

## KRISTNI SAGA AND ITS SOURCES: SOME REVALUATIONS

BY SIÂN DUKE

**K**RISTNI SAGA IS RATHER DIFFERENT from other accounts of Iceland's conversion to Christianity, and a study of its sources helps to illuminate why this is so. The dating of the saga to c. 1250–84, according to Jón Jóhannesson's dating of *Sturlubók*, rather than to the beginning of the thirteenth century, suggests that it may have drawn on more sources than is usually thought, and that it comes not from the beginning, but from towards the end of a long tradition of writing about Iceland's conversion to Christianity (cf. Jón Jóhannesson 1941, 135–36). This tradition stretches from Ari's reliable history of the Icelandic state, through hagiographic works like Oddr and Gunnlaugr's sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason, to Family Sagas which could, with reservations, be described as historical fiction. In *Kristni saga*, I shall argue, material from these very different texts is selected according to what Björn M. Ólsen (1893, 332) calls *historiske principer* (historical principles), and reworked to form something like a national history of early Christianity in Iceland, in which the role of the Icelandic missionaries is emphasised. In order to give a historical and nationalistic perspective on the Conversion, the author (or perhaps editor) has used not only Ari and Gunnlaugr's works, as is generally accepted, but has also drawn on *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Laxdæla saga* and, perhaps most significantly, *Heimskringla*. The aim of this paper is to examine more closely the relationship between *Kristni saga* and these three sources, and to show how the author has used them to create a distinctive picture of Icelandic conversion history.

Whereas many accounts of Iceland's conversion to Christianity occur within the context of longer works, lives of Óláfr Tryggvason or Sagas of Icelanders, *Kristni saga* sets out to tell the history of Icelandic Christianity independently, as its opening sentence explicitly states: *Nú hefr þat, hversu kristni kom á Ísland* 'Now this is the beginning of how Christianity came to Iceland' (Kahle 1905, 1). It is the only work we have in Icelandic which is wholly devoted to this purpose. The saga also covers a longer time-span than other accounts of the Conversion, placing the story of the Icelandic missions together with that of the early Church in Iceland. It begins with Þorvaldr and Friðrekr's mission to Iceland in c. 981, documents the lives of the two later missionaries, Stefnir and Þangbrandr, and ends its

first half with a depiction of the legal conversion at the General Assembly in the year 1000. At this point there is a gap of about fifty years, partly filled with an account of the deaths of Þorvaldr and Stefnir, before the saga recommences with portraits of Ísleifr and Gizurr, the first two native Icelandic bishops. Its last chapter describes the natural and legal disasters that followed Gizurr's death in 1118, in particular the conflict between the chieftains Þorgils and Hafliði. Altogether, then, the saga covers approximately 150 years of Icelandic history, which are divided into two by the Conversion itself; it has been described as 'et af de første oversigts- eller samlingsværker i den isl. litteratur' (one of the first overviews or compilations in Icelandic literature; Finnur Jónsson 1920–24, II 577).<sup>1</sup>

*Kristni saga* survives in only one medieval manuscript, *Hauksbók*, which was probably written in 1306–08. It follows immediately after Haukr Erlendsson's version of *Landnámabók*, and both are written in Haukr's own hand. Unfortunately only eighteen leaves of the two works are extant, as this section of the manuscript was divided up in the late seventeenth century and its leaves used as covers for small books (cf. *Hauksbók* 1960, xxviii–xxix). The beginning and end of *Kristni saga* are missing and must be supplied from a copy made by Jón Erlendsson in the mid-seventeenth century.

There has been little if any consensus on the date, authorship or sources of *Kristni saga*. The 1773 edition of the saga dated it to the early fourteenth century (*Kristni-saga* 1773, 'Ad lectorem'); Guðbrandur Vigfússon (*Biskupa sögur* 1858–78, I xxi–xxiii) thought it might be as early as the second half of the twelfth century, and Ólsen (1893, 347) placed it in the mid-thirteenth century on the basis of a reference to Bishop Bótólfr, who died in 1246. The 1773 edition asserted that the author was Haukr; Guðbrandur suggested either Oddr Snorrason or Styrmir Kárason; while Oskar Brenner (1878, 7–9) and Konrad Maurer (1891, 89–94) believed that the saga ultimately went back to the work of Ari. Ólsen and Finnur Jónsson (*Hauksbók* 1892–96, lxv) considered the saga an independent work, while Brenner and Maurer thought it was primarily an appendix to *Landnámabók*; Brenner thought that it had been interpolated by Sturla Þórðarson and Maurer by Haukr Erlendsson; and other points of contention include whether the saga has been interpolated, by whom, and at what stage in its history (cf.

<sup>1</sup> This concept of Icelandic history as divided in two by the Conversion corresponds with McCreesh's observations about the structure of certain Family Sagas (1978–79) and with Harris's discussion of bipartite structure in *þettir* and sagas (1986, 210–13).

Maurer 1891, 94–96; Kahle 1905, vi–ix). As for the saga's sources, these have been variously identified as Ari's older *Íslendingabók*, Ari's younger *Íslendingabók*, Gunnlaugr's lost *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, lost sources common to *Kristni saga* and the works just mentioned, and later sagas such as *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Laxdæla saga*. There is not even full agreement over the saga's subject-matter: many scholars have felt that the last chapter, the dispute between Þorgils and Hafliði, does not fit in with the whole, and Brenner (1878, 6–8, 14) argued that the inclusion of political events in the saga disqualified it as an ecclesiastical history. If the author had really been interested in church history, he asserts, he would have filled the fifty-year gap at the centre of the saga with accounts of the foreign bishops and clerics who came to Iceland during that time.

More recently, Jón Jóhannesson's work on the different versions of *Landnámabók* has brought some clarity to the situation (1941, 16–19, 69–72, 224–25). He suggests that, as well as following *Landnám* in the manuscript *Hauksbók*, *Kristni saga* was an appendix to Sturla Þórðarson's version of *Landnám* in a now lost manuscript known as *Resensbók*. In *Árni Magnússons Levned og Skrifter* (1930, II 19, 28, 75, 89, 90, 92), there are several references among Árni's writings to an 'appendix' to *Landnám* which gives information on, among other things, the consecration of Ísleifr as bishop, Ari's age at Ísleifr's death, and Sæmundr's part in the establishment of the tithing laws; the first of these refers specifically to 'Appendix Landnamu in Bibliotheca Resenii' (an appendix to *Landnám* in Resen's collection). Exactly the same information is given in the *Kristni saga* known to us from *Hauksbók* (cf. Kahle 1905, 46–48). Moreover, at the end of *Skarðsárþók* (1958, 193–95), a composite version of *Landnám* compiled from Sturla and Haukr's versions, there is one particular addition which corresponds closely to chapter 18 of *Kristni saga* in *Hauksbók*, but which is fuller and, it seems, closer to the original. Jón Jóhannesson concludes that the addition must have been taken not from the *Kristni saga* in *Hauksbók*, but from the appendix to Sturla's *Landnám*, and that this appendix must itself have been a *Kristni saga*, the one copied (and in parts summarised) by Haukr. This theory not only strengthens the links between *Kristni saga* and *Landnám*, but also reinforces the impression that Sturla had a hand in joining the two together.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jón Jóhannesson's theory has been questioned by Ólafur Halldórsson (1990, 461–66) in so far as it relates to the contents of *Resensbók*. He points out firstly that the references in *Árni Magnússons Levned og Skrifter* are only to material in the last chapters of *Kristni saga* and, secondly, that Árni Magnússon is unlikely to have referred to *Kristni saga* as 'appendix Landnamu', when

Scholars had previously assumed that either Sturla or Haukr appended a pre-existing *Kristni saga* to *Landnáma*, and interpolated chronological and genealogical details (cf. Finnur Jónsson 1920–24, II 571–72). Ólsen (1893, 347–48) even conjectured that the original *Kristni saga* must have begun with an account of the Christian settlers in Iceland, but that Haukr had omitted this because the material was already covered in *Landnáma*. Jón Jóhannesson (1941, 70) suggests instead that the saga never existed in independent form, but was put together by Sturla himself from a number of different sources in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, at any rate before his death in 1284. He argues that Sturla intended *Kristni saga* as one link in a chain of sagas documenting Icelandic history from its beginnings to his own day; these were perhaps the sagas associated with Sturla in the prologue to *Sturlunga saga* (1946, I 115), and called by its compiler *Íslendinga sögur*. The compilation was to have begun with *Landnámabók*, to which Sturla made a number of historical additions, and would have continued with *Kristni saga*, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, *Sturlu saga*, and finally the section of *Sturlunga saga* known as *Íslendinga saga*. *Kristni saga* should therefore be regarded as a transitional work leading from *Landnáma* to the contemporary sagas; hence the focus in its last chapter on the dispute between Þorgils and Hafliði.

Although it does not entirely exclude the possibility that Sturla used a pre-existing *Kristni saga*, this argument has the merit of fitting the facts exactly and of dispensing with the need to posit an independent or heavily revised saga for which there is no evidence. The saga's mixture of old and new, which has so baffled attempts to date it, can be explained by its composite nature, as can its general unevenness of style and the fifty-year gap which occurs in the middle. Its lack of a proper beginning and a conclusive end become understandable in the light of its place within the series *Landnáma*–*Kristni saga*–contemporary sagas. Finally, the interest in chronology and genealogy which characterises the saga-author fits in well with what we know of Sturla Þórðarson, whose work Ólafía Einarsdóttir (1964, 274–75) describes as ‘en lærd kronologs systematiske arbejde’ (the methodical work of a learned chronologist). With reservations as to the saga's prehistory, then, we can be reasonably sure that in its present form (perhaps its only form), it was put together in the second half of the thirteenth century by Sturla Þórðarson.

---

elsewhere he always uses the titles *Kristni saga* or *Historia Christianæ Religionis in Islandiam introductæ*. Nevertheless, the connection between Sturla Þórðarson and *Kristni saga* has been widely accepted.

There has been no corresponding breakthrough with regard to the sources of *Kristni saga*, the identification of which remains a slippery business. Jón Jóhannesson (1941, 71) follows Ólsen (1893, 309–49) in identifying the source for chapters 1–13 (the story of the missions to Iceland) as Gunnlaugr’s lost saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, and the source for chapters 14–17 (the history of the early Church) as Ari’s younger *Íslendingabók*. He does not mention chapter 18 of the saga, which is usually dismissed as an interpolation based on chapter 8 of *Hungrvaka* and *Porgils saga ok Hafliða*. Jón Jóhannesson also numbers *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Laxdæla saga* and ‘annals etc.’ among the subsidiary sources of *Kristni saga*, but gives no evidence for their influence. Both *Laxdæla saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga* had previously been discussed by Ólsen (1893, 310–11, 343–44) and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1937, 121–23), who agreed that *Vatnsdæla saga* may have been a source, but rejected *Laxdæla saga* on the grounds that it was younger than *Kristni saga*. In *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur* (Simek and Hermann Pálsson 1987, 219), the sources of the saga are given as Gunnlaugr’s *Óláfs saga*, Ari’s *Íslendingabók* and *Laxdæla saga*. This is presumably intended as a summary of Jón Jóhannesson’s research, but it is not entirely clear why *Vatnsdæla saga* has been left out and *Laxdæla saga* (which is a far less important source) placed on a level with Gunnlaugr and Ari’s works.

If we can date *Kristni saga* to the third quarter of the thirteenth century rather than to the beginning, this will have profound implications for the identification of its sources, implications which Jón Jóhannesson does not follow up. Although the first half of the saga is probably based on Gunnlaugr’s *\*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, parts of which are preserved for comparison in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, it also has close connections with *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, Snorri Sturluson’s *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in Heimskringla*, and perhaps even *Eyrbyggja saga*. Most scholars have argued either that *Kristni saga* serves as a source for the above sagas, or that it shares a common source with them; but the possibility now arises that these sagas are in fact sources for *Kristni saga*, especially since *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga* and parts of *Heimskringla* are all used by Sturla Þórðarson in his version of *Landnáma* (cf. Jón Jóhannesson 1941, 90–95, 109–10, 121–22). The second half of *Kristni saga* (chapters 14–18) is more obviously dependent on Ari’s *Íslendingabók* and usually follows Ari’s narrative word for word. There are, however, some additional comments in chapters 14–15, as well as in chapter 18, which are comparable with passages of *Hungrvaka*. Again, this has been put down to the use of a common source or, alternatively, to *Hungrvaka*’s

use of *Kristni saga*, while the direct loan from *Hungrvaka* in *Kristni saga* chapter 18 is usually explained away as the result of interpolation (cf. *Biskupa sögur* 1858–78, Ixxii; Brenner 1878, 134–35, 142–43, 147–49; Kahle 1905, ix–x). But if the whole saga, including chapter 18, was composed in the second half of the thirteenth century, it makes far more sense to see *Hungrvaka* as the direct source for the additions in chapters 14 and 15 as well as for the beginning of chapter 18. Jón Jóhannesson's conclusions as to when the saga was composed clearly call for a new exploration of its sources.

In the rest of this paper, I shall look more closely at the first half of *Kristni saga* (chapters 1–13), and trace the possible influence there of *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Laxdæla saga* and Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla*. I shall then go on to discuss very briefly what the author's use of these sources tells us about his methods of working.

