment of one parchment leaf. It begins with part of *JH*, in a version closer to the *Bps.* text than to that in *Ffb.*, but towards the foot of the reverse side of the leaf there begins an account of Magnus the Good's claim to the throne of England, and St. Edward's reply. In the course of this account the fragment breaks off.¹⁰ Whatever the precise significance of this manuscript may turn out to be, its very existence is proof that the histories of *JH* and of the Kings' sagas are connected.

Much work, then, remains to be done before we can be sure about the text of *JH*, but with these reservations I consider that the *Bps.* text is nearest to the original. Accordingly quotations from *JH* are given from *Bps.*, though the *Ffb.* variants are cited wherever they may be of importance.

The saga begins with the genealogy of St. Edward. His early love of the Church; his special worship of the Virgin Mary, St. Peter, and St. John the Evangelist; and his own virginity are briefly mentioned. There then follows a description of how William of Normandy wooed and won his future wife Mathilda by beating and kicking her because she called him bastard: this convinced her that no man was his equal.

The saga returns to St. Edward. England rejoiced to have him as king, because he came of the ancient royal house; under him the good flourished and the wicked were discomfited. Several of St. Edward's visions and miracles are now described. The whole series is introduced by the remark that during St. Edward's lifetime many remarkable things happened, to do with

¹⁰ Jón Helgason, Introduction to *Corp. Cod. Isl. Med. Æv.* vol. xix, p. 21. A similar account is in *Ffb.*, but in the "Saga of Magnus the Good and Harold Hardrada," copied into the book in the fifteenth century.

his performance of miracles and his gift of prophecy, "although we are able to tell only a little about them, because of our ignorance and remoteness."¹¹ The first three stories in the series are told at some length: first, the story of how St. Edward saw in a vision the drowning of a Danish king who had intended to attack England; secondly, of how St. Edward gave his ring to St. John the Evangelist, who then released an English nobleman from the clutches of the Saracens and give him the ring to return to St. Edward; thirdly, of St. Edward's vision of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and his prophecy of the disasters that would follow their turning over from the right side to the left. After these three fairly lengthy stories some other miracles are mentioned very briefly: how St. Edward saw a vision of a surpassingly beautiful young man in the Mass; how he carried a cripple to church, and so cured him; how water in which he had washed cured blindness.¹²

The family of Earl Godwine is next described. Edward was married to Godwine's daughter, but they had no children because of Edward's purity of life. When Godwine learned this he plotted to make his son Harold king, and about this time Edward's half-brother died suddenly and mysteriously. Godwine was suspected; one day at the banquet a servant slipped with one foot and steadied himself with the other, whereupon Godwine said, "There brother helped brother,"¹³ The king taxed him with complicity in his brother's death.

¹¹ *Bps.*: Margir hlutir urðu merkiligr í hans lifnaði um jarteiknagerðir hans ok spádóm, þótt vér kunnum fátt frá at segja, sakir fáfræði ok fjarlægðar. (*Annaler* 1852, p. 14; MS fol. 69 r.).

Fib.: Margir hlutir urðu þeir í hans lífi um hans jarteiknir ok spádóm, at sannfróðir menn hafa rita látit á bókum, en fyrir fáfræði vitum vér varla hvat fyrr eða síðar hefir verit á hans dögum, ok því segjum vér þat fyrst er oss þykkir mestrar frásagnar vert. (*Fib.* iii. 464; MS col. 852). "Many things connected with his miracles and gift of prophecy happened during his lifetime, which well-informed men caused to be written in books, but because of ignorance we hardly know what was earlier and what was later in his life, and therefore we relate first what seems to us most worth telling."

¹² This section about Edward's visions and miracles makes up chapters 2 to 4 inclusive in the 1852 ed.

¹³ *Húfði þar nú bróðir bróður* (*Annaler* 1852, p. 26).

Godwine denied his guilt, swearing by the food he was eating that he was innocent. His food stuck in his throat and he died immediately.

The question of the English succession is next discussed. Edward intended William of Normandy to be king after him; Harold Godwineson swore oaths to Edward and to William that he would not stand in William's way. But as Edward lay on his death-bed hardly able to talk, Harold said in his presence that he had appointed him his successor. Edward died, and was buried in London; after his death there were more miracles (these are not described). Edward lay buried in the ground until his remains were translated by St. Thomas of Canterbury.¹⁴

The rest of the saga is about Harold of England, Harold of Norway, William of Normandy, and their battles. The work ends with the story about an English emigration to Byzantium.

It will be apparent from this synopsis that only four of St. Edward's visions and miracles are described at length: the drowning Danish king, the ring, the Seven Sleepers, Godwine's death. As a Life of St. Edward, *JH* is far from complete.

The earliest Lives of St. Edward were written in Latin. The earliest of all is thought to be the so-called *Biography (B)* or *Vita Æduuardi Regis qui apud Westmonasterium requiescit*, published by Luard in 1858.¹⁵ It is an anonymous work; by general consent, its composition is

¹⁴ *Fib.* adds that Edward was buried in St. Paul's (*i Pálskirku*): but this is incorrect, as Edward was buried at Westminster (St. Peter's). Nor was the first translation of his remains carried out by St. Thomas. These errors in *JH* probably do not derive from the Lives of St. Edward, but from the King's sagas and from the Lives of St. Thomas. Cf. e.g. *Heimskringla* iii. 170, ed. Bjarni Aðalbarnarson (Íslenzk Fornrit xxviii, Reykjavík, 1951); *Thomas saga erkibyskups* pp. 53, 329, ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania, 1869); and especially *Haralds Harðrada Saga* in *Fornmanna Sögur* vi. 396 (Copenhagen, 1831), where the verbal resemblances to *JH* are particularly close. The text of the latter is based on the MSS Hulda and Hrokinskinna, said to be compounded of *Hkr.* and Morkinskinna; but neither of these now contains such close parallels to *JH*. Possibly *JH* contains matter from the now-lost recension of Morkinskinna written soon after 1280 — see Bjarni Aðalbarnarson, op. cit., p. xcvi.

¹⁵ H. R. Luard, *Lives of Edward the Confessor* (Rolls Series, London, 1858).

assigned to the years between 1066 and 1075.¹⁶ *B* has little relevance to *JH*.

The second Life is that written in 1138 by Osbert of Clare, prior of Westminster: *Vita beati Eadwardi regis Anglorum* (*O*). This work, though its existence had long been known, remained unpublished until Marc Bloch edited it in 1923.¹⁷ It is of great value in the study of *JH*, though it seems to have passed unnoticed by Icelandic scholars. Osbert's work, which did not succeed in its object of procuring the canonization of Edward the Confessor, was soon overshadowed by the third Life.

This was written by Ailred, abbot of the Cistercian house of Rievaulx. The canonization of St. Edward had been finally effected in 1161, and in response to a request from his kinsman Laurence, abbot of Westminster, Ailred wrote his *Vita Sancti Edwardi Regis et Confessoris* (*A*). In Westminster on 13th October 1163, St. Edward's relics were translated in the presence of King Henry II; Ailred offered the Life he had written, together with a now-lost homily about St. Edward, on the text of *Nemo lucernam accendit*.¹⁸

As might be expected, *A* became the most influential of the Latin Lives: it was the authorized version of Edward's sanctity. It was the one most commonly used as a source by later chroniclers; other Lives written in French and Middle English are little more than translations of *A*.¹⁹ Of all the Lives, *A* is the most likely to have made its way to Iceland in one form or another. Rafn and Sigurdsson, in their edition of *JH*, identified it as a possible source of the material about

¹⁶ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (second ed., Oxford, 1947), p. 686; R. W. Southern, "The First Life of Edward the Confessor," *E.H.R.* lviii. (1943), 385-400.

¹⁷ *Analecta Bollandiana* xli.

¹⁸ Bloch, *op. cit.* p. 16, and references there given.

¹⁹ Ö. Södergård, *La Vie d'Edouard le Confesseur* (Uppsala, 1948); G. E. Moore, *The Middle English Verse Life of Edward the Confessor* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Disst., Philadelphia, 1942); *La Estoire de Seint Edward le Rei*, printed by Luard, *op. cit.*, and issued in facsimile by the Roxburghe Club, 1920, with Introduction by M. R. James; M. D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* (Edinburgh, 1950), pp. 24-8, p. 50.

St Edward in the saga, and their opinion has been made more definite by later scholars.²⁰ Unfortunately, *A* has never been critically edited, though two versions of it have been printed often enough. Even more unfortunately, Rafn and Sigurdsson and their successors referred to the text printed in the Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum*, without apparently realizing that this is the abridged version of Capgrave which Wynkyn de Worde first printed in Black Letter in 1516.²¹ The text of Twysden printed in 1652, and conveniently reproduced in Migne's *Patrologia Latina* is to be preferred.²²

Apart from these self-contained Latin Lives, there are important references to St. Edward, his visions and his miracles, in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (*GRA*) the first edition of which he completed in 1125.²³ William employed another Life as his source — or so it seems, as we shall see. It may be regarded as established that *B* was a source of *O*, and that *O* was a source of *A*.²⁴

It is also certain that there existed at Westminster in Osbert's day a collection of material about St. Edward, written on *scedulae* or slips. This collection of miracles is now lost, but it was one of the chief sources of *O*, for Osbert wrote:

Ex diuersis namque hoc opus fratrum imperio collectum est scedulis, quas sancti patres nostri nobis reliquerunt scriptas, qui eas uiderunt et audierunt, sicut referimus, perpetratas.²⁵

The succession of Latin Lives is therefore *B* (1066-75), the *scedulae* (before 1138), *O* (1138), and *A* (1163). *GRA* was written before 1125; hence it occupies a place between *B* and *O*.

²⁰ *Annaler* 1852, p. 5; Finnur Jónsson, *Litt. Hist.* ii. 876 (for *Eadred*, read *Ailred*, for *June* read *January*); A. H. Smith, "Literary Relations of England and Scandinavia," *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* xi (1928-36), p. 228.

²¹ *Nova Legenda Angliae*, ed. C. Horstmann (Oxford, 1901).

²² *Historiae anglicanae scriptores X* (London, 1652), col. 369 ff.; Migne, *Pat. Lat.* vol. cxcv. cols. 739 ff.

²³ Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum Libri Quinque*, ed. W. Stubbs (Rolls Series, London, 1887-9), i. p. xxxi.

²⁴ Bloch, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-6; F. M. Powicke, *Life of Ailred of Rievaulx* (London and Edinburgh, 1950), pp. xlvi, 41-2; M. R. James, *loc. cit.*, p. 13.

²⁵ ed. Bloch, p. 66. See also pp. 33-4, 45.

When *JH* is compared with these early Latin Lives some curious facts emerge. As already mentioned, Rafn and Sigurdsson and others have suggested that *A* was a source of *JH*. In a way, this must be true: the ring story, and the story of Godwine's death, both of which are in *JH*, are in *A*, but not in the earlier Lives. (Godwine chokes to death in *GRA*, but the remark about brother helping brother is there attached to an anecdote about Athelstan.) From this point of view, *JH* occupies a place later than *A* in the development of traditions about St. Edward. But the verbal resemblances of *JH* to *A* are not particularly close. The ring story in *JH* is quite different from that in *A*.²⁶ The two accounts of Godwine's death are more similar, but even here *JH* is not really very like *A*.

In *JH*, when Godwine is about to eat the morsel of food which chokes him, St. Edward takes him by the elbow and stretches out his arm towards a bishop who is present, asking for a blessing on the food. In *A* Godwine puts the food straight into his mouth after denying his guilt.²⁷ But in the French (Anglo-Norman) Lives which, in the main, derive from *A*, it is said that St. Edward himself blesses the morsel. In a twelfth-century Life:

Li reis a tant sa main leva
E le mortel mossel seigna.²⁸

The word *morsel* is used in the Icelandic of *JH*; the Latin word in *A* is *buccella*.²⁹ This is a small point, but it is enough to make one wonder whether *JH* is at least partly based on a French source, and whether some of the loan-words of Fr. origin in the saga may not have been carried over from the wording of this source. There are other pointers in the same direction: the name for Westminster in *JH* is *Vestmyst*, *Vestmust*. It has been claimed that

²⁶ cf. *Annaler* 1852, p. 18, n. 9; Migne cols. 769 f.

²⁷ Migne, col. 766 f.

²⁸ Södergård, op. cit., ll. 3895 f. cf. the thirteenth-century Life ed. Luard, op. cit., l. 3319: *Li rois Aedward le mors benoit*.

²⁹ Migne, col. 767.

this derives from an abbreviation of the Latin *Westmonasterium*, but there is no need to adopt such a complicated explanation: the common Anglo-Norman form is *Westm(o)uster*.³⁰ Another loanword which may be significant is *amia* "lover," found only in the *Bps.* text of *JH*; *Flb.* has the Icelandic word *unnusta*.³¹

The theory that *JH* is partly based on a French Life of St. Edward, itself based on *A*, helps to explain why *JH* does not resemble *A* more closely. It may also help to explain the presence in *JH* of historical or quasi-historical material that cannot possibly be traced to the Norse Kings' sagas: for example the story about how William wooed and won Mathilda, and the story about the English migration to Byzantium. There is a very close analogue to the former tale in the *Chronicon Sancti Martini Turonensis*.³² No close analogue to the latter has been found, but evidently a similar tradition was known to the Anglo-Norman Ordericus Vitalis.³³ Such stories as these two might be expected in a compendious French or Anglo-Norman chronicle; such a chronicle might also contain extracts from a Life of St. Edward — *A*, in all likelihood. Hence it would be understandable that *JH* should be so incomplete an account of St. Edward and his miracles. The remark, "we are able to tell only a little" becomes more comprehensible in these circumstances.

Extracts from saints' lives were commonly inserted into compendious medieval chronicles, and historical matter was inserted into saints' lives. There are extracts from the Lives of St. Edward in the Latin chronicles of England from William of Malmesbury to Capgrave; a thirteenth-century French Life contains quite a lot of

³⁰ A. H. Smith, *loc. cit.*, pp. 228-30; cf. my note to be published in *Medium Ævum*.

³¹ *Annaler* 1852, p. 12.

³² *Monumenta Germaniæ Historica Scriptores* xxix. 416; xxvi. 730; E. Martene, *Veterum Scriptorum et Monumentorum ampl. collectio* v. (Paris, 1729), col. 1004; *L'Art de Vérifier les Dates* xiii. (Paris, 1818), pp. 15-16.

³³ ed. A. Le Prevost, *Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ* ii. (Paris, 1840), pp. 172-3.

additional historical matter.³⁴ A late thirteenth-century manuscript of Wace's *Brut* contains the greater part of a French Life of St. Edward.³⁵ There is nothing intrinsically improbable in the proposed French source of *JH*. Indeed it is not impossible that the source may exist somewhere today, unpublished and neglected. A truly enormous amount of medieval literature of this kind is still not printed.³⁶

However, it is quite clear that although *JH* has some affinity to *A*, it cannot have been based directly on *A*. To some extent, the lack of close verbal resemblances between the two works might be explained on the assumptions that the Icelandic author had read *A* or something like it once, and wrote up what he could remember; that only corrupted extracts of *A* were available to him; that he added miscellaneous historical information from other sources.³⁷ But these assumptions do not fit the next set of facts to emerge from the examination of the early Latin Lives. Rafn and Sigurdsson noticed that one part of *JH*, the story about the Seven Sleepers, corresponds very closely to a passage in William of Malmesbury's *GRA*; and comparison with Osbert's work shows that other parts of *JH*, notably the story about the drowned Danish king, and the genealogy of St. Edward, correspond closely to *O*.

I have not been able to discover anything, in Latin, French, or Middle English, that shows this same mixture of features from the early Latin Lives of St. Edward. *JH* seems a special case, requiring a special explanation. *GRA* was of course one of the most popular books of the

³⁴ Luard, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii; cf. M. R. James, *loc. cit.*, pp. 13-16.

³⁵ *Le Roman de Brut de Wace*, ed. I. Arnold (Société des anciens textes français, Paris, 1938), pp. viii-ix (MS *J*). I am indebted to Miss M. D. Legge for drawing my attention to this.

³⁶ See, e.g. T. D. Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials* (Rolls Series, London, 1862-71).

³⁷ cf. *Annaler* 1852, p. 5; F. Jónsson, *Litt. Hist.* ii. 875-6 and *Corp. Cod. Isl. Med. Æv.* i. (pages not numbered); J. Helgason, *CCIMÆ* xix.22; G. Vigfusson, *Icelandic Sagas* i. p. xvi suggested Osbern (*sic*), without amplification.

time; it is not hard to find extracts copied from it.³⁸ But *O* was never popular, and it seems hardly to have been copied at all.³⁹ The story about the Seven Sleepers is in *A*: why should *JH* then borrow this story from *GRA*? The story about the drowned Danish king is also in *A*: why should *JH* now borrow from *O*?

Both questions can be answered with reference to the *scedulae*, the now-lost collection of miracles once kept at Westminster. Two distinguished medievalists, Bishop Stubbs and Professor Bloch, suggested that William of Malmesbury used the *scedulae* before Osbert. Osbert is known to have used the *scedulae*. If *JH* were partly based on the *scedulae*, it might resemble both *GRA* and *O*.

