

RONALD GEORGE FINCH

Professor Ronald Finch, a Life Member of the Viking Society, died unexpectedly on 26 February 1991 at the age of 65, a few months after retiring from the Chair of German in the University of Glasgow. After dame school and grammar school Ronald Finch had two years as a student in his home-town university, the University College of Wales Aberystwyth, before being called up in 1944 towards the end of World War II. He spent three years in the Army, mostly as a Staff Sergeant Interpreter working with German prisoners-of-war, which considerably extended his German vocabulary. Not a practical man, he used to say himself that he knew the German for all the parts of an engine even though he would not recognise them if he looked under the bonnet. On his demobilisation he returned to U.C.W., and in 1948 he graduated with first-class Honours in German, which had included a course in Old Icelandic inspiringly taught by Gwyn Jones. He was immediately appointed to the lecturing staff of the Department of German in U.C.W. His teaching was chiefly in medieval literature, German language and Swedish. He had begun learning Swedish as an undergraduate, and in 1950 he gained his M.A. degree with a thesis on the foreign element in the Swedish language. In 1954 he was appointed Lecturer in German in Queen's University, Belfast, where he rose to become Professor and Head of Department, and to have responsibility also for Spanish for a period. He gained his PhD in 1963 for a critical edition and translation of *Völsunga saga*. In its published form in Nelson's Icelandic Texts (1965) his treatment of this major text was an outstanding service not only to Scandinavian studies but also to European comparative literature. While in Belfast, and also in Glasgow, to which he moved as Professor in 1974, he published a series of invaluable critical articles on medieval literature, several of them on Old Icelandic topics and two of them in *Saga-Book* (XVI, 315–53, and XVII, 224–60). His priorities, however, were the administration of his departments, and the education and welfare of his students, for which he will be remembered with respect, affection and gratitude by many.

D. S.

JEAN ISOBEL YOUNG

Dr Jean Young, Emeritus Reader of the University of Reading and a loyal member of the Viking Society for some sixty years, died peacefully in her sleep on 25 November 1990. Born in 1903 of Scottish parents, she was educated at no less than seven schools (since her father, a tax inspector, moved frequently) before going to Girton College, Cambridge, where her lifelong devotion to the early languages and cultures of north-west Europe began, especially a love of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse. Her warmth, generosity, zest, infectious enthusiasms and quick sense of humour made her someone who will never be forgotten by her friends, while her bold imagination, passion for the right word and unfailing delight in sharing her understanding with others have given her published work an equally lasting quality. In particular she was an eminently readable translator (from modern Danish and Icelandic as well as Norse), as the success of her version of *The Prose Edda*, reissued a number of times since its first publication in 1954, exemplifies. Indeed, her last work was a translation of *The Fljotsdale saga and the Droplaugarsons*, made jointly with Eleanor Haworth and published in Everyman's Library shortly before she died. Typical of her adventurous spirit, her most significant contributions to fundamental interpretation are the articles she published during the 1930s and early fifties in the tricky field of Norse and Irish cultural exchanges of various kinds, in various conditions and of varying degrees of probability. Her alertness and facility of connection are well illustrated by this short paragraph in Gísli Sigurðsson's survey of research to date, *Gaelic influence in Iceland* (*Studia Islandica* 46, 1988, at p. 84):

In her study of *Rígsþula*, Young drew attention to Heimdallr's popularity in the British Isles as is reflected on sculptured crosses with images identified as Heimdallr. She then proceeded to show affinities between a tale in the *Rennes Dindsenchas* (p. 294–95), explaining the river name Inber n-Ailbine, and references to Heimdallr in *Völuspá in skamma* (st. 7) and in the lost *Heimdallargaldr*, quotations from which are preserved in *Snorra-Edda* (*Gylfaginning*, ch. 15 and *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 16).

But it is not only this 'academic' observation that impresses; she was just as likely to base an independent interpretation of the Exeter Book Old English riddle 8 on her own 'listening to the singing of thrushes and blackbirds during the spring of 1941' (the second spring of the war). Jean was no mean poet either, as is demonstrated by the publication for her eightieth birthday in 1983 of a collection of the mainly occasional poems she had written over some fifty-five years, appropriately entitled collec-

tively *The well of joy*. They express her deep and strong feelings for friends, places and religion with her characteristic linguistic sureness and skill. She was a triumphant person in spite of, or because of, her experience of suffering. Anyone who has known her, as I did as my immediate senior when I was a raw, post-war late-starter in an academic post, will remain permanently indebted to her warm encouragement, unquenchable spirit, shrewdness, fun and sheer flair. How fitting that some of her friends are commemorating her by planting one of her favourite flowering trees outside the Department of English at Reading.

P. A. M. C.

NOTES

GUÐBRANDUR VIGFÚSSON IN OXFORD

BY D. A. H. EVANS

To the pleasing volume of ‘Guðbrandur Vigfússon centenary essays’ which Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn have edited under the cryptic title *Úr Dólum til Dala* (1989) Dr B. S. Benedikz has contributed a lively ‘biographical sketch’. One of his sources is the obituary article on Guðbrandur which Dr Jón Þorkelsson published in *Andvari* 19 (1894), 1–36, with a bibliography (pp. 36–43) of 58 items and 20 obituary notices. The Bodleian Library has an offprint of Jón’s article (still uncut in May 1991) inscribed to Charles Plummer by York Powell, with an accompanying letter from Powell to Plummer, dated from Christ Church on 18 December 1894. On p. 20 of his sketch Dr Benedikz quotes part of Jón’s statement (p. 22) that in 1871 ‘fékk Guðbrandur eitt af collegiis háskólans í Öxnafurðu (Christ Church)’, which he then translates as ‘received one of the colleges of the university’. He calls this a ‘delightful overstatement’, and indeed it does sound on the face of it as though Jón entertained some curious notions of Oxford arrangements; ‘one wonders what Scheving would have said about that’, Dr Benedikz adds, alluding to Guðbrandur’s old teacher at Bessastaðir, Hallgrímur Scheving, a formidable stickler for accuracy.

Jón’s obituary certainly does contain delightful features, not least the appearance of a figure called Jórvíkur-Páll, whose identification I leave to the reader, but on this particular point Dr Benedikz has written with uncharacteristic haste. Jón’s phrase is clearly a variant of the expression *að fá Garð*, which actually occurs earlier in the article (p. 9) where Jón is speaking of Guðbrandur’s matriculation from Bessastaðir in 1849: ‘Sama ár og Guðbrandur útskrifaðist fór hann til Kaupmannahafnar og fékk Garð, og mun hann hafa haft í hyggju að leggja stund á gríska og latínska málfræði’ (*Garður* being of course ‘Regensen’, *Collegium Domus Regiae*, the student hostel in Copenhagen). I cannot find this expression in any published dictionary, but in a letter of 5 July 1991 Gunnlaugur Ingólfsson kindly tells me that he and his colleagues at Orðabók Háskóla Íslands are familiar with *fá Garð* in the sense ‘fá garðsvist (og jafnvel nokkurn frekari styrk að auki)’, though only one instance in their files has come to light, from *Tímarit hins íslenska bókmentafélags* XI (c.1890), 203: ‘skyldu læknaefnin . . . fá þegar Kommunitets-styrk og “Garð”

(Regents)'. Jón's phrase means simply that Guðbrandur was admitted to, became a member of, Christ Church, with, no doubt, common room and dining rights. So it is not Dr Jón but Dr Benedikz on whom, I fancy, the ghost of Hallgrímur Scheving is now bending his chill gaze.

'LÍTIL SKYNSEMI Í SYDNEY?' A CORRECTION

The editors of the *Saga-Book, Notes and reviews*, vol. XXIII, part 2, and Margaret Clunies Ross, author of the article that appeared on pages 73–9, wish to apologise for the uncorrected error that appeared in the title of the article, which reproduced a quotation from Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* as *Mikill* [rather than *Miki*] *skynsemi er at rifja vandliga þat upp*.

REVIEWS

THE BATTLE OF MALDON AD 991. Edited by DONALD SCRAGG. *Basil Blackwell in association with The Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies*. Oxford and Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991. xiv + 306 pp.

The 'AD 991' of its title gives an important clue to the emphasis of this book, which is very much on the event, as opposed to the poem, that has come to be known as 'the Battle of Maldon'. As the editor says in his Introduction (pp. xii–xiv), and as Wendy Collier's Bibliography (pp. 294–301) confirms, 'the poem has attracted a considerable body of literary criticism over the last half-century' (p. xiii). In this collection of commissioned studies, therefore, he has not thought it necessary to include a detailed account of the poem as literature, though Roberta Frank's essay on 'The battle of Maldon and heroic literature' (pp. 196–207; memorable for, among other things, its provocative statement that 'there is something in heroic literature that does not like heroes', p. 203) places the poem in the broad literary context indicated by her title, with reference to heroic traditions as widely separated as the Old Irish and the Japanese. Not that the poem is neglected in the present volume; on the contrary, it is given pride of place in that the first item in the collection, by Scragg himself, is an edition of the poem with a facing line-by-line prose translation (pp. 15–36), preceded by a facsimile of the manuscript in which the poem survives—the eighteenth-century transcript by David Casley, formerly attributed to John Elphinston (pp. 2–14). Nevertheless, for all that this edition has a section on 'style' (pp. 32–34), its final emphasis is on 'the poem as history' (pp. 34–35), and this is in line with the book's stated purpose, i. e. 'to present all the surviving evidence' (p. xiii) for the battle; the poem, in Scragg's view, is a contemporary source (p. 32), since he is not convinced by John McKinnell's suggestion (in *Medium ævum* 44, 1975, pp. 121–36) that the poem's application of the term *eorl* to the English leader Byrhtnoth indicates a date of composition later than Cnut's accession in 1016.

In addition to this contribution by Scragg, the first of the book's four parts (entitled 'Documentary evidence') provides editions and translations of other written accounts of the battle or of Byrhtnoth that may be regarded as sources, together with accompanying facsimiles of accounts from before the Conquest: by Janet Bately in the case of the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* (pp. 37–50), the relevant sections of which date from the first half of the eleventh century; by Michael Lapidge in the case of the Latin *Life of St Oswald* (pp. 51–58), which he believes was composed by Byrhtferth of Ramsey between the years 997 and 1005, and which he sees as a witness to the battle probably independent of the poem, but too imbued with typology to be taken very seriously as a historical source; and by Alan Kennedy in the case of the Winchester, Ely and Ramsey obits of Byrhtnoth (the third of which is of uncertain date, while the first and second date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries respectively), and the twelfth-century Latin accounts in John of Worcester's *Chronicle of chronicles* (formerly attributed to Florence of Worcester); Henry of Huntingdon's *History of the English*; the *Liber Eliensis*; the *Ramsey chronicle*; and the *Historia regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham (pp. 59–78). The sources treated by Kennedy provide in different ways evidence for Byrhtnoth's death on the 10th or 11th of August,

1991, and for his having been a benefactor of the monastic houses of New Minster (at Winchester), Ely (where he was buried) and Ramsey; they tend to confirm the view that Byrhtnoth's defeat at Maldon in 991 was the beginning of the end for the English in their struggle against the Danes, which had previously been relatively successful.

In the second part of the volume (entitled 'The background of the battle') the first two studies are by Simon Keynes (pp. 81–113) and Niels Lund (pp. 114–42), on 'The historical context' and 'The Danish perspective' respectively; both these scholars discuss, among other things, a question likely to be of special interest to readers of *Saga-Book*, the identity of the Viking leaders at Maldon; and both refer in this connection (on pp. 88 and 132) to Janet Bately's study in the first part of the book, from which it emerges (pp. 42–49) that the information in the annal for 993 in the A-manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle*, which appears to connect Óláfr Tryggvason with Maldon and has been thought properly to refer to events of 991, is in fact a conflation of material belonging to more than one year and cannot be taken as reliable evidence that Óláfr was present at the battle. No more reliable in this respect, according to Keynes (pp. 103–04, cf. Lund, p. 132), is the treaty now known as *II Æthelred* between Æthelred and, among other Vikings, Óláfr, which seems to belong to 994 rather than 991. While they both thus emphasize the uncertainty of the evidence, neither Keynes nor Lund wishes to exclude altogether the possibility that Óláfr was at the battle of Maldon, and both of them, in referring (pp. 90, 133) to Æthelred's confirmation of the will of Æthelric of Bocking, in Essex, show the way to an argument—none the less attractive for being based on indirect evidence—that Sveinn tjúguskegg was present at the battle. The conscientious tentativeness of these two historians in seeking to identify individual Vikings at Maldon may be contrasted with the more literary approach—hardly represented in the present volume—of, for example, G. C. Britton, in his 'The characterization of the Vikings in *The battle of Maldon*', *Notes and queries* 210 (1965), 85–87, which depends for its argument on the fact that none of the Vikings is named in the poem as it survives, and which sees the poem as treating the Vikings as animals rather than human beings. Richard Abels, 'English tactics, strategy and military organization' (pp. 143–55) contrasts with Nicholas Brooks' study, later in the book, of 'Weapons and armour' (pp. 208–19) in suggesting that the shields used by Byrhtnoth's men to form the shield-wall at Maldon are more likely to have been of the traditional Germanic round type than of the kite-shaped type depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry (p. 149; cf. p. 215). Mark Blackburn's study of 'Æthelred's coinage and the payment of tribute' (pp. 156–69) draws attention to the relatively intense activity of the Maldon mint in the latter part of the period c.991–97, during which coins of the Crux type were produced, but finds no certain connection between this and the raising of the tributes paid to the Vikings, according to the *Anglo-Saxon chronicle*, in 991 and 994. John Dodgson confirms that the causeway leading to Northey Island from the west bank of the River Blackwater at the head of Southey Creek (near Maldon, in Essex) was an altogether likely location for the site of the battle (pp. 170–79).