In chapter 2 of *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 6–10), we are told the story of Bishop Friðrekr's confrontation with two berserks at Haukagil in Vatnsdalr. The same story is also told in *Þorvalds þátrr ens víðförla* (Kahle 1905, 69–71), where it is attributed to Gunnlaugr Leifsson, and in chapter 46 of *Vatnsdæla saga* (1939, 124–26). The account in *Kristni saga* occurs within a section of narrative based on Gunnlaugr's work which follows the order of events given in *Þorvalds þátrr*: the encounter with the berserks occurs after the conversion of Þorvaldr's father, Koðrán, and before the missionaries' unsuccessful journey to the Westfjords. The actual description of the event, however, has striking parallels with *Vatnsdæla saga*. Scholars have explained these in different ways: Brenner (1878, 35–37) thought that *Vatnsdæla saga* was partly based on a text like *Kristni saga*, while Ólsen (1893, 311) and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1937, 121–22) argued that *Kristni saga* had in all likelihood been influenced by an early version of *Vatnsdæla saga* or a related account. Yet a comparison between the three versions of the story suggests that the author of *Kristni saga* is most likely to have borrowed directly from *Vatnsdæla saga*.

In *Þorvalds þátrr*, which is probably closest to Gunnlaugr's work, the encounter with the berserks is set at Þorvaldr's marriage feast to Vígdís, the daughter of Óláfr of Haukagil. Present among the heathen guests are two berserks, both called Haukr, who challenge Friðrekr to compete with them at their sports: striding barefoot through fire and falling on their swords without hurting themselves. Trusting in God's mercy, he agrees and, in full vestments, consecrates the fire through which they are to stride. When the two berserks approach the fire, it burns so high that the two men die instantly and are taken up to Haukagil to be buried. When

Friðrekr walks through the fire, however, the flames part on either side, rather like the Red Sea, and not even the fringes on his garments are singed.<sup>3</sup> Many turn to God as a result of this miracle, and Óláfr of Haukagil builds a church on his farm. The scene as a whole can be read as a ‘trial of strength’ in which the representatives of heathenism are defeated through the power of the Christian God.

In *Kristni saga*, the whole set-up is rather different. The missionaries are not at Þorvaldr’s wedding feast, but at a *haustboð* ‘autumn feast’ held by Óláfr of Haukagil; and among Óláfr’s guests is Þorkell krafla, probably the historical husband of Vígdís (cf. *Landnámabók: Melabók* 1921, 97; *Hallfreðar saga* 1977, 95). The two berserks are not invited to this feast, but intrude upon it in the usual fashion, and Friðrekr is asked by the other men present to destroy them. Although he consecrates the fire before the berserks walk through it, this does not kill them, but burns them severely; they are then finished off by other guests at the feast. Þorkell krafla is prime-signed, and others baptised, but there is no mention of any church-building.

Apart from its place in the narrative and the actual confrontation, this account has little in common with that of the *þátrr*. When we turn to *Vatnsdæla saga*, on the other hand, we find a large number of similarities. In *Vatnsdæla saga* (1939, 124–25), the scene is set at an autumn feast at which the guest of honour is Þorkell krafla: *Um haustit at vetrnóttum bauð Óláfr til sín vinum sínum, einkum Þorkatli mági sínum. Þeir byskup ok Þorvaldr váru þar* ‘In the autumn, at the winter nights, Óláfr invited his friends to his home, especially his son-in-law Þorkell. The bishop and Þorvaldr were there’. In *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 8), we are given the same information, but Þorvaldr and Friðrekr are, as we might expect, mentioned first: *Þeir biskup ok Þorvaldr váru at haustboði í Vatnsdal at Giljá með Óláfi; þar var þá kominn Þorkell krafla ok mart annara manna* ‘The bishop and Þorvaldr were at an autumn feast at Giljá in Vatnsdalr with Óláfr; Þorkell krafla and a lot of other people had come there’. The two berserks, who have been introduced at an earlier point in *Vatnsdæla saga*, are not invited to this feast and, when their imminent arrival is reported, Þorkell goes to the bishop for advice: *Þorkell spurði byskup, ef hann vildi*

<sup>3</sup> There are many parallels between this scene and hagiographic works portraying the trials suffered by saints. In particular, the reference to Friðrekr’s garments may come straight from the story in Book III of Gregory’s *Dialogues* (1978, II 344) of the monk Benedict, who is thrown into a furnace, but whose clothes are untouched by the flames: *neque extrema ullu modo vestimenta cremarentur* ‘not even the fringes of his garments were singed’.



*ráð til leggja, at berserkir þessir fengi bana* ‘Porkell asked the bishop whether he would give advice, so that these berserks might meet their death’. *Kristni saga* is less specific, but conveys roughly the same information: *Þá báðu menn biskup, at hann skyldi fyrirkoma þeim* ‘Then people asked the bishop to destroy them’. In *Vatnsdæla saga*, Friðrekr agrees to this on the condition that Þorkell receive baptism if he is successful. He then orders three fires to be built, which he consecrates, and asks the strongest and most able men to move to the benches nearest the fires. When the berserks finally enter, they stride through the first two fires, are badly burnt, and head for the nearest bench, where they are beaten to death with cudgels.<sup>4</sup> *Kristni saga* gives us a condensed version of this: *Eptir þat vígði biskup eldinn, áðr þeir æði, ok brunnu þeir þá mjök; eptir þat gengu menn at þeim ok drápu þá* ‘After that the bishop consecrated the fire, before they strode through, and they were badly burned; after that, people attacked and killed them’. In neither work does Friðrekr propose to stride through the fire himself. Both accounts tell us that several people are baptised, but in *Vatnsdæla saga*, Þorkell himself decides to delay his baptism until Christianity is legally accepted in Iceland.

Although the parallels in wording are rather few, it is clear that *Kristni saga* agrees with *Vatnsdæla saga* at many of the points where it differs from *Porvalds þátr*: the setting of the encounter at an autumn feast, the presence of Þorkell krafla, the intrusion of the berserks from the outside, the request for Friðrekr’s help, and the killing of the berserks by the other men present, rather than by the fire. Perhaps more important is the absence in *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Kristni saga* of the religious motifs which characterise the scene in the *þátr*: the militant heathenism of the berserks, their religious challenge to Friðrekr and his miraculous immunity from the fire. *Kristni saga* also agrees with *Vatnsdæla saga* indirectly in its omission of any reference to Óláfr’s church-building; in *Vatnsdæla saga*, Óláfr dies shortly after his baptism. In all these cases, the influence of *Vatnsdæla*

<sup>4</sup> An interesting analogue to this scene occurs in *Brennu-Njáls saga* (1954, 267–69), where Þangbrandr also rids a feast of an unruly berserk, although to my knowledge no literary relationship between the two has been suggested. Like Friðrekr, Þangbrandr builds three fires before the berserk’s arrival which are used to test the relative strengths of Christianity and paganism. One is consecrated by Þangbrandr, one by the heathens present, and one is left unconsecrated (cf. the ‘trial of strength’ set up by Elijah in 1 Kings 18: 16–40). The berserk is, of course, only afraid of the fire consecrated by Þangbrandr. In *Vatnsdæla saga*, it is not clear why three fires are built instead of the one mentioned in *Porvalds þátr*.



saga would explain the deviation in *Kristni saga* from Gunnlaugr's work. The only substantial differences between *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Kristni saga* are that *Kristni saga* omits the dialogue between Friðrekr and Þorkell prior to the berserks' arrival, and mentions that Þorkell was prime-signed after their deaths. The first of these can be put down to the author's summarising of his source and to the lesser significance of Þorkell in *Kristni saga*; it is the story of the mission, and not that of the potential convert, which is being told. The prime-signing is rather more difficult to explain. Some scholars have used it as evidence that the author of *Kristni saga* did not know *Vatnsdæla saga* (cf. Brenner 1878, 37), while others, for example Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1937, 122), have supposed that he knew a different version of *Vatnsdæla saga* or a different tradition about Þorkell. There may, however, be a simpler explanation. In *Vatnsdæla saga* (1939, 125–26), Þorkell, although rather nervous about the idea of being immersed in water, expresses a clear inclination towards the new faith: *Pat þótti Þorkatli mest af bregða, er í vatni skyldi þvásk, ok kvazk eigi nenna enn um sinn at hafa þessa breytni, en kvazk þó hyggja at sjá mundi góð* 'Þorkell thought that it differed most in that one had to be washed in water, and said he was not willing to accept this change for the moment, but he did say that he believed it to be good'. He declares that he will *enn bíða um tíma*, which could perhaps be translated 'wait until the time is right'. It may be Þorkell's obvious affinity with the new faith and resolve to convert at a later time that the author of *Kristni saga*, without space to explain fully, wishes to express through his prime-signing. He was perhaps also aware of the demands of his story as conversion narrative; some sort of response from Þorkell was required and, since he did not in fact convert for another eighteen years, prime-signing presented itself as a good compromise.

The author of *Kristni saga*, then, knew two versions of Friðrekr's encounter with the berserks, the one preserved in *Þorvalds þáttr* and the one in *Vatnsdæla saga*. He took the context of the anecdote from Gunnlaugr's work, and possibly some of the wording, but inserted into this a summary of the story told in *Vatnsdæla saga*. Why he gave precedence to the version in *Vatnsdæla saga* over that of the *þáttr* is an issue which I shall come back to later (see p. 364).

One of the most disputed scenes in *Kristni saga* with regard to sources is Kjartan's conversion to Christianity in chapter 11. This was obviously a well-known story, as it occurs in a large number of texts: the A and the S texts of Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 122–26), *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 328–30), an interpolation in the text of *Heimskringla* in *Fríssbók* (*Codex Frisianus* 1871, 148–49), *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 32–

34), *Laxdæla saga* (1934, 115–23), and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (1958–61, I 358–67, 369–72). It was probably also a part of Gunnlaugr's lost *Óláfs saga*, but we cannot tell what form it took there, because the corresponding passage in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* is clearly not based on Gunnlaugr's work alone (cf. Ólsen 1893, 298). There have been many discussions of the relationship between these accounts, which is complicated of course by the fact that Gunnlaugr's is missing. Brenner (1878, 92–100), for example, thought that Oddr and *Kristni saga* used a common source, and that *Laxdæla saga* (which he dated to c. 1200) might have been an additional influence on *Kristni saga*. Ólsen (1893, 339–45) assumed that Gunnlaugr's work was the basis of the account in *Kristni saga*, but claimed that *Laxdæla saga* drew on independent sources. He explained the similarities between the two by advancing the theory that a copyist who knew *Laxdæla saga* had altered the text of *Kristni saga*. He also pointed out that there were a number of parallels between *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga*, and put this down to the faithful use by both of Gunnlaugr's work. Finnur Jónsson (1920–24, II 576), on the other hand, asserted that all the accounts were independent and based on oral tradition. Finally, Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1937, 123, 130–32) suggested that the parallels between *Laxdæla saga* and *Kristni saga* on the one hand, and *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* on the other, were due to the faithful use of Gunnlaugr's work in all these texts, but without excluding the possibility that *Kristni saga* had been altered by a copyist familiar with *Laxdæla saga* or that it was a direct source of *Heimskringla*.

Clearly all the accounts of Kjartan's conversion are closely related, and Gunnlaugr's version must have been known, if not used, by later authors. We can also be fairly sure that Oddr's work was one of the sources for *Laxdæla saga* and *Heimskringla*, and possibly for the author of *Kristni saga* (cf. *Laxdæla saga* 1934, xlii; *Heimskringla* 1941–51, I cxvi). Yet Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's theory that *Laxdæla saga*, *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* are all faithful renderings of Gunnlaugr's work is simply untenable in the light of the marked differences between *Laxdæla saga* and *Heimskringla*; nor is the copyist theory valid if *Kristni saga* was composed in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, when the author himself could easily have known *Laxdæla saga*. It is worth asking instead whether *Laxdæla saga* is not a direct source for the account of Kjartan's conversion in *Kristni saga*.

The similarities between the two sagas are actually rather unimpressive, especially when one considers the attention *Laxdæla saga* has been given as a possible source in *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur*. Both tell the

story of how Kjartan comes to Norway and is converted by Óláfr Tryggvason, but they have little else in common, and even this story is not told in the same way in both. According to *Laxdæla saga*, Kjartan arrives in Norway during the summer of 997 along with his foster-brother, Bolli, and Kálfr Ásgeirsson. Already present there are three Icelandic ships owned by Brandr inn ǫrvi, Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld and the sons of Breiðárskeggi, Bjarni and Þórhallr. We are told that these Icelanders had attempted to leave Norway before Kjartan's arrival, but that King Óláfr had forbidden this. One fine day, when men from the town are competing at swimming near the ships, Kjartan notices that one is far superior to the others. He tries to provoke Bolli into competing with this man and, when Bolli refuses, takes up the challenge himself. To his humiliation, the stranger proves to be the stronger and, after three underwater struggles, Kjartan is forced to admit defeat. On shore, the man reveals that he is King Óláfr Tryggvason, and gives Kjartan his cloak as a gift. After putting up a somewhat ineffectual resistance to Óláfr, Kjartan finally converts to Christianity at Christmas. The next year (998), Þangbrandr is sent to Iceland.

In *Kristni saga*, on the other hand, the scene is set in the autumn of 999, three years after Þangbrandr is sent to Iceland and just before his return. As in *Laxdæla saga*, we are told that there are three Icelandic ships at Niðaróss, but their owners do not correspond; the first ship belongs to Kjartan, Bolli and Kálfr (who are treated separately in *Laxdæla saga*), the second to Halldórr Guðmundarson, Kolbeinn Þórðarson and Svertingr Rúnólfsson (the men who are later taken hostage by King Óláfr), and the third to Hallfreðr and Þórarinn Nefjólffsson. The Icelanders attempt to leave Niðaróss before the king's arrival, but are not able to because the wind is against them. The swimming competition follows roughly the same order as in *Laxdæla saga*, but the roles of Kjartan and Bolli have been reversed; Bolli urges Kjartan to compete with Óláfr, and Kjartan at first refuses. Only when Bolli prepares to compete himself does Kjartan change his mind. After his defeat, Kjartan exchanges words with Óláfr Tryggvason, but Óláfr does not reveal his identity directly. Instead, he allows Kjartan to become aware of it through his expensive gift: *Kjartan varð viss, at þessi maðr var Óláfr konungr* 'Kjartan became aware that this man was King Óláfr' (Kahle 1905, 34). At Michaelmas Kjartan is summoned by the king and asked to accept baptism, which he agrees to do in return for honourable treatment. Immediately after Kjartan's baptism, Þangbrandr returns from Iceland.