In the passage about the Seven Sleepers, the resemblance of *JH* to *GRA* is certainly very close, so close that either *JH* borrowed from *GRA*, or both works had a common source. A short quotation will suffice here to show the resemblance, to which Rafn and Sigurdsson and others have already drawn attention.⁴⁰

GRA Talia mirantibus inculcans passionem septem dormientium, et habitudines corporum singulorum, quas nulla docet littera, ita prompte disseruit ac si cum eis cotidiano victitaret contubernio. His auditis, comes militem, episcopus clericum, abbas monachum, ad veritatem verborum exculpandam, Manicheti Constantinopolitano imperatori misere, adjectis regis sui litteris et muneribus. Eos ille, benigne secum habitos, episcopo Ephesi destinavit, epistola pariter quam sacram vocant comitante, ut ostenderentur legatis regis Angliæ septem dormientium martiriales exuviæ. Factumque est, etc.⁴¹

JH Marga hluti sagði hinn helgi Játvarðr þeim, þá þeir undruðusk, hversu hann mátti vita, bæði af þínu vii. sofenda ok álitum þeirra, ok flest þat sem í engum bókum stendr áðr af þeim ritat, ok sagði þeim frá svá inniliga sem hann hefði optliga hjá sjau sofendum verit staddr.

³⁸ See Stubbs, *op. cit.*, i. pp. xci-xciii. The story of the Seven Sleepers was copied, e.g. by Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale*.

³⁹ Bloch, *loc. cit.*, p. 17: "On l'oublia."

⁴⁰ *Annaler* 1852, p. 5; A. H. Smith, *loc. cit.*, p. 228.

⁴¹ ed. Stubbs, i. 275.

En þrír hofðingjar er þetta heyrðu ok fyrr var getit, Haraldr ok byskup ok abóti, gørðu sína sendiboða, jarlinn riddara, byskup klerk, abóti munk, til keisarans í Miklagarði. Miklagarðs keisari tók sœmiliga við þeim ok sendi til byskups af Effesu með sínu bréfi er Grikkir kalla sakram, at hann sýndi sendiboðum Englakonungs líkami hinna helgu vii. sofera. Ok byskup gørði svá, etc.⁴²

Stubbs suggested, and Bloch argued more strongly, that William of Malmesbury was drawing on the *scedulae*: as Bloch pointed out, William makes mistakes in this passage about the Seven Sleepers when he names the emperors of Constantinople, although elsewhere in *GRA* these mistakes are rectified. Bloch concluded that at this point in *GRA* William merely copied another source, which he did not bother to reconcile with his own knowledge. Moreover, Bloch argued, the source William was copying could not have been *B* (the only Life earlier than *GRA*), because he omitted some of the most attractive material in *B*. But *GRA* does resemble *B* to some extent. The resemblance must be due to a common source: the *scedulae*.

Of course, these arguments are far from conclusive, though they may be convincing. One feature of Bloch's reasoning which has not won general approval is his assignation of *B* to the twelfth century. But whether *B* influenced the *scedulae*, or the *scedulae* influenced *B* (as Bloch believed) does not much affect the present discussion. If *B* were written soon after 1066, as most scholars think, it or parts of it would surely have been incorporated into the *scedulae*. Hence *GRA* may still resemble *B*. In Stubbs's words, "We are thus led to the inference that there was at Westminster a growing store of traditions," of which *B* "may have been a part."⁴³

⁴² *Annaler* 1852, pp. 18-22. For a translation of the passage, see *Icelandic Sagas* iii. 419-20. The most notable resemblances are *quas nulla docet littera*: "which is not in books written about them before"; and *episcopo Ephesi destinavit, epistola pariter quam sacram vocant comitante*: "sent to the bishop of Ephesus with his (the emperor's) letter, which the Greeks call 'sacram'."

⁴³ Stubbs, *op. cit.*, ii. pp. c-cvi.

The resemblance of *JH* to *GRA* in fact strengthens Stubbs's and Bloch's theory, that William used the *scedulae*. *GRA* is full of material interesting to an Icelandic author, but *JH* only resembles *GRA* in the passage about the Seven Sleepers: elsewhere, indeed, *GRA* and *JH* are in conflict over the attribution of the remark about brother helping brother, which William records in connexion with Athelstan, but *JH*, like *A*, assigns to Godwine.⁴⁴ Hence it is clear that *JH* could not have borrowed directly from *GRA*; the passage about the Seven Sleepers can only be an extract, not made by the Icelandic author himself. But the crucial fact is that *JH* also resembles *O* in some other respects: the one explanation, the *scedulae*, will therefore cover both sets of resemblances.

JH and *O* agree in confusing Richard I of Normandy with Richard II, and consequently in making Emma (mother of Edward the Confessor) the sister, instead of the aunt, of Robert the Devil. *A* has these relationships right. *JH* and *O* make Edgar the first king of all England; *A* has the story of King Alfred's consecration as king of all England by Pope Leo in Rome.⁴⁵ But the most striking and sustained similarity of *JH* to *O* appears in the account of St. Edward's vision of the drowned Danish king.

Osbert is noted for the prolixity of his style.⁴⁶ If *JH* does derive from the *scedulae*, we may see in the following passage how Osbert has expanded and embroidered his original:

⁴⁴ *A* in Migne, cols. 766-7; *GRA* ed. Stubbs, i. 156-7; *Annaler* 1852, p. 26.

⁴⁵ *A* in Migne, cols. 740-1; cf. Ailred's *Genealogia Regum Anglorum* in the same vol., col. 726, where *Dunstan* is said to have heard the angels sing at Edgar's birth. This detail is not in *A*, or *O*, but is in *JH*, *Annaler* 1852, p. 10. Ailred's *Genealogia* is thought to have been used by the author of the thirteenth-century Fr. Life: Luard, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii. Apart from this, the resemblance of *JH* to *O* is clear: see Bloch's ed., pp. 69-70, and especially the MS readings. Bloch emended these in his text, so making the genealogy given by Osbert correct. In fact it is incorrect, as that in *JH* is incorrect.

⁴⁶ Bloch, *loc. cit.*, p. 55: "cette prolixité prétentieuse."

O:

In die gloriose festiuitatis
quam in aduentu Sancti Spiritus
missus de supernis serenauit
ignis, rex insignis Eadwardus
apud Westmonasterium in ecclesia
beati Petri apostolorum principis
agebat in sceptris; eoque totius
Anglie duces confluerant et
pontifices, sollempnitatem regiam
uariis diuitiarum suarum delitiis
in fimbriis aureis decorantes.

Circa horam uero eandem qua
salutaris uictima agni paschalis a
populo percipitur, in cachinum
rex gloriosus erupit immoderatum,
ita ut qui astant mirarentur
per circuitum. Quia uero solide
grauitatis idem princeps extiterat
et in illo nulla inconstantia uel
leuitas apparere consueuerat, post
acta sollempnia a suis inquiritur
que in risu significatio teneatur.

JH:

Þat bar til á einn
Hvítasunnudag

at Petriskirkju í Vestmyst
er hinn helgi Játvarðr hlýddi
þar hátíðligri messu, skryðdr
öllum krúnuklæðum,

at þá er prestrinn upphélt
várs herra líkam,
kom at honum
hlátr svá mikill
at allir undruðusk,
er hjá váru.

Eftir messuna
spurðu hann menn
hvat er völdi þeim fáheyrða
hlátri.

An important difference between *JH* and *O* is that in *JH* the name of the drowned Danish king is not at first given, whereas in *O* it is:

O: “Rex” inquit “Dacie cui Sueno iunior erat uocabulum cum infinita classe parauerat Anglie fines inuadere, etc.

JH: Konungr svarar, “Danakonungr bjósk með útalligum her ok skipafjölda at herja á vart land”,

But otherwise the similarity of *JH* to *O* is undoubtedly close:

O: Cumque de prora ad nauem in quam ingredi debebat pedem extenderet, iusto Dei iudicio, elapsus corruit, et demersus in mare miserabiliter exspirauit.

JH: ok svá sem hann skyldi stíga upp í skip sitt af báti, þá fell hann á kaf ok drukknaði eftir réttum Guðs dómi.

Apart from the name of the Danish king, then, *JH* and *O* are virtually identical in their account of this vision.

The account in *A* is substantially the same, but there are not comparable verbal similarities, and the name of the drowned king is not given.⁴⁷

In *JH*, the name of the drowned king is given at the end in the following words:

Bps.: En með því at þessi^a Danakonungr er^b eigi^c nefndr, þá þykkjask fróðir menn í Nóregs konungs veldi^d eigi^e vita, hverr þessi konungr hefir verit, nema þat er^f sagt frá orðum Gizurar Hallssonar, eins hins vitrasta manns^g á Íslandi, at þessi konungr hafi verit Sveinn, son Knúts konungs hins^h ríka ok Alfífu.

“ But because this Danish king is not named [in my source], learned men in the realm of the king of Norway do not themselves know who he was, except that it is said (*or*: written) on the authority of Gizurr Hallsson, one of the wisest men in Iceland, that this king was Swein, son of Cnut the Great and Ælfgifu.”⁴⁸

Hence, there is complete agreement between *JH* and *O* about the name of this drowned king. By “Sueno iunior” an Icelander would naturally understand Sveinn Knútsson, Sveinssonar — Swein, whose father was Cnut, whose father was Swein. But whereas *O*, which otherwise in this passage corresponds so closely to *JH*, gives the drowned king’s name in the text, *JH* says it was not given, and then adds it on the authority of Gizurr Hallsson.

Hitherto, this mention of Gizurr has generally been taken as a “mere embellishment,”⁴⁹ partly because the

⁴⁷ *O* ed. Bloch, pp. 75-7; *Annaler* 1852, pp. 14-16; cf. *A* in Migne, cols. 748-9. Translation of the extracts from *JH*: (i) “One Whit Sunday, it happened at St. Peter’s in Westminster, when St. Edward was attending High Mass, adorned in his coronation robes, that when the priest held up the body of Our Lord, he began to laugh so much that all those who were near were astonished. After Mass, people asked him what was the cause of this strange laughter.” (ii) “The king answered, ‘The Danish king was preparing to attack our country with an innumerable army and a multitude of ships,’ (iii) “and as he was about to go on board his ship from a small boat, he fell into the sea and was drowned according to God’s rightful judgement.”

⁴⁸ *Annaler* 1852, p. 16. The passage is full of difficulties of interpretation; the translation given above should be read in the light of the rest of this paper. Variants in *Flb.*: (a) þessi omitted (b) er: var (c) eigi: ekki (d) veldi: ríki (e) víst inserted (f) helzt inserted (g) eins . . . manns: er vitrastr lögmaðr var (h) hins omitted.

The fragment A.M. 238, fol. xvi, begins *-asta lögmanns á Íslandi*, and then follows *Bps.*

⁴⁹ Jón Helgason, *Corp. Cod. Isl. Med. Ev.* xix. 22.

information attributed to him was thought to be false. So it is, historically, for Swein the son of Cnut died before Edward was king of England; but it does faithfully reflect the statement in *O*, and from this point of view it is genuine.⁵⁰ There is practically no chance that the drowned king's name was invented by the Icelandic author: guessing would no doubt have produced the name of Magnus the Good, who did die while Edward was on the throne. Moreover, Magnus died on board ship, according to some traditions.⁵¹ The author of *JH* either got the drowned king's name from Gizurr Hallsson, as he says he did, or he read it in his source and lied about it so that he could mention Gizurr.

The latter alternative is, I think, quite unacceptable. If the author had guessed the drowned king's name, he might have wished to mention Gizurr, in order to make his guess seem authoritative. But he could not have guessed. If he already had good authority for the name, because it was in his source, why then need he mention Gizurr? There is no evidence in the rest of the saga that the author was unscrupulous: so far as can be judged, he dealt carefully with his sources, and he does not seem to have been the sort of man to tell such a pointless lie.

Further, if the reference to Gizurr is rejected, it is hard to explain why the saga should resemble *A* on the one hand, and *GRA*, *O*, and the *scedulae* on the other. But if it is taken at its face value it helps us to understand why there are these two layers of tradition in the saga, one older and one younger. The older layer made its way to Iceland in Gizurr Hallsson's day, that is in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century; the younger, deriving

⁵⁰ Edward reigned 1042-3 to 1066; Swein the son of Cnut died 1036-7; the other Swein (Sveinn Ulfsson) died 1074. Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 76, n. 1, understands Osbert to mean the latter ("Sven Estridsen").

⁵¹ See Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's note, *Heimskringla* iii. 105-6. It may be surmised that in fact Magnus the Good died on board ship; that this gave rise to the legend about St. Edward's vision; and that the legend was then transferred to Swein the Son of Cnut by a double misunderstanding of Adam of Bremen: "Suein" was misread for "Magnus," and the "Suein," which in Adam refers to Sveinn Ulfsson, was then taken to mean Swein the son of Cnut.

from *A* indirectly, came later. When the saga was written, at some time from 1200 to 1350, the author put the two layers together, copying the older material with care, and citing the name of Gizurr, who had been associated with it.

Gizurr may well have known something about St. Edward's life and miracles. He was one of the family of Haukadallr, and could count the two first bishops of Iceland, and the teacher of Ari the Learned, among his forbears. He ranked with Jón Loptsson among the leaders of Iceland in the twelfth century; he was Lawspeaker from 1181 to 1200, and was "staller" to the king of Norway. He was on close terms with the bishops of his time.

In the earlier part of his life — he is said to have been 80 when he died in 1206 — Gizurr travelled widely, even to Rome. The book he wrote, called *Flos Perigrinationis*, is unfortunately lost.⁵² His literary activities however are often referred to, though perhaps he was the sort of man who inspired others to write more than he wrote himself. *Hungrvaka* was written largely from information supplied by him; the author of *Veraldar saga* was also indebted to him for information. Gunnlaugr Leifsson, monk of Þingeyrar, submitted his "Saga of Olaf Tryggvason" to Gizurr, who kept it for two years before giving Gunnlaugr his advice. Gunnlaugr then "emended" the book accordingly.⁵³

Gizurr is said to have been the best scholar in Iceland. While he was abroad, he must have gathered a great deal of information for his own book; no doubt he would acquire other books if he could, and would write down things that interested him. He returned from the south in 1152, when Klængur was consecrated bishop of Skálholt.⁵⁴ At this time Ailred's Life of St. Edward was

⁵² *Haukdæla Þáttur* in *Sturlunga saga* i. 57-62 (ed. Jón Jóhannesson and others, Reykjavík, 1946). See also Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendingasaga I — Þjóðveldisöld* (Reykjavík, 1956), p. 276.

⁵³ See G. Turville-Petre, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-6, 202-5, and references there.

⁵⁴ *Hungrvaka*, chap. 9 (ed. Jón Helgason, Copenhagen, 1938, p. 107).

unwritten. If Gizurr knew anything about the saint, it would derive from the earlier Lives: *GRA*, *O*, the *scedulae*.

Consequently, there is good reason to trust the reference to Gizurr in *JH*, though what the reference implies, more than the existence in Iceland of material about St. Edward in Gizurr's day, can only be conjectured. Two theories are worth putting forward. One is that the *scedulae* had been copied and had reached Iceland. This is quite possible: Þorlákr the Younger studied in Paris and Lincoln, and returned just before the canonization of St. Edward.⁵⁵ He was abbot of Þykkvabær í Veri before becoming bishop of Skálholt, and *JH* may be connected with that monastery, for the *Bps.* codex is thought to have been written there.⁵⁶ Þorlákr and Gizurr knew each other; Gizurr may have supplied the name of the drowned Danish king from *O* or a similar source. On this hypothesis, or one like it, the resemblances of *JH* to *GRA* and *O* may be satisfactorily explained. It has the advantage of attributing to Gizurr no more than the saga does — the name of the drowned king — but it requires the assumption that the name was not in the *scedulae*. There is no way of checking this, and although the argument about the *scedulae* seems sound, it would perhaps be unwise to build too much on it alone.

The second theory, which I favour, is that Gizurr actually contributed more than the drowned king's name: that from information supplied by him, an account was written of St. Edward's Life, and this account was later incorporated into the saga as we now have it. It would include the story of the drowned Danish king, and those

⁵⁵ On Þorlákr and his saga, see Turville-Petre, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-11, and references there.

⁵⁶ Jón Helgason, *Corp. Cod. Isl. Med. Æv.* xix. 10. Gizurr's son Hallr was later abbot of Þykkvabær. Rafn and Sigurdsson, *loc. cit.*, p. 6, associated the writing of the saga with Þingeyrar, without good reasons (cf. Jón Helgason's remarks, *loc. cit.*); though I am unable to give better reasons, my impression is that the saga belongs to Skálholt and Þykkvabær rather than to Hólar and Þingeyrar.

other parts of the saga resembling *GRA* and *O*, and thus appearing to derive from the *scedulae*. If it were not for the ring story, which comes between the accounts of the drowned Danish king and the Seven Sleepers, a whole block of the saga could be traced to the *scedulae* and attributed to Gizurr. This is the nucleus of the Icelandic Life, chapters two to four inclusive in the 1852 edition. The ring story may have been in the *scedulae* as it is now in *JH*, its form much less developed than it is in *A*. That *GRA* should not have it is not surprising, for William there has just told the famous story of the statue and the ring, and he may well have hesitated to add the story of St. Edward's ring, even if it were in his source, the *scedulae*. On the other hand, it is strange that Osbert should not have taken it from the *scedulae*.⁵⁷

The suggestion that *JH* was partly based on a French or Anglo-Norman work, containing an incomplete Life of St. Edward deriving from *A*, has already been tentatively put forward. This would perhaps include an account of the Danish king's drowning, but it would not include his name, any more than *A* includes it. If the author of *JH* had a fuller account, written from what Gizurr said, he might prefer Gizurr's version and substitute it entirely. By extracting the drowned king's name, and attributing it specifically to Gizurr, he would make sufficient acknowledgement of his debt, for the drowned king's name is the only really substantial difference between *A* on the one hand and *GRA*, *O*, and the *scedulae* on the other, in the stories about the drowned king and the Seven Sleepers. The story of Godwine's death, however, must have been in the source deriving from *A*. This was probably not in the *scedulae*: *O* does not have it, nor does *B*, and although *GRA* has it in an incomplete form, it is not with the rest of the material about St. Edward, but in a place apart.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The ring story is in one MS (there are only two) of *O*, but it does not in the least resemble the story in *JH* (*Annaler* 1852, pp. 16-18). Bloch has argued strongly that it could not have been in *O* originally (*loc. cit.*, pp. 58-60). cf. *GRA* ed. Stubbs, i. 256-8; *A* in Migne, cols. 769-70.