The book's third part (entitled 'The significance of the poem') opens with a paper by Kathryn Sutherland on 'Byrhtnoth's eighteenth-century context' (pp. 183–95), in which the author discusses the first printed edition of the poem, by

the Oxford scholar Thomas Hearne (published in 1726 and based on the transcript now attributed to Casley), in the light of Hearne's loyalty to the Stuart as opposed to the Hanoverian dynasty, a preference bound up with Hearne's attachment to 'the legend that Oxford University was a Saxon foundation and King Alfred its benefactor' (p. 187). With the second item in the third part, Roberta Frank's essay, already referred to, one first becomes aware (in reading the book from beginning to end) of a slight breakdown in the volume's connectedness; whereas those contributors who have so far quoted extensively from the poem (Keynes, pp. 90–91; Lund, pp. 130, 132; Sutherland, p. 189) follow the wording of Scragg's translation, Frank seems to use her own (witness, for example, her 'undisgraced', p. 199, for Scragg's 'of unstained reputation', p. 21, in translating part of l. 51 of *Maldon*). This would not matter overmuch if it were not for the fact that Frank is here discussing one of her favourite subjects, namely eagles as birds of battle in Old Norse literature, an interest of hers which the *Saga-Book* has been following keenly since 1986 (see vol. XXII:1, 1986, pp. 79–82; XXII:5, 1988, pp. 287–89; and XXIII:2, 1990, pp. 80–83). Reading of what Frank calls (on p. 201) the *ménage à trois* of wolf, raven and eagle in Old English and Old Norse battle poetry, and turning to Scragg's text and translation to check that all three are in *Maldon*, one finds that wolves (albeit looking suspiciously like Vikings, *Maldon*, l. 96) and ravens (l. 106) are there alright, but that the expected eagle, the *earn æses georn* of l. 107, has become 'the bird of prey eager for carrion' in Scragg's translation, presumably because he regards the phrase as parallel to the noun *hremmas* ('ravens') in the preceding line, and thus not to be taken as referring to a different species of bird. Has Scragg been a little too cautious here as translator of the poem, or momentarily a little too careless as editor of the book? Or a bit of both? In general, it must be said, the book does provide careful pointers, where relevant, from one contribution to another, both in cases of agreement (as with Bately, Keynes and Lund; see, for example, p. 132) and of disagreement (as with Abels and Brooks, see p. 215), and this carefulness must surely be mainly due to the editor. Nicholas Brooks' discussion of 'Weapons and armour', already referred to, deals under appropriate headings with different kinds of weapon mentioned in the poem: bows, spears, swords, shields, helmets and byrnies. Gale Owen-Crocker treats 'Hawks and horse-trappings' as 'insignia of rank' (pp. 220–37), with reference, firstly, to the young nobleman who, near the beginning of the poem in its surviving form, lets a hawk fly from his wrist to a wood (ll. 5–8) and, secondly, to Byrhtnoth's horse-trappings, appropriated after his death not only, as Owen-Crocker believes, by Godric, son of Odda, but also by his brothers Godwine and Godwig, when, as she seems to suggest by her use of the plural 'sons' (p. 229), all three of them mount Byrhtnoth's horse to take refuge from the battle in the wood. This view would surely involve taking the *ær[n]don* of l. 191 of the poem as 'galloped', rather than as 'ran off', as Scragg's translation has it (p. 27). Owen-Crocker argues that the proximity of woodland makes the goshawk the likeliest (in the *Maldon* context) of the various types of bird to which Old English *hafoc* (l. 8) can refer, and concludes by stressing the high value placed on horse-harness in late Anglo-Saxon times. Finally in Part III, Margaret Locherbie-Cameron lists 'The men named in the poem' (pp. 238–49) (apart from Byrhtnoth, to whom, with his family, she devotes a separate chapter in Part IV), indicating under each name what may be deduced

from the poem and from other sources about the bearer of the name as a historical figure. Her general view is that 'the names confirm that the poet was writing fact rather than fiction' (p. 239), not least because he calls some of the English warriors by Scandinavian names (such as *Thurstan* and *Wistan*), which he would have been unlikely to do if the warriors in question had been purely the products of his heroic and patriotic imagination. Under Byrhtwold's name (p. 243) she comments interestingly on the poem's structure and preservation in pointing out that this old retainer's heroic resolve in a context of pessimism about the battle's outcome, occurring as it does near the end of the poem in its surviving form, and contrasting with the optimistic spirit in which the young warrior turns from hawking to the battle near the beginning, may suggest that not much of the poem has been lost at either end.

Reading the first two items in the fourth part (entitled 'Byrhtnoth and Ely'), by Margaret Locherbie-Cameron and Mildred Budny, on 'Byrhtnoth and his family' (pp. 253–62) and 'The Byrhtnoth tapestry or embroidery' (pp. 263–78) respectively, one feels the need for more editorial encouragement of collaboration between contributors than seems to have taken place. The textile in question, which does not survive, is described as a hanging (*cortinam*) in the *Liber Eliensis* (Book II, ch. 63), according to which it was presented by Byrhtnoth's wife Ælfflæd to the abbey church of Ely at the time of Byrhtnoth's death and burial, and depicted his deeds. Also according to the *Liber Eliensis* (Book III, ch. 50) Byrhtnoth's granddaughter, Æthelswyth, was a weaver and embroiderer of vestments. 'It would have been a pleasing coincidence', writes Locherbie-Cameron, 'had she been able to make the tapestry celebrating her grandfather's life which Ælfflæd gave to Ely' (p. 256). These past conditionals seem to exclude the possibility that Æthelswyth was responsible for the textile. Is this on chronological grounds, or does it have to do with the fact, pointed out by Locherbie-Cameron on p. 255, that Æthelswyth's mother Leofflæd, daughter of Byrhtnoth, is not mentioned in the will of Ælfflæd, Byrhtnoth's widow, so that Æthelswyth, though Byrhtnoth's granddaughter, may not have been the granddaughter of Ælfflæd, who donated the textile? If there are good reasons for excluding the attractive possibility that Æthelswyth made the textile, they should have been more clearly stated than they are by Locherbie-Cameron, since the information she gives seems to leave this possibility open, if only just; and particularly since all sorts of possibilities are left open by Budny's article, notably as to what exactly the textile depicted (did its subject-matter include the battle of Maldon, or not?), and as to when, how and by whom it was made. Investigation of this last question is not helped by the fact that, in the Index to E. O. Blake's edition of the *Liber Eliensis* (1962, 441), Æthelswyth (here spelt Æthelswith) is described not as a granddaughter, but as a daughter of Byrhtnoth. Elizabeth Coatsworth's article on 'Byrhtnoth's tomb' (pp. 279–88) aims to trace as far as is now possible the history of the removal from one place to another of Byrhtnoth's remains, which according to the *Liber Eliensis* (Book II, ch. 62) were brought after the battle to the abbey church of Ely by the monks, and buried after the abbot had set a ball of wax in place of the head, which the Vikings had taken. With the help of later sources Coatsworth ventures to follow the remains from their removal in the twelfth century to the north wall of the choir of what by then was Ely cathedral, through their replacement there after another removal in the fourteenth

century, to their further removal, overseen and recorded by the eighteenth-century prebend and antiquary James Bentham, to within the arch over Bishop West's tomb in the south-east corner of the east end of Ely cathedral, possibly their present resting-place. Bentham's information is also used, again with due caution, by Marilyn Deegan and Stanley Rubin in the last article in the book, on 'Byrhtnoth's remains: a reassessment of his stature' (pp. 289–93), in which the authors calculate, on the basis of bone-measurements given by Bentham, that Byrhtnoth, whom the *Liber Eliensis* (Book II, ch. 62) describes as of great physical size, was just over six foot tall—not six foot nine inches, as suggested by Dr Hunter, to whom Bentham refers.

This reviewer has found only a few misprints in the book: 'extent' for 'extend', on p. 81; a blank reference on p. 221 to what should in fact be p. 228; a missing 'c' in 'Scandinavian' on p. 239; the illustrations (as opposed to the letters) (a) and (b) the wrong way round on p. 283; and a superfluous *e* on the end of the word *liv* in the title of Haarder's book, *Det episke liv*, in the Bibliography on p. 298. To Wendy Collier's admirable Bibliography, noted above, and divided into editions, translations and studies, may now be added Gunnar D. Hansson's Swedish translation in his *Slaget vid Maldon och sju elegier. Fornengelska dikter* (1991); the page numbers (96–106) of Roberta Frank's article in the Peter Sawyer *Festschrift (People and places in Northern Europe 500–1600)*, ed. Ian Wood and Niels Lund, (1991), listed in the Bibliography (p. 297) as forthcoming; and Richard North's article, 'Getting to know the general in *The battle of Maldon*', *Medium ævum* 60 (1991), 1–15. One item which seems to have escaped Collier's attention is R. E. Ballard's study, 'The battle of Maldon' in the *British Army review* for August, 1989, pp. 49–51, consisting mainly of a not unsuccessful attempt 'to set the finest and earliest account of an English battle into a rhyme that still rings in the English language' (see Ballard, p. 49; for this reference the reviewer is indebted to Dr Matthew Bennett, of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst). Further relevant publications will no doubt proliferate in the wake of the battle's millennial anniversary; it is evidently planned, for example, to publish the Proceedings of the millennium conference held at Colchester on 5–9 August, 1991 (see Joyce Hill's report on 'The millennium of the battle of Maldon' in *Medieval English studies newsletter* 25 (December, 1991), 11–12); and Battle of Maldon T-shirts and sweatshirts are now available.

Readers who are deterred by the emphasis of this book on matters other than strictly literary ones would do well to ask themselves, as the present reviewer has done while reading it, if they do not read too much literary criticism, and to bear in mind some words of T. S. Eliot (in 'The function of criticism', 1923; here quoted from his *Selected prose*, ed. John Hayward, 1953, p. 19) which are particularly relevant to the book under review: 'any book, any essay, any note in *Notes and Queries*, which produces a fact even of the lowest order about a work of art is a better piece of work than nine-tenths of the most pretentious critical journalism, in journals or in books.'

RORY MCTURK

THE VIKINGS. By ELSE ROESDAHL. Translated by Susan M. Margeson and Kirsten Williams. *Allen Lane The Penguin Press*. London, 1991. xxiv + 323 pp.

The Vikings is the first English edition of Else Roesdahl's *Vikingernes verden*, originally published in Denmark in 1987, and the four-year delay in transmission is perhaps behind some of the shortcomings which are unfortunately apparent in the book. Aimed seemingly at a popular, non-specialised readership, it is a general survey of the field of early medieval Scandinavian studies, covering a wide area both temporally and geographically. A review is perhaps not the place to question the wisdom of such surveys, or to raise the issue of the actual value of studies which try to collect together under one label the experiences and activities of dispersed and not wholly homogeneous peoples. It is certainly much to Dr Roesdahl's credit that she recognises the dangers inherent in making such a study; and, indeed, she opens the book on a note of caution. It is to be regretted that the cautionary note is not everywhere followed through, and this may go part of the way to explaining why *The Vikings* is a rather uneven book.

From the point of view of the popular audience, the book does provide a readable and concise introduction to the so-called Vikings and the world they knew. Divided into clearly labelled sections, the book's presentation of material is attractive, and largely logical (though marred by a total absence of footnotes). The tone throughout is descriptive, rather than discursive, and each topic described is given roughly equal space, with a slight bias towards Denmark over Norway and Sweden, and towards England over Western Europe, the Eastern world and Ireland. Within the genre of popular, portmanteau books, it is an improvement upon other similar works produced in the last decade or so, and goes part of the way towards bridging the gap between the popular conception of Vikings and the academic one. Having said this, however, the book's value as an academic or teaching aid is considerably lower, and in this respect it is a disappointing follow-up to her *Viking Age Denmark* (1982). As is to be expected, Roesdahl's account of the archaeological evidence, both inside and outside Scandinavia, is excellent. She makes complicated material readily and easily accessible; in particular her description of town sites and the evidence of trade networks should be of value to students both of archaeology and of economic history. Similarly, her sections on art history and poetry are clear, concise and helpful, and, like the archaeological sections, form a good basic introduction to these complex subjects. However, the historical sections of the book leave a certain amount to be desired, and their unanalytic, narrative tone serves to let down the high standard of the archaeological sections. Her approach to the written sources lacks rigour; although she is sensibly wary of saga texts, and of later works such as those of Saxo Grammaticus and Dudo of Saint-Quentin, she nevertheless makes use of material from such texts in her historical sections, and the early caveat as to their value is too often forgotten. The lack of footnotes makes it difficult to establish the origin of some of the quotations, and the end-notes provided by the translators are not an adequate substitute. She has a tendency to generalise the contemporary chronicles originating outside Scandinavia, referring to 'The Frankish Annals', 'The Irish Annals', 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', without always specifying which text is intended, which is at best misleading and at worst inaccurate. To give but one illustration, her description

of the 'fifteenth-century Irish Annals [which] contain a reliable version of the original Viking Age annals' (p. 12) presents a number of problems for the text-based historian. Without devoting overmuch space to the complex interrelationships of the various sets of Irish Annals, it should be noted that even for the ninth and tenth centuries it is unsafe to treat their accounts as necessarily being representatives of a common—or even related—exemplar; the position is not that simple. Indeed, it is hard to say what exactly is meant by 'fifteenth-century Irish Annals'; on grounds of manuscript-date, one can only assume that Roesdahl means the Annals of Tigernach, yet this text is lacunose for the years 766–975, which cover much of the 'Viking Age' in Ireland. The most complete account of Viking activity in Ireland is, arguably, that of the Annals of Ulster, which text Roesdahl refers to by name later in her book; the manuscript of this text is, however, largely sixteenth-century.

The internal political history of the Scandinavian countries is a subject much in need of scholarly examination; Roesdahl's book does not help to fill the gap. The issues of multiple kingship, of royal succession, and of the nature of royal power are all overdue for examination, yet *The Vikings* does nothing to correct the assumptions and misapprehensions which are the legacy of the sagas and legendary histories of the later Middle Ages. The contemporary Carolingian chronicles present us with a picture for Denmark of an area fought over by many claimants, and often held by more than one ruler at a time; Roesdahl speaks of a realm unified before 800 AD and sidesteps the problem of multiple kingship entirely. Her account of succession-patterns overlooks the evidence for inheritance not by sons, but by brothers and nephews. Her account of the political history of Norway and of Sweden is similarly oversimplified and too brief. It is apparent that in writing the historical sections of the book she depended largely upon existing secondary studies, and the result is that shortcomings in secondary works available to her are reflected in *The Vikings*. There is no attempt at discussion or analysis of the historical evidence, which contrasts oddly with the archaeological sections. Her narrative descriptions of events are too basic—her account of Western Europe is so simplified as to be barely comprehensible. The description of the inhabitants of ninth-century Dal Riada as 'Scots' may be an infelicity of translation—'Irish' would be more accurate; however the statement regarding tenth-century Ireland that 'only the abbots of Armagh had authority . . . over the entire island' (p. 223) is not only wrong—there is no evidence to suggest that anyone had such wide-reaching authority in Ireland at that time—but it reflects an antiquarian approach to Irish history which belongs to nineteenth- not twentieth-century scholarship.

The Vikings is ultimately a book of variable quality, containing much that is laudable, but juxtaposing it with too much that is inadequate. The use of archaeological material is thorough and illuminating; it is greatly to be regretted that the handling of historical evidence is so weak. This more than anything perhaps reflects the dangers inherent in continuing to treat the peoples of medieval Scandinavia as one group who can be discussed under the common name of Viking.

K. L. MAUND

TOWNS IN THE VIKING AGE. By HELEN CLARKE and BJÖRN AMBROSIANI. *Leicester University Press*. Leicester and London, 1991. xii + 207 pp.

As the authors rightly point out in their introduction to this long-awaited volume, despite a growing interest in all things Viking over the last couple of decades there has been a marked lack of general publications dealing with urbanisation in the early medieval period. Although we have seen numerous site-specific studies, the only synthetic works have resulted from conferences, and the edited proceedings have been almost entirely Anglo-centric (the principal exception being Clarke and Simms's *Comparative history of urban origins in non-Roman Europe*, 1985). As the first general survey covering the whole of Europe (east and west) and Scandinavia, and conceived as a consistent thesis as opposed to an edited volume, *Towns in the Viking Age* may be regarded as having immediately occupied a unique position in Viking studies. As such, the authors' predicament is a precarious one: while avoiding the wilder shores of controversy inappropriate to a general undergraduate introduction to the subject, it is still necessary to inject fresh life into data which have been recycled many times before (Kaupang, Hedeby, York, etc.). For the most part Helen Clarke and Björn Ambrosiani have succeeded in achieving this balance, and if the result occasionally seems a touch bland, this is more a product of the format of such a synthesis rather than any fault of its authors.