The main evidence for the influence of *Laxdæla saga* here is the presence of Kálfr Ásgeirsson on Kjartan's ship; he is not mentioned in any version

of the story other than these two. The dialogue between Kjartan and Bolli prior to the swimming competition is probably also modelled on *Laxdæla saga*, despite the fact that their roles have been reversed; Bolli is mentioned in the S-text of Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 122), but plays no part in what is narrated, and in the A-text, the dialogue takes place between Kjartan and Hallfreðr.<sup>5</sup> Hallfreðr is also Kjartan's interlocutor in the interpolation in *Fríssbók*, which comes from a lost manuscript of Oddr's saga, possibly the same one from which the two remaining leaves of the U-text originate. In both cases, it makes more sense to assume that the new characters were borrowed from *Laxdæla saga* by *Kristni saga* than vice versa; Kálfr and Bolli play important roles in the plot of *Laxdæla saga*, but do not appear outside this chapter in *Kristni saga*. Perhaps the author of *Kristni saga* was relying on his memory of the swimming competition in *Laxdæla saga* and accidentally reversed the roles of Kjartan and Bolli, or perhaps he wished to portray Kjartan more sympathetically; the impression of his arrogance is certainly lessened by Bolli's initiation of the competition with Óláfr.

There are, moreover, a small number of verbal echoes in *Kristni saga* which suggest that the influence of *Laxdæla saga* may run deeper than the provision of Bolli and Kálfr. Among the most significant is the introduction to the swimming competition in the two works:

*Laxdæla saga* (1934, 118)

Pat var um haustit einn góðan veðrdag,  
at menn fóru ór bænum til sunds.

One fine day in the autumn, people  
went from the town to go swimming.

*Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 33)

Pat var ein góðan veðrdag, at menn  
fóru á sund ór bænum.

One fine day, people went swim-  
ming from the town.

These almost identical statements can be contrasted with the wording in the A-text of Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* at this point (1932, 122): *Þeir sa einn dag er veðr var gott, at menn fóru asund. at skemta sér* 'They saw one day, when the weather was good, that people went swimming to entertain themselves'. Likewise, when Óláfr reveals his identity, *Kristni*

<sup>5</sup> The content of Hallfreðr and Kjartan's dialogue in the A-text of Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 122–23) provides strong evidence that it represents the original version of this scene, since Hallfreðr's reluctance to compete with Óláfr is clearly due to an anticipation of the difficult relationship he will later have with the king. Bolli and Kjartan, on the other hand, have no such reason for refusing the challenge. I am grateful to Ursula Dronke for pointing this out to me.

saga provides a shorter and reported version of the direct speech in *Laxdæla saga*:

*Laxdæla saga* (1934, 118)

‘Bæði er, at þú ert gørviligr maðr, enda lætr þú allstórliga; en eigi því síðr skaltu vita nafn mitt, eða við hvern þú hefir sundit þreytt.’

‘You are not only an accomplished man, but also act very arrogantly; but you shall nonetheless know my name, and with whom you have competed at swimming.’

*Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 34)

Hann gaf Kjartan skarlatsskikkju ok kvað hann þá vita mundu, við hvern hann hafði þreytt sundit.

He gave Kjartan a scarlet cloak and said that he would then know with whom he had competed at swimming.

In Oddr’s *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 124), on the other hand, there is the simple declaration: *Við konungin hefir þu reynt sundit* ‘It is with the king that you have competed at swimming’. Finally, in *Laxdæla saga*, we are told that Kjartan showed the king’s cloak to his men, but that *ekki létu hans menn vel yfir þessu* ‘his men were not pleased about this’; *Kristni saga* tells us that *heiðnir menn létu illa yfir því, er Kjartan hafði gjafir þegit af konungi* ‘the heathens were displeased that Kjartan had received gifts from the king’. Oddr, it is true, also comments that *þeim licar þetta stor illa* ‘they dislike this very much’, but connects the Icelanders’ displeasure with the competition as a whole rather than with the gift-giving in particular. What emerges from this brief comparison is that all three texts are very similar, but that there are a few similarities between *Laxdæla saga* and *Kristni saga* which cannot be traced back to Oddr, and which may therefore be due to the influence of *Laxdæla saga* on *Kristni saga*. The verbal parallels are, however, slight, and only the presence of Kálfr and Bolli in *Kristni saga* can really be considered conclusive. In view of this, one might wish to question the singling out of *Laxdæla saga* as a source for *Kristni saga* in Jón Jóhannesson’s work and in *Lexikon der alt-nordischen Literatur*.

As I noted earlier, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla* also contains an account of Kjartan’s conversion to Christianity, although in this version there is no swimming competition between Kjartan and Óláfr. Scholars have been reluctant to consider the possibility of direct influence from *Heimskringla*, mainly because in chapter 6 of *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 16), the author refers to an *Óláfs saga* which is clearly not Snorri’s; it is mentioned in confirmation of Óláfr’s journey from Russia to Norway to become king, whereas in *Heimskringla* Óláfr travels to Norway from Ireland.

Ólsen (1893, 340) argues that the author would not have used more than one saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, and that he would have used Snorri's in chapter 6 if he had known it. Yet Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* does not mention the main event of chapter 6, Stefnir's mission to Iceland, and so the author's apparent non-use of *Heimskringla* at this point does not necessarily rule out influence from it elsewhere. Nor is there any justification for Ólsen's assumption that the author could not have used more than one saga of Óláfr Tryggvason; he may well have used both Oddr's and Gunnlaugr's. Since *Heimskringla* tells us most about the Icelandic missions in its depiction of Kjartan's conversion and Þangbrandr's return from Iceland, it is above all in these scenes that we might expect to see the influence of Snorri's work.

As far as Kjartan's encounter with Óláfr is concerned, there are certainly extensive parallels between *Kristni saga* and *Heimskringla*. In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 324–28), Kjartan's arrival in Norway is preceded by an account in chapters 77–80 of King Óláfr's mission in Hálogaland, which ends with his return to Niðaróss in the autumn. The opening sentence of the chapter in *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 32) looks very much like a summary of these movements: *Óláfr konungr hafði kristnat Hálogaland ok kom hann til Niðaróss um haustit* 'King Óláfr had converted Hálogaland and arrived in Niðaróss in the autumn'. Although the same mission is described in Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 140–42), it is placed after Kjartan's conversion rather than directly before his arrival. In *Heimskringla*, Snorri goes on to tell us that among the Icelanders staying at Niðaróss that autumn were Halldórr Guðmundarson, Kolbeinn Þórðarson and Svertingr Rúnólfsson. These are the very men that *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 32–33) mentions at this point among the ship-owners. Both *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* tell us that all the Icelanders were heathen and that they were unable to leave Niðaróss before Óláfr's arrival because of bad weather. Whereas Oddr gives them three unsuccessful attempts to depart, *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* mention only one. *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 329) adds that when Óláfr heard of the Icelanders, he placed a ban on their departure, and knowledge of this ban may be implied in *Kristni saga* by the information that *Þessir . . . ætluðu suðr fyrir land; en þeim gafeigi, áðr konungr kom norðan* 'These men . . . intended to go south along the coast, but did not get a wind before the king arrived from the north' (Kahle 1905, 33). There is an implication in this that the Icelanders were prevented from leaving by other means after the king's arrival.

The similarities are yet more pronounced when we come to Kjartan's actual conversion. In Oddr's saga and *Laxdæla saga*, as we have seen, this takes place at Christmas but in *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* Kjartan converts at Michaelmas. The alteration is usually put down to the influence of Gunnlaugr, who, so the argument goes, was especially devoted to the Archangel Michael, and changed the time of Kjartan's conversion in order to reflect this devotion (cf. Ólsen 1893, 342–43); Hallr of Síða's conversion, for example, also takes place at Michaelmas. Although this may be correct, there is another possibility: that Snorri made the alteration as part of his general 'tidying up' of Oddr's rather haphazard chronology (cf. Andersson 1977). In Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 126–27), the arrival of Þangbrandr from Iceland is closely connected to the story of Kjartan; chapter 40 of the A-text ends with his conversion, and chapter 41 continues with the words *Oc íþenna tíma com Þangbrandr af Íslandi* 'And at this time, Þangbrandr arrived from Iceland'. In the S-text, there is not even a chapter division between the two events, and this may have been created by the compiler of the A-text in order to allow the addition of extra information about Þangbrandr's mission. Yet if Kjartan was converted at Christmas, Þangbrandr could not possibly have arrived in Norway for at least another five or six months (in June or July); for Oddr, the connection between the events was probably primarily thematic, part of his linking together of events concerning Icelanders in what the A-text of his *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 122) calls an *Íslendinga þotr* (*Íslendinga þáttur*). In *Laxdæla saga*, the author renders the chronological problem insignificant by splitting up the two events: Kjartan is baptised in 997 at Christmas, Þangbrandr goes to Iceland in 998 and returns in the summer of 999. In *Heimskringla*, however, Snorri preserves Oddr's connection by a small chronological alteration: Kjartan converts at Michaelmas, and Þangbrandr returns immediately afterwards. The author of *Kristni saga* adopts the same solution as Snorri, although in his case, this involves keeping Þangbrandr at sea for several months; he leaves Iceland before the General Assembly in June, and arrives in Norway at the end of September.

All four texts tell us that Kjartan and the other Icelanders go to church to hear the divine services, either at Christmas or at Michaelmas. After returning to their lodgings, they discuss the experience, and in *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* Kjartan expresses his approval of Christian worship:



*Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 329–30)

En er þeir kómu til skipa sinna, sagði hver þeira, hvernug líkat hafði atferð kristinna manna. Kjartan lét vel yfir, en flestir aðrir lögstuðu.

And when they got to their ships, each of them said how they had liked the proceedings of Christians. Kjartan approved of them, but most of the others found fault.

*Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 34)

Ok er þeir kómu apr, ræddu þeir um með sér, hvern veg þeim hafði virzt þeira athæfi; Kjartan lét vel yfir, en fáir aðrir.

And when they got back, they discussed amongst themselves how their practices had seemed to them; Kjartan approved of them, but few others did.

In Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Laxdæla saga*, on the other hand, it is Kjartan's opinion of the king which is asked, and the king of whom he speaks so highly. In *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga*, Kjartan is then summoned by Óláfr, whose spies have been vigilant, and is offered baptism. In both cases, he lays down one condition: in *Heimskringla*, he asks for the king's friendship and in *Kristni saga*, to be shown the honour he would expect in Iceland. Again, this can be contrasted with the account of Oddr, where Kjartan converts without bargaining after hearing Óláfr preach the faith. The chapter in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 330) ends with a description of how the new converts are treated: *Var Kjartan ok Bolli í boði konungs, meðan þeir váru í hvítaváðum* 'Kjartan and Bolli were entertained at the king's table while they were in white robes'. The ending in *Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 34) is almost identical: *Kjartan var þá skírðr ok var í boði konungs meðan hann var í hvítaváðum* 'Kjartan was then baptised, and was entertained at the king's table while he was in white robes'. The close similarities in wording between the two texts together with their agreement against Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Laxdæla saga* suggest strongly that the main source of *Kristni saga* for this scene was Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla*. Only for the swimming competition, which is not depicted there, does the author look to other sources.

The parallels between *Kristni saga* and *Heimskringla* are not restricted to this scene, but continue into the second half of the chapter, which describes Þangbrandr's return from Iceland. This passage is usually thought to be derived from Gunnlaugr's saga, and possibly also Oddr's, but there are echoes of Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* at a number of points. When Gizurr and Hjalti speak up in defence of their fellow Icelanders, for example, they use exactly the same argument in *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga*:

*Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 332)

Eigi muntu, konungr, vilja ganga á bak orðum þínum, því at þú mælir svá, at engi maðr skal svá mikit hafa gort til reiði þinnar, at eigi viltu þat upp gefa þeim er skirask vilja ok láta af heiðni.

You will surely not go against your own words, king, because you say yourself that no man shall have done so much to anger you, that you will not forgive those who wish to be baptised and to abandon heathenism.

*Kristni saga* (Kahle 1905, 34–35)

Þeir Hjalti ok Gizurr báðu þá fyrir mǫnnum, sagði at konungr hafði þat mælt, at menn skyldu ekki þat hafa til gort aðr, ef þeir vildi skíraz láta, at eigi skyldi frið hafa.

Hjalti and Gizurr then spoke up on behalf of people, said that the king had declared that people would not have done anything previously, if they wished to be baptised, that there would not be pardon for.