⁵⁸ *GRA* ed. Stubbs, i. 240.

It is not now wholly essential to suppose that Gizurr's source was the *scedulae*, although this is an attractive hypothesis indicated fairly plainly by the evidence. Possibly, Gizurr's source was *O*; the passage about the Seven Sleepers might have been taken from a work deriving from *GRA*, e.g. Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*, which was known in Norway.⁵⁹ But there is little doubt that one layer in *JH* derives ultimately from *A*, and another, at least partly transmitted by Gizurr, derives from the earlier Lives.

The passage where reference is made to Gizurr does not give any unequivocal evidence about its date of composition. In the circumstances, the words *Þat er sagt frá orðum Gizurar* are best taken to mean "it is written on the authority of Gizurr": what he said was written down, as the author of *Hungrvaka* wrote it down, so that it would not be forgotten.⁶⁰ A written record could have been used by the author of *JH* some time after Gizurr had died in 1206. However, the use of the phrase *i Noregs konungs veldi* does not necessarily imply a date later than 1264, when Iceland and Norway were politically one: rather, it implies an ecclesiastical point of view.⁶¹ It must mean that St. Edward's Life was known in Norway as well as in Iceland, and it suggests that some of the material used by the Icelandic author of *JH* came to him through Norway.

Some slight support for this idea (about which there is nothing intrinsically unlikely) may be found in the misunderstanding of a skaldic strophe about Valþjófr. According to *Heimskringla*, Valþjófr burned a hundred of Duke William's men in a wood, late in the evening of the battle of Hastings; a strophe from a poem called *Valþjófs flokkur* is cited. This strophe, without the

⁵⁹ *Sjórn*, facsimile in *Corp. Cod. Isl. Med. Æv.*, xx., Introduction by D. A. Seip, p. 13.

⁶⁰ ed. Jón Helgason, p. 72.

⁶¹ Sigurður Nordal, *Litteratur-Historie, Norge og Island* (Nordisk Kultur viiiB, 1953), p. 213; *idem.*, *Borgfirðinga sǫgur* (Íslenzk Fornrit iii, Reykjavík, 1938), pp. cl-clii; Jón Helgason, *Corp. Cod. Isl. Med. Æv.* xix. 22.

accompanying prose gloss, might be misunderstood as meaning that William burned Valþjófr. This is the way *JH* takes it; and an Icelander would be less likely to make this mistake than a Norwegian would be.⁶² Incidentally, it may be remarked that here at least is one place where *JH* does not borrow from *Hkr.*, which says in prose who burned whom.

It should not be forgotten that an expert on St. Edward visited Norway in 1248-9: Matthew Paris. The thirteenth-century French Life, to which reference has already been made, is now generally attributed to him.⁶³ Apart from that, he must have been unusually well-informed about the saint. Extracts from Ailred's Life are incorporated in his *Chronica Majora*. In 1247, not long before he visited Norway, Matthew was commanded by Henry III to sit near the throne and write a full account of the proceedings at the translation of St. Edward. A year later, a new fair was established at Westminster; the feast of St. Edward was kept magnificently on 5 January, 1249. It was a time of great interest in St. Edward. Matthew Paris went to Norway to reform the Benedictine monastery of Holm, and he may well have left traces of his visit on the literature of the north.⁶⁴

That part of the Icelandic Life of St. Edward dates from about the year 1200, and that Gizurr Hallsson was somehow associated with it, is as certain as these things can reasonably be. The rest is conjecture: a postulated French or Anglo-Norman source for the layer of tradition deriving from Ailred's Latin Life; the further supposition that this came through Norway; the guess that Matthew Paris may have had something to do with it. There is so

⁶² *Hkr.* iii, 195. Vigfusson noticed this in *Icelandic Sagas* i. p. xvi. Cf. the misunderstanding of *skeiðar brandr* by the (Norwegian) author of *Agrip* — Turville-Petre, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-3.

⁶³ M. R. James, *loc. cit.*; M. D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, p. 24: "There is no room for any doubt that the author was in fact Matthew Paris."

⁶⁴ *Matthæi Parisiensis, Chronica Majora*, ed. H. R. Luard (Rolls Series, London, 1872-83), vol. i, 514-37; iv. 640-5; v. 42-5, 47-8.

much in early Icelandic literature which one may suspect, but not prove. However, it appears at least possible that *Játvarðar saga hins helga*, for so long neglected and even despised, may have had its origins in the now-lost collection of miracles at Westminster, and in the work of Gizurr Hallsson and Matthew Paris, a famous Icclander and an even more famous Englishman.

HENGEST AND HORSA

By J. E. TURVILLE-PETRE

(Some of the material for this essay was used in an address to the Mediaeval Society of Manchester University in 1955. I am indebted to this society for the stimulus of the occasion, and for helpful suggestions).

GILDAS the Wise was the first to describe the arrival of the Germanic peoples in this country as mercenaries of the high king of Britain. But Bede the Venerable was the first to clothe this political formula with the reality of persons and places. In *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, 15, he digresses from the military situation to display the invasion in terms of its results. He traces the people of England to three Continental tribes, the *Jutae*, the *Saxones* and the *Angli*, and defines the areas occupied by their descendants. That is to say, he gives an ethnographic analysis based on the political alignments of his own day. He completes this characterization of the invasion by naming the first leaders (*duces primi*) of the invaders: they are reputed to have been two brothers, Hengest and Horsa. He adds that a monument inscribed to Horsa is still to be seen in east Kent, and he ends with a short pedigree deriving the brothers from Woden, "from whose issue the royal house of many provinces took its origin."

Other writers enlarged upon the activities of Hengest and Horsa in Kent (see below, p. 286). Bede himself later shows that Hengest had been incorporated in the royal genealogy of Kent (*Hist. Eccl.* II, 5). How he got there we must enquire later.

If the royal house of Kent in the early eighth century seriously believed themselves to be descended from a person called Hengest, they should have taken pains to make him seem credible. The tale of his four battles, set forth in *Historia Britonum* § 44 and the *Anglo-Saxon*

Chronicle s.a. 455-473 may have been composed with this aim in view; but Bede had no use for this material, if indeed he knew of it. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Hengest is simply an invading chief, one of two brothers who both bear cult names.

The founder-pair is a well-known motive among origin legends. Besides Romulus and Remus, there are Germanic examples: Paul the Deacon tells of Ibor and Agio of the Lombards, who led a third part of their people from the homeland in Scandinavia, when over-population made it necessary to emigrate.¹ The same writer mentions Ambri and Assi of the Vandals (*Hist. Lang.* I, vii). Dio Cassius has a pair *Ραος* and *Ραπτος*, who led the *Ἀσπιγγοι*, a Vandal tribe, into Dacia in A.D. 170.² This clearly is a recognised formula, and its origin is to be sought in religious beliefs.

Divine twins appear in an ancient system of theology, the Indian religion represented in the *Rigveda*, of about the thirteenth century B.C.³ This work, being a collection of hymns of praise, is descriptive rather than definitive; the functions and activities of its divinities are not formulated in narrative, but conveyed through invocation. The mythological outlines are consequently blurred by a certain generalisation of divine attributes. The twins, entitled *Aśvinau*, emerge as representatives of the life-giving light of the sun, as practitioners of healing, helpers in distress, especially for seafarers. Their title probably means "possessors of horses."

The worship of divine twins was also known in ancient Sparta, where social and dynastic tradition bore the impress of this cult. Herodotus tells of the origin and practice of a dual kingship; both kings usually led in battle, accompanied by the *Τυνδαριδαί*, a double emblem

¹ *Historia Langobardorum* I, ii, iii; translation by W. D. Foulke, New York, 1907.

² *Historia Romanorum* lxxi.

³ See A. A. Macdonell, *Grundriss der Indo-arischen Philologie u. Altertumskunde* Bd. III heft 1(a) (1897), § 21; and *A Vedic Reader* (1917), Introduction and §§ 128-130.

which had to be divided when one king alone went to war.⁴ Plutarch calls this cult-object *δοκανα*, and he describes it as two parallel wooden beams joined by two transverse beams⁵; it represented the Dioscuroi, the twins Castor and Polydeuces, who were held sacred by the Spartans. When these twins manifested themselves in person, they rode on white horses; they were patrons of seafaring, and the war-dance and the war-song were also in their province.⁶

Among Germanic peoples, the cult of twin deities is recorded in one instance only. Tacitus mentions that two divine brothers were the godhead of a shrine among the Naharvali, a tribe living in the region of Breslau (*Germ.* xliii). He equates these twins with Castor and Pollux, and says that they were worshipped *ut fratres, ut juvenes*. The name of this joint godhead is given as *Alcis*, which is probably to be interpreted "protectors."⁷ It may be significant that the practice of this cult is reported only on the eastern fringe of Germania; evidence of a belief in such sacred figures is nevertheless much more widespread.⁸ Collaboration of a pair of brothers is not unknown in real life; but when their activities are exemplary and symbolic, a particular reason for their presence should be sought. Any association with religious practices has significance where figures such as these are concerned.

The rites performed at the shrine of the *Alcis* can be linked with the nomenclature of heroes in widely separated parts of the Germanic area. According to Tacitus, the

⁴ *Histories* I. 75.

⁵ *Moralia* xxxv.

⁶ See Seyffert, *Dictionary of Classical Antiquities* (revised by Nettleship and Sandys) s.v. *Dioscuri*.

⁷ See J. de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (2nd edition, 1956) § 499.

⁸ Abundant archaeological evidence for a twin-god cult among both Celtic and Germanic peoples on the Continent has been assembled by E. Krüger, "Die gallischen u. die germanischen Dioskuren," *Trierer Zeitschrift* XV-XVII (1940-42); see especially XVI, 36-57. Literary evidence was gathered by A. H. Krappe, "Les dieux jumeaux," *Acta Ph. Scand.* VI (1931), 1-25; see also de Vries, *op. cit.* §§ 496-97.

priests of this shrine appeared in women's garb (*muliebri ornatu*). It might seem far-fetched to connect this usage with a pair of warriors in early Norse tradition, the *Haddingjar tveir* (*Hyndluljóð* 23, also *Hervarar saga* and *Orvar Odds saga*). Nevertheless, this name is probably based on the stem represented by O.N. *haddr* "women's hair"; and de Vries has shown that this word could refer to the sacramental long hair associated with certain cult-usages.⁹ The same base is to be found in the name *Hasdingi* (*Ἀστρινγοί*) of the Vandal dynasty led by Raos and Raptos. This dynastic name recurs in the work of Jordanes, who speaks of a certain king of the Goths as *Visumar Aslingorum* (= *Asdingorum*).¹⁰ These three instances, apparently independent, provide evidence of a name or title alluding to long hair. Considering the duplication of the *Haddingjar*, it seems reasonable to connect both them and the *Hasdingi* with cults of twin-deities. The title of the Gothic dynasty is not linked with any pair; the suggestion of cult usages is of a remoter kind, connected with the sacred functions of kingship. The wearing of long hair became a formal expression of royal dignity among some peoples, notably the Merovingians.¹¹ Their kings were by origin closely associated with the performance of heathen rites, according to Gregory of Tours (*Libri Histor.* II, 10); but long hair remained a dynastic custom after the conversion to Christianity. A symbol arising in religious practices survived as a social distinction, and the same symbol has elsewhere entered the tissue of heroic fable. What was once a significant feature of religious ceremony has its last vestiges in the name of legendary heroes, and in the patronymic of a line of kings.

⁹ *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* XXIV (1953), 185-87; also Sijmons-Gering, *Kommentar* I, 385. Names containing this element have been discussed by G. Dumézil, *Le Saga de Hadingus*, 123-29.

¹⁰ *Getica* xxii (ed. Mommsen, *M.G.H. Auct. Ant.* V. i).

¹¹ Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* II. 9: *juxta pagus vel civitates reges crinitos super se creavisse de prima et, ut ita dicam, nobiliore suorum familia.*

It would seem that the heroic formula of brother-leaders is ultimately based on a myth arising from the worship of twin brothers. When the brothers bear cult names, their mythical origin is evident. Raos and Raptos of the Vandals have been interpreted as "reed" (or "pole") and "rafter" respectively,¹² which would seem to point to a sacred wooden object comparable to the *ḍokava* of Sparta. The two *Haddingjar* bear a name which once carried an allusion to the garb of a celebrant of a religious rite. Hengest and Horsa have no such obvious associations. Yet these are very odd names. *Hengest* is the regular Old English word for "gelding," as for instance in a charter where a hundred wild horses are mentioned in connexion with sixteen *tame hengestas*.¹³ It was the usual term for a pack-horse, but it may have been extended to indicate other kinds of horses, as in other Germanic dialects. *Hengest* is not a frequent element in place-names; it has been recorded only in south-eastern England, the northernmost example being in Cambridgeshire. It occurs in combination with habitation-terms, with water (*ford*, *ēg*), and with hills.¹⁴ The name *Horsa* is of a common derivative type, related to the neuter noun *hors*, which in Old English denoted the genus *equus* in general. *Hors* is a common element in place-names, but *Horsa*, if it occurred, cannot now be distinguished from the plural inflections of the noun. Apart from the invasion-legend, Hengest and Horsa never appear unambiguously as personal names — except for the rather remote hero Hengest in the poems *Beowulf* and *Finnsburh*. Their names are the names of animals.

Animal names are not unusual in personal nomenclature. But the two "horses" of this invasion-legend have more than once challenged an explanation.¹⁵ It seems

¹² See de Vries, *op. cit.* § 499.

¹³ See R. Jordan, *Die altenglische Säugetiernamen*, 106-09.

¹⁴ See A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements* s.v. *hengest*.

¹⁵ See recently, J. de Vries in *ZfdPhil.* LXXII (1953), 125-43, where the suggestion is also made that these names were conventional terms, not intended as personal names.

pertinent that the horse was one of the foremost sacred animals among the Germanic peoples. Horses were sacred to Freyr,¹⁶ as we know from the Icelandic *Freyfaxi*. Tacitus tells of sacred white horses which were not to be used except to draw the sacred chariot, and from which omens were taken (*Germ.* x). The cult of the horse was also well known among other Indo-European peoples.¹⁷ Even horse-racing can sometimes be recognised as a ritual practice, as for instance in the Roman race on the Campus Martis, when the winning horse was dedicated. The *hestaþing* of Iceland could be regarded as a survival deprived of its religious associations. The horse figures of the English invasion may best be explained in the context of pre-Christian religious practices.

Sacred animals and animal-sacrifice were known to the pagan English, although the evidence for such beliefs and practices is indirect. A number of terms originating in pagan sacrifice survive in the Old English vocabulary.¹⁸ Some of the places named after animal heads may mark sacrificial sites. Professor Bruce Dickins has noted such compounds in districts where *heafod* cannot refer to a hill-peak; they include *gāt* (Gateshead, Dur.), *fearr* "bull" (Farcet, Hunts), *swīn* "boar" (Swineshead, Beds.) and *eofor* "boar" (Eversheds, Surr.).¹⁹ But in England there was only one animal-cult specifically banned by the Church, and that was the cult of the horse.²⁰ Among the canons drawn up by the Papal legates who visited England in 786, there were provisions forbidding the maiming of horses and the eating of horses.²¹ The Synod of Clovesho (746) ordained that Rogation days

¹⁶ H. Rosén, "Freykult och djurkult," *Formvännern VIII* (1913), 221-236.

¹⁷ See de Vries, *op. cit.* § 258. G. Gjessing, "Hesten i forhistorisk kunst og kultus," *Viking VII* (1943), 5-143 has assembled representations of the horse through many centuries.

¹⁸ R. Jente, *Die mythologischen Ausdrücke im altenglischen Wortschatz*, 33-52.

¹⁹ *The Place-Names of Surrey*, 403-06. See also *English Place-Name Elements* s.v. *heafod* (1) v, (2) b.v.

²⁰ Jente, *op. cit.*, 145.

²¹ Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils &c.* III, 458-59; and see Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 214-5.

were not to be spent in games, horse-racing or feasts.²² Eating of horses could not be tolerated because it reflected the ritual meal associated with horse-sacrifice.

Yet in the pages of Bede we are far away from pagan myths and ritual practices. The tale of Hengest and Horsa is part of Bede's sober reconstruction of the past. Its purpose is to present in realistic manner the bare fact that Britain came to be settled by Germanic peoples. Such tales were the stock-in-trade of medieval historians who had to define the first origin of peoples and their migrations. Examples from Paul the Deacon have already been quoted. Jordanes tells that the princes who led the Goths from their original homeland in the North were regarded as partly gods (*semideos*).²³ The Prologue to Snorri's *Edda* relates the journey of Óðinn and his people from *Tyrkland* to *Saxland*. There Óðinn left three of his sons, who founded the kingdoms of East Saxony, Westphalia and the Frankish domains. Proceeding north, he set his three sons Skjöldr, Yngvi and Sæmingr to rule over Denmark, Sweden and Norway respectively.

How did historians obtain these motives, and in what form? Partly, no doubt, from ancient writers and their derivatives. The Trojan origin of the Franks was propounded by a continuator of "Fredegar's" Chronicle, in the mid-seventh century. The legends of Rome and Troy were used by the compiler of the *Historia Britonum* in the early ninth century, and by the time that Snorri was writing they had been well interpenetrated by native themes.²⁴ But these are late developments. At an earlier stage, classical legends are to be regarded as parallel literary creations rather than direct influences. The patterns used by Jordanes, Bede, Paul the Deacon, and in an early stratum of the *Historia Britonum* had

²² Haddan and Stubbs, III, 368.