The text is organised in a straightforward fashion, divided into eight chapters set out along basic chronological, geographical or thematic lines, each of which can be read as a more or less discrete essay and summary. A scene-setting introduction on the context of Viking period studies, urban archaeology and terminology (ch. 1) is followed by discussions of north-west European towns to the end of the seventh century (ch. 2) and from the eighth to ninth centuries (ch. 3), towns in Scandinavia (ch. 4), the Vikings in Britain (ch. 5), towns in the Slavonic-Baltic area (ch. 6), urban physical structure and economy (ch. 7), and a concluding review of research problems and agendas (ch. 8). Referencing is by footnotes collected at the end of the book, and the volume concludes with an extensive bibliography. Although the print is small, the text is clearly laid out and the book is printed on good quality paper. The chapters on north-west European towns up to the ninth century give a traditionally-framed review of the familiar material, including a well-referenced, though brief, summary of early Continental towns. There is a sensible caution in the use of the word *wic* in a purely urban context, and some well-aimed criticism (for example, of the rather blinkered interpretation of the Northampton 'palaces'). This pattern is repeated in the succeeding chapters on Scandinavia and Britain, with incisive interpretations of environmental influences on urban settlements, and good general coverage of the main sites without undue emphasis on the 'famous names'. A particular bonus is the inclusion of the most recent material and discoveries, such as the Trelleborg-type enclosure found at the southern Swedish site of the same name in 1989, and the new proto-urban centre excavated at Fröjel on Gotland. Chapters 2–5 suffer slightly from an unfortunate concentration on England and Sweden—not surprising considering the authors' backgrounds—but this does not unduly detract from the overall integrity of the arguments, though some issues are somewhat simplified. There is little discussion, for example, of what the Five Boroughs actually

are in economic and administrative terms, and the debate as to the direction of influence in urban development (from Britain to Scandinavia or vice versa) is side-stepped. Similarly, one or two rather odd interpretations creep in, as when the back yards of the Coppergate tenements are described as working areas for craft activity when the artefact scatters there are clearly the result of rubbish dumping (*Jórvík* is also strangely spelt *Jorvic* on p. 92); such glitches are, however, inevitable in a survey on this scale. Chapter 6, on eastern Europe and Russia, is particularly important as it presents the material from a large number of recently excavated Slavonic and Baltic towns for the first time in English, together with an excellent list of basic references. For many people, the summaries of towns such as Wolin, Menzlin and Kołobrzeg will in themselves justify purchase of the book. There has obviously been a clear division of the volume into two sections, chapters 2–6 presenting the data, and chapter 7 (on ‘physical structure and economy’) discussing the issues they raise. It is in this chapter that the two major faults of the book lie. The first of these rests with the choice of illustrative material (more on the quality of the figures below). Almost every town described in the regional chapters is illustrated by a topographical map of the site in its environmental context, but *none* of them has an excavation plan of the settlement itself, or of individual structures. This might be expected to be remedied in chapter 7, perhaps by a separate discussion of town planning and building design, but only Hedeby is treated in this way. The implications of this omission are wide-ranging: the book cannot possibly be used in isolation as a standard work of reference because other publications will always be needed to provide the detailed plans required. A slight shift in illustrative emphasis could easily have overcome this problem. The second difficulty lies in the scope of the debate which the authors have chosen to outline to their readers. Chapter 7 presents excellent summaries of town–hinterland communications and the physical aspects of trade routes and supply (using the latest data from waterfront excavations), and includes interesting ideas on the nature of urban institutions, town defences and the interpretation of urban cemeteries. However, although some of this material is skilfully linked to the wider issues of the roots of Viking expansion and the structure of Scandinavian society, there is a gap at the heart of these arguments. At no point do the authors mention the work on urban origins, gateway communities, peer–polity interaction and core–periphery exchange begun by Richard Hodges in the early 1980s, which has attracted much subsequent research into its orbit and been taken up by large numbers of medieval archaeologists. Whether or not one agrees with Hodges’s controversial ideas, the omission from the bibliography of his *Dark Age economics* (1982) and related papers, and Klavs Randsborg’s *The Viking Age in Denmark* (1980) is quite staggering. This omission is not enough to invalidate the volume or its contribution to Viking scholarship, but it introduces an unnecessary bias into the material presented. *Towns in the Viking Age* concludes with a well-reasoned suggested agenda for future research and some firm, controversial statements on the process of urban development in early medieval Europe.

A final word must be said on another aspect of the problematical illustrations mentioned above. While the writing and production of the text can be judged elegantly clear and incisive, regrettably the same cannot be said of the figures. In general, the line drawings are poorly executed and obscure, the plates so badly

reproduced as to be almost opaque, and the editing of figures reprinted from other publications notable by its absence. It is sad when such a broad generalisation actually *is* applicable to the whole book, and doubly surprising when one considers that a decision has obviously been made to produce a well-illustrated volume (there are 95 figures and photographs). Each section begins with a map showing the location of places mentioned in the text, with further plans of individual towns, artefact drawings and photographs as appropriate. None of the maps exhibits any standardisation of symbols or conventions, apparently being reproduced directly from their original publications, sometimes with a key that is quite irrelevant (this is seen particularly clearly in fig. 5.1, showing Anglo-Scandinavian York, where the accompanying caption actually tells the reader to disregard the site numbers because they refer to the text of Moulden and Tweddle's volume in the *Archaeology of York* series). The exception to this is the set of town plans and area maps specially commissioned for the book. Although these are most welcome in theory, being in many cases the only illustrations of these sites in an English-language publication, they are in practice very difficult to use. The problem stems from the lack of any distinction, either in tone or symbol, between areas of sea and land. When mapping places with heavily indented coastlines or chains of islands, this can be unbearably frustrating; thus in fig. 6.2 the island of Rügen is shown as a writhing black line on a blank white background, with 'The Baltic' written helpfully to one side, making the differentiation of sea, coastal islets, inland lakes and inlets almost impossible. Similarly in fig. 7.3, the portage route at Södertälje is drawn using exactly the same type of line as the coast (again, black against white sea and white land). Poor quality reproduction has effectively removed the modern streets from the map of Dublin (fig. 5.4), and the walls of the Hedeby house have disappeared (fig. 7.13). Nor do photographs escape: the antler combs of fig. 7.22b have vanished into the fog, and the Birka hoard (fig. 7.27) appears to have been photographed at night, to choose only the most obvious examples. In a class of their own are a (thankfully small) number of drawings illustrating building construction techniques (figs. 7.9 and 7.11 a and b). These are so bad as to resemble the sort of scribbles one makes on the backs of envelopes; they should certainly never have been published in a scholarly textbook. Given that the text itself is excellent and a credit to its authors, such quibbles *should* be minor (and are, in any case, probably not the responsibility of the authors). However, the numerous illustrations may well have contributed to what will be the first thing most readers will notice about the book—its cost. Leicester University Press have priced the volume at an extraordinary £41.50, thus effectively ruling out its purchase by the very student readership that it serves so well. This is a good book, and one which amply fills a long-vacant gap in Viking studies. Let us hope that it gets the early paperback edition, and revised illustrations, that it deserves.

NEIL S. PRICE

SOCIAL APPROACHES TO VIKING STUDIES. Edited by ROSS SAMSON. *Cruithne Press*. Glasgow, 1991. xiv + 240 pp.

The papers contained in this volume were initially presented at a conference held in Glasgow in September 1988, and the relatively speedy publication of the papers is to be applauded. The presentation of the volume is of a high standard and it is certainly priced competitively. It is hoped that this new publisher, Cruithne Press, is able to continue this high standard. The range of papers presented is great, as would be anticipated from the generalised title of the volume, and there are several fascinating contributions. There are five main sections, 'Literacy', 'Gender and sexual relations', 'Exchange and society', 'Political and social power' and 'Ancient ethnicity and modern nationalism'. Within each, there is a variety of approaches, ranging through social anthropological, historical and archaeological. Inevitably, this variety means that for individual readers some parts of the volume are more approachable than others. There is, what has now unfortunately become commonplace, the proverbial tub-thumping concerning the perceived inability of medieval scholars to utilise 'modern, multi-disciplinary approaches', but this is not entirely justified; it is a relief to be able to read a coherent presentation of factual information alongside more generalised critiques. The papers present several interesting approaches, although some are extremely difficult to read. Common themes of social structure and gift exchange echo throughout the volume; virtually everyone manages to extract something from a saga source, and not always in an uncritical manner. However, this is complemented usually by the presentation of new work and thoughts on old topics and certainly gives cause for rethinking many traditional opinions. I presume this is the aim of the volume, and in this it is successful.

The role of women in the Viking period is dealt with in the papers on 'Gender and sexual relations', and I have to confess that to me these are the strength of the book. Torben Vestergaard and Margaret Clunies Ross take Scandinavian mythology and sagas as inspiration for their studies, Anne-Sofie Gräslund, Liv Helga Dommasnes and Anne Stalsberg concentrate on archaeological evidence to consider such major developments as the acceptance of Christianity and the power base provided by women of the period, particularly in trade. These papers are complementary and provide much in the way of stimulus for further work. In the 'Exchange and society' section again there are stimulating pieces, although Samson's confidence that his arguments 'explain the phenomenon of hoarding' may bring a smile to the faces of those who have worked on this problem in recent decades. However, his paper does have much to offer and one feels that perhaps he ought not to have exercised his editor's prerogative quite so freely for this is the second—and by far the stronger—paper he contributes to this section. Märit Gaimster's paper provides much valuable information, building on the work already published by her as Thurborg. The 'Political and social power' section includes two papers of more conventional historical approach, one on slavery and a fascinating paper on witches by Gísli Pálsson. It is the final section in the volume which draws on the much wider and crucial context of the Vikings, by examining Saami evidence (Inger Zachrisson), Russia (Thomas Noonan) and North America (Birgitta Wallace). This wider framework is welcome, including as it does information not always readily available in English. Noonan's plea that

the end of single-person study of the Viking period should be giving way to cooperative multi-disciplinary studies comes a little late however; this approach has been well established in the last decade, particularly in the study of the Viking expansion through the North Atlantic regions.

This is a valuable contribution to Viking studies, enabling new approaches to be presented by several up-and-coming scholars, although there are some established names represented. It is well edited by Samson and has few typographical errors (although see pp. 60–61, captions to Figs 1 and 2). Perhaps a little more illustrative material might have been incorporated. I end with a comment on the Introduction: this is extremely funny, but not appropriate to this volume. Read this last, and preferably somewhere where you can laugh out loud, i. e. not in a University library.

COLLEEN BATEY

NÄR SVERIGE BLEV SVERIGE. By PETER SAWYER. Translated and revised by Birgit Sawyer. *Viktoria Bokförlag*. Alingsås, 1991. vi + 106 pp.

The most recent in the series of short monographs published by the Sawyers' Viktoria Bokförlag is a translation into Swedish and revision of Peter Sawyer's work *The making of Sweden* published in English two years earlier. The principal difference in contents between the two books is that the more recent version includes an appendix of modest length (about 4,000 words) by Birgit Sawyer on rune-stones as a historical source. This too represents a modification of the position she proposed in her earlier work in the same series, *Property and inheritance in Viking Scandinavia: the runic evidence* (1988; review by the present reviewer in *Saga-Book XXII*:7, pp. 470–73), an essay which had attracted considerable interest and criticism. The declared purpose of this series of monographs is to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas concerning research into the Middle Ages, and the background of the current book illustrates in what way the series is playing a role in contributing to debate and to the refinement of ideas.

The current study is presented in a very concise manner. The 'Sweden becoming Sweden' of its title means the process of unification of Götaland and the kingdom of the Svear in the Mälars region (which I shall call 'Sveariket') into a single kingdom, and the focus of the book lies on the late Viking Period and the early Middle Ages; above all on events of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. At the heart of Peter Sawyer's chosen approach lies the proposition that the history of Swedish kingship in this period can be elucidated by a more broadly based and more clearly documented model of the development of kingship in medieval Europe; he thus offers a formula that is meant to be able to make sense of the fragmentary surviving evidence for Sweden and to fill in the gaps. Surprisingly, though, this formula is never clearly set out in abstract terms, at least not fully so; rather it is accumulated, element by element, alongside the 'facts' of Swedish history, as we may think we know or can infer them, examined in the light of comparable situations elsewhere in Europe (mostly in Denmark and Norway, or the British Isles), case by case. This method is appropriate in respect of one line

of the author's argument, which is to restrict any sense of a historically inevitable process of evolution taking place in Sweden and conversely to emphasize the role played by individuals, the decisiveness of their acts and their policies. Consequently, the title of the Swedish version of the study is particularly precise: this is a study of *when* Sweden became Sweden, rather than *why* Sweden became Sweden. But despite this avoidance of abstract generalization, the major factors in the process as seen by Peter Sawyer can be extracted and enumerated. I would summarize his underlying thesis as being that the unification of Götaland and Sveariket was driven by external pressures in the form of models of overlordship and the spread of Christianity, which were responded to by ambitious rulers within the territory, whose most successful stratagem for consolidating power seems to have been alliance by marriage. Peter Sawyer presents an informative picture of the separation of and the cultural differences between Götaland and Sveariket down to the twelfth century. In contrast to the simple common view of a powerful Sveariket eventually annexing a somnolent southern neighbour, he presents a case for the impulses towards unification as a kingdom running largely from the south-west (from Denmark and Götaland) into Sveariket.

Although there is a determined effort on Peter Sawyer's part to recognize the contribution that archaeology can make and to take account of the evidence this source affords—mostly, for him, in the form of rune-stones and coins, archaeological material that carries written texts—his section of the book remains very much a historian's work. The second chapter of the book is a straightforward and acutely critical review of the historical sources, including coins. The third chapter is a sketch of Sveariket, with a useful though very brief observation of the existence of economic central places at Uppsala, Birka and Västerås, and references to Åke Hyenstrand's and Björn Ambrosiani's researches into the social and territorial organization that appears to have accompanied these. Chapter 4 offers a synopsis of what is known and what can be inferred about a series of kings of the Svear from Olof Skötkonung (d. 1022) to Knut Eriksson (d. 1195 or 1196). The final two chapters are called 'New perspectives' and 'The unification of the kingdom', and this is where Peter Sawyer interprets the history of kingship in central Sweden in this period in terms of the model sketched above. It is in chapter 6 that I find the most stimulating engagement with material of broader geographical and methodological significance: an attractive analysis of Canute's power in Sweden, using the occurrence of the terms *þægn* and *drængr* on rune-stones; a consideration of Danish interests in Sweden generally, and of the relevance of Swedish involvement in Finland; and finally a reasoned statement of what perhaps one should call the historical good sense of *Ynglingasaga*, which also, of course, is a historical study looking at Sweden in a perspective that recognizes the importance of relationships with the south-west. Birgit Sawyer's essay on the rune-stones also shows a move away from inductive analysis of the inscriptions towards a larger historical model. Now, as a 'hypothesis', the inscriptions are interpreted as a *krissyptom* (a 'symptom of crisis')—a grossly over-worked concept in cultural history generally, though that does not necessarily mean that Birgit Sawyer is wrong to use it—reflecting in various ways the conjoint pressures for a change of faith and a change of political system in the early Middle Ages in Sweden.