In Oddr's saga, there is no mention of this particular promise on the king's part. In *Heimskringla*, Hjalti and Gizurr go on to assure Óláfr that Christianity will eventually catch on in Iceland: *En vér munum finna bragð þat til, er kristni mun við gangask á Íslandi* 'But we will think of a plan, so that Christianity will be accepted in Iceland'. As we have come to expect, *Kristni saga* reports this in indirect speech: *Gizurr sagði at honum þótti ván, at kristni mundi við gangaz á Íslandi, ef ráðum væri at farit* 'Gizurr said that he thought it likely Christianity would be accepted in Iceland if they proceeded sensibly'. Oddr's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1932, 127), however, uses a slightly different expression: *Oc sogðu at menn myndu við taca cristni a Islandi æf raðum veri at farit* 'And they said that people would accept Christianity in Iceland if they proceeded sensibly'. The speech ends in both *Heimskringla* and *Kristni saga* with a criticism of Þangbrandr. In *Heimskringla*, Gizurr and Hjalti object to his methods of evangelism: *En Þangbrandr fór þar, sem hér með yðr, við ofstopa ok manndráp, ok þolðu menn honum þar ekki slíkt* 'But Þangbrandr behaved there in the same way as he did here with you, with arrogance and killing, and people would not tolerate such things from him there'. *Kristni saga* borrows this idea, but develops it to bring in Þangbrandr's nationality: *En Þangbrandr fór þar, sem hér, heldr óspakliga, drap hann þar menn nokkura, ok þótti mǫnnum hart at taka þat af útlendum manni* 'But Þangbrandr behaved in the same way there as he did here, rather badly; he killed several people there, and people thought it hard to take that from a foreigner'. In Oddr, in comparison, it is rather understated: *En quaðu Þangbrandr við fa menn vingaz hava a Islandi* 'But they said that Þangbrandr had not made many friends in Iceland'. The last part of the chapter in *Kristni saga*, which tells of Hjalti's magnanimity towards his enemy's son, Svertingr Rúnólfsson, can be compared with chapter 218 of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (1958–61, II 163–66) and probably does derive

from Gunnlaugr's work. But the account of the collective baptism of the Icelanders, with which the scene ends, goes back to *Heimskringla*; in all other versions of the story, the heathen Icelanders are baptised before Þangbrandr's return from Iceland. Although the second half of this chapter in *Kristni saga* draws on a number of different sources, the most important of these is, again, *Heimskringla*.

There are several shorter sections of *Kristni saga* which may also show the influence of *Heimskringla* (cf. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1937, 128–29). In chapter 7, for example, we are told of Óláfr's decision to send Þangbrandr to Iceland (Kahle 1905, 19):

Þá er Óláfr konungr spurði óspekðir þær, er Þangbrandr gerði, stefndi hann honum til sín ok [bar sak]jir [á] hann ok kvað hann ekki skyldu vera í sinni þjónustu, er hann var ránsmaðr. Þ[angbrandr bað konung le]ggja á hendr sér nokkura torvelda sendiferð. Konungr mælti: 'Sáttir skulu vit, ef þú ferr til Íslands ok fær kristnat landit.'

When King Óláfr heard about the unruly things which Þangbrandr had done, he summoned him and accused him, and said that he could no longer be in his service, when he was a thief. Þangbrandr asked the king to send him on some difficult errand. The king said: 'We shall be reconciled if you go to Iceland and manage to convert the country.'

It is usually assumed that this is based on Gunnlaugr's work as preserved independently in chapter 189 of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (1958–61, II 64–66), but at least some of the phrasing recalls the treatment of the same scene in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 319): *En fyrir sakir óspekðar hans þá vildi konungr eigi hann með sér hafa, ok fekk honum sendiferð þá, at hann skyldi fara til Íslands ok kristna landit* 'And because of his unruliness, the king did not want to have him with him any longer, and gave him the task of going to Iceland and converting the country'. Right at the end of chapter 11 of *Kristni saga*, there is a brief account of Hallfreðr's baptism: *Óláfr konungr veitti Hallfrøði guðsifjar, því hann vildi eigi láta skíraz ella; þá kallaðiz konungr hann vandræðaskáld ok gaf honum sverð at nafnfesti* 'King Óláfr stood sponsor to Hallfreðr, because he refused to be baptised otherwise; then the king called him "the troublesome poet" and gave him a sword as a naming gift' (Kahle 1905, 35). Why the author places this so late, among the forced baptisms, is not clear; perhaps he found that he could not mention it earlier without breaking the flow of the narrative. In any case, the source of the reference is probably chapter 83 of Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 330–32), which is the only account of Hallfreðr's baptism to mention the king's sponsorship, Hallfreðr's nickname and the gift of the sword all in quick succession. Finally, Ólafur Halldórsson (1978, 383–87) has shown that the reference to

Leifr's mission to Greenland at the beginning of chapter 12 of *Kristni saga* is probably based on the wording of chapter 196 of Snorri's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, while the account of Óláfr's preparations to go south relates to the contents of chapter 195. Only in *Heimskringla* and in *Kristni saga* are these two events made the context for Gizurr and Hjalti's mission to Iceland.

*Heimskringla*, then, is by far the most important of the three sources I have discussed here. It not only forms the basis for *Kristni saga*'s account of Kjartan's conversion and Þangbrandr's return from Iceland, but has also influenced several other scenes: the commissioning of Þangbrandr, the baptism of Hallfreðr and the preparations for Gizurr and Hjalti's mission. Within these particular sections, it has motivated the author's chronological ordering of events, although elsewhere the chronological influence is limited because *Heimskringla* does not refer to the missions of Þorvaldr and Stefnir, or describe Þangbrandr's in any detail. All the evidence shows that the author of *Kristni saga* used the account of *Heimskringla* whenever possible, preferring it in such cases to that of Oddr or Gunnlaugr, and even to that of *Laxdæla saga*. Where *Heimskringla* is lacking, however, he fills in the story from other sources, as in the case of the swimming competition.

What does this tell us about the author of *Kristni saga* and his approach to his source-material? He was clearly well read, and put his saga together from a large number of sources, combining and reworking these to fit them to their new context (cf. Jón Jóhannesson 1941, 131). His dependence on Gunnlaugr's \**Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* has perhaps been overemphasised, for in several places he chooses alternative accounts in preference to those of Gunnlaugr and, elsewhere, there is evidence that Gunnlaugr's work has been heavily revised (Ólsen 1893, 309–33).<sup>6</sup> The combination of different sources suggests that the author was a historically-minded man, who aimed to give the most reliable picture he could of early Christianity in Iceland. This does not necessarily mean, as is sometimes

<sup>6</sup> The whole issue of *Kristni saga*'s relationship to Gunnlaugr's lost saga of Óláfr Tryggvason is extremely complicated. Ólsen (1893, 332) argued that Gunnlaugr's work was preserved fairly accurately in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, but that it had been reworked in *Kristni saga* according to the author's historical principles. The first of these points, however, depends upon an assumption that the compiler of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* followed his texts closely, and this is clearly not always the case (cf. Knirk 1981, 186–99; *Hallfreðar saga* 1977, cxxviii–cxxx). It is therefore possible that *Kristni saga* is sometimes closer to Gunnlaugr's work, at least stylistically, than *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* is.

thought, that he used what we would consider the most reliable sources. His aim, perhaps, was to give an impression of historicity which was better achieved by works like *Heimskringla* and certain Family Sagas than by earlier hagiographic works like Oddr and Gunnlaugr's sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason. This is certainly the case with the scene from *Vatnsdæla saga*, where the emphasis has been shifted away from the miraculous intervention of the Christian God towards Friðrekr's bargaining techniques and use of his wits. Whereas the scene in *Þorvalds þáttur* is alive with religious and symbolic meaning, the scene in *Vatnsdæla saga* presents itself as history. It is the historical depiction which the author of *Kristni saga* chooses. Since the second half of the saga is based firmly on Ari's historical depiction of the early Church, it is quite possible that the combination and revision of sources in the first half of the saga is aimed at levelling the stylistic and generic differences between Gunnlaugr's work and Ari's, and at bringing the hagiographic accounts of the early missionaries into the same sphere as Ari's ecclesiastical history.

Finnur Jónsson (1920–24, II 577) describes *Kristni saga* as 'et rent kompilationsarbejde uden egenligt forfattersærpræg' (a work of pure compilation without any really distinctive mark of authorship), and to call it a compilation is certainly near to the truth. Yet the author's handling of the three sources discussed here hardly justifies the assertion that the saga has no distinctive mark of authorship. As I have noted above, the author's approach to his sources is characterised by a historical and rationalistic way of thinking which is not always inherent in the source-material itself. The depiction of Kjartan's conversion reveals something more of the author's concerns and biases. Although this part of the saga draws on both *Laxdæla saga* and *Heimskringla*, it is not identical with either source; there is far less emphasis on Kjartan's opposition to Christianity prior to his conversion, and the reversal of roles in the dialogue between Kjartan and Bolli is certainly in Kjartan's favour. Particularly evocative is Kjartan's reply when Óláfr asks him to receive baptism: *At þér fáid mér eigi minna sóma hér, en ek á ván á Íslandi, þó at ek koma þar eigi* 'That you show me no less honour here, than I may expect in Iceland, even though I may not go back there' (Kahle 1905, 34). In *Heimskringla*, he simply asks for the king's friendship. The condition for his baptism draws attention to the strained relationship between Icelanders and Norwegian kings, and typifies the Icelandic refusal to be forced into anything, least of all conversion; this is a common motif in the Family Sagas (cf. Schach 1982). The latent tension comes to the fore again in Óláfr's threat when he hears of Þangbrandr's failure in Iceland: *sagði konungur, at hann skyldi þá*

*gjalda þeim þat, hversu óvirðiliga feðr þeira tóku á Íslandi hans erendum* ‘the king said that he would repay them for how disrespectfully their fathers in Iceland had received his communications’ (Kahle 1905, 34). Kjartan demands honour in Norway; Óláfr demands recognition in Iceland. This is ultimately a political and not a religious issue. Finally, when Gizurr and Hjalti tell Óláfr of Þangbrandr’s misdemeanours in Iceland, they add, *þótti mǫnnum hart at taka þat af útlendum manni* ‘people thought it hard to take that from a foreigner’ (Kahle 1905, 35). *Heimskringla* (1941–51, I 333) has only *þolðu menn honum þar ekki slíkt* ‘people would not tolerate such things from him there’. In *Kristni saga*, the phrasing implies that it was not so much Þangbrandr’s behaviour as his nationality which people found objectionable. If Iceland is to be converted, it will be through its own people and not through a foreign priest, even if he is an emissary of the Norwegian king. One might want to compare the evident nationalism here with that inherent in the second half of the saga, Ari’s account of the Icelandic national church; for the author of *Kristni saga*, it is the continuity of Icelandic efforts, both before and after the Conversion, that has led to the establishment of Christianity in Iceland. This is perhaps the reason why he has separated the missions to Iceland from the life of Óláfr Tryggvason and chosen to begin his work not with the Norwegian king, but with the Icelander Þorvaldr Koðránsón: *Nú hefr þat, hversu kristni kom á Ísland, at maðr hét Þorvaldr Koðránsón* ‘Now this is the beginning of how Christianity came to Iceland, that there was a man called Þorvaldr Koðránsón’ (Kahle 1905, 1). And if Sturla is the author of *Kristni saga* rather than just one of its redactors, then we come to see the saga as part of a grand history of the Icelandic nation, following on from the settlement, and leading to the history of contemporary struggles for power, struggles which will end with Iceland’s subjugation to Norway.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I would like to thank Ólafur Halldórsson for reading a draft of this article and making useful comments.

## Bibliography

- Andersson, Theodore M. 1977. ‘The Conversion of Norway according to Oddr Snorrason and Snorri Sturluson’. *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 10, 83–95.
- Árni Magnússons *Levned og Skriftr* 1930. I–II. Udgivet af Kommissionen for Det Arnamagnæanske Legat. Ed. Finnur Jónsson.
- Biskupa sögur* 1858–78. I–II. Ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Jón Sigurðsson.
- Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1937. *Om de norske kongers sagaer*.
- Brenner, Oskar 1878. *Über die Kristni-Saga: Kritische Beiträge zur altnordischen Literaturgeschichte*.

- Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954. Ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslenzk fornrit XII.
- Codex Frisianus: En samling af norske konge-sagaer* 1871. Ed. C. R. Unger.
- Finnur Jónsson 1920–24. *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie* I–III.
- Gregory the Great 1978–80. *Dialogues* I–III. Ed. Adalbert de Vogüé.
- Hallfreðar saga* 1977. Ed. Bjarni Einarsson.
- Harris, Joseph 1986. 'Saga as historical novel'. In *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*. Ed. John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, 187–219.
- Hauksbók udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4<sup>o</sup> samt forskellige papirshåndskrifter 1892–96*. Ed. Finnur Jónsson and Eiríkur Jónsson.
- Hauksbók: The Arna-Magnæan Manuscripts 371, 4<sup>to</sup>, 544, 4<sup>to</sup> and 675, 4<sup>to</sup>* 1960. Ed. Jón Helgason. Manuscripta Islandica V.
- Heimskringla* 1941–51. I–III. Ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson. Íslenzk fornrit XXVI–XXVIII.
- Jón Jóhannesson 1941. *Gerðir Landnámabókar*.
- Kahle, B., ed., 1905. *Kristnisaga, Þáttur Þorvalds ens víðfjara, Þáttur Ísleifs biskups Gizurarsonar, Hungurvaka*. Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek 11.
- Knirk, James 1981. *Oratory in the Kings' Sagas*.
- Kristni-saga, sive Historia Religionis Christianæ in Islandiam introductæ; nec non Patrum de Isleifi Biskupi, sive Narratio de Isleifo Episcopo; Ex Manuscriptis Legati Magnæani 1773*. Ed. Hannes Finnsson with a preface by B. W. Lüxdorph.
- Landnámabók: Melabók AM. 106. 112 fol.* 1921. Ed. Finnur Jónsson.
- Laxdæla saga* 1934. Ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslenzk fornrit V.
- Maurer, Konrad 1891. 'Über Ari Fróði und seine Schriften'. *Germania* 36 (24), 61–96.
- McCreech, Bernadine 1978–79. 'Structural patterns in the *Eyrbyggja Saga* and other sagas of the Conversion'. *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 11, 271–80.
- Oddr Snorrason 1932. *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar*. Ed. Finnur Jónsson.
- Ólafía Einarsdóttir 1964. *Studier i kronologisk metode i tidlig islandsk historiskrivning*.
- Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 1958–61. I–II. Ed. Ólafur Halldórsson.
- Ólafur Halldórsson 1978. *Grænland í miðaldaritum*.
- Ólafur Halldórsson 1990. *Grettisfærsla: Safn ritgerða eftir Ólaf Halldórsson gefið út á sjötugsafmæli hans 18. apríl 1990*.
- Ólsen, Björn M. 1893. 'Om Are Frode'. *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* 8, 207–352.
- Schach, Paul 1982. 'The Theme of the Reluctant Christian in the Icelandic Sagas'. *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 81, 186–203.
- Simek, Rudolf and Hermann Pálsson 1987. *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur. Skarðsárabók: Landnámabók Björns Jónssonar á Skarðsá* 1958. Ed. Jakob Benediktsson.
- Sturlunga saga* 1946. I–II. Ed. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and Kristján Eldjám.
- Vatnsdæla saga* 1939. Ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson. Íslenzk fornrit VIII.