²³ *Getica* xiii, 78.

²⁴ See A. Heusler, "Die gelehrte Urgeschichte im altisländischen Schrifttum," *Abh. d. preuss. Akad., phil.-hist. Klasse*, 1903.

been formulated in native tradition; they can be regarded as the archetypes expressing fundamental beliefs. This concept of mythical archetypes has recently been discussed by de Vries.²⁵ Briefly, it consists in identifying certain persons and situations in early medieval literature as symbols of the powers and processes controlling organised society. Before the Church became dominant, and the administrative reorganisation brought by the Church, concepts of government and of social obligation were formulated in the system of thought promulgated by heathen religious practices.²⁶ The priesthood was the mainspring of societies so organised, for the priests preserved relations between man and the external powers, and formulated the mythology expressing this relation. From this point of view, a theological system comprising the various attributes and functions of divinity reflected also the social objectives of the worshippers.²⁷ In particular, cults can be discerned associated with the leading figure of the king, in one or other of his functions: law-giver, warrior or fertility-emblem. From such usages there arose the archetypes of the ruler, the founder, the father of his people.

The literary concept of the founder-king rests upon various presentations of the divine leader, according to his place in the religious and social order. G. Dumézil has shown that the standard account of the foundation of Rome incorporates three or four mythical archetypes of the functions of kingship.²⁸ This account appears in a stylised, though not entirely consistent, form in Livy's *History of Rome*, after the material had passed through several centuries of literary development. Livy (I, 20) makes it clear that in the earliest times the king filled the

²⁵ *Folklore Fellows Communications* Nr. 150 (Helsinki, 1954).

²⁶ See K. Hauck, "Lebensnormen u. Kultmythen in germanischen Stammes- u. Herrschergenealogien," *Saeculum* VI (1955) 186-223, and references there given; the conclusions of this article are unclear, but some interesting topics are touched on.

²⁷ The method has been demonstrated by Professor G. Dumézil in *Les Dieux des Indo-Européens* (Paris, 1952).

²⁸ *L'Héritage Indo-européen à Rome* (Gallimard, 1949), 72-94.

office of high priest, among his other functions. By the religious reforms attributed to Numa, this function was delegated to a permanent official, the *flamen dialis*, and two other *flamines* were created to assist him in maintaining the divine rites. Dumézil has argued that this tripartite system presents three principal aspects of divinity as conceived by the Romans, in common with some other Indo-European peoples. The *flamen dialis*, attached to Jupiter, represented the attributes of sovereign power and lawgiving: the second *flamen*, attached to Mars, represented violence and warfare: the third was attached to Quirinus, who stood for the welfare of the citizens (*quirites*) in their civil capacity.²⁹ But this synthesis is not only to be found in the religious system ascribed to early Rome by her historians. The narrative history of the founder-kings has apparently been stylised on the same tripartite pattern. An epic story formed from standard mythological types was assimilated by historians (though Livy had his reservations), and preserved as historical record. Thus we have, in succession: Romulus, founder of the city and first king; Numa, founder of the religious and legal systems; Tullus Hostilius, the conqueror; and Ancus Martius, guardian of the commonwealth and of commercial prosperity. Romulus and Numa severally represent the attributes of ruler and lawgiver associated with Jupiter, Tullus corresponds in function with Mars, Ancus Martius with Quirinus.³⁰ It is pointed out that, whereas the events and actions of the first three reigns are stereotyped, the reign of Ancus Martius is not wholly ideal, but incorporates some memory of actual events.³¹ Another inconsistency in the narrative of Livy is the presence of the separate and simpler archetype of the founder-brothers. Romulus and Remus carry the religious symbolism of agriculture and fertility: they were born of a

²⁹ *Mitra-Varuna* (Gallimard, 1948), 86-94; also *Les Dieux des Indo-Européens*, 27-33.

³⁰ G. Dumézil, *La Fonction guerrière* (Paris, 1956), 18-19.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20; also *L'Héritage Indo-européen à Rome*, 719.

priestess, cast on the waters, raised by a wild animal and brought up among shepherds. Their story was attached to the sites of existing cults: a sacred fig-tree (*ficus Ruminalis*), and the Lupercal grotto with its fertility rites (Livy, I, 4, 5).

Thus there are mythical archetypes of diverse kinds embedded in the critical and carefully composed work of Livy, archetypes which can be recognized and illustrated by comparing the material gathered by other observers of Roman deities and Roman cults³² — even without Dumézil's remoter analogues from India and elsewhere. The poverty of native Roman religious myths is probably to be connected with the large element of mythology in Roman historical legends. Instead of elaborating a world of gods with its own actions, the Romans drew on religious symbolism to delineate the origins of their city-state.³³

Germanic historians reached no such clear-cut formulation of their pre-literary history. But it seems likely that the material they used sprang from the same origins as that intensively developed by the Romans. We then have to ask in what form the material reached them. These Christian writers can hardly have had direct access to the fables associated with pagan rites. Their principal source would have been genealogical records, embodying exemplary anecdotes about the founder-figures. There is in fact a literary example of this kind of record in the Edict of the Lombard king Hrothari, issued in 643. The prologue contains a regnal list of the king's predecessors. Soon afterwards, this regnal list was incorporated in a tract known as *Origo Gentis Langobardorum*, where it is the nucleus of a short general history.³⁴

³² See Dumézil, *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus I* (Gallimard, 1941), 74-99.

³³ See Dumézil, *L'Héritage . . .*, 117— "des recits . . . qui chez certains peuples indo-européens, garnissent la mythologie divine, se rangent, chez les autres, dans la "mythologie humaine," dans l'histoire ancienne, dans l'épopée"; and also pp. 115-138, 169-76.

³⁴ See Wattenbach-Levison, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter I*, 206 f., G. Baesecke in *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift XXIV* (1936), 161 ff.

The original purpose of the royal genealogy was to attach the line to a divine ancestor. The genealogical list expressed the myth of the god-king — overtly while the priests were heathen, in a transferred sense after the conversion. Names indicative of divine functions appear in Old English genealogical records: for example, *Geat*, *Seaxneat*, *Freoþolaf*. But these are bare names used to swell the compilations of the latter eighth century.³⁵ In Scandinavia, the religious functions of the king survived to become a literary topic, as we can see from Snorri's descriptions of *Yngvifreyr* and *Friðfróði*, which show them in the capacity of fertility emblems.³⁶ Other Yngling kings in Snorri's narrative are associated with cult-usages, not excluding human sacrifice.

In England, during the pre-literary period, genealogical records would be in the keeping of heathen priests. The chief among them held high office in the royal entourage. Coifi of Northumbria was one of King Edwin's counsellors who expected equal honours with other *optimates* (Bede, *H.E.* II, 13). He was not the sole officiant, but *primus pontificum*; compare the *princeps sacerdotum idolatriae* in Sussex (Eddius, *Vita Wilfridi* xiii). The seat of worship in Edwin's kingdom was called *Godmundingaham*; the interpretation "enclosure of the *godmundings*" suggests a group of priests.³⁷ We can hardly doubt that the heathen priesthood in England was a highly-organised institution, in close association with the king's household.³⁸ The doctrine and the learning of these officials achieved no direct literary expression, since literacy was introduced by Christian missionaries. But Pope Gregory's policy of gradual adaptation and transformation preserved some elements. The sacred function

³⁵ See K. Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies" (*Proc. Brit. Acad.* XXXIX), 308 and 328.

³⁶ *Ynglingasaga* X, *Skáldskaparmál* (in *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1931) 53.

³⁷ Jente, *op. cit.*, 3 f.

³⁸ On the traces of heathen worship in England, see E. A. Philippon, *Germanisches Heidentum bei den Angelsachsen* (1929); D. Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (1952), 19-28.

of the king continued within the Christian social order. The people of Kent might not practise horse-worship or horse-sacrifice, but the royal house might keep its Hengest and Horsa as mere ancestors.

Yet there was another divine ancestor for the kings of Kent, and his claims had at some point to be reconciled with those of Hengest and Horsa. When Bede gives the genealogy of King Aepelberht (*H.E.* II, 5), he says that these kings were accustomed to call themselves *Oiscingas*. That is to say, they bore a dynastic name of an ancient type, like the *Amalungs* among the Goths, the *Ynglingar* in Sweden and the *Skjoldungar* in Denmark. In the genealogical list that Bede quotes, Oisc was reckoned son of Hengest and great-grandfather of Aepelberht (d. 616). He is not the hero of the migration-legend, but like some other founders of dynasties, he follows at a later stage.³⁹ Similarly, Skjoldr was son of Óðinn the invader. Paul the Deacon says that Agelmund was the first king of the Lombards, and belonged to the dynasty of the *Gungingi*; yet, by an arbitrary connexion, he is made son of the invader Agio (*Hist. Lang.*, xiv). Genealogists were apt to make use of both invader-legend and founder-legend (where both existed), placing them end to end. Each carried religious significance, either or both would serve to demonstrate divine origin. This process can be traced in the narrative of Jordanes (*Getica*, xiii). He tells that the princes who first won decisive victories over the Romans were called by the Goths *semideos, id est Ansis*. He then enumerates the royal line derived from these *Ansis*, starting from *Gaut*⁴⁰ who was the first of them, through *Amal* his great-grandson, down to the end of the dynasty in the middle of the sixth

³⁹ The pattern is already standardized in Tacitus' account of the *origo* of the Germani (*Germ.* ii, 3): the ultimate ancestor was the autochthonous god Tuisto, next came his son Mannus, the *origo gentis*, finally his three sons, who were called *conditores* and were known by eponymous names reproducing tribal designations. We are told moreover that this *origo* was expressed in traditional poetic form.

⁴⁰ The MS. form *Gapt* is generally so interpreted (by error for *Gayt* = *Gaut*); see Mommsen, *M.G.H. Auct. Ant.*, V, i, 143 (note by Müllenhoff).

century. Thus the Ostrogothic *Amalungs* were taken back to a hero who bore the name of a god (*áss* in Old Norse), but was rationalized as semi-divine.

There are two interesting things about *Oisc*. The name he bears is not a personal name, but a title etymologically related to the *Ansis* of Jordanes: and he was at one time the hero of an invasion-legend.

The name *Oisc* is applied only to this personage of the Kentish genealogy as given by Bede. In a genealogical compilation of the later eighth century, the same list has a different form, *Oesi*, which is likewise isolated.⁴¹ Both names are derived from the base **ans-* becomes *ōs* "god"; *Oisc* being formed with a *-ki* suffix, *Oesi* with an *-i* suffix. *Os* is well known as a first element in compound names. Evidence of *ōs* / *ēs* as a monothematic name is found only in the genealogies and in three southern place-names⁴²; in all of these, the word could rank as a title rather than a current personal name.

We meet the name *Oisc* in another connexion, although it is obscured by corrupt spelling. In the *Ravenna Cosmography*, an Italian compilation of the late seventh century, we are told that Britain was settled by the gens *Saxonum*, who at one time came from Saxony with their prince, *nomine Ansehis*. The latest editor, J. Schnetz, accepts the usual emendation to *Anschis*,⁴³ which offers a direct connexion with *Oisc*: the basis **anski-* is a more archaic form of **ōski-* which gave O.E. *Oisc*.

⁴¹ In the Kentish genealogy given by MS. Vespasian B vi (Sweet, *The Oldest English Texts*, 171), *Oese* corresponds to the *Oisc* of Bede's list, although he has changed places with his son *Ohta* (Bede, *Octa*; Vesp., *Ocgga*). A doublet-form *Oesa* is the name of another genealogical personage, the grandfather of *Ida* in the Bernician list: Vesp. *Oesa*, A.S.C. s.a. 547, *Ēsa*. The only occurrence of this name outside the genealogies is in the Berks. place-name Easington (*E.P.N.E.* i, 297).

⁴² See *E.P.N.E.* s.v. *ēs*, *ōs*. The forms and etymology of the name are discussed by M. Redin, *Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English*, 33; and by O. S. Anderson, *Old English Material in the Leningrad Manuscript*, 73. The evidence of these names has been pressed into the closely reasoned argument of K. Sisam (*Proc. Brit. Acad.* XXXIX, 324 f.), who simplifies the issue by assuming some scribal corruption.

⁴³ *Itineraria Romana* II (1940). Müllenhoff's equation $\alpha\gamma\chi\iota\varsigma = \textit{Hangis}(t) = \textit{Hengist}$ will hardly stand, if the compilation was written in Latin, as Schnetz now contends.

If this identification is accepted, we have an invasion-legend attributed to a personage who was known to Kentish tradition in a different capacity. There he is founder of the ruling dynasty, whereas the invasion is associated with the divine brothers Hengest and Horsa.

The personage Oisc represents the divine ancestor, and he is appropriately styled "the divine." On the other hand, Hengest and Horsa owe their names to the cult-image venerated by the warriors of early Kent. Of course there were military adventurers who answered the British call for federates, just as Aepelberht of Kent had a human great-grandfather. But they were not known to their contemporaries as Hengest, Horsa and Oisc. When their deeds attained a retrospective importance, they were dignified by obsolete titles, in accordance with their historic functions.

The further adventures of Hengest in the conquest of Kent are a separate subject, which must be briefly considered here. Bede has nothing of them, but they are recorded in the *Historia Britonum* and in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The list of battles shows that both these compilations derive their material from a common source, though at different removes. This material again consists of literary formulas devised to present distant events in a lively and realistic manner. They are differently constituted from the invasion-formulas I have examined, and they are closely associated with place-names, not all of which have survived. Genealogy plays a secondary part. Yet invasion formulas are also present, and differing details in separate accounts show that various formulas were available. The conquest starts from the arrival of three ships. Gildas has these (*tribus cyulis*), and he associates the invasion with omens, divinations and a prophecy. Bede retains only the three ships. The *Historia Britonum* states that the invading brothers came as exiles, a detail betraying the emigration motive which appears in the story of the Lombard pair

Ibor and Agio. In the Kentish campaign, variously reported in the *Historia Britonum* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Horsa falls at the battle of *Episford* or *Aegæles þrep*. In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* only, the rest of the campaign is led by Hengest and *Aesc his sunu*.⁴⁴ The association of father and son is a separate invasion-motive. It has left a trace in Bede's account of King Aepelberht's lineage (*H.E.* II, 5): for here he says that Hengist with Oisc his son was the first to enter Britain at the invitation of Vortigern. This is a direct contradiction of his earlier account of the invasion (*H.E.* I, 15), and it betrays the use of a different invasion-formula, perhaps the one especially cultivated in Kent.

There is one other appearance of Hengest which has long bedevilled criticism of the English invasion-legend. A person of this name is champion of the Danes, in the tragic conflict at Finnsburh which is described in *Beowulf* and in a fragmentary Old English heroic lay. The episode itself is undateable. It is part of the subject-matter of *Beowulf*, comprising events between roughly the mid-fourth and mid-sixth centuries, and it accords in subject and in style with the heroic legends based on these events. It presents a typical tragic situation, which is "Danicised" in the manner of Old English heroic fable. The only historic facts that emerge are that a clash occurred between Frisians and Danes in which Jutes were closely involved, and that it took place in Frisia. Finn, King of the Frisians, is known only from Old English heroic legend; he appears in the catalogue of *Widsith* with the patronymic *Folcwalding*. When we find that the principal hero of the Finnsburh story bears the name of Hengest, it may again be a specifically English feature. It might be suggested that this particular representation of the god-hero was favoured

⁴⁴ *Aesc* is evidently a West Saxon substitute for the obsolete northern form *Oisc*. It is not known as a personal name in England, nor need it be inferred from the place-name *Aescsedun* (A.S.C. s.a. 648). Asser's explanation, *mons fraxini*, was right; see E. Tengstrand, *A Contribution to the Study of Genitival Composition &c.* (1940), pp. xix, xxx.

by some of the tribes that settled in England. For gods readily became heroes, and heroes gods, as we see, for instance, in the far-flung adventures of the Greek Herakles. In Germania, where myth was weakly cultivated and heroic legend very fully developed, emphasis commonly falls on the human aspect of the god. We know that *Gautr* was a god, for his cults have left their mark in Scandinavian place-names, the Götär of southern Sweden bear his name, the Goths recognised him as their divine ancestor. In Old Icelandic poetry the name appears as an appellative of Óðinn. In England, *Geat* figures as an ancestor in the genealogies of the later eighth century, and in the *Historia Britonum* § 31 he is called the son of a god, one of the idols worshipped by the Germanic invaders. But there is also a *Geat* in the poem *Deor*, and here he is ranked among other human heroes — Weland, Theodoric, Eormanric. A parallel case is the Fróði of Scandinavian legend, as compared with the Heathobard king Froda in *Beowulf*. Fróði is the king of the Danish golden age, called *Friðfróði* because he is the type of peace and plenty. His name is probably a title, signifying “the productive.”⁴⁵ This symbolic figure was partly historicized by Saxo: in his account, the gold-giver was Frotho III, whereas Frotho IV was another Danish king, father of Ingellus. In *Beowulf*, Froda is completely historicised. There is no trace of any fertility-emblem.