As has briefly been noted, Peter Sawyer appeals to external models in an attempt to reconstruct what was going on at certain dates in Sweden rather than making more general statements about the evolution of Germanic kingship, which, after all, if his analogies hold, he could as well generate by consideration of the analogues as by duplicating or reduplicating the results by applying them to Sweden. But it is precisely where he is setting out the more general model, in his first chapter, that he becomes most controversial, and simplifies matters rather too much in order to reduce events in Scandinavia to a basic formula. Is it really simply a fact that needs only to be stated that Danish kings dominated Scandinavia for a majority of the period 800–1040? (So I interpret ‘under större delar av perioden’: if the phrase is used colloquially, i. e. meaning ‘for considerable stretches in this period’, it should not have been so used in this context.) Can we accept that the exceptional political development of Iceland in the period covered by the book was due to Iceland being quite free of external pressure? The Icelandic sources would seem rather to show that Icelandic difference and independence was maintained for centuries despite considerable external pressure to fall in with the mainland Scandinavian system. Turning to Norway, the limitations of a historical approach and a concentration on the Viking Period and the two or three centuries following become more apparent. A speculative suggestion that political organization in Vestfold in the early ninth century was one of territorially overlapping chiefdoms within an area whose unity resided in the shared identity of the native inhabitants as a particular *folk* is based on a few words in *Annales Regni Francorum s.a.* 813, without any reference to—for instance—the work of Bjørn Myhre in identifying centralized chiefdom territories in southern Norway from as early as the fourth to sixth centuries (see, for instance, his ‘Chieftains’ graves and chiefdom territories in South Norway in the Migration Period’, *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 6, 1987, pp. 169–87). Of course the situation could have developed with an erosion of central power between the Migration Period and the Viking Age—results from the current Borre project, coupled with a reassessment of the great Vestfold ship graves of the early Viking Period, it is to be hoped, will throw more light on this—but once again here we see the old failure of communication between archaeologist and historian rearing its head. It is not, of course, only historians who neglect the other side; it is reasonable enough, for instance, to cite the lack of support from historical sources as a counter-argument to a current enthusiasm for identifying a powerful and centralized Danish kingdom that included Jutland as being in place from at least the earlier eighth century, an enthusiasm which relies on a combination of the predictions of a very general model of state-formation and dendrochronological dates for the construction of part of the Danevirke in southern Jutland, near Hedeby, and the Kanhave canal on Samsø, off the east coast of Jutland (cf. Lotte Hedeager, forthcoming, *Iron-Age societies: from tribe to state in Northern Europe 500 BC to AD 700*, Blackwell: Social archaeology, and Ulf Näsman, 1991, ‘The Germanic Iron Age and Viking Age in Danish archaeology. A survey of the literature 1976–1986’, *Journal of Danish archaeology* 8 (for 1989), pp. 159–87). Curiously, Peter Sawyer here follows—or even outbids—the historical reconstructions of current archaeological fashion by telling us that in Ohthere’s time, ‘as in the sixth century, the political centre of the Danes lay in

Jutland'. And to make a final point (more could be raised from this first chapter) it is an extraordinarily mundane and reductive reading of skaldic verses, including *Vellekla*, and of ideology in Norway towards the end of the Viking Period, to state that the title *jarl*, as opposed to *konungr*, was used by the Hlaðajarlar simply because they recognized Danish 'kings' as overlords.

For a specialist in other periods than that which is central in this monograph, and in the other parts of Scandinavia that are cited as models, there is a strong sense that the wider perspective has been poorly represented if not distorted. The strange thing is that since this is a model used as an image-enhancer for early Swedish history, it does not have to be entirely true and accurate to be methodologically valid, only to be plausible. As a general and abstract historical statement of the processes of the development of kingship in Scandinavia, the essence of the model is acceptable, even if the factual details of what was happening were probably much more complicated. And the point remains that this study is a clear, pointed, original and useful monograph on its central topic: Swedish kings and kingship in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Scandinavian prehistorians (the Viking Period is a twilight zone between prehistory and history in the Scandinavian scheme) are taking to historicism in the reconstruction of Scandinavian Iron-Age social structures and developments, and need to be controlled by what written sources can tell us. The Sawyers' efforts at integrating archaeology and history should be emulated. The Norwegian Borre project has been mentioned; Sigtuna, the site of very recent and unexpectedly fruitful and even puzzling excavations is teasingly introduced in the last paragraph of Birgit Sawyer's appendix. This little book may before long be drowned in a deluge of reassessments of its subject-matter, but it unquestionably offers a timely contribution to a debate that will be the better conducted the wider its range, and the broader the participation in it, as long as real efforts are made to reach cross-disciplinary understanding and integration.

JOHN HINES

IL TEMA DEL VIAGGIO NELLE ISCRIZIONI RUNICHE. By CARLA CUCINA. *Studi e ricerche di linguistica e filologia*, 2. Gianni Luculano Editore. Pavia, 1989. x + 796 pp. + 42 plates.

In her study of the theme of sea-travel in the runic inscriptions of chiefly Viking-Age Scandinavia, Carla Cucina takes primarily a literary approach, although she also uses historical, archaeological, linguistic and iconographic evidence. After analysing over 260 stones mentioning, or simply implying, sea-travel, she concludes that this theme is above all seen as 'the desire and motive for glory for oneself and for one's relations, the model image of a world that looks towards the outside, that does not fear adventure or—as in the case of the archetypal hero of Germanic tradition—death' (p. 2, my translation). *La gloria* looms large in Cucina's exposition of these inscriptions.

The book is split into four parts. The first (pp. 5–26) discusses two pre-Viking-Age inscriptions: those of Kårstad and Schretzheim. The guts of the book is however the second part (pp. 27–486), examining Viking-Age and early

mediaeval inscriptions. Sea-travel is broken down into three main types: the journey planned; that begun; and that completed. Each of these three is then split into headings and sub-headings. 'The journey begun', for example, is first discussed under the heading 'Life lost in the course of the journey', and then under six sub-headings such as '(Life lost) at a stopping place' or '(Life lost) in a fight'.

The third part (pp. 487–542) examines the language of the inscriptions, in particular the metres used in poetical inscriptions. Part four looks at the iconography used on certain stones (pp. 543–62), concentrating on representations of ships and horse-riders. In an appendix Cucina lists all the inscriptions cited in the first two parts, laying them out with transliteration, standardized Old Norse version and modern Italian translation, followed by comments on difficulties of interpretation (pp. 569–740). Unfortunately this entails a fair amount of repetition, since most inscriptions are discussed in some detail in the main text. There is also an English translation of the book's conclusions on pp. 741–44.

Cucina's aim is to avoid what she sees as the usual preoccupation with runic inscriptions as historical sources above all else. She prefers to see them as literary texts, celebrating essentially heroic ideals. Her conclusion is that Viking-Age runic inscriptions glorify sea-travel and display the ideals of Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon heroic literatures, which are characterized as the search for gold (for oneself or for one's heirs); family pride; heroism that scorns the dangers of the deep and aspires to a death in battle; and loyalty to one's leader, friends and allies (cf. p. 565). In many instances Cucina is on fairly sure ground, such as when discussing inscriptions raised for those who died in battle, where some notion of glory must be assumed. A good example is Sö 338 (pp. 180–84), commemorating Þorstæinn, who died fighting in Russia, or Sö 179 (pp. 215–18), celebrating those who fed the eagle in the east. The Eddic and scaldic parallels cited for eagle-feeding are certainly apt, but as often as not Cucina seems to make too much out of her material.

Typical of Cucina's approach is her discussion of U 539, raised by the surviving brothers of one Svæinn, who died in Jutland on his way to England. Cucina argues that 'young' Svæinn had gone to Jutland to join a military expedition to England, and was probably headed for one of the fortified camps in the area, such as Fyrkat. But Svæinn died before he could sail and the sole glory left to him is that of the rune-stone, glory springing from a desire for adventure, thwarted in this case but nonetheless worthy of celebration in heroic culture (pp. 30–36). Obvious objections can be raised. Why is Svæinn necessarily young? Could he not have been a merchant? Was glory of the literary-heroic kind the real motive for raising the stone? Cucina seems not to consider that such stones as U 539 were raised for more practical purposes, perhaps as notification of death for legal reasons (e. g. inheritance). The inscription also ends with a prayer to God and Mary to have more mercy on Svæinn's soul than he deserved. The tone is redolent of humility rather than glory. Another example of this incautious extrapolation is the discussion of U 455 (pp. 58–59). The inscription says simply that Ingifastr raised the stone for his mother and father, who both drowned. Cucina rightly says that we do not know where they drowned, or what the object of their journey was—whether for trade or even pilgrimage. Yet she goes on to talk of the 'glory' that Ingifastr brings to his parents' reputation by commissioning so well-executed an inscription. The upward direction of the inscription's text

and decoration, even the shape of the very stone, lifts the memorial, Cucina argues, towards ‘the higher regions of glory after death, those regions to which both the Germanic hero and the Christian in their different ways aspire’ (p. 59, my translation). As noted above, Ingifastr could have had more mundane intentions, touching inheritance for example, especially as there would have been no bodies and so no burial to make transfer of ownership clear.

On the positive side, Cucina’s use of the physical positioning of text and decoration on certain rune-stones to shed light on the content of inscriptions is always interesting. On pp. 344–48, for instance, she discusses Sö 164, raised for Guðmarr, who died in the west. A cross and ship adorn the stone. Cucina first discusses the part of the inscription in *fornyrðislag* (Guðmarr *Stoð drængila i stafn skipi / Liggr vestarla of hulinn sar do*) purely from a literary angle. She notes how each part of the second line contrasts with the first: Guðmarr once stood, now he lies (buried); the ship is exchanged for the grave. More striking, to Cucina’s mind, is the arrangement of text and decoration on the stone. While noting that in most cases the two elements have little to do with each other, she argues that here the ship, with its mast blossoming into a cross, somehow combines the Christian notion of the *peregrinatio* with pre-existing Norse ideas linking ships and death (cf. Naglfar). The Christian idea is accepted, Cucina argues, because it struck a chord with ancient Norse belief. Thus Guðmarr continues to sail, indulging his native desire for sea-travel, but now under the eternal protection of the cross. Similar discussions can be found throughout the book (e. g. pp. 140–41, 296–98).

The overall impression of this book is of material being stretched to fit the theory. The author has decided that if sea-travel is undertaken it necessarily implies heroic ideals such as honour and glory. In many instances, however, one surely has to admit that the inscriptions are too laconic for us to know with certainty what inspired them, apart from the obvious wish to notify a death. No one can doubt Carla Cucina’s enthusiasm for her subject, but a dose of caution might not have come amiss.

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON

ALTNORDISCHE KOSMOGRAPHIE. STUDIEN UND QUELLEN ZU WELTBILD UND WELTBESCHREIBUNG IN NORWEGEN UND ISLAND VOM 12. BIS ZUM 14. JAHRHUNDERT. By RUDOLF SIMEK. *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, 4. Walter de Gruyter. Berlin, 1990. 643 pp.

This is a massive and ambitious book. It examines most of the extant writings in Old Norse that contain descriptions of the physical world from a cosmographical, geographical or ethnographical point of view in relation to their sources in order to assess the extent of knowledge in medieval Iceland and Norway of the medieval Latin tradition of cosmography. Some texts are by design excluded, though one might have preferred that they had not been; for instance the geographical passages in *Historia Norwegiæ* (only referred to on p. 324 n.), the descriptions to be found in the Vinland sagas and some Family Sagas, and the cosmology of the Eddas and of the heathen period generally, though the prologue

to *Snorra Edda* and the geographical introduction to *Heimskringla* are included. Besides considering treatises and encyclopaedic writings that include descriptions of the world, the author also examines some of the narrative works that seem to contain passages derived from them. The conclusion is that all these texts are in the tradition of medieval Latin encyclopaedic writings going back to classical origins, though specific Latin sources are rarely identifiable (much of the material is ultimately derived from well-known Latin writers both of the early Middle Ages and of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, such as Bede, Isidore, Honorius Augustodunensis; a previously unidentified source who appears quite frequently is Lambertus Audomarensis, c. ll 20). They are eclectic and compilatory and treat their originals with freedom. Even taking into account the possibility that texts either in Latin or Icelandic have been lost, the variety of the extant texts indicates that a lot of activity in translating, copying and compiling cosmography and geography took place in Iceland in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, though while Icelandic writers seem quite up to date in continental encyclopaedic writings until the fourteenth century, no new material of this kind seems to have reached Iceland in later centuries. It seems that a variety of Latin cosmographical texts were known in Iceland, though of course once the material was available in the vernacular, the appearance of such material in a Norse text does not necessarily mean that the author had access to the Latin originals. Indeed some geographical descriptions, like perhaps that in the prologue to *Snorra Edda*, may be derived from a map or diagram of the world rather than from an ordinary verbal text. Others may be based on oral accounts of the contents of Latin manuscripts, or, of course, on florilegia. In fact the lack of close correspondence between the vernacular cosmographical writings and those in Latin suggests that few Icelandic and Norwegian writers in the Middle Ages had direct access to Latin books.

The study is avowedly not diachronic, that is, it does not attempt to trace changes in the world-picture of Icelanders and Norwegians in the Middle Ages, though the discussion of the history of the manuscripts and the source-criticism implies some alteration of that picture from the time before Latin texts became available until the time of the fullest development of Norse encyclopaedic writings. In this the book is a great contrast to Kirsten Hastrup's *Culture and history in medieval Iceland* (1985), which is much concerned to trace changes in the Icelanders' world-picture from heathen times to the time after the fall of the Republic. There is the same implicit problem with both studies, however, as to how far the sources chosen for examination actually reflect the world view of ordinary Icelanders in the Middle Ages, and to what extent they reveal only the attitudes of a select literary minority; indeed it is difficult to know whether the texts represent 'beliefs' about the real world at all, since they may be just formal reproductions of school learning without necessarily having been adopted even by the compilers of the manuscripts. Neither book really addresses the question of whether it is proper to assume the existence of a single coherent world view attributable to the populations of Iceland and Norway in the Middle Ages at all. Scribes were after all still copying pre-Christian texts in the late Middle Ages as well as texts derived from medieval Latin sources. It is interesting that almost the only narrative texts that show clear evidence of being influenced by the geographical and cosmographical treatises are late *fornaldarsögur* and romances.

The author's treatment of the relationships of the various texts he discusses is detailed, and contains lengthy quotations, usually with translations and summaries. These discussions and comparisons precede the presentation of the texts themselves, and tend to be rather laborious and indeed repetitive, while there is in fact no line-by-line commentary on the actual texts, and there are some surprising omissions. The account of the descriptions of the division of the world after the Flood (pp. 222–28) lacks any reference to the passage in the version of the Prologue to *Snorra Edda* in Codex Wormianus that deals with this topic. The quotations from cosmographical writings in the discussions are difficult to identify and locate because they are not accompanied by references, and the lack of an index (other than one of ancient authors and texts) makes the book very difficult to use (there is an index of manuscripts, but without page references, so that it is virtually useless). The bibliography of primary sources does not even include *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla*, though these are among the texts discussed (in the bibliographical details of *Heimskringla* on p. 426 the dates of Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's edition are given incorrectly).