## SNORRI STURLUSON AND THE CREATION OF A NORSE CULTURAL IDEOLOGY

By KLAUS VON SEE

*This paper is a summary in English translation of the content and conclusions of five essays published in the volume Europa und der Norden im Mittelalter (Europe and the North in the Middle Ages) (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter 1999, pp. 275–412). The page numbers in brackets refer to the more detailed argumentation in the book and the literature cited there. The English translation is by Bill McCann.*

IN EARLIER SCHOLARSHIP there was a tendency, particularly in the German-speaking countries, to Germanicise Old Norse literature in a somewhat biased fashion, because its texts were believed to preserve the heritage of Germanic antiquity in its purest form. More recently the tendency, in a way that seems to me to be equally biased, has been to theologise it. Walter Baetke, himself originally a theologian, was the first to do so, when he attempted to demonstrate in 1952 that Snorri Sturluson was seeking in his *Edda* to present his Götterlehre ('mythology') in terms of a particular Christian theological theory: that is, as the religion of a 'natural sense of the divine' which was held to be present in the human race after the Flood. This first step of Baetke's became the foundation for what followed: Anne Holtsmark, among others, cited him when she proposed the theory that Snorri was using Augustinian demonology to present Norse mythology as 'djevelsk vranglære', 'devilish heresy' in 1964 (275–76).

A new direction in scholarship followed from this hypothesis, as can be seen in the simple fact that since the 1970s a number of works devoted specifically to the *Prologue of Snorra Edda* have appeared. This text had previously been dismissed as a tissue of pseudo-historical pseudo-theology: it was simply omitted from Gustav Neckel's 1925 German translation of *Snorra Edda*, and Andreas Heusler prided himself on having freed Snorri from the stigma of being its author. However, since Baetke and Holtsmark it has been the common currency of scholarship that the *Prologue* was written by Snorri himself, and indeed that it actually provided the key to the interpretation of the whole work, including both *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*. It was in these terms that Margaret Clunies Ross first attempted in 1987 to prove that Snorri's work was based on a conceptual framework that was valid for all

three parts: what the *Prologue* presents in the form of a theological tract, the theory of the ‘natural sense of the divine’ of the pre-Christian pagans, is what is narrated in *Gylfaginning* in mythical form and what then appears in *Skáldskaparmál* as the skaldic linguistic system of the kenning (275–77).

Against this, I would argue that it is only the *Prologue* of *Snorra Edda* that adopts a specifically theological position, and it is therefore unlikely to have been written by Snorri, because *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, as well as *Heimskringla*, are written with a completely different aim in view: they attempt to integrate genuine pagan tradition into the high-medieval world picture in as unprovocative a way as possible, and to exploit it in terms of a specifically ‘Norse’ cultural ideology. This aim can be explained by the particular conditions of Norse history, briefly, by the fact that the North in the Viking era, thus in the very final phase of paganism, was at the high point of its cultural development; that it was immediately afterwards converted to Christianity; and that this very culture was immediately threatened with condemnation, since it was, after all, pagan. Such a condemnation, because the conversion to Christianity occurred so unusually late, would mean an almost total amputation of the North’s own history, and an almost total loss of identity.

In the light of the high cultural level of the late pagan Viking era, many of the continuities between the pagan era and the Christian era in the North are hardly surprising. In 1316, for example, a Norwegian *rétarbót* (‘amendment to the law’) could still demand that a plaintiff should prove his paternal descent *till haughs ok till heidni* (‘to howe and heathendom’), i.e. back to the time of the pagan mound burials (308–09). However, it is not these continuities, which can be explained by the situation I have described, that are the really striking phenomenon in Norse history, but rather the attempts, starting at the beginning of the thirteenth century, to revitalise pagan traditions that were already becoming weaker, and so consciously to re-activate the continuities, in order to counteract the flood of cultural imports from southern and western Europe with a genuinely Norse cultural ideology. Euhemerised pagan gods thus became specifically Norse ‘cultural heroes’, the founding ancestors of the Norse dynasties, and founders of the social order; skaldic poetry, as Óðinn’s invention, became the typically Norse form of historical tradition, and pagan mythology became the epitome of a peculiarly Norse culture.

Moreover this is, *mutatis mutandis*, a phenomenon which is not without parallels outside Scandinavia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a period in which the consciousness of national individuality is on the increase everywhere. Of course, Christianity does offer a number of theories of history,

but its universalism is incapable of fully satisfying the need for individual ethnic or national traditions. Thus Cosmas, dean of Prague cathedral, makes the chronologically fixed history of Bohemia begin with the baptism of the first Christian ruler, Bořivoj, but sets its origins and foundations in the pagan, and thus specifically Bohemian, period that precedes it. Of the three granddaughters of the founding ancestor Čech-Bohemus, it is the youngest, Libussa, 'prophetess and judge of the people', who, together with her consort Přemysl, is seen as the founder of the Bohemian dynasty which is still reigning, and also as the promulgator of all their laws, which are still in operation, in Cosmas's own time. The restriction of a specifically national tradition to the pagan era, that is, the time before the conversion to Christianity, in the Finnish *Kalevala*-epic, appears to be no less deliberate. As Hans Fromm says, 'the nation reached a new level of consciousness as a result of the evidence that there was a tradition that reached beyond the Christian-Swedish Middle Ages' (353–56).

The attempts to lay the historical foundations of a specifically Norse culture are most clearly apparent in Snorri's writings: in *Heimskringla*, which propagates a specifically Norse ideal of rulership and law (330–37, 358–67); in the so-called *Snorra Edda*, which probably provided the first impetus for the collection of the mythological Eddic poems (309); and also, as I believe, in the *Hávamál* compilation in which the god Óðinn, as a genuinely Norse teacher of wisdom and morality, is placed on a par with the Biblical Solomon and Cato the Roman (390–96); further in *Rígsþula*, which makes a fictitious Norse god the founder of the medieval class structure (408–12); and finally in *Völsunga ok Ragnars saga*, which, with the aim of glorifying the Norwegian royal house, though probably not at royal instigation, constructs a genealogy reaching far back into the pagan era via Sigurðr and Sigmundur, the greatest heroes *í norðrhálfu heimsins* ('in the northern part of the world') and *í fornum sið* ('in pagan times'), to Óðinn, who becomes the founding ancestor and first helper of the royal line (397–408).

Before discussing these texts, it is necessary to deal with the *Prologue* of *Snorra Edda*, which has become, as mentioned above, the key document for the 'theologising' tendency in scholarship. The degree to which the ruling axiom that Snorri is the author of the *Prologue* has forced many scholars to propose absurd interpretations can be seen in the mere idea that Snorri, according to the theological principles of the *Prologue*, was attempting in his *Gylfaginning* to present Old Norse mythology as an expression of 'natural religion', and then chose as his framework a narrative in which the acquisition of this mythology occurs in a way which is precisely not that of

‘natural religion’; for in *Gylfaginning* the Swedish king Gylfi hears the myth of the Æsir in the form of instruction, staged as a *ginning* (‘delusion’), deception by means of magic, and is thereby brought to believe in the Æsir, while the characters in the *Prologue* reach their ‘natural knowledge of God’ through a long-drawn-out process of cognition and entirely on the basis of their own innate abilities. These two conceptions cannot be reconciled, because an essential element of the theological construct ‘natural religion’ is precisely the way in which belief is achieved, and this comes about through the use of the five senses in a way which is acceptable to God, and in no way through deception (278–79).

Lars Lönnroth, however, believes that he can maintain the conceptual unity of the *Prologue* and *Gylfaginning* by explaining that I had failed to see that we are dealing here with ‘two different but successive stages in the history of paganism’ (285–86). It does not take a theological training to recognise that this ‘two-stages’ theory is false for a number of reasons. Firstly, we see that the action of the *Prologue* is not continued in the frame-narrative of *Gylfaginning*, but goes far beyond the period of time in which *Gylfaginning* is set: Óðinn establishes his rule in *Sigtún*, the Swedish town of Sigtuna, then conquers Norway and hands it over to his son Sæmingr, while he bequeaths Sweden to his son Yngvi. The opening scene of *Gylfaginning* is not related to this at all; here Gylfi goes to *Ásgarðr*, thus to a place that does not even exist in the *Prologue*. Moreover, the logical structure of the frame-narrative of *Gylfaginning* is such that the Æsir need not appear as persons with names, since they only adopt the names which are familiar to us from mythology after their conversation with Gylfi. What the names of the Æsir had been before this in the fictional universe of *Gylfaginning* is obviously a question we cannot ask. However, the narrative presupposes that when Gylfi visits *Ásgarðr*, in what is obviously his first encounter with the Æsir, he does not know their names. This cannot be reconciled with the *Prologue*, where the Æsir, Óðinn, Baldr, Fróði etc., are mentioned by name from the very beginning. If the *Prologue* were really meant to form a conceptual unity with *Gylfaginning*, why in the world did the author burden the narrative transition with such avoidable incongruities?

Objections can also be made to the ‘two-stages’ theory from a theological point of view. The *theologia naturalis sive rationalis*, which was supposed to be accessible to pre-Christian pagans, is a retrospective construction from the standpoint of Christianity; its only *raison-d’être* is that it represents an incomplete anticipation of *theologia revelata*, ‘revealed’ religion. In other words, ‘natural religion’ can only be succeeded by Christianity, and not by any polytheistic religion, which would be a system of belief of much less

value in theological terms (287–88). Another aspect that has been ignored is that ‘natural religion’ and polytheistic myth, *theologia naturalis* and *theologia fabulosa*, as Augustine would call the *Gylfaginning* myth, are mutually exclusive. This is because the God of ‘natural religion’, which the pagans deduce from the order of creation by the use of their five senses, can only be a non-mythological individual god, since he is none other than the Christian God: *deus Platonis qui etiam noster est*, as Augustine expresses it (289–92).

Moreover, it is striking that there is no mention of skaldic poetry in the *Prologue*, apart from a single passing reference to *Háleygjatal* in connection with genealogies. This is somewhat strange, if one follows the general opinion that Snorri himself composed this text as a prologue to his presentation of the skaldic language of kennings. There is also another piece of evidence that unambiguously contradicts the view that the *Prologue* is conceived as the introduction to a poetic theory or to a theological exegesis of Old Norse skaldic poetry: namely, that while Snorri’s historical perspective is restricted to *Norðrlǫnd*, the countries that make up the present-day North, the *Prologue* also includes *Saxland*, the north-German land of the ‘Saxons’, in the linguistic area connected with the *Æsir*. Accordingly, the *Prologue* describes the wanderings of the *Æsir* differently from Snorri in *Heimskringla*. In the conclusion to the *Prologue* it is quite decidedly stated that *þeir æsir hafa haft tunguna norðr hingat í heim, í Nóreg ok í Sviþjóð, í Danmǫrk ok í Saxland* (‘the *Æsir* brought the language north to this part of the world, that is to Norway and to Sweden, to Denmark and to Saxland’) (349–50). It is theoretically possible that the idea of including *Saxland* in the *Æsir*–Norse linguistic area derives not just from the influence of *Skjöldunga saga*, but was also inspired by the change in the political and cultural course of events that was effected by the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson in the years after 1240. At the expense of the traditional orientation towards the West, he intensified relations with the north German cities. The Hansa was able to settle permanently in Bergen from this point onwards, and in the 1250s *Þiðreks saga* was produced in Hanseatic Bergen, a text in which it is expressly stated that its narrative had been known *um allt Saxland* (‘over all Saxland’) (285, 351). No less striking is a further deviation from Snorri’s texts, which may also have been influenced by contemporary developments: in 1247 the Norwegian monarchy had experienced an increase in its prestige as a result of King Hákon’s coronation, which might explain why the *Prologue* attempts to depict the Norwegian monarchy as being not now simply a collateral branch of the Swedish Yngling dynasty, as it had still been in Snorri’s *Ynglinga saga*, but uses Óðinn’s son Sæmingr as the first Norwegian

king to raise the Norwegian royal house to the same rank as the other two Scandinavian monarchies (285).

How well-founded is the supposed existence of the numerous traces of ‘natural religion’ that the majority of ‘modern scholars’ claim to find in *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, following what they presume to be the programme of the *Prologue*? Lars Lönnroth thinks that Gylfi appears in *Gylfaginning* as a proponent of ‘natural religion’, but the text provides no foundation for this statement. In fact Gylfi goes to the Æsir because he wishes to know whether the Æsir owe their great success to their own power or whether it is due to the gods to whom they sacrifice. Thus Gylfi here shows himself without question to be a perfectly normal pagan, to whom polytheism and the *do-ut-des* principle of pagan sacrificial cult are completely self-evident. Nor does Gylfi come to understand the myths as an expression of ‘natural religion’ in the course of this instruction; on the contrary, he feels confirmed in his paganism by the myths that are narrated to him (293).