I would therefore regard the name *Hengest* in the Finnsburh episode as a name conferred upon a typical heroic figure. It was a traditional name or title, referring to a fertility-emblem or a battle-emblem, or possibly each of these in different settings. In Old English poetry, this name was brought into connexion with other famous names, *Hnæf* of the *Hocingas* and *Finn Folcwalding*. Each of these names was famous in its own right, and all three were worked into one episode in the arbitrary

⁴⁵ Icel. *fróðr*, O.E. *frōd* “wise, learned” is possibly a semantic divergent of the same word; see E. A. Kock, *Notationes Norrœnæ* (1928) § 1780.

construction of a poetic fable. It is a fainter example of the process by which historic names of the Goths, the Burgundians and the Franks were woven into a family conflict in some poems of the Edda. Here also there are figures bearing names which are probably symbolic, associated with personages of history. Two brothers, called Hamðir and Sqrli, are sent to attack the Ostrogothic king Jormunrekr; they are given armour so strong that iron cannot bite upon it, so that they must be stoned to death (*Skáldskaparmál*, 51). Both names seem to refer to this special equipment: cf. *hamr* "garment," Goth. *afhamon* "undress," and *sqrvi* "adornment, especially necklace," Goth. *sarwa* "armour." Heusler accordingly took this as "ein klarer Fall sinnvoller Namengebung."⁴⁶ The historical basis of the Frisian situation cannot now be recovered, except in the broadest general terms. But the form in which we know it is typical of poetic fiction, with vague indications of time and place, in contrast to the clear-cut lines of its personal drama. Therefore I regard this Hengest as an idealised figure, bearing a name proper to his status, but set in a human situation according to the conventions of heroic poetry.

Hengest accompanied by his brother Horsa is a completely different matter. Here again we have an artistic creation serving a particular purpose. The theme of the *adventus Saxonum* is presented in personal terms, by investing religious symbols with a foundation-legend. The cult of these equine deities had been fostered by the heathen priests of Kent. Religious practices withered, but genealogists had a use for the invasion-heroes, who were finally ranged among the forbears linking the Christian kings of Kent with Germanic antiquity.

Hengest alone and unduplicated figured independently in heroic legend. The war-god had his shrines and his cults, but he also had adventures. Neither of these embodiments represents a direct memory of real events.

⁴⁶ Hoops, *Realexicon* I, 627.

They are products of the creative imagination, working on the guiding ideas formulated in the spheres of religious ceremony and genealogical record. There had been an invasion of Britain, there was once a tragic siege of a royal hall. We should not now represent these events in the manner chosen by medieval writers. But even when we have allowed for the author's intention and the proper limits of his medium, there remain legitimate speculations about the material he used. Answers of a sort can be obtained by comparative study. The theme of a horse-deity can be traced among northern and western Germanic peoples. The traces have been overlaid and re-interpreted, but they can still be perceived. The Germanic horse-deity has faded into insignificance. The two Hengests remain, each in his proper setting. Together they bear witness to things once held holy and powerful, which are still memorable although their origins have been forgotten.

ALCUIN AND THE ICELANDIC LAW-BOOKS

BY DR. OLE WIDDING

WHEN we think of cultural relations between different nations, it is often in general terms of mutual influence or with reference to particular historical events. Sometimes however we are able to trace the specific influence of individuals, even though their names may have been forgotten or indeed never even known. An instance of this is Alcuin's anonymous influence on the Icelandic code of laws.

Manuscript A.M. 619 4to, the old Norwegian book of homilies, also contains a translation of Alcuin's famous work *De virtutibus et vitiis*. The manuscript dates from about 1200 and is a copy, not an original, so that the translation must be still older. For many years it has been taken for granted that this old vellum was the only manuscript of any value for the textual criticism of the Alcuin-translation, even though three other manuscripts were known to contain fragments of a translation of the same work (A.M. 685d 4to, 688a 4to and 56 8vo). These manuscripts date from the fifteenth century and were consequently left out of account. In 1931 Gustav Indrebø, on the authority of Marius Hægstad, maintained that while Alcuin's treatise had been translated into Norwegian before 1200, it had not become known in Iceland until the fifteenth century.¹ I think there can be no doubt that Indrebø was misled in this by some inaccurate or inadequate statements made by Finnur Jónsson and Kr. Kålund. The latter in his catalogue of the Arnamagnæan manuscripts says that the three fifteenth-century fragments contain *Icelandic* translations of Alcuin's book, and for some reason or other he stresses

¹ Gustav Indrebø, *Gamal norsk Homiliebok* (1931), Innledning 61-2.

the word Icelandic by spacing out the letters.² Finnur Jónsson on the other hand concluded that the text of the fragments represents a modernised version of the text in the old Norwegian vellum, apparently as a result of his comparison of the largest of the fragments with A.M. 619 4to.³ It will appear from the following that both Kålund and Finnur Jónsson were mistaken.

Among the most interesting duties of an editor of a new dictionary of Old Icelandic is the reading of manuscripts that have not so far been printed. When I came to the fragments of the Alcuin-translation I compared them both with A.M. 619 4to and with the Latin original.⁴ It soon became evident that, while the three fragments are certainly of Icelandic origin, it is wrong to say with Kålund that they contain a specifically Icelandic translation. It is the same version as is found in A.M. 619 4to. Naturally the orthography and forms of the fragments show modernisation, but it is also clear that the scribes found it no easy task to copy their original: many individual words must have been unintelligible to them and they were faced with an archaic language and many latinised constructions. The text of the fragments sometimes differs a good deal from that of the old vellum. The latter was written with some carelessness and the scribe was guilty of both omissions and misunderstandings. The fragments, although with errors of their own, do not have the same omissions and corruptions as A.M. 619. The conclusion must be that their ultimate original was not A.M. 619 but a more complete manuscript, now lost, and that these fragments must be used when a critical text of the Alcuin-translation is being established.

On the basis of these facts we cannot of course conclude that the translation of Alcuin's book was originally made

² Kr. Kålund, *Katalog over den arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling* (1888-92), II 101, 104, 362.

³ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie* (1920-24), II 929.

⁴ Frobenius, *Flacci Albini seu Alcuini opera*, Ratisbonæ 1777, tom. II, vol. I, pag. 128; Migne, *Patrologia latina*, CI 613.

in Iceland, or even that Indrebø was wrong in believing that the work was unknown in Iceland in the early middle ages, since it is still possible that a copy may have been brought from Norway much later. All the same, the odds are that a translation of this book by Alcuin also existed in Iceland in the early period.

II

Two chapters of Alcuin's *De virtutibus et vitiis* occur much more frequently than the rest of the text because they were adopted in some manuscripts of the Icelandic law-book. As is well known, the old code *Grágás* was replaced by the *Járnsíða* in 1271 and this again by the *Jónsbók*, named after the Lawman Jón Einarsson, in 1281. *Jónsbók* was in reality a Norwegian code of law that had been revised to suit Icelandic conditions, but it remained the Icelandic law-book for centuries.

Common to both the Norwegian and the Icelandic codes is a chapter dealing with the office of judges or jurors, the *dóma-kapítuli*, where the matter is ethical rather than legal.⁵ The Norwegian author of this chapter included some sentences which are derived, directly or indirectly, from Alcuin's book, and in the Icelandic version they remain unaltered. But these sentences were not to be the only instance of the voice of Alcuin in the Icelandic law-book.

The *Jónsbók* as it appears in the many extant manuscripts is not a homogeneous body of law. Although its main text was but slightly altered through the centuries, very few manuscripts are entirely free from interpolations. Most of the new legal provisions introduced were kept separate and added in an appendix at the end of the text, but the various manuscripts differ widely in their choice of additions and amendments. The oldest manuscript containing such supplementary material is from the fourteenth century and no more than 50-75 years younger

⁵ *Norges gamle Love* II (1848), 62-3; Ólafur Halldórsson, *Jónsbók* (1904), 54-6.

than the law-book itself.⁶ In most manuscripts after that date we find that some amendments (*réttarbætr*), enactments of the Althing and royal letters are included. And in some twenty-five manuscripts we find that the chapter dealing with the duties of judges or jurors has been expanded: the additional material is drawn from two sources, the *Konungs skuggsjá* and Alcuin.

Amongst the laws is a decree concerning the death-penalty issued by King Eiríkr Magnússon in 1280.⁷ It exists in both a Norwegian and an Icelandic version.

In *Jónsbók* manuscripts from the end of the fourteenth century we find that this decree is introduced by a purely theoretical discourse enjoining judges to be mindful of their special responsibilities in cases where life and limbs were at stake. This introductory passage has never been published, but is in fact based on extracts from different chapters in the *Konungs skuggsjá*. It probably owes its existence in the law-book to one of the Norwegian bishops of Skálholt in the fourteenth century.

Another enlargement of the *dóma-kapítuli*, found only in some ten manuscripts of the *Jónsbók* or other legal texts, is based on Alcuin's *De virtutibus et vitiis*, and is from his chapter on justice. Here Alcuin stresses the responsibilities of those called on to judge their fellow-men, which is of course the main purport of the original *dóma-kapítuli* itself in the Norwegian *Landslov* and in *Jónsbók*. It is not known when or by whom this additional section from Alcuin was introduced in this chapter. The oldest extant manuscript containing it is from the fifteenth century (A.M. 128 4to, probably soon after 1450). What is significant is that the translation of Alcuin's text in this chapter is precisely the same as that found in the old Norwegian manuscript A.M. 619 4to and in the three Icelandic fragments discussed above.

Finally, we find that in four manuscripts yet another

⁶ Gl. kgl. Saml. 3269 B 4to; see Ólafur Halldórsson, *op. cit.* XXIX; Ólafur Lárússon, *Monumenta typographica islandica* III (1934), 30.

⁷ Edited in *Diplomatarium Islandicum* II 199-200.

section has been borrowed from Alcuin, this time on the subject of perjury, while in two manuscripts a short extract on mercy has been adopted from the same source.⁸ These texts are all from the same translation as others mentioned above, but unfortunately the manuscripts are too late to throw any light on the problem of when Alcuin's book first became known in Iceland. It might be argued that since nothing of this text appears in any known manuscript before about 1450 Indrebø's statement that Alcuin was not known in Iceland until the fifteenth century may be right, but naturally in such a case as this an argument *ex silentio* is of very little value.

The *Jónsbók* was printed in 1578, but the Icelanders still went on transcribing the text in paper copies. The printed edition included only a few of the additional enactments and amendments, and it was customary to make separate collections of these. And when in the eighteenth century an Icelandic farmer copied out the chapters on perjury and the duties of judges, Alcuin's words still echoed across the thousand years that lay between them.

⁸ These texts and the others referred to above will be included in a new critical edition of the translation of Alcuin's work which I am preparing for the Arnamagnæan Foundation.

I-MUTATION OF BACK VOWELS IN OLD NORSE

By A. R. TAYLOR

THE problem presented by the lack of *i*-mutation in a short stem syllable in the North Germanic dialects has always been a difficult one and it cannot yet be said to have been solved. The theory most generally accepted was first put forward by Axel Kock in 1888, and this theory is still reproduced in modern grammars, though there are few now who are willing to accept its fundamental division into three stages.¹

The problem can be best posed by the oppositions *gest:stað*, *dæmða:valða*.² From these forms it will be clear that mutation has taken place in the long stems whereas in the original short stems it is absent. Without doubt the simplest explanation would be that the *i* which caused the fronting disappeared after a short stem syllable before the period of mutation, and this theory was, in fact, propounded by Sievers in 1878.³ But such an explanation necessitates the assumption that North Germanic did not share the West Germanic system of accentuation as a result of which the unaccented syllable was syncopated earlier after a long stem than after a short one. Sievers' assumption has not yet been substantiated and is not accepted by the majority of modern scholars.⁴

Kock rejected Sievers' theory and believed that North and West Germanic both had the same system of accentuation, for he felt that his belief was supported by the forms evidenced in runic inscriptions. But in order to explain

¹ Kock's theories can be found in *Arkiv for nordisk filologi IV* (1888), pp. 141 ff.; a German version appeared in *Beiträge zur geschichte der deutschen sprache und literatur XIV* (1889), pp. 53 ff. Cf. also his *Umlaut und Brechung im Altschwedischen* (Lund 1911-16).

² The accusative singular is the form cited here for all masculine nouns, as it is otherwise difficult to avoid confusion with the so-called *-iR* mutation, which should be universally present in the nominative of *i*-stems.

³ *Beiträge V* (1878), pp. 63 ff.

⁴ See however Penzl in *Arkiv* 66, pp. 1 ff.

the lack of *i*-mutation in the short stem syllable he found it necessary to make several assumptions. The first was that the fronting must be the direct result of the loss of the unaccented *i*, which has as its corollary the assumption that mutation could not take place before *i* which remained. This theory is at variance with the evidence both of a similar change in Old English and of the mutation in Kock's own "third period" in which a back vowel was fronted by surviving *i*.⁵ Secondly it was assumed that the disappearance of *i* after a short stem syllable did not cause mutation, whereas the earlier disappearance after a long syllable did. But these two assumptions involve a third: that at a still later date mutation of the stem vowel did take place before *i* which remained down to the literary period. Presumably this later mutation must have a different phonetic basis from that of stage one, where mutation is represented as resulting from the loss of *i* in the unaccented syllable. Finally in order to account for the mutation in such verbal forms as *kømr* and such adverbial forms as *betr*, Kock had to postulate mutation by *-iR*.

As stated above, the main objection to Kock's theory lay in the proposal of three different periods for the completion of the mutation process, though the second objection that he should assume two different phonetic bases within substantially the same sound change seems equally valid. These objections have long been felt, and many different suggestions have been made, but the most important challenge in recent years was that of Hesselman in 1944.⁶

Hesselman rejects the three-period solution; he maintains that mutation must have taken place whenever unaccented *i* followed in the next syllable and that it

⁵ As in *karling* > *kerling*.

⁶ B. Hesselman, *Omljud och brytning i de nordiska språken* (Stockholm and Copenhagen 1944). There is a good descriptive review of Hesselman by A. E. Sturtevant in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 45 (1946) pp. 346-52. Other theories on *i*-mutation up to 1930 are summarised by E. Neuman in *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* IV, pp. 193 ff. For references to later theories see the bibliography in Hesselman, *op. cit*

resulted from the presence and not the loss of the unaccented vowel. In this theory much is gained, for Hesselman not only suggests the same phonetic explanation for *i*-mutation in all circumstances but also gives to it the same phonetic basis as that normally assumed for *i*-mutation in Old English. The difficulty of the absence of mutation in the short syllables is overcome by invoking vowel-harmony, a well-known phenomenon in the Scandinavian languages. Forms such as **gasti: *staði*, **dōmiðð: *valiðð* all began to show mutation, which Hesselman represents **ga¹sti: *sta¹ði*, **dō¹miðð: *va¹liðð*. At this stage unaccented *i* is lost after the long stem and mutation is completed, but after the short stem the *i* is temporarily retained but weakened to *e*; the result is then represented *gest: *sta¹ðe*, *dæmða: *va¹leða*. The partially mutated vowel of the short stems is now followed by *e* and not *i*, so that by some kind of "e-mutation" **sta¹ðe* becomes **staðe* and **va¹leða* becomes **valeða*. Finally, by the subsequent loss of unaccented *e* the process is completed.

The interest aroused by Hesselman's book put the problem on the agenda of a philological conference in Copenhagen in 1946.⁷ Unfortunately, however, the result was inconclusive.

Since then, an interesting variation, or rather combination, of the three above theories, though with the rejection of the three-period postulation, has been made by Penzl.⁸ Like Hesselman, he maintains that the process of mutation must have taken place wherever unaccented *i* existed in the following syllable, but he points out that the presence of the *i* would only produce an allophonic variant of the root vowel, which might or might not be noted orthographically. This suggestion might well explain the inconclusive nature of the runic evidence. Only later, he suggests, after the loss of

⁷ A summary of this conference is to be found in *APhS* XIX, pp. 1 ff.

⁸ *Akiv* 66, pp. 1 ff.

unaccented *i*, would the allophonic variants become phonemic and be represented orthographically. Objections to Penzl were made by Harding;⁹ and, indeed, his explanation for the absence of mutation in short stems seems unsatisfactory. It is based on analogy and a return to Sievers' assumption that a system of accentuation peculiar to North Germanic brought about the loss of vowels in unaccented syllables earlier after short stems than long ones.

The conflicting elements in the above theories suggest one further line of approach. The fronting process by *i*, *j* or *-R* of back vowels seems to demand that the mutating element was a palatal sound and therefore that the *i* which caused the mutation must have been close [i]. In order to account for the absence of mutation where mutation is to be expected, it should therefore be necessary to assume that at the time of mutation either the *i* had already been lost or else its quality had been changed. Sievers assumed the former, but could only do so by presupposing that the North Germanic system of accentuation was different from that of West Germanic. Hesselman assumes the latter, and suggests that after a short syllable *i* was weakened to *e* before being lost; and although Hesselman's theory has been found wanting,¹⁰ a modification of it might prove acceptable. The attractive suggestion quoted by Penzl¹¹ that mutation allophones already existed in Common Germanic before unaccented *i* may serve as a basis, for it accounts so well for the occurrence of *i*-mutation in all the Germanic languages, although its presence in Gothic is not shown orthographically.¹² As Penzl points out, the change need only be obvious orthographically after the palatalised allophones had become phonemic, probably as a result

⁹ *Arkiv* 67, pp. 208 ff.

¹⁰ Some of the objections raised against Hesselman's theory will be found in *APhS* XIX, pp. 1 ff. and *Arkiv* 60, pp. 194 ff.

¹¹ *Arkiv* 66, loc. cit.

¹² It should perhaps be pointed out that the present explanation is not, however, dependent on the assumption that such mutated allophones did exist in Common Germanic.

of the syncope of unaccented *i*. Once the palatalised phonemes had become established in the language, as they might well become after the completion of the first stage of syncope, i.e. of unaccented *i* after a long syllable, it is unlikely that they would change. Hence it is necessary to assume that the close quality of the *i* was lost after a short syllable not, as Hesselman suggests, at a time when syncope was in process, but before the period of syncope began. Furthermore, it should not be assumed, as Hesselman does, that *i* after a short syllable was weakened to *e* but rather that it was lowered and centralised to [ɨ] or even [ɛ̃]. If, after the short syllable, the unaccented *i* was lowered and centralised before the stabilisation of the palatalised allophone, the new lowered, centralised and more open sound would cease to exert its palatising influence on the stem vowel, which would then revert to its original quality. This reversion would undoubtedly be aided by the vowel pattern of the language, since palatal allophones would only exist before close *i* and not before other unaccented vowels. The stages of development of **gasti* and **staði* could be represented orthographically thus: **gasti:staði* > **ga^lsti:sta^lði* > **ga^lsti:sta^lðə* > **ga^lsti:staðə* > *gest:stað*; or phonetically [gasti:staði] > [*gasti:staði] > [gasti:stað_i/stað_{ɛ̃}] > [gasti:stað_{ɛ̃}] > [gast/gæst/gest:stað].