But it is in the editing of the Icelandic texts themselves and the translations of them that the real limitations of the book lie. The author says he has re-edited most of these texts from the manuscripts with the exception of the extracts from *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla* (in the case of *Snorra Edda* the extract is inexcusably taken from Finnur Jónsson's edition of 1900, which is far from being reliable, and the list of manuscripts includes Finnur's (unpublished) transcription of Codex Trajectinus but not Codex Trajectinus itself). Some of the texts reproduced have not been edited before, it is claimed, and unfortunately the author reveals that he is not competent to undertake this kind of work. There are numerous examples of expansions of manuscript contractions that betray a totally inadequate grasp of Icelandic grammar, orthography and palaeography; for instance: 'sua segir ymago mundi at heimsinn se uaxinn sem egg . . . sua er elldin umhuerfum heiminn . . . id huita eggri er' (p. 397); 'skvrnill [MS skvrml] er vm egg . . . a notutenne (the MS has 'notvtenne' with 'v' subpuncted) . . . yfir irdvni (MS yfer íorrdvne)' (pp. 397–8); 'þau bigdi borgina salfin er seirnameir var kaulud Irlin . . . Iparsta nafn og hofdingskapir' (translated 'die erbauten sich selbst die Stadt, die seither Irlin heißt . . . von höchstem Namen und Ansehen', p. 463); 'Austur jardtriknir' (translated 'Der Osten der Erde', p. 501); 'af odri tveim þridiungum . . . byrgdr aptir' (pp. 334–5); 'gogg sonr iaphets noa sonr . . . stendr fiallz þat . . . kyn kams noa sonr . . . til merks huer hann kom framaz . . . þar standa þui em . . . orkneyar er bygdar xxv' (p. 446); 'af Drottingu eim . . . J þeim partr heims . . . þangad má eingum komast . . . engi hagl . . . Gnorki granda Angur nie elli . . . sem vmhuerfis gangur . . . aunnur ainm . . . hann hafdi drepid sinum brodrum . . . Þar Heitir rijkr Media . . . J þessu erir babilon, Caldea . . . af sialfan Gudi . . . postolur paule . . . annarr hlutir gangur' (pp. 474–5). Some of these may be uncorrected printing errors, of which there are plenty anyway ('engi byggvr', p. 425; the headers on pp. 375 and 377–81 'Hausbók'; 'synri bygd' [MSS *Synnri* bygd, transcribed '*Synnri* bygd' p. 407], p. 320), but their frequency, especially in the texts which are not available in printed editions, suggests incompetence, and the texts edited in this book must be regarded as quite unreliable. The translations in many places contain quite ludicrous misunderstandings of Old Icelandic grammar and vocabulary, e. g. 'Sá [sc. hafsbót] skilr

heimsþriðjungana' is translated 'So teilt man die drei Kontinente ein:' (pp. 426–7); 'nær meir rás hennar [*sc.* sólar]' becomes 'näher ihrem Aufgang' (p. 404); 'hofudborgum huerso þar [*sic*] hafa ifystu [*min*]daz [*v.ll.* smidaz, syndaz] til þat [*sic*]at liosara uerdi lefanda manni *edr* til hlidannda' is rendered 'die Hauptstädte, die dabei am meisten erwähnt werden; damit den heute Lebenden deutlicher wird und sie aufmerksam gemacht werden' (pp. 436, 442); the roman numeral 'C' is rendered '1000' (p. 501); '.l. oc .cc. . . . íj. oc .xx. . . .vi. mínna en .cccc.' become '70 . . . 33 . . . 396' (pp. 459, 462; the numbers are given correctly on p. 220, where the author rather comically points out how medieval scribes frequently make errors in reproducing roman numerals); 'enn blaland' is translated 'ein schwarzes Land' (pp. 459, 462); 'personu' is translated as a plural (which it probably ought to be) and 'voldum' ('choice') as 'vielen' on p. 265; 'Svo hefir almatigvr gvd saman bvnddet eld & iord himen & votn at iordin mundi [brenn]a ef ei være vatnít en sokva ef ef [*sic*]ei være elldrin' is translated 'So hat der allmächtige Gott Feuer und Erde, Himmel und Wasser verbunden, damit die Erde nicht verbrenne, wenn es kein Wasser gäbe, und ertrinke, wenn es kein Feuer gäbe' (pp. 398–9); 'taka þar til . . . um stundar sakir at' becomes 'dort beginnen . . . vor einer Weile . . . weil' (pp. 446–7); 'to' (altered from 'to'f') is rendered '2 [*recte*: 12]' (pp. 399–400); 'fellr J sio kuijslir' becomes 'fällt in einem Delta . . . ins Meer' (pp. 474, 476); 'þar heitir nije [presumably an error for 'vin'] Landid goda' is rendered 'dort spricht man von guten neuen Ländern' (pp. 475, 477); 'Audug Af Løgum [for 'Løgum''] is translated 'berühmt wegen der Gesetze' (pp. 475, 477); but the most hilarious misunderstandings come in the translation of a passage about monstrous races, who are made even more monstrous than in the medieval text: 'sem alla kuodu fordum hafa': 'wie alle alten Gedichte sagen'; 'biugir sem fenudr': 'gekrümmt wie ein Bogen'; 'skiotir sem dýr': 'schneller als Tiere'; 'éta þa ath erfi sino': 'essen sie zum Andenken'; '& ohægimdí': 'ohne sie zu erschlagen'; 'þath er enn edli kuenna sumra ath eitt megu barn ala allz æ efi': 'Dort ist ein Frauenvolk, von denen einige ihr ganzes Leben Kinder gebären können'; 'þeir menn ero enn er lodnir ero sem dyr & hafa eigi fót': 'Es gibt auch welche, die behaart sind wie Tiere und keine Füße haben' (pp. 470–3). These elementary mistakes cannot all be due just to carelessness; they imply fundamental ignorance, and to my mind entirely vitiate whatever value the study of the texts in this volume might otherwise have had; since such an investigation demands close knowledge of the meaning of the texts under discussion, the work as a whole must be regarded from a scholarly point of view as very unreliable—some might even say valueless.

ANTHONY FAULKES

HELLAS OG NORGE. KONTAKT, KOMPASJON, KONTRAST. EN ARTIKKELSAMLING. Edited by ØIVIND ANDERSEN and TOMAS HÅGG. *Skrifter utgitt av Det norske institutt i Athen, 2. Klassisk institutt, Universitetet i Bergen*. Bergen, 1990. 280 pp.

The volume under review contains a number of papers which were originally delivered in a discussion-group of Norwegian scholars at the Norwegian Institute at Athens in December 1989, reworked for publication. The occasion for the original meeting in Athens was the founding of the Institute earlier in 1989 and

the handsome gift to it of about forty thousand volumes, comprising the library of the Greek emeritus professor of ancient Greek and Roman law, Johannes Triantaphyllopoulos. The papers address themselves to a variety of subjects in the cultural histories of Norway and Greece from ancient times down to the present day, being chronologically partitioned into three fields of discussion: 1) 'Saga, epic and poetry', 2) 'Norway and Byzantium', and 3) 'National formation and politics'. Thus the first part covers some of the oldest literature of Norway and Iceland (prose and poetry) and Greece (epic poetry), the second the cultural and historical ties between the northern lands and the Eastern empire of Greece in the Middle Ages, and the third the rise of national consciousness in 19th-century Greece and Norway and the emergence of socialism in the two nations in modern times, with a short coda on the political shenanigans of Papandreou and his socialist party.

The subtitle to this collection—'contact, comparison, contrast'—affords us a preliminary set of criteria by which to judge its general value. Summarily, one may say that where there were real contacts between Greece and Norway, as in the Middle Ages, the contributors to part 2 are in a position to make solid contributions to their subjects; but where little or no contact existed, as between the literatures of ancient Greece and medieval Norway, or the later political developments of modern Greece and Norway, the contributors to parts 1 and 3 are thrown back on comparisons and contrasts which are apt to strike us as artificial and forced. Since at *any* time in the histories of the two lands the differences between their cultures and peoples are always bound to be greater than the similarities, the comparisons seem particularly feeble, as in part 1. One of the editors, Øivind Andersen, has tried in the introduction ('Like and unlike') to remedy the weakness of the comparisons by juggling terms with 'near' and 'far' comparisons (p. 11), which supposedly will do justice impartially to the similarities and dissimilarities in Greek and Norwegian cultural phenomena, but this terminological jugglery cannot disguise the lameness of his comparisons between the Homeric and Old Norse-Icelandic civilizations, which, he tells us, were cradled on islands or in fjords and were naturally seagoing, raised cattle, sheep and goats, had small populations, rivalrous chieftains and warriors highly sensitive to honour, etc., etc. (more of the same in Bjørn Qviller's paper, pp. 46–48). All superficially true, but quite trivial. What actually individualizes the Achaeans or the Vikings is lost sight of among these trivia—for example, the fact that the Vikings could design boats which were equally suited to shallow-draft and deep-sea navigation, while the maritime peoples of primitive Greek civilization were largely confined by their less innovative naval architecture and seamanship to coastal voyages or *periploi*.

The papers themselves, which we shall summarize and appraise individually in their respective parts of the collection, do not bring anything very new to light, but tend to synthesize previous scholarship on their subjects. The happy as well as unhappy exceptions to this synthesizing tendency occur in part 2 where the ground is firmer for historical investigations, and one can venture to be more independent, not to say more wayward, in one's researches. But as it stands the collection seeks overall to put together a representative scholarly picture of Greek and Norwegian-Icelandic literature and culture in major historical epochs, using current American and European theories of e. g. oral and literary composition,

cultural anthropology and feminism. The theoretical framework is frequently 'paradigmatic' in the Kuhnian sense, and erected unquestioningly as being standard equipment, but we need not be so uncritical ourselves in reckoning with the literary and cultural orientations of the contributors.

(I) *Saga, epic and poetry*. The leading essay in this part is that of the scaldic poetry specialist, Bjarne Fidjestøl, 'Icelandic saga and court poetry: literature and society in archaic Norse culture' (pp. 21–44). The term 'archaic', with connotations of the 'archaic period' in early Greek literature, was chosen to denote an early medieval period of orally-composed scaldic poetry, between c.700 and 1100, before Old Norse literature began generally to be written down in the Latin alphabet. This chronological demarcation between the oral and the literary would appear to be more or less superfluous in regard to the basically oral composition of scaldic poetry throughout the Middle Ages, and it intersects with but a small slice of the corpus of Eddic poetry. Fidjestøl consigns the oldest Eddic poems (he does not say which, p. 24) to the obscurity of pre-archaic times, during the Germanic migrations, but he fails to note that the bulk of the Eddic corpus falls chronologically after his 'archaic period' (cf. *Old Norse–Icelandic literature*, ed. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow, 1985, 93, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenzkar bókmenntir í fornöld*, 1962, 228–29). Furthermore, though the end of the 'archaic period' also marks the beginnings of prose writing in Old Norse, the written sagas that emerge in Iceland will have been in size and shape most unlike the oral saga-like stories (*frásagnir*, *þættir*) that preceded them. Fidjestøl admits the non-identity between the oral and written saga (p. 25), but finds some theoretical comfort nonetheless in Carol Clover's rather metaphysical idea of the 'immanent saga' in Icelandic story-telling (*Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 101, 1986, 34), which pervades the scattered *frásagnir* or *þættir* of oral tradition and lends them a kind of unity of context.

Fidjestøl's proposal of a quasi-Greek period of 'archaic' oral poetry for Old Norse literature is not a stepping stone but a stumbling block to the interpretation of that literature. Saga prose had its gestation period in oral story-telling doubtless, but scaldic and Eddic poetry would usually have been composed entirely orally, whether the resulting poems were to be recorded in writing or not. The composition of Eddic poetry, however, is still a mystery, despite much initial searching for oral formulae in it. Few instances of the recitation of Eddic poems have come down to us, as in the legend of Norna-Gestr (on which see Lars Lönnroth in *Speculum* 46, 1971, 4–8), and they are hazy and indefinite.

When Fidjestøl comes to the interpretation of Old Norse court poetry and the Icelandic sagas he reduces it to a schema of *rex* and *lex*, inasmuch as *drottkvæði* were centred in Norway on the king (*dróttinn*) and the Icelandic sagas on the law. Under this schema scaldic poetry fares better than the sagas and Fidjestøl's expertise in the court poetry of the scalds is displayed to advantage here. The sagas and the law, however, are another matter. The centrality of law in the sagas is not in question, but not content with the remarkable preoccupation of both the sagamen and the persons of the sagas with the law, Fidjestøl attempts to discover in the laws themselves of Norway and Iceland the seeds of saga narrative. Thus he educes the origins of the story-telling of the sagamen from law cases (as in *Gulapingslög*) and medieval reasoning by *exempla* (as in *Konungs skuggsjá*) (p. 38). This tack will not lead us very far into the sagas.

Another, more inconclusive approach to the sagas and the Eddic poems is taken by Else Mundal in 'The Norse epic tradition' (pp. 65–80), a postscript to her book on the scholarly controversy over the oral and/or literary evolution of the sagas (*Sagadebatt*, 1977). Mundal's bibliography of names and works that have refuelled this controversy since the late sixties is deficient, however, in several particulars. Like Fidjestøl she is chiefly attracted to the Andersson/Clover lines of thought about saga evolution, but she overlooks Andersson's latest reflections prefaced to his and William I. Miller's translations of *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Valla-Ljóts saga* (Theodore M. Andersson and William Ian Miller, *Law and literature in medieval Iceland*, 1989, 64–98), on the double texts of the first saga and their bearing on saga composition. As for Clover's two works, *The medieval saga* (1982) and 'The long prose form' (*Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 101, 1986, 10–39), Mundal does not fully realize that Clover, like Lars Lönnroth, passed through two distinct phases of the saga controversy—one literary, the other oral—which are irreconcilable with each other. 'The long prose form' breaks completely with the older philological conception of the saga in *The medieval saga* as a repertoire of European medieval literary conventions. Nevertheless, the hypothesis of an 'immanent saga' in this article, which is much cited in *Hellas og Norge* and elsewhere, surreptitiously extends an idea of audience *reception* to the realms of authorial *creation*, but does not thereby bridge the gap between oral story-telling and literary narrative; instead, it circumvents it by making the Icelandic community at once the repository and the creator of sagas—a modernist version of the Romantic tenet, 'das Volk dichtet'.

Mundal brings in Eddic poetry, as the alternative 'epic tradition', to illumine the social unity of context which integrates the isolated poem or *þáttur*, according to Clover. Just as the killing of Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi was a part of the 'immanent saga' of the burning of Njáll, known to Icelanders from oral tradition, so the murder of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani in the different *Sigurðar kviður* was spun off the epic cycles of poetry current about him throughout the Germanic world. Even the kennings of Eddic and scaldic poetry will testify to the shared knowledge that the Norsemen had of their literature *in extenso*, since otherwise the individual kenning-elements of their poetry would have been unintelligible to them without this wide context. So far, so good. But when Mundal in conclusion wants to correlate the 'epic tradition' of Eddic or scaldic poetry with that of the prose sagas she wavers between them uncertainly. On the one hand, she sidesteps (p. 75) inexpediently the large body of evidence which has been thoroughly sifted, *inter alios*, by Oskar Bandle in 'Isländersaga und Heldendichtung' (*Afmælisrit Jóns Helgasonar*, 1969, 1–26), to reveal the literacy and cultural ramifications of Eddic poetry in saga prose; on the other, she has only a weak grasp of the function of the scaldic *lausavísur* in saga prose, which to her are mere narrative links in the sagas ('ein lekk i forteljninga', p. 77), and therefore she gratefully acquiesces in the suggestion of Clover (after Lönnroth and Peter Buchholz) that saga prose and scaldic verse could have been composed simultaneously together as in other literatures of the world. The oral intercalation of scaldic verse in saga prose bespeaks, Mundal feels, the cultural sophistication of the audiences of the sagamen before the advent of writing.