Lönnroth further claims that Gylfi’s question in *Gylfaginning* ch. 5, namely whether Ymir is a god, makes it clear that Gylfi, just like the pagans of the *Prologue*, believes the earth to be a living being. However, the Æsir only tell him about the dismemberment of Ymir and the creation of the world from the various parts of his body later, in ch. 8, long after Gylfi has asked this question. Gylfi’s question cannot therefore be based on the conception of the earth as a living being, quite apart from the fact that the *Prologue* nowhere says that the pagans regarded the earth as a giant or a god (293). What the *Prologue* in fact says is that the pagans had discovered analogies between the earth and human beings, (four-legged) animals and birds: *jörðin ok dýrin ok fuglarnir* have similar organs and are subject to the same laws of continual renewal and decay. It then specifically says of the earth that the pagans had compared ‘rocks and stones with the teeth and bones of living beings’ (*tönnum ok beinum kvikenda*). Thus the comparison is not confined simply to human beings and the earth alone, but rather to all living things, a comparison that leads to a belief that the earth itself is ‘alive’: *Af þessu skildu þeir svá, at jörðin væri kvik*. And since the pagans, by means of these analogies, reached the conclusion that the earth shares in the law of eternal flux and decay and absorbs into itself everything that dies, they further believed that they were born of the earth: *Þeir [. . .] tölðu ætt sína til hennar*. That is, the *Prologue* does not present the creation of the earth out of a giant in human form, as *Gylfaginning* does; on the contrary, it presents the creation of man out of the earth (295).

A proper understanding of the *Prologue* is further complicated by the fact that some interpreters also regard the ‘earth’ of the *Prologue* as an

anthropomorphic living being, though not — in the manner of Lönnroth — as a dismembered giant, but rather as a ‘Mother Earth’. Both interpretations are equally incorrect, since the *Prologue* nowhere speaks of the earth as a goddess. When it says that ‘this same earth and the sun and the stars’, *en sama jörð ok sól ok himintungl*, had existed for many hundred years, the earth is in no way given precedence over the sun and the stars. And when it is subsequently said of the one who regulates the movements of the heavenly bodies that he ‘rules over the elements’ (*ræði fyrir höfuðskepnunum*), earth is just one of the four elements together with fire, air and water. Therefore it is incomprehensible that Siegfried Beyschlag can claim that the ‘natural religion’ of the *Prologue* refers to two divinities, the God of heaven and Mother Earth; incomprehensible, because ‘natural religion’ would not permit bitheism and the belief in a ‘Mother Earth’. Moreover, it is a characteristic of ‘natural religion’ that the God who directs all things is invisible, so that his actions can only be deduced from the workings of nature. Even if one could, taking it in isolation, apply the phrase *töldu ætt sína til hennar* to a birth-giving ‘Primal Mother’, the context contradicts this decisively, since the phrase *hon eignaðisk alt þat, er dó* (‘she took possession of everything that died’) can only refer to the earth, which takes all dead beings to itself and absorbs them as they rot. Such statements are obviously an echo of God’s words in Genesis 3: 19: ‘[. . .] till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return’ (296–97). Throughout the Middle Ages it was generally believed that Adam, the first man, was γηγενής, *terrigenus*, ‘earth-born’, though in this case one should note that the earth was not thought of as giving birth to him, but merely as the material from which he was made: the bones from stone, the flesh from earth, the blood from water.

Even if some connections of a purely external kind can be discerned between the *Prologue* and *Gylfaginning*, above all in the fact that Gylfi is mentioned, all attempts to make *Skáldskaparmál* subject to the *Prologue*’s theological model are doomed to failure from the outset. Quite clearly the frame-narrative, the Ægir scene — Ægir’s visit to Ásgarðr, the illusions, the conversation with Bragi — is not inspired by *Lokasenna*, as is generally assumed, but rather by the Gylfi scene at the beginning of *Gylfaginning*, even down to exact verbal parallels (Gylf.: *Hann byrjaði ferð sína til Ásgarðz / Skskm.: Hann gerði ferð sína til Ásgarðz*; Gylf.: *en æsir [. . .] sá [. . .] ferð hans, fyrr en hann kom / Skskm.: en æsir vissu fyrir ferð hans*). In both cases the Æsir receive their guest with *sjónhverfingar*, and on both occasions they sit *í háseti* (‘in high seats’) (302). A commentary directly connected with the Ægir scene is included in *Skáldskaparmál*, and this makes direct reference



to the Gylfi scene in *Gylfaginning*: Christians should believe in the myths only 'in the way in which it is found at the beginning of the book'. *Uphaf bókar* obviously does not mean the *Prologue*, as is generally thought, since it does not mention myths at all, but rather the 'illusion scene' at the beginning of *Gylfaginning*, since it is only here that the reader discovers how he is to understand the myths, i.e. as a tradition which is admittedly to be respected, and which aids in the creation of identity, but is nonetheless fictional (303).

The only sentence in the *Prologue* which could refer to *Skáldskaparmál* is the statement about post-diluvian humanity, which gave names to all things on earth and in the heavens: *þá gáfu þeir nǫfn með sjálfum sér ǫllum hlutum*. According to the prevailing opinion of scholars, it is this naming material which is presented in *Skáldskaparmál* as an expression of 'natural religion'. The text itself, however, explicitly excludes such a possibility, since in his conversation with Ægir, Bragi explains that there are 'three kinds of poetic language'. The definitions given later show that the second and third types, *fornǫfn* and *kenningar*, can both be taken as meaning *kend heiti*, 'marked', allusive modes of description with more than one element, while the first, the *ókend heiti* or *ókend nǫfn*, obviously mean 'unmarked' modes of expression. In Bragi's speech Snorri calls this mode *at nefna hvern hlut sem heitir* ('to name everything by its name'), a formulation which makes it clear that Snorri wishes to distinguish between ordinary 'prosaic' language and language that rises to the creative level of the skalds. If the attempt were made, therefore, to construct a link between *Skáldskaparmál* and the *Prologue*, all that it would imply would be that the names given to all things by post-diluvian humanity represented nothing more than 'unmarked', inartistic language. In other words, the language of 'natural religion' would definitely not be the skaldic language, but rather ordinary, plain language (304).

There is also no evidence elsewhere in *Skáldskaparmál* that its presentation is based on that of the *Prologue*. The word *kenning* can hardly mean 'sensory perception', as M. Clunies Ross, with the concept of 'natural religion' in mind, seems to suggest, since its root-word *kenna* is attested both within and outside the realm of poetry with a meaning that tends not towards sensory perception but very precisely towards a perception which is more abstract and intellectual: *kenna við* 'characterise by means of (some particular features)' (304). The organisation of material in *Skáldskaparmál* lends itself equally little to the hypothesis that there is a theologically oriented 'structure of meaning' inherent in the composition of this text. G. W. Weber is of the opinion that, after the naming of Christ in ch. 53, almost 'exclusive [use is made of] "historical heroic sagas", in the strictest sense of the word' rather than of the 'old myths of the gods'. However, since the

mention of Christ comes in the section on gold-kennings, and gold plays a much more important role in heroic sagas than in the myths, this consideration alone is enough to explain why there is a preponderance of heroic sagas. When, however, in chs 61–63 we come to the kennings connected with battle and weapons, kennings which are mainly formed using the names of gods and valkyries, there are once again a great many mythological references. The second reference to Christ in ch. 65 is entirely unremarkable. *Ægir's* question *Hvernig skal Krist kenna?* leads to a list of Christ-kennings, to which the kennings for kings and dignitaries are appended. Clunies Ross and Weber claim to discover a theological significance in this order of presentation: by presenting the designations for secular rulers after the designations for Christ in chs 65–66, Snorri is supposed to have been demonstrating the derivation of the designations for secular kings (*konungsnöfn*) ‘from those of the divine king, Christ’. This interpretation has, however, no basis in the text. On the contrary, we are once again surprised by Snorri’s sober matter-of-factness, for he merely states that one can often only deduce from the context whether a given kenning contains a reference to Christ or to a secular king, and shortly thereafter follows the comment *Keisari er ætzt konunga* (‘The Emperor is the greatest of kings’). Thus there is a more important title than that of the ‘divine king, Christ’. Snorri could hardly make it plainer that he is not interested in the spiritual connotations of the title of king (317). The order of presentation in chs 65–66 can be explained simply by the fact that the kennings for kings and the holders of other kinds of political titles, among them the Christ-kennings, form a transition to the next major section, which deals with the *ökend setning skáldskapar*, the ‘non-periphrastic mode of expression’ (chs 67–83). It is only at the very end of *Skáldskaparmál* that simple, non-metaphorical descriptions of the type ‘*bróður Vilis = Óðinn*’ appear (chs 84–88), and these hardly have the great significance in Snorri’s scheme of ideas that Clunies Ross tries to attribute to them according to her theory. The above-mentioned term *fornöfn* can be understood without recourse to the background of continental learning, since it surely refers to the formulation *láta ganga fyrir nöfn*, which directly precedes that of naming. This formulation certainly does not mean ‘to precede’, which would be pointless in this context, but is rather to be understood as ‘to stand for, to correspond to, to take the place of’. Snorri wishes to say that the *fornöfn* are not metaphors, but only designations which ‘take the place of a name’, for example ‘enemy of the Frisians’ or ‘generous one’ (306).

M. Clunies Ross’s attempt to support Snorri’s postulated authorship of the *Prologue* by adducing supposedly parallel statements in the *Prologue*

and *Heimskringla* is ultimately unconvincing. Admittedly, both texts refer to English place-names, but in *Heimskringla* (*Hák. góð.* ch. 3) the purpose is quite different from that in the *Prologue*. In the *Prologue* these names are used as evidence that England does not belong to the linguistic territory of the Æsir, that is, the Scandinavian-Saxon linguistic area. In *Heimskringla*, on the other hand, it is a question not of old names that derive from a non-Scandinavian language and thus demonstrate an ancient language boundary, but of settlement names from a historical period, when the Vikings ruled the Western islands. And the conclusion is diametrically opposed to that of the *Prologue*, namely the assertion that there are place names of Scandinavian origin in England: *Mǫrg heiti landzins eru þar gefin á nórcæna tungu, Grímsbær ok Hauksfljót ok mǫrg önnur*. The two passages thus have nothing to do with one another, and therefore the suggested parallel is actually evidence against, rather than for, common authorship (300).

Some other attempts to demonstrate that Old Norse literature is steeped in theological ideas can be briefly mentioned here. Thus G. W. Weber thinks that the Old Norse authors interpreted the phrase *ár ok friðr* ('good harvests and peace'), in so far as these were granted to pagans, as the work of the Devil in terms of Christian demonology. But this formula appears in Latin in the Bible and also, at precisely the time of the missionary effort in Scandinavia, in Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* ch. 26: *pax et prosperitas*. It is very likely that *ár ok friðr* actually derives from the language of the Christian missions and cannot therefore be used pejoratively by saga authors to refer to the 'work of the Devil' (340). It is just as unlikely that the formula *trúa á mátt sinn ok megin* can, as Weber suggests, refer to the 'noble pagan' as an adherent of 'natural religion' who has rejected the pagan sacrificial cult and instead 'trusts in his own power and strength'. Weber appeals to the evidence of the Bible, but in so doing fails to realise that the biblical *potestas* is simply a means to belief, whereas *mátt ok megin* are the objects of belief. It would be hard to find a formulation that more clearly expresses the primal sin of Christianity, *superbia*. Thus the formulation is in no way suitable as an expression denoting the positive characteristics of the 'noble pagan' in a theological sense (342). Weber's thesis that the Icelanders based their claim for political freedom on the assertion that the island was an ancient *terra christiana*, though one which had temporarily reverted to paganism, is also erroneous. This is because in canon law the relapsed believer does not become a pagan again, but rather an apostate, and thus falls into a state which deserves damnation. The Icelanders, therefore, would have been very careful to avoid claiming such a status (343). Finally, an equally erroneous view is Weber's theory that ducking in swimming contests is interpreted

in the sagas as a *praefiguratio* of Christian baptism. Here he fails to realise that in those days swimming contests were not a matter of speed alone, as they are almost exclusively today, but of stamina and mettle, and that reciprocal immersion was intended to test these qualities. This means that such ducking was in no way unusual, and so no Old Norse author or reader would have seen it as an ‘obvious *praefiguratio*’ of baptism (344).

Like G. W. Weber, Lars Lönnroth is of the opinion that it was Snorri’s conscious intention to suggest to the readers of his *Ynglinga saga* that the gods of the pagan Swedes were in fact cunning, devilish magicians, ‘posing as gods for their own private gain’. Weber’s main evidence is the word *veraldargoð* (‘world god’) which the Swedes used for the dead Freyr; Weber calls it ‘the most obvious designation of the Devil’. He is clearly thinking here of St Paul’s phrase ‘the god of this world’: *deus huius saeculi*. But as the quotation shows, the phrase needs the demonstrative pronoun in order to refer to the Devil, defining the ‘world’ unambiguously as the terrestrial world (cf. *þessa heims höfðingi* in the Legendary saga of St Óláfr). Weber’s equation is seen to be completely unlikely if we compare the use of the genitive *veraldar-* in other compounds: in *Fagrskinna*, *veraldarfriðr* means ‘a comprehensive, lasting peace’. Thus *veraldargoð* can only mean that the Swedes regarded Freyr as their permanent chief god (322–23).