To the above assumption it is necessary to add one premise in order to account for the lack of mutation in originally trisyllabic forms such as *valða*: that lowering and centralisation also took place medially if the unaccented *i* was in an open syllable. The full assumption, and the only assumption necessary, then, is that in Primitive Norse, before the period of syncope, unaccented *i* was lowered and centralised in open syllables when it followed a short stem syllable. The development of the parallel trisyllabic forms **dōmiðð*:**valiðð* might then be expressed orthographically **dōmiðð*:**valiðð* >

*dōⁱmiðð̄:*vaⁱliðð̄ > *dōⁱmiðð̄:*vaⁱl̄əðð̄ > *dōⁱmiðð̄:
*val̄əðð̄ > dæmða:valða.¹³

This assumption, like Hesselman's, would eliminate the necessity for the three-period history of mutation and also for the assumption of *-iR* mutation, since in the combination *-iR* in the second person singular present tense of strong verbs the *i*, being in a closed syllable, would not be lowered and centralised. It might, however, be argued that the palatalised *-R* sound prevented the lowering and centralisation of the preceding *i* in the same way as it palatalised an immediately preceding back vowel, as in *glaR > gler. If so, this would account for the mutated vowel in betri < *batirā, where the unaccented *i* stood in an open syllable.

The difficulty of the presence of the mutated vowel in the past tense subjunctive of verbs of the *velja* type might be overcome as follows. The forms of the first person singular and plural of the indicative and subjunctive are assumed to have been: *waliðð̄:*waliðjǎ, *waliðum:*waliðim.¹⁴ It will be noted that in both forms of the subjunctive the unaccented *i* is followed in the next syllable by a high front sound, either *j* or close *i*, which could prevent the lowering and centralisation of the medial *i*.¹⁵

The variation between mutated and non-mutated vowels in the paradigm of such words as *ketill* and *lykill* suggests that no lowering or centralisation of the *i* took place when it bore secondary stress. As the surviving forms *ketil:lykil* show, the Primitive Norse accusative singulars *katila:*lukila had a stronger stress on the medial than on the final syllable. The close quality of the *i* remained, mutation took place and the resulting forms were *ketil* and *lykil*. The dative singular and nominative plural forms *katilē:*katilōR, *lukilē:*lukilōR

¹³ The symbol ə is here used as the orthographic representation of the lowered and centralised form of unaccented *i*.

¹⁴ See A. Jóhannesson, *Frunnorræn Málfræði* (Reykjavík 1920) §§ 171 and 168.

¹⁵ Cf. also Hesselman, *op. cit.* p. 13.

had a stronger stress on the ending and a weaker stress on the medial syllable. Hence the unaccented *i* of the medial syllable was lowered and centralised, no mutation took place and the resulting forms were *katli:kattlar*, *lukli:luklar*.

Finally, it must be admitted that the above explanation, like all other phonetic explanations of early sound changes, is based on assumption only. But parallels for the assumption made can be adduced, for a similar lowered and centralised form of unaccented *i* [ɪ/ɨ] can be heard in the dialects of the West Riding of Yorkshire today alongside Received Standard [ɪ] and non-standard [i].

THE BACKGROUND OF BRUNANBURH

By J. McN. DODGSON

ONE of the places which have been suggested as the site of the famous battle fought A.D. 937 *ymb Brunanburh*, is Bromborough on the Mersey shore of Wirral, in Cheshire.¹ As long ago as 1937, A. H. Smith² demonstrated that the place-name Bromborough must be derived from the OE form *Brunanburh* "the stronghold of a man called *Bruna*". Recent collections of place-name spellings for this district³ have not produced any evidence to upset Smith's argument; indeed, two spellings which support it can be added to the examples he quoted then.⁴ But, as Alistair Campbell pointed out at the time, the identity of place-name does not prove that this *Brunanburh* in Wirral is the same as that near which the battle took place.⁵ There is no available information which would, in fact, make proof possible; there are no recorded place-names in the vicinity of Bromborough which would support any of the traditional alternative forms of name for the battlefield as listed by Campbell and Smith, and there is no further record of the sea-name *Dingemere*⁶ — the water over which the defeated Anlaf fled to Dublin. The place-name Wargraves⁷ in Bromborough parish, which marks the site of the battle in the

¹ The proposed locations are listed in Alistair Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh* (1938), 57-80. Bromborough is marked on the map by the lower of the two crosses below the letter B on the Wirral shore of Mersey, see p. 306 *infra*.

² "The Site of the Battle of Brunanburh," *London Medieval Studies*, I, part 1 (1937), 56-59. Bromborough was identified with *Brunanburh* by Gibson in his edition of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 1692, and by R. F. Weymouth in *Athenæum*, 15th August 1885, p. 207.

³ *The Place-Names of Cheshire* (English Place-Name Society, proceeding).

⁴ *Brunneburgh* 1153 (1285) Cartulary of Chester Abbey, *Bronebur'* 1291 Eyre Roll.

⁵ Campbell, *op. cit.*, 59, note.

⁶ Anglo-Saxon Chronicle "A" and "C" texts (ASC "A," "C") — altered to *Dinnesmere* in the Otho MS — *Dyngesmere* ASC "B," *Dynigesmere* ASC "D." Agreement between "A" and "C" establishes *Dinges-* as the original form.

⁷ *Wargraves* does not appear in old records, so there are no early spellings for it. It may derive from ME *werre* (OF *werre*) "war, battle" and ME *grave* (OE *græf*) "a trench, a pit, an earthwork".

six-inch Ordnance Survey Map, may be an old place-name of purely local usage but it may also be a name more recently inspired by local antiquarianism. There have been, as yet, no archæological discoveries there which might lead to a certain identification.

In spite of the lack of conclusive evidence, however, it is possible to show that the place Bromborough, once bearing the name *Brunanburh*, is situated in a district likely to have been the scene of the battle. Bromborough lies on the edge of an area of Norse settlement, which was part of the larger territory of North-West England over-run by Norse immigrants from Ireland and Man in the early-tenth century.⁸ Details of this settlement in Wirral are available in two sources, documentary history,⁹ and place-names.¹⁰

Apart from the Viking kingdom at York, the Wirral settlement is the only Norse movement into England that is documented. The prime document is *Annals of Ireland. Three Fragments*,¹¹ which though of dubious tradition, is corroborated and supplemented by other Irish and by Welsh annals. From these accounts, the following course of events appears:¹²

In A.D. 902 the Norsemen were expelled from Dublin. Led by one Ingimund they went to Britain. They landed in

⁸ Eilert Ekwall, *Scandinavians and Celts in the North-West of England* (1918); F. T. Wainwright, "The Scandinavians in Lancashire," *Transactions of the Lancs. and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 58 (1945-6), 71-116.

⁹ F. T. Wainwright, "North-West Mercia, A.D. 871-924," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancs. and Cheshire*, Vol. 94 (1942), 3-55; and "Ingimund's Invasion," *English Historical Review*, Vol. LXIII (April 1948), 145-169.

¹⁰ The Scandinavian settlements in Cheshire, as illustrated by place-names, lie in defined areas, Danish east of R. Weaver, Norse in Wirral and district; see G. Barnes, "The Evidence of Place-Names for the Scandinavian Settlements in Cheshire," *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 63 (1952-3), 131-155; and S. Potter, "Cheshire Place-Names," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancs. and Cheshire*, Vol. 106 (1955), 16-20 with map (fig. 3).

¹¹ Edited by John O'Donovan for the Irish Archæological and Celtic Society (Dublin, 1860) from *Fragmenta Tria Annalium Hiberniæ* (Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, MS. 5301-5302). This Brussels MS. is a nineteenth-century copy made by O'Donovan of a copy made in 1643 by Duaid Mac Firbis of a vellum manuscript since lost.

¹² v. F. T. Wainwright, "Ingimund's Invasion," *loc. cit.*

Anglesey where they were resisted by the king of the Britons,¹³ who defeated them in battle and drove them out. Thereupon Ingimund and his people sought out Æpelflæd lady of the Mercians, her husband Æpelred being a sick man,¹⁴ and requested land of her, in which to settle, being weary of war. She granted Ingimund land near Chester,¹⁵ and there for a time he lived quietly, until he began to envy the English their better lands around Chester, a rich city.¹⁶ Ingimund had secret consultations with the leaders of the Norsemen and the Danes, who agreed to join him in a bid for land. They would first ask for, and then fight for, the lands Ingimund coveted. They assembled secretly at Ingimund's house. Æpelflæd heard tell of the plot, and she garrisoned Chester,¹⁶ and when the Danes and the Norsemen attacked the city, the garrison made a stout resistance. The siege being vigorous, the defenders sent messengers to Æpelred, then at the point of death (he died A.D. 911), to ask his advice and that of his lady. They advised upon a stratagem which was successful up to a point. But when the Norsemen began to undermine the city wall, Æpelflæd and Æpelred tried to draw them off by splitting the enemy forces; they persuaded the Irishmen who were among the Norsemen, and who were disaffected towards the Danes, to massacre the Danes. The Norsemen went on mining and were stopped only when all the beehives in the city were thrown down upon them from the wall, and they were so badly stung that they had to withdraw. But it was not long after that before the Norsemen came to do battle again.

The important features of this story are (a) the date — ranging from A.D. 902 to c. 910 (a lost continuation of *Three Fragments* presumably dealt with later attacks by the Norsemen upon the English); (b) the character of the

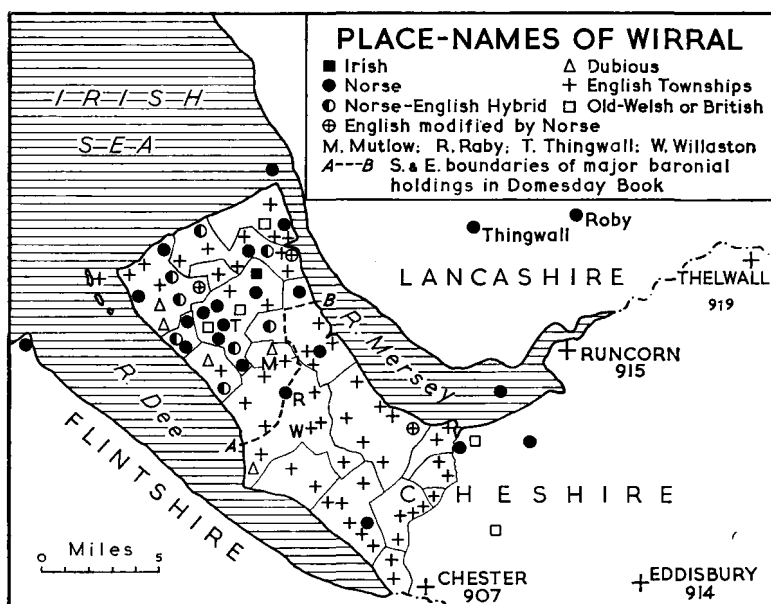
¹³ *Three Fragments* calls this king "the son of Cadell son of Rhodri"; J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, I, 332, says Cadell son of Rhodri Mawr did not die until c. 909, and that his sons were Hywel and Clydog; Wainwright, *op. cit.*, 167, note, 4 suggests that *Three Fragments* should read "the brother of Cadell . . ." to refer to Anarawd ruler of Gwynned and Anglesey until A.D. 916. Wainwright's correction is not necessary, for the *Three Fragments* scribe uses the term "king" loosely, and the leader of the British force need not have been a reigning monarch: cf. note 14 *infra*.

¹⁴ *Three Fragments* calls her "Edelfrida Queen of the Saxons," and her husband "Edelfrid the King." He was *aldorman* of Mercia from 883 until his death in 911; she was married to him by the end of 889 and ruled Mercia after his death until she died in 918.

¹⁵ *Three Fragments* reads "Castra."

¹⁶ ASC "A," "B," "C," "D", has the Danes arrive *on anre westre ceastre in wirhealum* in 893; the Mercian Register embodied in the ASC (see note 35 *infra*) records the rebuilding of Chester. In ASC "C" this is dated 907.

settlement — the creation, by arrangement with the Mercian government, of a Norse community in North-West Mercia, which, once established, was liable to be rebellious, and which had apparently been settled in second-rate land upon which it wished to improve; (c) the relationship of various peoples in the new community — a mixture of Norsemen and Irishmen, entering into warlike political arrangements with the Danes who were at that time the enemies of the English state.



The characteristics and the distribution of the Norse element in the place-names of Wirral and district bear this analysis out,¹⁷ as the following survey will show.

The place-names NOCTORUM ("the dry hillock," OIr *cnocc* "hillock," OIr *trim* adj., "dry") and IRBY

¹⁷ v. note 10, *supra*.

{“ the farmstead of the Irish ” ON *Íra-býr*) indicate, respectively, the location of Irish-speaking inhabitants and of the habitation of a community from Ireland.¹⁸ In the place-name IRBY, as in GREASBY and WHITBY, there is an exchange of ON *býr* “ farmstead ” and OE *byrig*, dative singular of OE *burh* “ stronghold, fortified house.”¹⁹ In GAYTON, ON *geit* “ a goat ” rather than OE *gāt* “ a goat ” is the first element.²⁰ GAYTON is one of a number of place-names in Wirral where a Norse first element is combined with the ending *-ton*.²¹ This ending may represent either OE *tūn* “ enclosure, farmstead ” or ON *tún* “ farmstead, farm enclosure, enclosed in-field,” which cannot be distinguished from each other formally.²²

These place-names may safely be regarded as the creation of a mixed Anglo-Norse community predominantly Norse in speech; some of them may as well be purely Norse. Place-names which are assuredly Norse are MEOLS (ON *melr* “ sandbank ”), TRANMERE (“ the crane-frequented sandbank,” ON *trani* “ a crane, a heron,” ON *melr* “ sandbank ”), THINGWALL (ON *þing-vollr* “ field where the Thing meets ”), and certain other place-names, which end in *-by* (ON *býr*). WEST KIRBY and *Kirby in Waley* (the old name for Wallasey village as distinct from the parish of Wallasey in which it lay) are derived from ON *kirkju-býr* “ the church hamlet ”; PENSBY contains Welsh *pen-* (British **penno-*) “ a hill ”;

¹⁸ ON *Íri* as a by-name usually denotes a man who has sojourned in Ireland.

¹⁹ Irby is *Erberia*, *Irreby* c. 1100 (1280) Chester Cartulary, where OE *byrig* is an occasional substitution for original ON *býr*. Greasby is *Gravesberie* 1086 DB, *Grauesbyri*, *-biri*, *-beri* c. 1100 (1150 and 1280) Chester Cartulary, *Grauisby* c. 1100 (1280), c. 1153 (1280) *ibid.*, and Whitby is *Witeberia* c. 1100 (1150), 1150, *Witebia* c. 1100 (1280), *Witebi* c. 1190 (14th) *ibid.*; in these two place-names original OE *byrig* is replaced by ON *býr*.

²⁰ *Gaitone* 1086 DB, *Geytona* 1238 Pipe Roll; there is no record of a ME form *Gatton* that would be expected from OE *gāt-tūn*.

²¹ Cloughton (ON *klakkr* “ a hill ”), Storeton (ON *stórr* adj., “ great ”), Larton (ON *leirr* “ clay ”), and possibly Neston (? ON *nes* “ headland,” though ME spellings in *Nas-* indicate OE Mercian *næss* (OE *ness*) “ a headland ”). Thurstaston contains the ON personal-name *þorsteinn*, spelt in the English fashion *Thurstan*; Barnston probably contains the personal-name ON *Björnúlfr* or OE *Beornwulf*, as mediaeval spellings show.

²² v. A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society, Vol. 26 (1956), s.v. *tūn* OE, para. (10).

FRANKBY is "the Frenchman's farmstead"²³; RABY is "the boundary farmstead" (ON *rá* "boundary mark"); HELSBY (outside Wirral, on the south side of Mersey in Eddisbury Hundred) is "the farmstead on the ledge" (ON *hjalli* "a ledge") and lies on the side of a steep and prominent hill overlooking the Mersey estuary.

Many of these places were not of sufficient importance to be entered in Domesday Book by name. If we subtract those place-names which show hybrid characteristics, from the place-names which do appear there,²⁴ there remain only MEOLS, THINGWALL, RABY and HELSBY that point decisively to Norse settlement, with NOCTORUM indicating an associated Irish settlement. Of these only RABY and HELSBY are habitative names. The minor character of the Norse habitative place-names in Wirral is shown by place-names in *-by*, many of which only appear in late records, while some are, so far, only known from nineteenth-century Tithe Award field-names which preserve the memory of their location — Syllaby (Gt. Saughall), Haby (Barnston), Hesby (Bidston), Stromby (Thurstaston), Kiln Walby (Upton near Woodchurch; *Gildewalleby* 1321 Cheshire Sheaf series 3, No. 24, p. 40). Another Norse place-name for a minor settlement is ARROWE, which also appears late in record (*Arwe* c. 1245 Chester), and derives from ON *erg* "shieling," a word borrowed from MÍr *airge*, Gælic *airigh*.²⁵

This word *erg* also appears in field-names, especially in

²³ From ME *Frank* (OE *Franca*) "a Frenchman." In Domesday Book, fo. 264b, in the entry for Caldy, is the note "et unus Francigena cum uno serviente habet duas carucas." This Frenchman held an estate worth noticing as a separate item for taxation purposes, but the place had no separate name. The place-name emerges as *Frankeby* 1230 *Harl. MS.*, 1304 Chester Fines. This place-name obviously does not contain ON *Frakki* "a Frenchman." Danish *Franki* would be unexpected here; though the place-name Denhall in Ness parish might derive from both OE *Dena* (gen. pl.) and ON *Dana* (gen. pl.) "of the Danes," with ON *vollr* (dat. sg. *velli*) "field" confused with OE *wella, walle* "a spring, a stream."