The two surveys of Old Norse literature by Fidjestøl and Mundal are matched by a corresponding couple of overviews of Homeric and archaic Greek culture and

literature by the classicists Bjørn Qviller and Øivind Andersen. Qviller's paper, 'Poetry and political power in archaic Greece' (pp. 45–64), recreates the political and cultural ambience for the recitation of early Greek epic and lyric poetry at palace banquets, symposia and temple festivals, while Andersen's longer piece, 'Singing and writing' (pp. 81–115), confronts the 'Homeric problem' of the composition of the ancient Greek epics, which for many classical scholars, especially the Americans, has been finally resolved by the 'oral-formulaic theory' of Milman Parry and Albert Lord. At this point in part 1 of *Hellas og Norge* the conjunction of the problems of saga evolution and Homeric-epic improvisation, and the oral solutions thereto, begin to reproduce the scholarly situation of a century ago when the *Lieder* theory of Karl Lachmann sampled successively the Homeric Greek and Middle High German epics, and (with A. U. Bååth, *Studier öfver kompositionen i några isländska ättsagor*, 1885) the Icelandic sagas.

Qviller's paper, though it does well enough for the natural association of feasts or festivities and song, rests on dubious assumptions about the political side of Greek feasting and poetry. This classicist believes (p. 45) that Homer and Hesiod, or the rhapsodes that went under those names, inhabited epochs (9th to 8th centuries BC) that were in the process of repudiating Bronze-Age theocratic Mycenaean palace culture and ushering in the more 'democratic' city-state (i. e. 'a collectivity of citizens on an equal footing', p. 45). Homer appears to him to be the more politically conservative of the two, since this poet unqualifiedly upholds the rule of one man (as in *Il.* ii. 204 f.), whereas Hesiod, the voice of the small farmers of Boeotia, does not bow to a king without warning him (in *Works and days*, 248 ff.) that the gods will see to it that he shall dispense justice. Besides these references (quoted pp. 57–58), Qviller offers archaeological evidence from excavations of the temple of Hera Limenia of Perachora (pp. 60–61), which he thinks discloses a separation of political deliberations from religious auspices in early Greek public life of the 7th century BC. In other words, the Hera Limenia temple was not really a temple with a presiding priest but simply a building which housed the local *prytaneion*, 'where the elite in the region took their meals and drank wine together' (p. 60), and talked politics freely, unmonitored by any priest. Hence this site approximates closest of all to the 'relatively secular' atmosphere of the classical Greek *polis*.

No classicist of my acquaintance would go along with this tendentious argument in favour of the incipient democratization and secularization of Greek politics from the 'dark age' to the archaic period. There is no epigraphical hint as to the social or political purpose of the temple of Hera Limenia, which can only be guessed at from the layout of the building. Hesiod, the small farmer and critic of kings, is not more progressive than Homer, and Homer himself took over his model of kingship with a wealth of epic materials from theocratic Mycenaean palace-culture. Indeed, his indebtedness to that culture was so great that it has been said that '... Homer depicts a state of affairs which is not only closer to the Mycenaean age than to any other but can actually be identified with the Mycenaean age in some crucial respects' (J. T. Hooker, 'From Mycenae to Homer', in *Studies in honour of T. B. L. Webster*, 1986–88, II, 59). So much for the alleged repudiation of Mycenaean palace-culture at the end of the 'dark age'.

In the Homeric epics the feasting of the heroes was orchestrated as a social form of entertainment among aristocratic equals, or of glorification of their royal

hosts, or else of reconciliation of opposing enemies—but beyond these aims it could not be described as really political. Telemachus (in *Od.* i. 372–75) sharply distinguishes for Penelope’s suitors their gluttonous feasting from the *agorē*, the political assembly where serious business is to be transacted, and in the opening scene of the second book of the *Iliad*, the *agorē* and the *boulē*, the council, are the two institutions convoked for the Achaean consultations on the prosecution of the war against Troy. Qviller has not extricated the right implications of the *daitai eisai* or ‘equal feasts’ (*Od.* xi. 185) in the Homeric epics—their purely social significance, as above—but he correctly relegates the political significance of Greek banquets to the later symposia of the archaic period, as e. g. in Alcaeus’s circle on Lesbos, though one should not, with Qviller, pretend that these symposia were ‘early city-councils’ (p. 60). Neither the remains of the temple of Hera Limenia nor a stray passage on the origins of the *polis* from Strabo’s *Geography* (9. 3. 5, quoted pp. 59–60) will warrant that inference.

The complementary paper of Andersen on the ‘Homeric problem’ first gives a résumé of the most prominent features of Homer’s versification and oral style of composition and performance (for Parry and Lord one and the same thing), before posing the problem itself, to which it provides several solutions in the end, without endorsing any one of them very strongly. These last are so many ‘positions’ taken by the author from theoretical standpoints toward oral composition and the transcription of the Homeric epics. Throughout the paper the Parry/Lord paradigm overshadows the argumentation, up to the closing discussion of writing, in which Andersen leans more heavily on the bold thesis of H. T. Wade-Gery (*The poet of the Iliad*, 1952) and Barry B. Powell (in *Classical antiquity* 8, 1989, 321–50; cf. now his book, *Homer and the origin of the Greek alphabet*, 1991), namely that the Greek alphabet was purposely designed by one man to record hexametric poetry. Wherever he can, Andersen slips in (pp. 86, 99) some contrasts between Homeric verse and saga prose and scaldic verse, but these are no improvement on his initial comparisons in the preface between ancient Greek and medieval Scandinavian civilizations, and may be more or less disregarded. When, however, he cites (pp. 97–98) Clover’s ‘immanent saga’ as something analogous to the traditional material in the Homeric epics, we see how her oral theory can be hitched to two very different literatures; but more commonly among mediaevalists it is the oral-formulaic theory that is transferred to the Poetic Edda and the verse epics of the Middle Ages.

The Homeric problem has always been involved with the illiteracy of the so-called ‘dark age’ from the second millennium to the eighth century BC, the century in which ‘Homer’ is supposed to have flourished, or to put it another way, in which the texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, whether oral or written, assumed definitive form. Nobody imagines that before ‘Homer’ the *aoidoi* or the rhapsodes (as in fragment 265 of the Hesiodic corpus) could have done otherwise than compose their songs of Troy or Thebes orally, without a Greek alphabet at their disposal, but when by the eighth century the earliest Greek inscriptions, often hexametric, are attested here and there (inventory of these in P. Kyle McCarter, *The antiquity of the Greek alphabet*, 1975, 65–75, and Powell’s article cited above), it is only reasonable to ask whether our Homer could not have availed himself of writing too, or been affected by it one way or another. The true-blue oral-formulaic theorists, like John Miles Foley (*The theory of oral composition*,

1988), do not bother their heads with the written redactions of the Homeric epics, which lie outside their narrow interests, but Andersen to his credit has multiplied the possible solutions to the Homeric problem by taking account of the hexametric Greek inscriptions of the eighth century. Unfortunately, under the Parry/Lord paradigm the performer/creator and the scribal recorder of the Greek epics can never be one and the same man, since each of them had a highly specialized mentality of his own. Hence at best by this division of labour one can only conceive of Homer as dictating his poems to a scribe newly equipped with the Greek alphabet (so Andersen, p. 104). Secondly, as Andersen points out (p. 103), the surviving quotations from or allusions to Homer from the archaic period, as on the cup of Nestor, do not run to more than a line or two of verse. Finally, his will-o'-the-wisp, Powell, has pushed the Wade-Gery thesis to such lengths as to rob it of all probability; not only must the Greek alphabet be the invention of one man for the purpose of recording hexameter verse of restricted circulation (within aristocratic circles), but the verse must also be first and foremost that of the celebrated *aidos* of the day, Homer, and, furthermore, the inventor of the alphabet who was also Homer's recorder was the only one who could read the texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, to begin with (Barry B. Powell, *Homer and the origin of the Greek alphabet*, 1991, 231–33)! The hexametric inscriptions of the eighth century compel us to rethink the relation of written script to oral song in Homer's epics, but not thus, assuredly.

Andersen's own thoughts about these matters are summed up in four 'positions' on the Homeric problem (pp. 106–11). 1) *Large-scale epic composition presupposes writing generally*. Though scholars of the stature of Albin Lesky and Jan de Vries have adopted this position, Andersen complains that it is 'rarely established' by anyone (p. 106). 2) *Writing may have inspired the aoidoi to such sustained composition*. Parry's son, Adam Parry, advanced this view (in *Yale classical studies* 20, 1966, 216), which Andersen rejects because it contravenes the Parry/Lord division of labour between poet and scribe. 3) *The large scale of the Homeric epics may on the contrary have prompted the invention of writing* (so as to record them). Acceptable to Andersen on the whole because it chimes in with the Wade-Gery/Powell thesis. 4) *Large-scale epic composition dispensed with writing altogether*. Also acceptable to Andersen because conformable to the Parry/Lord paradigm for oral-formulaic composition. The notes of scholarly orthodoxy are struck audibly ever louder in the last three 'positions'.

(II) *Norway and Byzantium*. The second part of the collection traverses the historical terrain whereon 'Norden' and the Eastern empire in the Middle Ages became acquainted with each other. As I have said before, the historical foundation for their mutual acquaintance exerts a steadying effect upon the contributors to part II, aside from one or two scholarly truants who lose themselves in unfounded speculation. How vast the terrain was, yet how pervious to trade from late Roman times on (4th to 8th centuries AD) is outlined for us by Bente Magnus in a paper on the contacts between Scandinavia and the East Roman empire before the Viking Age, 'The route to and from Miklagarðr' (pp. 119–38). The author takes proper stock of the archaeological finds of Roman and German glass, Byzantine jewellery (especially the exquisite 'face-beads'), Arabic coins and native runic inscriptions which circumstantiate the foreign-trade contacts and the eastern travels of the Scandinavians up to and through the Viking Age. Just how

far those who travelled the *austrvegr* in the Viking Age managed to get in the Near East is not ascertainable from our western sources, but one early Arabic source in the compilation of Harris Birkeland (*Nordens historie . . . etter arabiske kilder*, 1954, 11) tells of the camel-trains of Russian goods that the Kievan Scandinavians led down to Baghdad from the Caspian Sea and sold in the souks of the Persian capital. The nearest to the eastern caliphate most Scandinavians would have got, however, would probably have been by the Volga waterway to the western shores of the Caspian, where, trading and raiding, they became embroiled with the Khazar kingdom.

The principal population of Scandinavians in the east, beginning with the Swedes, accumulated in the course of the ninth century in the depôts of Ladoga, Novgorod and Kiev, comprising loosely the khaganate of the Rus. In the *Russian primary chronicle* of the 12th century that foreign body of Scandinavians is named 'Varangian' in an entry under the years 860–62. As is well known, the historical development of the name 'Varangian' itself is wrapped in clouds of scholarly controversy (see e. g. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *History of Russia*, 1984, ch. 3). Predictably, therefore, the linguistic and geographical provenience of the name and the identity of the 'Varangians' are attacked in part II by a historian, Håkon Stang, linguistically trained in Russian and Arabic and bristling with novel etymologies. It is the contention of Stang in his paper 'From Novaya Zemlya and Varanger to the heart of the world' (pp. 139–52) that the Varangians mentioned in the *Primary chronicle* did not yet exist (p. 140) but that the name was, in Greek form, a Byzantine coinage around the year 1000 (p. 149: 'Navnet *Varanggoi* stammer fra Bysants'), which in Russian form with the secondary meaning of 'merchants' was borrowed and then generalized by the twelfth-century Russian chronicler to encompass several ethnic groups of people in Bjarmaland who traded in walrus tusks and other Arctic commodities with the Scandinavians and the Arabs. Two objections immediately check this derivation of *væringi/varyag*: first, the *Primary chronicle* refers under *varyag* explicitly to the 'foreign' (i. e. Scandinavian) Rus, who are said to have imposed tribute on the Chuds and the Ves of Bjarmaland, but secondly and more importantly, as Stang has inconveniently forgotten, *væringi* is from a Common Germanic word (**wēragangian*) with the underlying meaning of 'så sem gengur í tryggðasamband' (so Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon, *Íslensk orðsifjabók*, 1989, 1156), or 'sworn retainer', which of course was its primary meaning when the Byzantines employed the word in reference to the Varangian guard. Since Stang is rather unfamiliar with the Old Norse side of the linguistic equation he can persuade himself that Old Norse *væringi* is seldom used in the Kings' Sagas ('navnet . . . knapt brukes i norrøne kilder', p. 139), and that the sagamen are mysteriously silent about any *væringjar* in Garðaríki, though the Russian chroniclers denominate the foreign Rus Varangians (p. 140). One wonders how he thinks the Byzantines and then the Slavs ever came to speak of *hoi Baranggoi* and *varjazi* respectively, in the absence of an Old Norse substrate.

In the eyes of Sverre Bagge, the political historian of medieval Norway, the Varangian guard of the Byzantine emperors was personified in their Norse leader, Harald the 'Tough-Minded', 'han er eksempel på et alment fenomen' (p. 169). Hence Bagge's paper, 'Harald Hardrada in Byzantium: two stories, two cultures' (pp. 169–92), can spotlight him and his Norse and Byzantine biographers as

exponents not only of the role of the Varangian guard in Byzantine society but also of the historical reactions of two cultures in the North and Near East to him and the guard. This is a laudable project but it is not implemented very well by a diffuse impressionistic essay. Although the author cites the fundamental study of the Varangians by Sigfús Blöndal (as translated and revised by B. S. Benediktsson as *The Varangians of Byzantium*, 1973), he does not even take the trouble to corroborate his impressions with the firm convictions of Blöndal who had steeped himself for twenty-five years in the multilingual materials of Varangian history in the eastern Mediterranean world. Thus Snorri's biographical notices of Harald in Byzantium (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, chs 1–15), which have a pronounced 'anti-Byzantine' bias in Bagge's opinion (p. 175), represent him nonetheless as what Bagge chooses to call a 'robber-chieftain' (p. 176). The chief Byzantine witness to Harald's career in Byzantine service—the anonymous *Logos nouthetikos pros basilea* (ed. B. Wassiliewsky and V. Jernstedt, 1896)—spoke of him with the greatest respect, however, even though he served as an example of how foreign mercenaries should *not* be rewarded too much for their just deserts by the Byzantine emperors. Furthermore, the fact is that Snorri likewise spoke in the highest terms of Harald, as at the end of his saga, and the cause of this praise was, as Blöndal has observed (*The Varangians of Byzantium*, pp. 101–02) and Bagge has not, that Harald was very friendly and helpful to the Icelanders while he was king of Norway (cf. *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ch. 36: 'var hann . . . vinr þeira mikill'). Probably Bagge's impression of Harald as a robber chieftain is founded, if on anything historical in the king's Byzantine career, on the wealth he amassed either from his campaigns with the city guard or more likely from the imperial revenues themselves, out of which he was accused of misappropriating funds (on this moot charge see Blöndal again, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, pp. 77–87).