In contrast to these ‘theologising’ hypotheses, I am of the opinion that Snorri did not regard the religious attitudes of the pagans as reprehensible in principle. It probably seemed obvious to him that in pre-Christian times humans had adopted some kind of cult, and the pagans were only doing what was possible for them. This is an attitude which is not unknown elsewhere in the Middle Ages: *secundum gentis suae traditiones religiosus* (‘religious in accord with the traditions of his people’) is what Archbishop William of Tyre, Chancellor of the kingdom of Jerusalem, called a Muslim prince at the end of the twelfth century. Thus Snorri most certainly would have regarded it as the duty of a good king to ensure the harvests and the peace of his land by whatever means he felt to be appropriate, as long as he had not yet acquired the blessings of Christianity. Therefore what after conversion must necessarily be interpreted as the service of the Devil might well be regarded as a legitimate attempt to cope with the exigencies of life in pagan times (328).

Thus G. W. Weber’s attempt to ascribe to a major part of saga literature, including *Heimskringla*, a perspective founded on salvation history is based upon an erroneous interpretation of the texts (315). In the postulated

perspective the *siðaskipti*, the ‘change in religious belief’, becomes the turning point in Norse history and the expression of its ‘character as a predetermined process’. No such perspective is discernible in *Finnboga saga* or *Orvar-Odds saga* (315–16), nor can it be seen in *Skáldskaparmál*. Using the text of *Heimskringla*, we can show that Snorri, given that his position is not ‘theological’, but rather ‘ideological with respect to culture’, makes the change from paganism to Christianity take place as unobtrusively as possible in gradual stages, and that he sets up an image of the ideal ‘tolerant’ prince, who is prepared to make religious compromises, an ideal which is embodied in Hákon góði and the jarls of Hlaðir and set in obvious contrast to the fanatical, violent missionary king (326–27). He avoids excessive offence to the Christian reader by allowing the idea that sacrificial cult and magic are characteristic of the Yngling line of kings to disappear progressively as the narrative leaves archaic times behind and moves towards the change in belief (329). Thus Hálfdan svarti is described as ‘of all kings the most blessed with fruitful harvests’ (*allra konunga ársælstr*); but no mention is made of pagan sacrificial cults, only of the fact that his body is divided into four parts, and the hope that the individual quarters will, in those parts of the land where they are buried in mounds, ensure good harvests. This is a concept which has no parallel in pagan religion, but may be found in the Christian reverence for relics: *Ubicumque hae reliquiae fuerint, illic pax et augmentum et levitas aeris semper erit* (‘wherever these relics were, there will always be peace and increase and light winds’) (329). With Haraldr hárfagri, Hálfdan’s son, the first proponent of ‘natural religion’ appears in the dynasty. He swore ‘by the God who created me and who rules over everything’ (*til guðs, er mik skóp ok öllu ræðr*), and it is obviously meant to be significant when Snorri writes that, although Haraldr admittedly was buried in a mound (*heygðr*) according to pagan custom, this mound was in a place near where a church and graveyard were later situated, and the stones which were previously in the mound are now in the churchyard (330).

The reign of Hákon góði is yet another step closer to the *siðaskipti*. Snorri explicitly states that Hákon was a good Christian when he came over from England to Norway, but he also, in contradiction to the tradition, places the most prominent representative of the pagan party at his side as friend, adviser and mediator: Sigurðr Hlaðajarl, called *inn mesti blótmaðr* (‘the most enthusiastic sacrificer’). This immediately shows that for Snorri it is not really a matter of paganism and Christianity, but rather of the ideal form of political rule. More precisely, it is through the way that Hákon attempts to master the religious situation with the help of Sigurðr that Snorri demonstrates

what proper political rule should look like. It should be based on respect for the demands and aspirations of the peasant community as members of the *þing* ('assembly'), that is, on mediation, negotiation and compromise (330–32). When the sons of Eiríkr and Gunnhildr attacked Norway and Sigurðr rushed to help the king, he had in his company precisely those peasants from Trøndelag 'who had pressed the king most severely in the winter to force him to perform the sacrifices'. Hence the king's policies, aiming at balance, were ultimately fruitful, as Snorri's narrative makes clear: they ensured internal peace and therefore also the country's external security (332).

Snorri even tries, as far as possible, to rehabilitate jarl Hákon, who is given an evil reputation in the clerically oriented literature (334–35); on the other hand, the Christian King Óláfr Tryggvason's efforts at conversion are bluntly described as a succession of brutal acts of violence. Unlike Hákon góði, Óláfr disregarded the will of the peasants as expressed at the *þing* meetings, took hostages, and had his opponents put in irons or tortured with bestial cruelty. Occasionally Snorri even contrasts Óláfr's unbridled religious fanaticism with the controlled 'tolerance' of the pagans in a very decided manner. When Óláfr was negotiating a marriage alliance with the Swedish Queen Sigríðr, she responded as follows to his demand that she be baptised: "I will never abandon the belief which has been mine and that of my kin before me. But nor will I quarrel with you, if you believe in the God that pleases you." Then King Óláfr lost his temper and shouted angrily: "How could I marry you, you woman heathen as a dog (*þik hundheiðna*)," and he struck her in the face with his glove' (336). If there could be any doubt in the matter, certainly the end of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* makes it abundantly clear that Snorri is setting up in Óláfr an antitype to his ideal ruler, since its final chapter is reserved for Óláfr's opponents, the *Hlaðjarlar*, the jarls of Hlaðir, and after jarl Sigurðr and his son, jarl Hákon, the presentation turns to Hákon's sons Eiríkr and Sveinn. They were the first Christians in the line of the jarls, but after conversion they behaved totally differently from Óláfr in the exercise of the new religion. Other historical sources also note this, but Snorri is the first to make religious 'tolerance', based on respect for ancient custom and the will of the peasants expressed in the *þing*, the expression of his ideal of a ruler. 'They allowed everyone to do what he wanted about practising the Christian religion. And they maintained the old laws and all the customs of the land and they were much loved and good rulers' (*létu þeir gera hvern, sem vildi, um kristniháldit, en forn lög heldu þeir vel ok alla landzsiðu ok váru menn vinsælir ok stjórnsamir*) (337).

When Snorri was writing his *Heimskringla*, the constitutional and social history of the Norse countries was in the last phase of a wearisome process

of upheaval. It was still typified by the peasant *þing*-communities, whose geographical scope was mainly dictated by the natural landscape, and which were *de facto* more or less dominated by local ruling families. At the same time, the monarchy, which had long since developed from small-scale local rule by Viking chieftains into a hegemonial kingship, ruled the *lond*, the 'lands', as *ríki*, which at first betokened merely abstract power, and was thus only slowly able to enforce its power over the organs of peasant self-government. It did so at a local level with the aid of the stewards of the royal demesne, the *konungs brytiar* and *ármenn*, who gradually became officials in the local administration. It did so centrally by means of the royal retainers, the *hirð*, out of which developed the court offices and an aristocracy which was distributed over the whole kingdom and bound to the central monarchy by feudal ties. This process, the creation of a state apparatus which was based on the principle of office-holding, and thereby in keeping with the international norm, was in the last phase of its development during the reign of Hákon Hákonarson. *Heimskringla's* ambition to remind its readers of genuine continuities and to create a Norse history based on its own origins and ancient legal traditions is therefore all the more remarkable.

It is obviously intentional when *Heimskringla* tells us several times how difficult it is for the Norse people to come to terms with the concept of royal office, that is, to recognise the individual administrator of the royal demesne as the representative of the 'power of the state'. Thus Erlingr Skjálgsson declares to King (Saint) Óláfr: 'I freely bend my neck to you, King Óláfr; but it seems to me a cruel imposition that I should have to bow down before Selþórir, who counts only thralls among his ancestors, even though he is now your steward' (*at lúta til Selþóris, er þrælborinn er í allar ættir, þótt hann sé nú ármaðr yðarr*). Chieftains like Erlingr are, or at least so they claim in Snorri's narrative, on the one hand 'destined by virtue of their birth to exercise power on the king's behalf' (*ættbornir til ríkis at hafa af konungum*), but on the other hand, in their own districts, by virtue of their birth, they are the representatives of the peasants in their dealings with the king. The most impressive of them is Einar þambarskelfir, who defended the peasants at the *þing* 'when the king's men prosecuted a case' (*er konungs menn sóttu*), and above all the Swedish lawspeaker Þorgnýr, who threatened his king with rebellion and death if he did not do what the peasants wished, and explicitly added that this was how their (pagan) forefathers had behaved towards their kings (*hafa svá gort inir fyrri forellrar várir*) (358–59).

The king himself is not essentially different from these magnates. The term *hofðingi* ('chieftain') can be used for vassals as well as for jarls and kings; it is the main term for any kind of ruler — even the king has to have



*hofðingskapr* ('the qualities of a chief') — and since the lexical material contains an organological conception of human communities, the term also affirms that lordship itself is a natural given. Snorri is actually firmly convinced that this is a given, or even a necessity. When, as happens quite frequently, he describes a country, a population group or a warband as *hofðingjalauss* ('without a lord'), he means that this is a defective state, one which has fallen away from the natural order of things, a vacuum that will soon be filled (*at landit myndi vera auðsótt er hofðingjalaust var*). In particular, Snorri shows again and again that the peasants are politically and militarily helpless, 'headless' in the truest sense of the word, incapable of concerted decision-making or of acting as a group, if they lack their *hofðingi*. This, however, also means that the *hofðingi* is committed to protecting the interests of the peasants. Thus throughout the whole of *Heimskringla* we find running like a *leitmotiv* the concept that the king, as the highest *hofðingi*, is duty-bound always to act in agreement with the peasants' *þing* meeting; to take the traditional beliefs and cults of the peasants into consideration; to resolve inevitable conflicts by negotiation and compromise rather than by force; to ensure peace and the rule of law; and not to burden the peasants with unnecessary demands for service, that is, to remain in the country and not indulge in campaigns to distant lands (359).

It is in the light of this that Snorri makes Einar þambarskelfir, whom we have already mentioned as the ideal peasant chieftain, appear in a scene in which he warns King Haraldr that it is more advisable to bring King Magnús's body back to Norway for burial 'than to fight in a foreign country and desire another king's dominions' (*en berjask útlendis eða girmask annars konungs veldi ok eign*). It is of no significance that this scene corresponds to a text which also appears in *Morkinskinna*, since it is totally consistent with Snorri's own ideas. The same holds true of the 'comparison of manhood' between Kings Sigurðr and Eysteinn. Even Sigurðr's journey to Jerusalem, which, in contrast to the skaldic stanzas usually quoted, is moreover described not as a Christian pilgrimage but as a Viking raid, appears to Eysteinn, who has stayed at home, less 'useful' than what he has meanwhile achieved in the country. He has built churches, harbours and the Hall in Bergen 'while you have been slaughtering Moors for the Devil in the land of the Saracens; I do not think that was very profitable for our land' (*meðan þú brytjaðir blámenn fyrir fjándann á Serklandi; ætla ek þat lítit gagn ríki váru*). The provocative irony with which Snorri makes King Eysteinn speak of the senseless slaughter of distant peoples, and the pointedness which he gives the dialogue in contrast to the *Morkinskinna* text, but also more particularly the praise which he heaps on the king elsewhere: all this leads to

the conclusion that the author himself is speaking through the mouth of Eysteinn (360).

This criticism seems even more pointed in the saga of King Magnús berfœttr. Snorri ascribes to the king, who fell early in battle, an utterance that could stand as a central statement of the heroic ethic. To the reproach that he was often careless ‘when he was campaigning abroad’ (*er hann herjaði útan landz*), Magnús answered ‘that kings are made for fame, not for long life’ (*til frægðar skal konung hafa, en ekki til langlífis*). At the same time Snorri explains that Magnús was opposed to the peasants, and imposed great trouble and cost on them through his campaigns, and also that Magnús had displayed very little *hǫfðingskapr* in his conflict with the peasants’ leaders and had even affirmed in a vainglorious way that must have disqualified him in Snorri’s eyes ‘that what he said was law’ (*at þat var rétt, er hann sagði*) (361–62).

Since Snorri avoided specifically Christian motivation as much as possible, it is all the more remarkable that in his demand for policies that would ensure peace and the rule of law for the peasant *þing*-communities he should find himself completely in agreement with the aspirations of the Church. This agreement also made it possible for him to make the saintliness of King Óláfr comprehensible from a genuinely Norse viewpoint. In an anonymous skaldic stanza quoted by Snorri, which belongs to the legendary tradition of St Óláfr, we already find the concept that it is a precondition for the saintliness of a king that he should have fallen, not on a campaign for conquest or booty abroad, but at home, in the defence of his own country. In Snorri’s account the stanza is spoken by the dead Óláfr, who appears to his brother Haraldr in a dream, prophesies his approaching end and thus reminds him of his own death, which was pleasing to God and ‘holy’ precisely because it occurred *heima* (‘at home’): *hlautk, þvít heima sǫtum, / heilagt fall til vallar* (362–63). At the end of *Haralds saga harðráða*, in the ‘obituary’ for Haraldr, presented as a comparison of the dead man with his half-brother St Óláfr, Snorri returns to this idea once more: it permits him to accept Óláfr’s sanctity without having to modify his criticism of the king’s violent rule and its hostility to the peasants. He cautiously puts the comparison in the mouth of a certain Halldórr Brynjólfsson, a ‘clever man and a mighty chieftain’. When this Halldórr heard people say that the characters of the two brothers were very different, he used to answer: ‘I never found two men with such a similar personality.’ Both had been ‘greedy for booty and power, capable in punishment and in ruling’. The only difference was that rebels had killed King Óláfr ‘in his own country, and that is why he became a saint’ (*feldu hann á eigu sinni sjálfs; varð hann fyrir þat heilagr*). Haraldr, on the other hand,

campaign 'to increase his glory and his power' (*til frægðar sér ok ríkis*); moreover 'he fell in the country of other kings' (*fell hann . . . á annarra konunga eigu*) (363).