²⁴ Noctorum, Greasby, Gayton, Storeton, Neston (and Ness), Thurstaston, Barnston, Meols, Thingwall, Raby, Helsby.

²⁵ On the possibility of this place-name's derivation directly from MÍr *airge*, rather than from ON *erg*, v. Christian Matras, "Gammelfærosk *ærgi*, n., og dermed beslægtede ord," *Namn och Bygd*, Årgang 44 (1956), 51-67. Also v. A. H. Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, E.P.-N.S. Vol. 25 (1956), s.v. *erg* ON.

Arrowe parish itself. Norse elements in the field-names of the area are widespread and pervasive.²⁶ Furthermore, there is a good number of Norse names of natural features in the area, e.g. ON *dalr* "valley" in Crowsdale (ON *kross*), Lingdale (ON *lyng*), and *Steyncolesdale* (1298 Plea Roll, in Thurstaston parish; containing the ON personal-name *Steinkell*), and ON *sker* "reef, sandbank" in Score Bank in the Mersey Estuary (called *Swarteskere* 1308 Black Prince's Register, "the black reef"), and a lost *Le Skere* (1275 Cheshire Sheaf) off Wallasey.

The conclusions to be derived from this place-name evidence are, that Norse village-names begin as the names of minor and insignificant farmsteads that are subsidiary settlements in hitherto unused land within the framework of English townships and parishes; that the nature and distribution of Anglo-Norse hybrid place-names (see map 306) as compared with the distribution of English place-names, indicates a Norse settlement beginning in north-west Wirral and spreading south and east across the peninsula from more exposed to more fertile and developed country; and that the prevalence and persistence of Norse field- and minor-names throughout the peninsula, and, at the same time, the persistence of English parish-, township-, field- and minor-names even in the Norse northern area of it, bespeak a deliberate and non-disruptive integration of Norse and English people into one Anglo-Norse community.

The Norse element must have remained dominant for some time; at least long enough to impress its consciousness of identity upon the pattern of regional government over and above the parochial level, as the distribution of certain place-names in Wirral indicates. The place THINGWALL is in the Norse northern end of the peninsula, and can only be the meeting-place of a Norse organisation. In Domesday Book, what is now the hundred of

²⁶ v. F. T. Wainwright, "Field-Names," *Antiquity*, Vol. 17 (1943), 57-66; also *English Historical Review*, Vol. LXIII (April 1948), 162.

Wirral was known as the hundred of *Wilaveston* (OE *Wīglāfes-tūn* "Wiglaf's farmstead") which met at Willaston. Half-way between Thingwall and Willaston is RABY, "the farmstead at the boundary-mark." It looks as though the Norse colony had a defined boundary, within which it owned its own jurisdiction.

This special jurisdiction is commemorated also in the feudal arrangement of north Wirral in post-Conquest times. In 1182 the Pipe Roll names a minor hundred in Wirral *Caldeihundredum* "the hundred of Caldý." This minor hundred, attached to the manor of Gayton, survived until recently.²⁷ The origin of this jurisdiction lies in the Norman re-organisation of the Anglo-Saxon shire of Cheshire. The feudal allocation of lands in Cheshire was made by the Earl of Chester to his own barons, whose baronies centred upon Halton, Mold (Flintshire), Rhuddlan (Flintshire), Malpas, Nantwich, Shipbrook, Dunham Massey, Kinderton and Stockport.²⁸

In Domesday Book, Robert, baron of Rhuddlan in Flintshire, also held a block of lands in Wirral, which apart from Gt. and Lt. Mollington, all lay in the north and west of the hundred²⁹: in Leighton, Thornton Hough, Gayton, Heswall, Thurstaston, Gt. and Lt. Meols, Newton, Larton, Wallasey, Neston, Hargrave, Hoose, West Kirby, Poulton and Seacombe. This estate is the origin of the minor hundred; it is approximately co-terminous with it. Apart from the Rhuddlan barony, the lands of north Wirral were held by the barons of Dunham Massey, Halton and Mold (Moreton, Claughton, Tranmere, Saughall Massey, Bidston; Barnston and half of Raby; Caldý; respectively). The greater part of the north of Wirral, therefore, was held in compact parcels by four of the most

²⁷ G. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, ed. T. Helsby (1882), II, 518, traces its feudal descent down to 1819 when some of its privileges were still observed. He lists the extent of the minor hundred as being then comprised of Thornton Hough, Leighton (in Neston), Gayton, Heswall, Thurstaston, West Kirby, Gt. and Lt. Meols, Hoose, Newton, Larton, and Poulton-cum-Seacombe.

²⁸ v. Ormerod, *op. cit.*, I, 55; 56, 58 note; 520; 688; II, 245; 592; III, 187; 788, respectively.

²⁹ Ormerod, *op. cit.*, I, 55; II, 353.

powerful Norman barons of Cheshire; by contrast, in the rest of Wirral the Domesday holdings are dispersed.

The treatment of this area of north Wirral, which is approximately co-terminous with the Norse settlement area, by the Norman administration, is paralleled elsewhere in Cheshire. The present hundred of Bucklow, the northern hundred of Cheshire that marches with Lancashire along Mersey, was in Domesday Book two hundreds, *Tunendune*, the western one, meeting at an unidentified place, and *Bochelau*, the eastern one, whose name now applies to both, meeting at Bucklow Hill (OE *Buccan-hlaw* "Bucca's mound") in Mere parish. In two mediæval lists³⁰ of the villas and manors of the barony of Halton (the minor hundred called *Haltonshire* was its jurisdiction), it is apparent that this barony was co-terminous with the Domesday Book hundred of *Tunendune*.³¹ Nantwich hundred,³² at the other end of the county, was one hundred in Domesday Book, *Warmundestreu* (OE *Wærmundes-treow* "Wærmund's tree"), the meeting-place of which is unidentified. An insepimus in 1438 of an inquisition made in 1342 lists the villas of the Nantwich barony held by William de Maubanc, baron of Nantwich,³³ and shows that this barony coincided rather with the Domesday hundred of *Warmundestreu* than with the reformed hundred of Nantwich. The townships of Church Minshull, Betchton, Hassall and Alsager were transferred from the hundred of *Warmundestreu* (Nantwich) to that of Northwich (DB *Mildestuic* i.e. Middlewich), at some date in the twelfth century. Although they were then no longer in Nantwich hundred, they remained in the Nantwich barony.

³⁰ National Register of Archives (Historical MSS. Commission), *Report No. 3636 (Tabley Muniments)*, entry No. 1063, a list of date c. 1300 tempore Henry Lacy, baron of Halton; Ormerod, *op. cit.*, I, 704 and note, a list for a date c. 1360 at the death of Henry duke of Lancaster, baron of Halton.

³¹ All the land of the present Bucklow hundred west of a line excluding Lymm, Grappenhall, High Legh, Mere, Tabley Superior, Pickmere and Marston.

³² Ormerod, *op. cit.*, III, 421.

³³ Enrolled in Chester Recognisance Rolls, *Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records*, No. 37, Appendix II, p. 478. The barony was divided in 1342 among the daughters of Wm. de Maubanc.

In these examples the Norman feudal estates with their own jurisdictions were based upon the Anglo-Saxon hundreds, and so preserved the shape of the old administrative pattern after the twelfth-century re-organisation of the major hundreds. Since this happens in these other parts of Cheshire, it is not unreasonable to suppose the same process in Wirral, and to assume that the baronial minor hundred of Caldý and the lesser block-holdings in north Wirral, represent a Norman adaptation of an administrative pattern that already existed when the Norman earls took over the shire. It looks as though the Norse enclave in Wirral was so politically distinctive that it justified a special feudal administration.

If the deductions made from place-names and from this excursion into Norman feudal history are added to those drawn from the historical account presented in *Three Fragments*, it becomes obvious that in Wirral there was throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries a recognised Norse colony, deliberately established in a definitely bounded area, and with a conscious identity sufficient to support and warrant a distinctive local administration. The situation was apparently repeated to some extent across Mersey in South-West Lancashire,³⁴ where there is another Thingwall (near Liverpool), the nucleus of a Norse enclave there whose inland boundary was likewise marked by a *rá-býr*, ROBY. The Wirral colony began a programme of vigorous, and occasionally, armed, expansion almost immediately after its establishment, towards the better lands of the English districts to the south. It is therefore proper to suppose that at any date shortly after A.D. 902-910, there would exist on either shore of the Mersey estuary a community of Norse settlers upon whose sympathy, at least, any Norse expedition passing up or down that river would be able

³⁴ v. F. T. Wainwright "The Scandinavians in Lancashire" *Transactions of the Lancs. and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 58 (1945-6), 71-116.

to rely. There was here a route by which a ship-borne attack could have been delivered far into the mainland of Mercia, a route flanked by the territory of Norsemen who were not themselves averse to attacking the English. It would have been attractive to any Viking adventurer. It may have been the route of Sihtric's raid in 920, to Davenport in South-East Cheshire, the market-place (OE *port* "market") on the R. Dane (*Daven*) which served the Danish area of the county; it will be recalled that there is a record of disaffection towards the Danes on the part of the Irish element in the Wirral settlement, in the *Three Fragments* account.

Of the state of affairs near the Mersey estuary the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle has little to say in a direct fashion. The affairs of North-West Mercia tend to be overshadowed by the events leading to the re-conquest of the Danelaw. However, the "Mercian Register" included in the B- and C-texts of the Chronicle³⁵ records the building, between 907 and 919 of a series of fortresses along the west and north frontiers of Mercia. In 907 it records the rebuilding of Chester (a probable reason for this has been alluded to). In 909 (D-text) or 910 (C-text) it records the building of *Bremesburh*, in 912 *Scergeat* — these are unidentified so their strategic purpose is unknown — and in 914 Eddisbury (Cheshire), presumably to support Chester in guarding against incursions from the North and the Mersey estuary. In 915, the Register informs us, the frontier with mid-Wales was secured by a fort at Chirbury (Salop), and the head of the Mersey estuary was guarded by a fort at Runcorn (Cheshire). It also records, in the same year, the building of the unidentified fort *Weardbyrig* (there is no place-name evidence to assure an identification with Warburton in N. Cheshire, though such a location would be attractive). Finally, the "Mercian Register" records Eadweard's

³⁵ J. Earle and C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (1892), I, 92, note 7.

building a fort at *Cledemuða* in 921 — probably at the mouth of the North Welsh River Clwyd, near Rhuddlan.³⁶ Meanwhile, according to another annal, not in the “Mercian Register,” he had fortified Thelwall (Cheshire) and Manchester in 919 (ASC “A” sub anno 922). By 921 therefore, there was a line of five, possibly six, fortresses established to hold the frontier from North Wales to Manchester.

This great effort to secure the north-west frontier of Mercia was called forth by the steady build-up of Norse power in the north-country which culminated in the establishment of the York kingdom. The urgency of the need for fortification on this frontier cannot have been lessened by the existence upon the frontier itself of restless Norse colonies, whose territories would serve as excellent beach-heads for any expedition striking down into Mercia along a short, direct and strategic route from Mersey.

It is impossible to connect in any detailed way the facts known about *Brunanburh* with this context of political and geographical factors. The main tradition of the campaign derives from the Anglo-Saxon poem (ASC “A,” “B,” “C,” “D”), William of Malmesbury’s two accounts — his own twelfth-century report³⁷ and his quotation of a mid-tenth-century Latin poem³⁸ — and from the account of Florence of Worcester,³⁹ also twelfth-century. From these sources we learn that an alliance was made in the north-country⁴⁰ between Anlaf the Norseman and Constantine king of the Scots. They crossed the English frontier⁴¹ or landed in the estuary of the Humber.⁴² The English king gave way before

³⁶ F. T. Wainwright, “Cledemuða,” *English Historical Review*, Vol. LXV (April 1950), 203-212.

³⁷ *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* ed. W. Stubbs (1887-89), I, 142.

³⁸ *ibid.*, I, 151.

³⁹ *Chronicon ex Chronicis* ed. B. Thorpe (1848-9), I, 132.

⁴⁰ William of Malmesbury, Latin poem, lines 4-7; quoted by A. Campbell, *The Battle of Brunanburh* (1938), 154.

⁴¹ William of Malmesbury; v. Campbell, *op. cit.*, 152.

⁴² Florence of Worcester; v. Campbell, *op. cit.*, 147.

them for a while according to plan⁴³ during which time they made great inroads and took much booty. Upon the king's taking the field against them, the enemy abandoned their booty and fled away towards their own country.⁴⁴ The English force of West-Saxons and Mercians under Athelstan and Edmund his brother utterly routed them in a fight around *Brunanburh*, pursuing them⁴⁵ throughout the day.⁴⁶ After the battle, Anlaf and his surviving companions returned by ship to Dublin across *Dingesmere*⁴⁷.

All that emerges from this, is that the invasion was planned in the north-country, and reached "a long way" into England; the enemy was defeated by a combined West-Saxon and Mercian force; the survivors of the enemy's defeat went off home, some of them taking ship to Dublin. Although this sea-borne escape to Dublin need not imply a direct Irish Sea passage, the only evidence against the location of *Brunanburh* on the North-West coast that comes from the traditional accounts, is the statement of Florence of Worcester that the landings took place in Humber.⁴⁸ His source for this statement is not known, and its authority can neither be attacked nor defended.

Unless Florence's statement is to be considered

⁴³ William of Malmesbury; v. Campbell, *op. cit.*, 152. The Latin poem, lines 11-18, v. Campbell, *op. cit.*, 155, is more descriptive.

⁴⁴ William of Malmesbury, Latin poem, lines 26-33, v. Campbell *op. cit.*, 155.

⁴⁵ Campbell's note (*op. cit.*, 104) on *on last legdun* in line 22 of his text of the Anglo-Saxon poem, is important. He interprets it "they pressed on behind." This indicates pursuit upon and from the battlefield, rather than a long chase; see note 46 *infra*.

⁴⁶ The duration of the battle and its relevance to site of the battlefield is discussed by A. H. Smith, "The Site of the Battle of Brunanburh," *London Medieval Studies*, I, i (1937), 58. Note that William of Malmesbury parallels the OE poem's phrase *ondlongne dæg* (line 21, Campbell's edition) with *tota die usque ad vesperam* (Campbell *op. cit.*, 153). If Bromborough be *Brunanburh*, we should have to assume that the battle took place after the invaders had withdrawn to the coast from their deep penetration inland. In that case, they may have begun to retreat as soon as the king turned out, as William of Malmesbury says (v. note 44 *supra*), their retreat culminating in a day-long disaster in the battle.

⁴⁷ OE poem, Campbell's edition, lines 53-56.

⁴⁸ It might be pointed out that the point of exit after the defeat may not have been the point of entry at the beginning of the campaign. It is not known whether the ships Anlaf fled in were his own; nor whether he found them where he had left them.

dependent on reliable tradition (and the OE poem and the Latin poem do not elucidate this), Bromborough in Wirral would appear to be the most eligible place for the battle-field. In no other locality does the context of geography, politics and place-names accord so well with the few facts we possess concerning the battle.

BOOK REVIEWS

ENGLISH PLACE-NAME ELEMENTS. By A. H. SMITH. English Place-Name Society, Vols. XXV and XXVI. Cambridge: The University Press 1956, pp. lv + 305 and 417.

The English Place-Name Society survey now covers about half the counties in the country, and after an inevitable break as a result of the war years new volumes are again appearing regularly. The two latest numbers, XXV and XXVI, list the place-name elements so far found to have been used. It will be remembered that the second part of volume one, published in 1924, was a slim volume by Sir Allen Mawer entitled *The Chief Elements used in English Place-Names*. The present volumes supersede it, and the great increase in size is indicative of the increase in knowledge which has resulted from the Society's efforts.

Members of the Viking Society will find of particular interest the many articles on place-name elements of Scandinavian origin and will be justly proud that the author of the two volumes is their President, Professor A. H. Smith.

In his introduction Professor Smith states the dual purpose of his work. In the first place it is intended as a companion to both past and future surveys published by the Society, and as such it will no doubt facilitate considerably the work of future editors. Secondly it provides a summary of the lexicographical results of the work done both by the society and others in the field of place-name study, results which are remarkable in their bulk. The collection of this material, which is otherwise by no means readily available, affords the most obvious example of the extent of Professor Smith's scholarship and of the tremendous labour he has put into the work.

The amount of space allotted to the various elements naturally varies greatly; the common elements are dealt with at length, whilst others, more seldom found, can be dismissed in a line or so. The general method can be best exemplified by the articles on one or more of the common Scandinavian elements, such as *by* and *þorp*. The head-word is identified and its dialectal and grammatical variants given; the meaning or meanings are then discussed, both historically and, if the element is of foreign origin, also with reference to its provenance. Then follows an account of its usage in English place-names under such headings as *first element*, *simplex*, *final element of a compound*, and *affix*. Finally etymological notes are added. The sources used in the

interpretation of the various elements are amazing in their scope. They include Old English glosses and translations from the Latin, Old and Middle English literary texts, comparative philology, comparisons with Scandinavian and Continental Germanic place-names, dialectal investigations, observations of the topography of the actual site, and an examination of the types of word with which the element may be compounded — all these have been found to lead to a more exact interpretation of the meaning.