Snorri and Harald's scalds, if not Harald himself, occasionally overstate their hero's role and rank as a military commander, as when Snorri makes him out to be temporary commander-in-chief of Jaroslav's army in Kiev while he was en route to Byzantium (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, ch. 2; cf. Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, pp. 54, 62, 75). Bagge has a curious explanation for these overstatements, which he attributes to the Icelanders' rugged individualism, which, he holds, would never tolerate any subordination of oneself to the dictates of another, even in a military hierarchy. Consequently, Snorri's life of Harald was intended 'to keep at arm's length every suspicion that his hero was subject to the orders of someone else' ('et forsøk på å fjerne enhver mistanke om at Harald var underlagt noens kommando', p. 180). In this explanation a theory of national character substitutes for a better reading of a text.

The dirty work of the Varangian guardsmen, in which Harald was also involved, bespatters both the poetry and the biography about him, most heavily as regards the blinding of Emperor Michael V at his deposition. This horrible but routinely Byzantine operation has been laid in this case to the charge of Michael's murderous stepmother, the empress Zoe, by Bagge (p. 176) and the Byzantinist Robert Browning (*The Byzantine Empire*, 1980, p. 92) but as an eye-witness of the blinding, Michael Psellos (*Chronographia*, ed. E. Renauld, 1926–28, V, 36–51) inculpates if anyone Zoe's sister and co-empress Theodora, or else the city-prefect Nicephorus Campanaras who dispatched the Varangians to capture and blind Michael (cf. Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, p. 93).

When Bagge has sketched in the ups and downs of the Byzantine career of Harald and the decadent imperial history in which he participated, he proceeds to examine some of the historical principles on which the Old Norse and Byzantine accounts of Varangian adventurism hinged. Here again intellectual anomalies crop up in his essay. Of Old Norse historiography he seriously entertains the idea that the stories of the kings of Norway might have been cast in 'epic verse' were it not for the prosaic influence of European (Latin) chronicling on the Kings' Sagas (p. 182). Among the Byzantine historians, furthermore, he singles out Michael Psellos (1018–78) and Anna Comnena (1083–1153) for comparison with Snorri, two historians of whom Psellos is delineated, strangely, as a man who set great store by religion but was attentive like Snorri to political behaviour also, and Anna as a woman with a 'worldly perspective' (p. 184). Anyone who has the least knowledge of the vain, witty, irreligious Byzantine man-of-letters Psellos and the lachrimose, dutiful and devout Anna will barely recognize them from these profiles of Bagge's, which really would have to be switched around to make much sense at all. Stranger still is his assertion that there was no bureaucratic machinery in the troubled Byzantine state during Psellos's lifetime which would execute the autocratic commands of the ruling power (p. 186; but cf. W. Ensslin's chapter on Byzantine administration in *Byzantium*, ed. Norman H. Baynes and H. St L. B. Moss, 1948, ch. 10).

What Bagge finds, with more plausibility, that unites the historiography of the Norse and Byzantine historians of the high Middle Ages was a late-antique Graeco-Roman stylism for the description of the physical persons and psychological personalities of historical figures—namely, 'iconism', which was essentially a summation device for rendering the characteristic physical and mental qualities of some outstanding individual. In late Antiquity when historical biography had usurped the form of history, this stylism became stereotyped (Hilde Vogt, *Die literarische Personenschilderung des frühen Mittelalters*, 1934) and passed into the mainstream of early medieval historical writing, to be conveyed to Latin hagiography and history, to the biographical histories of Old Norse Christian literature, and to the historical portraiture of saints and kings in Byzantium and Arabic biography (Gustav E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, 1953, pp. 278–79). Stereotyped in telegraphic descriptive phrases, iconism often could not catch the subtler psychological reflections of personality, from the 'soul', unless the biographer were a perceptive *Menschenkenner* like Psellos or Snorri. Bagge has disputed that Snorri and the sagamen were ever interested in 'soul' (p. 189), Christians though they were, but one has only to recall Snorri's iconistic portrait of Egill Skalla-Grímsson (in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*) to be reassured that the most skilful sagamen probed for something very like 'soul' beneath personal appearances.

The faults of Bagge's essay are superficial—diffuseness and impressionism—but there is something methodologically wrong with Marina Mundt's essay, 'Was Byzantium a port of transit?' (pp. 153–68), an error which is more fundamental. Since the publication of Margaret Schlauch's classic study of the oriental sources of the *riddarasögur* and *fornaldarsögur* (*Romance in Iceland*, 1934) Scandinavianists have, like other students of medieval European culture, been prone to regard the East/West traffic in material and cultural goods as all going one way, to the West, like the proverbial course of empire. Thus, in Mundt's title phrase,

Byzantium was a 'transitthavn' through which the riches of the orient flowed westwards. I have written (in *Speculum* 59, 1984, 509–23) against this one-sided misconception of East/West relations in the Middle Ages but to little effect, apparently. One does not have to be told (as by Stang, p. 150) of the lone Frankish sword named 'Constantine' that was unearthed in the northern Urals to know that the material and cultural residues of the Western infiltration into Russia and Byzantium, culminating in the Crusades, were far from negligible or sporadic. Scholars, however, who have fixed their eyes, as Mundt's eyes are fixed, on Byzantine traces in Western literature will only need to detect certain similarities between some European or Scandinavian text and a Byzantine, Old Russian or Near Eastern text to decide that the preponderating influences are oriental. This in essence is the thrust of Mundt's method of source-criticism, a method which leaps impulsively in one direction from A to Z without dwelling upon the intervening steps of transmission between the two extremes. Indeed for some of the oriental influences that she wants to foist upon the *fornaldarsögur* the intervening steps from eastern source to northern saga are quite untraceable, but that rather facilitates than hinders the big leap from the one to the other.

Under the illusion that the Norse travellers to the East wandered all over the Near East looking at Egyptian and Assyrian monumental statuary and listening to versions of the *koinē* Greek epic *Digenis Akritas* and the Persian epics of Firdausi and Fakhr Ud-Din Gurgani, Mundt is perfectly convinced that mental images of grotesque statues and literary reminiscences of the Greek and Persian epics would have found their way north with the Norsemen and been deposited by oral retelling in the Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*. This is as much of the transmission process as she vouchsafes to us (pp. 155–56). The more likely sources of inspiration, however, for such monsters and marvels as a giant bird, a bird-beaked or a dog-footed man, a magical horse or a centaur-like creature, etc., in the *fornaldarsögur* are concentrated in the Alexander story, especially the fictive letter of Alexander to Aristotle on the wonders of India, and are also distributed in a reservoir of Biblical and late antique lore about monstrous races surrounding the *oikoumenē* of the Graeco-Latin and Christian world (see John Friedman, *The monstrous races in medieval art and thought*, 1981). *Fornaldarsögur* authors did not have to work up their calculated grotesqueries from travellers' tales. Those twice-told tales at any rate will seem pretty nebulous to us, for the bearers of them had neither the languages to understand the epic originals, nor any taste that we are aware of for monumental statuary. It must have been a very garbled final version of the macabre ending of *Digenis Akritas*, where the hero squeezes his wife to death as he dies, that could, according to Mundt (pp. 164–66), be a model for the scene in *Heiðreks saga* (ch. 8) in which King Heiðrek unceremoniously dumps his queen into a river, so that she breaks her back and drowns. But sooner than stretch our imaginations to tie these unrelated scenes together we should more naturally think that the sagaman had never heard of the death of Digenis Akritas at all.

After so much nay-saying it is a pleasure to be able to praise without qualification the last three contributions to this section of *Hellas og Norge*, viz. Jan Ragnar Hagland's essay, 'Legends from Byzantium about St Olaf' (pp. 193–210), Henrik v. Achen's 'Emperor Heraclius in Nedstryn' (pp. 211–20), and especially Tomas Hägg's 'A Byzantine visits Bergen' (pp. 221–28). These pieces

are distinguished by careful research, a precise focus on one subject or problem, and a pleasing style of presentation.

Hagland investigates the Varangian source of two types of legend about St Olaf which tell (a), of the saint's sword, that, on being taken to Byzantium by a Swedish Viking, it manifested miraculous power, which moved it about on the ground for three consecutive nights without its being touched by its possessor; and (b), of a blind (Byzantine) ruler beset by barbarian attackers, that he prayed to the saint for assistance, vowing to build him a church if the prayer was granted, which it is when St Olaf himself materializes as a ghostly standard-bearer to lead the unseeing sovereign and his army to victory. Of these types of legend (a), with an admixture of (b), is contained in Einarr Skúlason's *Geisli* (stt. 43–50) and Snorri's *Hákonar saga herðibreiðs* (chs. 20–21) in his *Heimskringla*, while (b) on its own is preserved in the Norse Latin acts and miracles of St Olaf (*Acta Sancti Olavi regis et martyris* and *Passio et miracula beati Olavi*). This Old Norse and Norse Latin literature was generated from the middle of the 12th century, beginning with Einarr's poem, to the first quarter of the 13th century, ending with Snorri's saga of Hákon. On the Byzantine side, two historians, John Kinnamos (fl. second half of 12th century) and Niketas Choniates (d. c.1213), recount in their histories a climactic battle at Beroë (i. e. Stara Zagora in Bulgaria), in 1122 or 1123, which the emperor John II Komnenos fought (with unimpaired vision) against the Turkish Pechenegs, to win the victory which re-echoes in the Norse sources.

Since one Eindriði, 'the young man', is cited in Einarr's poem (st. 45) as the authority for the legends of the sword and its yet more glorious royal owner, and since the young man is mentioned again in *Orkneyinga saga* (ch. 85) as someone who had gone out to Constantinople and could tell amusing stories of his adventures, it seems in good order to identify him, as Hagland does (p. 205), as the intermediary transmitter of the legends to Einarr the poet. The events of the Battle of Beroë, in which the Varangians had participated, may have already been transmuted among the guardsmen into legends of the (b) type, on which the Northern church set its *imprimatur*. The (a) type legends of St Olaf's sword, however, were welcome to Einarr and Snorri. Thus, by a precise identification of the intermediary between the historical Byzantine sources and the Norse legends in verse and prose, Hagland has made good a deficiency in the English scholarship on their relationship: 'Bortsett frå det å konstatera at vi her har eit "ekko" . . . frå Bysants i norrøne sagaer, har lite vore gjort for å finna ut kva veg dette stoffet har hatt inn i vår boreale litteraturtradisjon' (p. 193). Mundt could justly be reproached with these words for her incomplete research into the orientalism of the *foraldarsögur*.

Henrik v. Achen's essay on the frontal altarpiece decorations from the churches at Dale, Luster, Sogn and Nedstryn, Nordfjord, is an equally successful art-historical study of a legend told in *Maríu saga* of an apotropaic Turkish head and an anachronistic bit of history from the seventh century about the Emperor Heraclius's recovery of the true cross from Jerusalem, together with the respective representations, c.1300, of these subjects on the altars of the Dale and Nedstryn churches. The legend of the Turkish head tells of a ghastly head which was at the disposal of a Turkish potentate who frightened away or slew his Christian enemies by the mere sight of it on the end of a pole. The 'bishop' of

Byzantium countered its deadly force with an image of the Virgin, which caused it to fall with a scream into the Bosphorus and sink, and thus rescued the besieged city from the Turks. This legend patently dramatizes the steady encroachments of the Turks around Byzantium c.1300 in the wake of the disastrous Fourth Crusade which devastated the imperial capital at the beginning of the thirteenth century and effectually dismembered the empire between Latins and Greeks. The Turks were themselves subjugated by the Mongols in 1242, but from the middle of the thirteenth century on, the come-back of the Turkish peoples was relentless; 'by 1300 almost the whole of Byzantine Asia Minor had been lost to the Turkish *ghazis*' (Robert Browning, *The Byzantine Empire*, 1980, p. 169).

The story of Heraclius's recovery of the true cross in 627 from the Sassanid dynasty of Persia—an anachronism rather than a legend in the time-frame of the 1300s—is considered by v. Achen, in its representation on the altar-front from the Nedstryn church, inscribed with Old Norse captions, as a piece of ecclesiastical propaganda to promote a Hospitaller crusade among the Norwegian nobility. This crusade did not get under way from Rhodes until 1365, but, as Stephen Runciman remarks, 'though soldiers for a Crusade were lacking [at the end of the 13th century], the feeling that Christendom had been shamed [by the expulsion of the Western Christians from Outremer] produced a new wave of propaganda' (*A history of the Crusades*, III, 1954, 430), of which the Nedstryn frontal's representation of Heraclius as a crusader may have been a northern ripple. It is perhaps worth while remembering in connection with this piece of propaganda that at the end of the Fifth Crusade, in 1221, the returning crusaders could not bring home with them the true cross from Jerusalem, for at their departure it had somehow disappeared from the holy city (Runciman, *A history of the Crusades*, III, 170). Only the great Byzantine defender of the faith, Heraclius, could have recovered it, the Nedstryn frontal reaffirms.

The last essay in this second part is very concise, and arguably the best in the whole book, if we have envisaged rightly the objectives of *Hellas og Norge*, which are to entertain and instruct educated Norwegian readers who, whatever their own specialities, have some intellectual curiosity about Greek and Norwegian literature and culture, old and new. Tomas Hägg, it seems to me, has balanced nicely high standards of scholarship against the general expectations and capacities of such readers, with his charming and informative essay, 'A Byzantine visits Bergen'. He has reproduced for them a short report, in translation, of one Laskaris Kananos, who fifteen years before Constantinople fell once and for all to the Turks travelled thence to Scandinavia, probably along the old Viking *austrvegr*, and from Norway sailed over to England and then out to Iceland—the last perhaps no more than a traveller's boast—before continuing by ship down the Atlantic coastline to the Mediterranean. Hägg has furnished his readers with a sensible commentary on this Byzantine text and explicated as far as possible the geography, purpose and scope of Kananos's travels. The enterprising traveller was not an official ambassador, more likely a merchant looking for new markets in the west, if not a mere tourist on a western junket; in any case a rare bird in northern climes. Here, then, is an intriguing figure whose Scandinavian *periploos* and travel notes constitute an excellent subject for an essay in a volume with the title *Hellas og Norge* and a good corrective as well for 'a certain one-sidedness' (p. 221) in that volume, which, as Hägg says, stresses in essay after

essay the eastern over the western movement of peoples and goods between Scandinavia and Byzantium in the Middle Ages.

(III) *National formation and politics*. The third and last part of *Hellas og Norge* comprises three essays on social and political questions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The feminist paper of Brit Berggreen, 'Heroines in Greece and Norway' (pp. 231–46) engages in a rather helpless Plutarchian *synkrisis* or comparison of two very different national 'heroines', the Norwegian authoress and proto-feminist Camilla Collett (1813–95) and the Greek ship-owner and revolutionary Laskarina Bouboulina (1770–1825). On the one hand, we have an Ibsenesque heroine of well-to-do family, aspiring to personal independence and equality between the sexes, but smothered in the stuffy and provincial bourgeois society of 19th-century Oslo, which did not even let her publish her writings under her own name, or attain to any public recognition; on the other, 'hē Bouboulina', a woman of the people, twice widowed by Algerian pirates but capable of commanding her husbands' ships and heading them into battle against the Turkish fleet in the Greek War of Independence. What could these two women really have in common? The comparison is only made more awkward by a theory of national character, propounded by a Norwegian sociologist in the eighties, which categorically divides the peoples of forty countries into those who have 'tough' national characters (oppressive, among others, of women) and those who have 'gentle' ones (being tender towards humanity and life in general). Alas, for this theory and Berggreen's feminist comparison, Greece, which is classified theoretically as 'tough', has elevated women like Laskarina Bouboulina to the heights of admiration, while Norway, theoretically 'gentle', has 'oppressed' them socially and been slow to recognize the literary talents of Camilla Collett. Berggreen does not resolve this self-created paradox but devotes the rest of her paper to the function of hero-worship in the formation of nationality, as symbolized by flags, holidays, anthems and memorial images of famous men and women. Since the faces of Collett and Bouboulina have both been commemorated on the bank notes of their respective countries they help to promote ideas of nationality, albeit very different ideas—one of inner rebellion to social tyranny, the other of outer resistance to the overlordship of the Turks. The two women come no closer to each other than this as they circulate nationally with the currencies of their countries.

The remaining papers of part three take up political and social questions about Norwegian and Greek socialism in the 19th and 20th centuries and Greek cultural attitudes to politics today, viz. to the political regime of Papandreou. Peggy Jensen's survey of the political growth of socialism or social democracy in Norway and Greece, 'Greek and Norwegian Socialism' (pp. 247–59), starts out with the inquiry, 'to what large extent are theoretical notions about the old Scandinavian social democracy applicable to PASOK [the Pan-Hellenic socialist party] as a representative of the Mediterranean's modern socialistic parties?' (p. 248), but soon splits up into a series of historical parallels between the Norwegian Workers' Party (DNA) and PASOK, shifting back and forth over a long period from the inception of the former in the last decade of the nineteenth century to the establishment of the latter in the last quarter of our century. As a result of this double-tracking ('parallelstille'), Jensen's theoretical viewpoint gets out of focus, and her tame conclusion does not answer her opening query:

'PASOK carries on the legacy of the liberal climate of opinion in the sixties. Strife is forthcoming in the doctrine of class-war, but compromises entered into with other factions of Greek society have transformed PASOK into a people's party without a special platform for action of its own', etc. (p. 258). Jensen, in a word, has given us the empirical details of the growth of socialism in twentieth-century Norway and Greece but she does not in fact tell us how far the normative side of northern European socialism in Norway can be expanded to parallel that of Mediterranean socialism in Greece (see the section 'A theoretical approach', pp. 248–49). All the empirical evidence would suggest that PASOK has not been around long enough to convert its interactions with the historical process into a permanent structural core of principles and norms (slogans apart), and hence in its brief existence it has been continually buffeted by the winds of chance, and easily manipulated by the well-known particularism of Greek politicians, notably Andreas Papandreou.

Just what this particularism (not 'individualism') means in Greek affairs is well stated in Vibeke Knudsen's essay, 'Political culture in Greece' (pp. 261–71), the best essay of the three in this part. As first secretary to the Norwegian ambassador to Greece she has had a front-row seat in the theatre of Greek politics from which to watch the extraordinary performances of Andreas Papandreou and ponder his equally astonishing popularity which none of his antics could diminish. Divesting herself of the ethical prepossessions of her own culture, she has been able to penetrate the traditional motivations for his behaviour as head of PASOK and for the solidarity of his constituents, who are bound to him in the age-old dependency of clients on a patron. This dependence releases patron and clients alike from every obligation except their paramount loyalties to the group. Political patrons also have fringe relationships with the family—the so-called *koumbaria* relations—which permit them to become in-laws and god-parents to favoured family groups. So strong is the social validity of the group in Greek life that, Knudsen asserts (p. 262), there is no concept in modern Greek society for private life. Strong as the group is, however, it is usually dominated by yet stronger personalities—like Papandreou's—which hold it together by patronage and favours. Patrons control everything politically and socially desirable, and as Knudsen says (p. 263), little or nothing can be done in present-day Greece without personal contacts. Group solidarity and personal ascendancy—these, then, are the hallmarks of Mediterranean particularism that stamp the Greek variety, and render intelligible the outrageous behaviour of Papandreou and his fellow politicians, who seem to Western eyes neither to be able to cooperate together nor ever to tire of slandering and defaming each other in public, while lying about their own activities freely.

Looking back over this lengthy review, one can only commiserate with the contributors to this volume, who were recruited to pay equal tributes, one way or another, to the cultures and literatures of Greece and Norway throughout their histories. A handful of scholars proved altogether up to the task—Bente Magnus, Jan Ragnar Hagland, Henrik v. Achen, Tomas Hägg and Vibeke Knudsen—but the rest did not, among them some eminent names. The burden of having expertise in two cultures was clearly too great to be borne for several contributors.

FREDERIC AMORY

HEIMUR HÁVAMÁLA. By HERMANN PÁLSSON. *Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs*. Reykjavík, 1990. 300 pp.

This work is the latest salvo in Hermann Pálsson's long campaign to play down the archaic, native, pre-Christian element in Old Norse literature and place it instead in the context of medieval European learning, cosmopolitan, biblical, latinized. 'This little book' he begins, 'has been put together with the aim of bringing to light the roots of *Hávamál* and considering their relationship to other early writings.' (For purposes of this review, I have taken the liberty of translating Hermann's Icelandic, and take responsibility for the result; I also follow his modern spelling in quotations.) It is characteristic of Hermann's approach that the last seven words of his opening sentence thus pre-empt the whole enquiry, whose manner is not one of setting out the facts, such as they are, neutrally and then seeking to draw reasoned inferences therefrom; rather, it is his humour to begin with his conclusions. These are as follows. *Hávamál* is a fusion of five older poems: 'Wisdom', stt. 1–83; 'Mankind', stt. 84–110; 'Advice', stt. 111–137; 'Torments and runes', stt. 138–45; and 'Incantations', stt. 143–63; with st. 164 rounding off the whole collection. The compiler of our text, who brought together discrete fragments and added much new matter of his own composing, was a learned, thoughtful man, the product of a medieval schooling, widely read, literate in Latin, who worked in the period 1150–1250. The first three sections of the poem show considerable influence from Continental learning, which reached Iceland from the eleventh century onwards in the form of Latin writings, which were partly Christian but also partly derived from pre-Christian Rome. Yet (and here Hermann differs from most other recent 'medievalizing' critics) the poem, especially in its last two sections, contains a fair amount of matter (*töluvert af efni*) from Norway, ancient lore deeply rooted in paganism; it seems very likely that the original poems (*frumkvæði*) which the poet made use of were Norwegian, and though he himself was 'probably' Icelandic, he clearly had first-hand experience of the life and landscape of Norway. The *málhátttr* catalogues of things to be wary of, between stt. 81 and 90, are doubtless popular wisdom long antedating the poet (contrast von See's view that they reflect medieval Christian teaching on 'die Unsicherheit alles Irdischen', cf. my edition of *Hávamál*, 1986, p. 23). The poem is not the product of the Viking Age, as Nordal believed; its wide views and interest in travel reflect the experiences of Norse pilgrims on the Continent in the twelfth century. It is likely that the poet was familiar with *Hugsvinnsmál* (the anonymous free rendering, dated by Hermann to the late twelfth century, of the *Disticha Catonis*) and indeed it is tempting to suppose that both poems were created at the same cultural centre and that both bear the marks of their common background.

These introductory conclusions are followed by two chapters, comprising two thirds of the volume, in which this picture of the poet as erudite, travelled, bookish, is filled out. First, 195 proverbs, or proverb-like sentences, are listed in alphabetical order, most of them direct quotations, of from one to six lines, from the poem, but some made up by Hermann, as *Fár er vamma vanur* or *Hvað skal trúa tryggðum Óðins?*, whose existence is taken to be implied by stt. 22 and 110 respectively, and others cited from other texts, as *Fár hyggur þegjanda þörf*, which comes from *Sólarljóð* 28 but 'manifestly' was in the poet's mind when he composed st. 104. Many (though by no means all) of the 195 'proverbs' are followed by commentary in which obsolete words and obscure phrases are (sometimes) clarified and

more or less parallel sentiments are adduced from Norse prose and poetry, from Cicero and Ovid, Horace and Vergil, from medieval Latin writings, and also from relatively modern Icelandic texts, such as the 17th-century hymn-writer Hallgrímur Pétursson. Except of course for this last category, where *Hávamál* is often no doubt the model, the constant implication is that these parallels, and especially the Latin and scriptural ones, are not just evidence of some human tendency to generalize in roughly similar ways in different societies, but actually constitute the source, direct or indirect, of the lines in *Hávamál*. Then comes a ninety-page catalogue of 'Concepts' (*Hugmyndir*), listing alphabetically 89 concepts or themes treated in the poem (as *árvekni*, *dauði*, *gestir*, *heimska*, *tunga*); we are reminded what *Hávamál* has to say about each of these, and this is often, though not always, expanded into a little essay in which the theme in question is traced through other writings, Norse and foreign. Some of the lengthier essays (seven pages on *manvélar*, 'wooing wiles', for instance) wander rather a long way from the poem and some of the shorter ones too, like *nám og nytsemd*, 'study and utility', or *samkunda*, 'social intercourse', seem but loosely attached.

The book is essentially concluded at this point, but three short chapters follow, treating mainly of the poem's inheritance from native antiquity: 'Archaic relics', 'Torments and runes' and 'Incantations'. There is little here that is not in the standard handbooks on Norse paganism and in the commentaries on the poem (pp. 241–43 are notably close to pp. 29–33 of my edition), but it is of course helpful for Icelandic readers to have these matters presented in their own language. The final chapter is another alphabetical list, this time of 275 Latin gnomes and phrases that have been referred to earlier; each is translated, but there is no discussion.

By and large, Hermann writes as though in a vacuum; there are no footnotes, and the alternative hypotheses advanced by other scholars are rarely referred to and even more rarely argued against. How persuasive is his general thesis? In the Introduction to my edition, and also in *Skandinavistik* 19 (1989), 127–41, I have tried to show that the whole notion of *Hávamál* as a learned, bookish, latinate, fairly sophisticated work from twelfth- or thirteenth-century Iceland confronts great difficulties. The rather disjointed and rambling impression given by the text, with its mixtures of metre and strophe-length and its frequent lack of any clear structure, is more compatible with the traditional notion of *Hávamál* and especially of 'Wisdom' (to use Hermann's name) as transmitted, orally and imperfectly, from pagan Norway than it is with his notions of lateness and book-learning, and the quite numerous Norwegianisms in the poem (not only material, whose presence Hermann admits, but also lexical, which he ignores) are more naturally explained in the same way than as the fruits of twelfth-century tourism. An even stronger pointer in that direction is provided by the great quantity of textual and exegetical scholarship the poem has occasioned for over a century; it is simply not credible that the kind of work postulated by Hermann could contain so many rare and puzzling words and turns of phrase, so much matter for academic controversy and speculation. Then there are, on the one hand, the archaisms, cremation, *bautarsteinar*, the *pulr*, and on the other the complete absence of anything at all that is unquestionably Christian, particularly noteworthy in a poem that has so much to say about proper behaviour, ethics, morality, true and false values. To adduce comparisons with *Hugsvinnsmál*, as Hermann (like von See) repeatedly

does, seems to me to point in exactly the opposite direction: here we do have a poem about behaviour which certainly is of bookish, latinate origin and which few have ever doubted comes from twelfth- or thirteenth-century Iceland, and here there is a great deal of Christian reference and next to nothing in the way of textual difficulty; also, there are several references here to books (*Bækr ok rúnar nem þú blíðliga* st. 12, *á fornum bókum stendr til flests ráð* st. 57; text from Finnur Jónsson's *Skjaldedigtning*); why is there nothing like this in *Hávamál*, if that too comes from the world of book-learning? A recurrent polemical device of Hermann's is to depreciate the pre-Conversion North in the strongest terms: surely, he insists, we cannot believe that *Hávamál* is the product of 'Norwegian cotters, Norse Vikings or primitive Germanic tribes' (p. 9), or 'Icelandic fugitives from Norway' (p. 39). Hermann certainly holds his remote forefathers in low esteem; it is 'sheer absurdity' to suppose that 'Norwegian chawbacons' could have thought up for themselves the idea that one ought to *gjalda lausung við lygi* (st. 45); no, this must derive from Ovid's *fallite fallentes* (p. 135). He is much possessed by the notion that a 'heathen Norseman' would have had little to say about 'courtesy, knowledge, poverty, wooing wives' (p. 28, cf. p. 145). I wonder whether it is entirely fanciful to attribute the vogue which views like Hermann's have enjoyed in recent decades to the enormous decline in the knowledge of Greek among the educated in the past seventy years; for every reader of the *Odyssey* knows that a European society may be non-Christian, materially and socially simple, primitive, even barbarian, and yet be informed by a subtle and sophisticated code of manners. Living as we do in a culture deeply conditioned by the Christian church for well over a millennium, it is very hard for us (quite irrespective of our own beliefs, or lack of them) to shake free from the assumption that what is Christian is civilised and learned and what is pre-Christian is necessarily ignorant, boorish and crude.

To textual problems Hermann takes a lofty attitude. In st. 151 he reads MS *rás* as *hrás*; true, this fails to alliterate, but 'we need not lose any sleep over that' (p. 252). He prints *þægi* and *jarðar* as the final words respectively of st. 39 and 107 (pp. 216 and 225), thus breaching 'Bugge's Law' that a *ljóðaháttur* 'full line' may not end in a trochaic disyllable (cf. my edition, p. 87). Elsewhere he emends the text silently, as in st. 21 *mál*, st. 75 *af aurum*, st. 125 *við þér* (pp. 79, 91 and 117), yet he is not even consistent in this, for at p. 256 it is indicated that *þær* in st. 155 is an emendation (for MS *þeir*). The last line of st. 18 (MS *sá er vitandi er vits*) cannot be a separate sentence, as Hermann punctuates it on p. 103, unless the second *er* is omitted; he prints it again on p. 174, now punctuating differently. The last line of st. 53, *Hálf er öld hvar* (as Hermann prints) has caused much difficulty to others, but for him 'the meaning is clearer than day' (p. 76). This turns out to be 'Everywhere men are imperfect,' a sense of *hálfur* not evidenced in Old Norse and only dubiously present in the modern language (Björn Magnússon Ólsen denied it existed, cf. my edition, p. 100).

Yet—*að hárum þul hlæðu aldregi*—it is difficult to feel irritated with Hermann for long. Even if at times it is over-obvious that he was under no pressure from his publishers to write with concision, one is half-captivated by his genial tone: discursive, ingenuous, unbuttoned, eupeptic, mildly humorous, mildly eccentric. Not every recent writer on the poem has achieved as much.

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