Both volumes contain maps illustrating the distribution of various features, and Viking Society members will be especially interested by those which shew the "Scandinavian Element" and the "Irish-Norwegian Place-Names." A full index of the place-names used for illustrative purposes is also provided.

Inevitably, as Professor Smith points out, some of the information given can only be provisional, and no doubt a new summary will be called for on the completion of the Society's survey; but the work already done has established much that is certain and these volumes can be said to afford an admirable presentation of the present state of our knowledge.

A. R. TAYLOR

A SHORT HISTORY OF NORWAY. By T. K. DERRY. *London: Allen and Unwin 1957.* 281 pp.

Doctor Derry's work admirably supplies the hitherto crying need for an accurate and up-to-date history of Norway, written in English by an Englishman. The latest work of the kind available to those without a knowledge of Norwegian — by Karen Larsen — is already nearly ten years old, a long time in an age of rapid and continuous change, and its author, like that of Gjerset's book in 1915, is not of British but of American-Scandinavian origin, which is not quite the same thing. Considering the long, intimate and increasingly friendly relations between Norway and Britain, the widespread ignorance which still prevails in our country on the subject of Norwegian history is most deplorable. The average Englishman shows little more than a hazy awareness of the Viking period, and his confused thinking still tends to amalgamate in an imaginary "Scandinavia" three northern nations, whose important differences and histories of frequent conflict he is unable to appreciate.

For such ignorance, Dr. Derry's book provides a healthy and convincing corrective. In an admirable introductory chapter, he stresses the point that Norwegians and their history are

mainly the consequence of the special and very peculiar topographical conditions of the country. These were bound to create specific national characteristics; it makes no difference that an aboriginal "pure Nordic culture" is a figment of ultra-nationalistic imagination, and that in fact Norway was populated by successive migrations from neighbouring lands, since, as the late Professor A. W. Brögger has pointed out, "from the very first moment that human beings came to Norway, the natural conditions of the country were bound to turn them into Norwegians." These natural conditions not only inspired the conception of the sea as a highway rather than a barrier, but made the nation a congeries of scattered individual families rather than a community, and thus developed that passion for individual freedom and that self-reliant versatility which still to a great extent give Norwegians special characteristics, markedly differentiated from those of their neighbours.

As for the heresy of Scandinavianism, Dr. Derry repeatedly emphasizes how this policy "spelt disaster for Norway," as the weakest member of the combination which it envisaged; "any such partnership would be dominated eventually by Swedish or Danish interests." Though the truth of this has been proved again and again, both during the "*firehundraaariq natten*" of the union with Denmark and the more recent Swedish union, this mistaken Scandinavian ideal has shown a remarkable capacity for survival, not only in the outside world but in the three northern countries themselves; its persistence has in fact given to Norwegian history that succession of stops and fresh starts which characterises it, and it is not the least of Dr. Derry's triumphs that he succeeds in conveying a sense of continuity through all its stages. Even in Norway itself, historians have usually specialized in a particular period, but this work displays a balanced familiarity with all.

Though Dr. Derry describes his book — in a sense correctly — as a "*short history*," this must not be interpreted as a mere summary of leading features; the author has managed to find room for an amazing amount of detail, and includes mention of such subordinate but picturesque matters as Quirini's accidental visit to Norway in 1431, or the legend of "Jostedals Rype" and other folk-tales of the Black Death. It is in fact difficult to imagine how a better general history could be written on this scale, and in spite of all the necessary compression the book never seems over-crowded, but is always easy reading.

The author's prudent decision not to embark on controversial issues has left surprisingly little for a reviewer to criticise. The

student of the early and medieval periods might perhaps have been more carefully guarded against the democratic anachronisms of nineteenth-century Norwegian historians. There was precious little democracy in those ancient times. *Rígsþula*, in the dawn of history, shows us an elaborate stratification of classes with functions and status almost as sharply defined as under a caste system. The laws codified about the twelfth century breathe the same spirit, graduating steeply, for example, the penalties for wounding or homicide according to the social position of the victim. The men who attended the local *Things* would certainly have been surprised to hear that these were legislative assemblies; indeed, legislation in the modern sense was alien and even abhorrent to their conception. Their function was to declare what the law was, and to alter sacrosanct and time-honoured tradition as little as possible. Their codes contain, indeed, a considerable element of what we should call "case-law," resulting from decisions in concrete cases as to how a law was to be interpreted or applied. But fresh legislation, like the succession law of 1164, is never attributed to the *Things*, whose function, in practice, was little more than to recognise the fact that a change had taken place. In the example suggested above, the *nýmali* is described as the work of "King Magnus, on the advice of the archbishop, Erling Jarl (the Regent), and all the most intelligent men". Similarly, when Dr. Derry tells us that the *Things* "appointed the King," their rapidly varying decisions actually indicate that they regarded their task merely as a proclamation of what seemed to be the *de facto* situation at the moment.

Even if, however, it is possible to criticise Dr. Derry's handling of this question, the fault is rather one of presentation than of factual inaccuracy. It is quite possible that he agrees with the views expressed above, though his readers might form an erroneous impression. Demonstrable mistakes of fact are extremely hard to find. The statement that a disputed succession to the throne did not occur till "nearly a century" from the time of Magnus the Good requires some qualification: the claim of Harald harðráði very nearly led to armed conflict, and the backers of Hákon Þórisfóstri actually revolted against Magnus Barefoot in 1093-4 in spite of the death of their candidate. In the final portion of the work the influence of the "Altmark" case on Hitler's decision to invade Norway is exaggerated; the decision had been irrevocably taken earlier. But Dr. Derry is fully entitled to ask whether, in any history, the *corrigenda* to be found are so few and unimportant.

G. M. GATHORNE-HARDY

NORDISK FOLKEVISEFORSKNING SIDEN 1800. By ERIK DAL. *Copenhagen: J. H. Schultz Forlag, 1956. 448 pp.*

This book is in effect an annotated bibliography on a grand scale. It will prove an invaluable instrument for any student of the *folkeviser* of Scandinavia, Iceland and the Faroes, and indeed it may be read with pleasure and profit by anyone interested in the general problems of ballad-literature. Mr. Dal presents his exposition of earlier scholars' views with great clarity; he makes much use of unpublished material; and he himself contributes much of value to the discussion of the varied topics he has brought together. He begins fittingly with the bibliography on which the work depends. He then devotes about half the book to the history of ballad-research, with chapters on the great figures of the nineteenth century like Sven Grundtvig and Evald Tang Kristensen and on a more general survey of the work of Scandinavian scholars as he approaches our own age. In the rest of the book he deals with the Problems of the Ballads, considering first the history of opinions and the results of research in the field of the special ballad-groups, *Ridderviser*, *Kæmpeviser* and so forth; then he treats the discussion of the problems of the origin and migration of ballads, their composition and transmission, and finally their musical form. A twenty-page English summary at the end can do scant justice to the wealth of material collected by Mr. Dal, but it makes a useful starting-point for dipping into the book itself. The volume is admirably produced with a number of interesting illustrations and a useful index.

P. G. FOOTE

ÍSLANZKA SKATTLANDIÐ I. By BJÖRN ÞORSTEINSSON. *Reykjavík: Heimskringla; Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1956. 212 pp.*

This history of Iceland from 1262 to 1400 is a continuation of the author's earlier *Íslenska þjóðveldið* and shows the same liveliness of mind and style. The period it covers may at first sight seem less interesting than the Republican age, but the writer has made it come alive by his presentation of constitutional, legal and economic material combined with such things as details of costume from the Greenland archæological finds and brief personal histories of men like Gissur Þorvaldsson and Gissur galli. In any case, of course, the years 1262-4 did not mean any immediate decisive break in many features of Icelandic life, and Björn has a clear sense both of the continuity and the contrast. In his comparison between new *sýslumaðr* and old *godi*, for

example, he casts new light on the status of the *goði* in the earlier part of the thirteenth century. In such a passage as this, combining clear exposition and fruitful discussion, the author is at his best.

Although the author disclaims any intention of writing literary history in the usual sense of the term, the book is permeated with his knowledge of Iceland's early literature, and from the themes of great sagas like *Egils saga* and *Njála*, he does not hesitate to draw conclusions about Icelandic political aspirations in the thirteenth century. Although this may seem at times a subjective and doubtful matter, it cannot fail to awaken the reader's interest and increase his awareness of the social and political setting of the literature.

The extent to which Icelandic society differed from the international "medieval" ideal (in the authority of the secular courts over clerics, for example, and in the nature of the Icelandic aristocracy or upper class) is well brought out. This has interesting implications for the student of early Icelandic literature, since the author firmly believes that the particular virtues of that literature were automatically lost as a more "medieval" type of society developed. Björn's analysis of society is primarily in terms of class structure. "If anyone doubts the existence of a class struggle in the thirteenth century, the author of the *Konungs skuggsjá* corrects his misunderstanding," he observes, although his quotation, "the foolish people reckon the king their opponent," is not perhaps quite conclusive.

Sometimes the simplification required by the author's pattern seems to be taken too far. It seems to me not so much that the author is unfair to the medieval Church as that he fails to recognise the complexity of its rôle in society (and this was not always identical with the class interests of its leaders). He thus counts the church simply as a repressive force, throwing all its weight behind the established order, but he ignores, for example, the church's contribution to social mobility in that it alone made it possible for poorly-born but intelligent men to rise to positions of influence.

Like the first volume, this is a book to be read for its ideas. It is a pioneer work but, while further studies will inevitably produce corrections and lay stress on different aspects, I think it is true to say that our views on the state of Iceland in the fourteenth century must undergo a radical and salutary change after reading it. Whether we agree or disagree with the author on any particular point, he is always stimulating, and there is much to be learnt from his book.

A. L. BINNS

A ROYAL IMPOSTER: KING SVERRE OF NORWAY. By G. M. GATHORNE-HARDY. *Oxford University Press*, 1956, II + 305 pp.

Mr. Gathorne-Hardy says in his Preface that the history of Sverre and contemporary Norway has "obsessed and fascinated" him for more than thirty years. These words explain best the outstanding qualities of his book, the verve, argumentative tenacity, humour and insight with which he writes. He has lived with his subject so long that the problems are immediate to him, and his occasional bold speculations spring from personal convictions and thorough familiarity with the material. Not wholly satisfied with the existing interpretations of his subject, he has chosen to work over, in greater detail than in any previous study, the material relevant to Sverre's career, attempting to uncover the true course of events behind the saga's façade, making use of every scrap of evidence to build up afresh an estimate of the man's character and the effect of his reign on Norway. His subject is complex, but he rarely oversimplifies. At the outset he distinguishes the many factors — the laws of royal inheritance, the structure of Norwegian society, the ecclesiastical policy of Rome — which helped to set the stage for Sverre and a devastating civil war. The involved and wretched story of the seven short-lived kings and pretenders from the death of Sigurð the Crusader in 1130 to the coronation of his grandson Magnus *c.* 1164 also must be told: it stimulated Sverre's own ambition, and his followers, the Birchlegs, were the *wealaf* of these earlier wars. When Sverre came upon the scene, Norway was not crying out for a new ruler. On the contrary, there seemed, for the first time in nearly forty years, good hope of peace under Magnus and his powerful father. As Sverre noted when he first came to Norway, Magnus was popular: *fannz honum þat eitt í, at öll alþýðan væri Magnúsi holl*. Only a man of extraordinary determination and unconventional abilities could win the country against such odds, but, unfortunately for Norway, Sverre was such a man. When he dies in his bed in 1202, though he has founded a strong dynasty, he has (Mr. Gathorne-Hardy maintains) irreparably impoverished the country. In his wars with Magnus "the flower of the Norwegian nobility has been wiped out" and the districts are left without their natural leaders, like lairdless clans. Norway comes under "premature and excessive centralisation," for which the nature of the country made it wholly unsuited, and is administered by a new (and in Mr. Gathorne-Hardy's eyes, despicable) class of crown officials. All this paved the way for Norway's age of decadence, and is the price that she paid for one of her most remarkable kings. Against the flattering assurance

of Munch, that Sverre raised Norway "higher among the states of Europe than could have been expected of a land so sparsely populated and lying so far to the north," we must set Mr. Gathorne-Hardy's last word on Sverre: "It is difficult not to feel regret that he should ever have existed."

Nevertheless, despite his disapproval, Mr. Gathorne-Hardy is, as he admits, fascinated by his hero. He gives the fullest, sharpest, most carefully balanced account of him so far published, scrutinising his behaviour on each important occasion, and bringing to light his strange mixture of courage and funk, casuistry and "humorous candour about himself," military genius and "second sight." He rarely presents Sverre as an heroic figure, even where this might be justified (as at Nordnes, where Sverre leaps up to the high deck, prominent in white cloak and red shield: a picture favoured by other historians), but turns his searchlight upon him hiding in the ship's hold at Hattarhammer or sneaking out of the way of disaster at Fimreite. Though he often treats the saga's version of events ironically, he does Sverre full justice in his fine analysis of the nature of his courage (p. 150) and of his generalship, a conduct in war "based on reason utterly uninhibited by conventional notions of glory or of shame" (pp. 172 f.).

Sverre was undoubtedly an imposter. As Mr. Gathorne-Hardy properly insists, we must dismiss his claim to royal blood and try to reconstruct the state of mind, and the series of events, that led such a complete outsider, a priest from the Faroes, to make a bid for the throne of Norway. His clear head and imaginative agility must early have made him feel he could weave circles round his fellows, and his intense dreams and the "curiously psychic element in his character" must have set him apart, at least in his own mind. Distinguishing between the genuine and the fictitious dreams, Mr. Gathorne-Hardy illustrates well the visionary and romantic quality of Sverre's mind. He emphasises, as other historians have done, the influence upon his imagination of the story of David and Saul, "teaching that a humble youth without the slightest hereditary claim might be God's appointed instrument to supplant an unworthy king." Though Sverre's conviction that he had in him the power to be a king must have been rooted in youthful day-dreams, Mr. Gathorne-Hardy thinks it unlikely that he meant to set himself up as a king's son when he left the Faroes in 1174. Probably he hoped simply for ecclesiastical preferment. Koht accepts Sverre's own story that already, before he left the Faroes, he saw himself as St. Olaf's standard-bearer in a struggle against Magnus and Erling. This.

struggle Koht interprets as a social rather than a religious one, the common people against the tyranny of the lords. Mr. Gathorne-Hardy, however, emphasises the likelihood of a strong clerical element in the opposition to Magnus, based partly on religious feeling, partly on social antagonisms within the Norwegian Church itself, and considers that this situation inspired Sverre to see himself as St. Olaf's champion. Might he not have been influenced, when he first came to Norway, by arguments of the opponents of the Gregorian reforms (fanatically put to him, Mr. Gathorne-Hardy freely speculates, by the priest at Selje, *er honum sagði inniliga þat er hann vildi vita*), and on that account turned to the Birchleg party instead of to Archbishop Eystein, as he had intended, either in the hope of more "lucrative employment" as a young priest (p. 102), or even with the dream of one day leading a party that "stood for the defence and restoration of threatened tradition" (p. 269)? Mr. Gathorne-Hardy is convinced that Sverre himself sought out the Birchlegs before they sought out him, and that, during the years 1174-1176 (about which the saga is silent cf. p. 101), he worked with them, giving them experience of his wisdom, his usefulness as a spy, perhaps even of his generalship (cf. p. 105), and impressing them already with his "semi-prophetic pose." His lively picture (which is pure speculation) of Sverre's behaviour among the Birchlegs in these early days, and the manner in which the idea came to him of presenting himself as "the stranger prince from overseas" makes excellent reading. Though his interpretation of events can never be proved, it rings very true in many places. Sverre never deluded himself: he did not believe he was the son of a king, but maintained the claim as common form, required by his followers, a "*fraus pia*," as Mr. Gathorne-Hardy calls it, and he salved his conscience by building up another claim for himself to believe in: that his appointment came from God.

The years of Sverre's struggle with Magnus and the later quarrel with the Church are described in greatest detail, with vigorous discussion of each uncertainty. The fullness of argument is illuminating, and Mr. Gathorne-Hardy accepts no stale judgements. He comes briskly to the defence of Erling Skakke's good qualities just as honestly as he calls Sverre a "cad" when he thinks him so. Where the saga's record is fuller, in Sverre's later wars, Mr. Gathorne-Hardy makes his own account correspondingly swifter, and characters, such as Nikolas Arneson, remain for the most part merely names. In general he holds the balance well between narrative and discussion, though occasionally the need for condensation makes the going rather tough for a reader less

familiar than himself with the sources and points of dispute (cf. ch. xix). Two aids would have been greatly appreciated, a map of medieval Norway, and a genealogical table of the descendants of Magnus Barefoot; also a bibliography, assembling, and giving the dates, of the works cited. The appendices are valuable, setting out William of Newburgh's and Saxo's accounts of Sverre, and the Papal correspondence. More information on the nature and reliability of the Norse sources would have been welcome. It should have been noted that some details are recorded only in one version of the saga and may not be authentic. Sverre's prayer, *Alma Chorus Domini*, for example, in the battle off Nordnes, just before Magnus miraculously slips in a pool of blood (p. 183), is found only in *Flateyjarbók*, and may well be a later clerical embellishment. Again, it is impossible to read any significance (p. 35) into the fact that the reference to Breakspear's visit in *Fagrskinna* is placed immediately before mention of enmity breaking out between the sons of Harald Gille. The passage is disjointed, and the events can hardly be said to be intimately linked in context.

Mr. Gathorne-Hardy fears that his "reasoned use of imaginative reconstruction" will shock orthodox historians. But it is more likely that they will be thoroughly refreshed by his realism and zest and, not least, by the strong love of Norway that has inspired the book.

URSULA BROWN