It is highly significant that Snorri's ideal of the ruler comes to its fruition at the end of *Heimskringla*, in the narration of the reign of King Magnús Erlingsson and his father and guardian Erlingr skakki. Snorri praises this reign unusually highly as a time in which 'the kingdom of the Norwegians flourished greatly. The peasants were rich and powerful and no longer suffered deprivation of freedom and peace because of marauding troops' (*stóð Nóreagsveldi með blóma miklum. Var bóndafólk auðigt ok ríkt ok óvant ófrelsi eða ófriði flokkana*) (365). Snorri does not conceal the fact that Erlingr was concerned to confirm the rule of his son by a church coronation. Thus it may have been all the more important for him to represent Archbishop Eysteinn of Niðaróss not as a churchman in the first place but as 'a man of high degree' (*maðr ættstórr*), whom the people of Þrándheimr were happy to accept because 'most of the people of Þrándheimr were related to him by blood or by marriage'. It becomes clear that there is some kind of political ideology behind this obviously idealised portrait of aristocratic rule when we consider that Snorri avoids all mention of the reign of King Sverrir which followed almost immediately (366). Even if the results of modern scholarship no longer permit us to believe in a complete replacement of the old ruling class of chieftains by a new nobility of office, the fact remains that after the reign of Sverrir a modern conception of royal office which corresponded to the norm in the rest of Europe began to prevail. Snorri, however, closes his *Heimskringla* with the description of a state of affairs which must have seemed to him to be a meaningful result of the three hundred years of conflict and development since Haraldr hárfagri had united the kingdom: the peasant chieftain class seemed to have succeeded in bringing the monarchy and the recently created archbishopric of Niðaróss into their sphere of influence. This was a process made even more portentous by the fact that Erlingr skakki was a descendant of the *Hlaðajarlar*, the jarls of Hlaðir, thus of a family which embodied Snorri's ideal of lordship in its purest form because of its religious tolerance and its policies, which were both positively inclined to the peasants and committed to the local territory (367).

In his highly praised *Heimskringla* monograph of 1991, Sverre Bagge considers Snorri's work 'relatively unaffected by ideological bias'; it contains nothing but 'conflicts between individuals' who pursue their personal interests according to the somewhat cold-blooded motto 'nothing succeeds like success'. In answer to the question of why, then, Snorri wrote this

work, he can only say that it was some kind of collection of examples for 'future politicians' (369–72). I believe, in contrast to this, that I can discern a precisely formulated and consistent conception: the gradual replacement of the Viking form of kingship, based on roaming foreign lands in pursuit of fame and fortune, by a type of kingship that is sympathetic to the peasants, respects the traditional laws and concerns itself with peace at home. For Snorri this is the general theme of Norwegian history and indeed of Scandinavian history overall (367–68). Snorri does not know, or chooses to ignore, the legend of Troy, so popular everywhere in the Middle Ages and quoted in the *Prologue of Snorra Edda*, and so he rejects the idea of a *translatio* either of the *imperium* or the *artes*. His ideal of the *hofðingi* springs from purely Norse roots.

The *Hávamál* compilation, too, is in my opinion part of the broader context to which Snorri's efforts to create a cultural tradition peculiar to the *Nordr-lond* belong, although *Hávamál* is generally regarded as an ancient indigenous example of a Norse paganism untouched by Christianity. The majority opinion is still that the received sequence of stanzas, once it had been established, existed in oral tradition more or less unchanged over a long period of time until it was finally committed to writing in the Christian period, in the thirteenth century. '*Hávamál* is very much a text for performance,' Carolyne Larrington declares; 'it must have been recited many times in halls similar to the one represented in the opening sections.' On the contrary, I believe:

1) that the 164 stanzas of *Hávamál*, and more particularly the 79 stanzas of the 'Gnomic Poem' that form its first part, cannot possibly have survived in a purely oral tradition, because it is a characteristic of gnomic poetry that every stanza forms a self-contained unit of thought, and therefore is rarely able to achieve a fixed and unchangeable position in the context of a larger whole;

2) that the material we know as *Hávamál* was loosely bound together to form a complex at the time when it was committed to parchment, and that its only basic unifying feature is the three lines in which the name *Hávi* appears (stanzas 109, 111, 164);

3) that this name for Óðinn betrays the influence of Christian ideas, because it is only in Christianity that the concept 'high' is felt to be a quality of the divine;

4) that the redactor was attempting to provide by means of his collection a genuinely Old Norse counterpart to *Hugsvinnsmál*, a paraphrasing

translation of the Latin *Disticha Catonis*, and that in so doing he made use of a great deal of older gnomic material, but also added some stanzas which are influenced by *Hugsvinnsmál* and occasionally perhaps even directly by the *Disticha Catonis*;

5) that *Hávamál* was intended in this way to place the Norse god Óðinn on a par with the Biblical Solomon and the Roman Cato as a teacher of morality and wisdom (373–74).

David A. H. Evans rejected this interpretation in his *Hávamál* edition of 1986. For him, the archaic pagan, and even timeless, character of *Hávamál* is self-evident. Thus he fails to see that the alliterative formula *hold ok hiarta* ('body and heart') is attested only in *Hávamál* 96 and nowhere else, but that this linking of the two concepts occurs in the French troubadour lyric of the twelfth century, and then in the German Minnesang (*cor e cors, herz und lip*) and is therefore a fashionable theme in courtly poetry. He is equally uninterested in the fact that *Hávamál* 95 is the only Old Norse instance of the alliterative linking of *hugr* 'mind' and *hiarta* 'heart', whereas in the Old Saxon *Heliand* the alliteration of *hugi–herta* is almost formulaic; nor does he notice the obvious fact that in Old English the alliteration *hyge–heorte* is concentrated in Christian religious literature (374–75). Elsewhere Evans also denies any connection between *Hávamál* and Christian biblical tradition. In his interpretation of the scene of Óðinn's self-sacrifice (*Hávamál* 138–41) he is concerned solely to declare that any similarity to the death of Christ on the cross is superficial and coincidental, and to confirm the genuinely pagan and ultimately shamanistic origin of the scene. Reference to the word-pair *orð* and *verk* in *Hávamál* 141 is avoided, even though its Christian character has long been pointed out. The sudden popularity of this word-pair is based on the idea of the twofold revelation of God in 'word and works', in the Bible and in the creation of the world. As *word endi werc* it is found nineteen times in the Old Saxon *Heliand*, and since it also appears in baptismal oaths, as in the Old Saxon *uuercum endi uuordum*, it must have reached the North by way of the language of the Christian missionaries. Stanzas 138–41 of *Hávamál* probably have their origin in the period of the Christian missions, and therefore also the period of religious syncretism, and it is hardly by chance that the only apparently pagan use of 'word and works' appears in a group of stanzas which for other reasons are open to the suspicion that they contain a mixture of pagan tradition and ideas about the crucifixion of Christ (382–83).

In my view, the famous verses in *Hávamál* stanzas 76 and 77 *Deyr fé, deyia frændr, / deyr siálfr it sama* are influenced by the biblical passage Eccl. 3: 19: 'for that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: as the one

dieth, so dieth the other'. In disagreeing with this, Evans is content simply to remark that the alliterative pair *fé-frændr* doubtless comes from Old Germanic poetry. But apart from Eyvindr's *Hákonarmál* it appears only in purely Christian texts: in the Old English *Wanderer*, in Wulfstan's Homilies and also in the thirteenth-century Old Norwegian rune-poem. In Old Norse prose it is also first recorded in a late text: in King Hákon Hákonarson's prologue to the *Frostapingslög*. There is also the fact that the four oldest examples in Old English as well as in Old Norse are combined with the theme of transience, even though this is in no way obvious from the semantic content of the alliterating words. Therefore it is perfectly permissible to assume that the *fé-frændr* alliteration in *Hákonarmál*, an elegy for King Hákon góði, who spent most of his life in England, could be derived from Old English poetry, and is therefore one of the many examples of linguistic contact between English and Norse, collected by Dietrich Hofmann in 1955 (376). And it is surely also permissible to assign the subsequent wording of *Hávamál* 77 to the clerical sphere: *ec veit einn, at aldri deyr, / dómr um dauðan hvern*. Evans translates *dómr* with 'renown', but *dómr um* can only mean 'judgement on', and the following *dauðan hvern* makes Evans's translation totally meaningless, because 'renown' would not be 'renown' if it could be achieved by 'every dead man'. The meaning of this 'judgement on every dead man' is shown by *Konungs skuggsjá*: for Lazarus, as for 'all the other dead' there will be after four days 'a firm judgement on his case' (*at staðfastr domr var kominn a mal hans*). The Old English *Dream of the Rood* also explains that God, when he sits in judgement on the Latter Day, will have 'the power of judgement over everyone' (*domes gewæld anra gehwhylcum*). Here too it is emphasised that this is a 'judgement' that will affect every single individual. And this divine judgement has one other aspect besides the fact that it will apply to everyone, namely that it will be an 'eternal judgement' (*iudicium aeternum*; Hebr. 6: 2). The Old English text implicitly expresses this by contrasting God's judgement with earthly life, which is 'transient' (*læne*). In *Hávamál*, however, this opposition is expressed explicitly: the transience of earthly life in 77, 1–3 is followed in 77, 4–6 by the eternity of the divine judgement: *ec veit einn, at aldri deyr* (377).

The word *orðstírr* (*Hávamál* 76, 4), usually translated 'fame', is also to be interpreted in the light of this context. This is shown by Christian descriptions of God as *stýrir als tírar* (*Leiðarvísan* 24), and even more by the parallel section in *Hugsvinnsmál* 74, which says that there is no 'better reputation' (*orðstírr hæri*) than that acquired by a life without sin. And *Hugsvinnsmál* 74 has other phrases in common with *Hávamál*:

*Hugsv.*: Féðgirn [ . . . ] líkams munúð / orðstír [ . . . ] getr [ . . . ] aldrigi  
*Háv.* 79: fé eða flióðs munuð / *Háv.* 76: orðzífrr [ . . . ] aldregr [ . . . ] getr.

If we ask which text is primary in relation to the other, it turns out that *Hugsvinnsmál* 74 is a relatively close rendering of *Disticha Catonis* II, 15 (note that *luxuria* does not have the modern sense ‘luxury’, but means rather ‘lust, the desires of the flesh’). The correspondences are:

luxuria = líkams munúð  
 crimen avaritiae = féðgimi  
 fama = orðstír

Since it would be absurd to assume that the close *Disticha* translation in *Hugsvinnsmál* had hit purely by chance on just the same words as appear in two closely associated *Hávamál* stanzas, the only possible sequence of dependence must be *Disticha Catonis* > *Hugsvinnsmál* > *Hávamál* (378).

In the context of the present discussion it is sufficient to point out two further examples of this dependence. In *Hugsvinnsmál* 25, the conditional clause introduced by *ef* has as its source the conditional clause introduced by *si* in *Disticha Catonis* I, 9: (*Hugsv.*) *Ef þú vin átt* ‘If you have a friend’; (*Disticha Catonis*) *si tibi sit carus*. Here too it would be absurd to assume that *Hávamál* 44 *Ef þú vin átt* represents a genuine Norse tradition which is similar to *Disticha Catonis* and *Hugsvinnsmál* by pure coincidence. The common three-line structure of the Old Norse stanzas also clearly shows that *Hávamál* 44 cannot be anything but a transformation of *Hugsvinnsmál* 25: the *Hugsvinnsmál* line *fýs hann gott at gera* corresponds exactly to the text of *Disticha Catonis*, while *Hávamál* 44,3 *oc vill af hánom gott geta* may differ in content, but makes it obvious that the poet, as he formulated his line, had the words of the *Hugsvinnsmál* line ringing in his ears (386). In the case of the parallels between *Disticha Catonis* I, 26/*Hugsvinnsmál* 42/*Hávamál* 45 the content is exactly the same in all three: between friends, true and false, one should repay like with like. *Hugsvinnsmál* 42 *Fláráðs orðum, þótt fagrt mæli* is a very close translation of *Disticha Catonis*, and is repeated in *Hávamál* 45, 4–5 *fagrt scaltu við þann mæla, en flátt hyggja*. The certainty of this dependence is reinforced by the fact that *Hávamál* 42 *oc gjalda giðf við giðf, hlátr við hlátri* uses a rhetorical device which is most unusual in Old Norse to describe reciprocal behaviour. This is found in the text of *Disticha Catonis*: *sic ars deluditur arte* and in *Hugsvinnsmál*: *gjalt svá líku líkt* (386).

Even though it is difficult to assign individual *Hávamál* stanzas to a particular historical milieu (several derive from the pagan period, some from the period of religious syncretism, and yet others from the clerical, didactic sphere), *Hávamál* as a whole can be dated with some certainty. The starting-



point is the name *Hávi*. As one would expect, Evans assumes that it already existed when the gnomic collection was first created. However, *Hávi* as a name for Óðinn is extremely unusual. The term most closely related to it is *inn ríki* ‘the Powerful One’, related not only in respect of its grammatical form as a weak noun, but also in its blandness as a descriptive term. In *Vpluspá*, *inn ríki* obviously refers to the Christian God, and even the name *Hávi* for Óðinn has Christian terms as its model, since the attributive ‘high, High One’ is not given to the pagan gods, but is frequently used by Christians to describe heavenly powers: God as *hár goð*, Mary as *vífet hæsta*, the hope of salvation as *ván hás batnaðar*. Since *Hávi* does not occur in any other text than *Hávamál* apart from a passage in *Gylfaginning* based on the poem, and in *Hávamál* itself only appears in three lines, it is probably an *ad hoc* formulation whose purpose was to provide a basic frame for this gnomic collection.<sup>1</sup> In other words, whoever invented the device of Óðinn as the mouthpiece of the poem also coined the name *Hávi* (392).

Where did this idea come from? The collection of gnomic stanzas seems to me to be indirectly related to Snorri’s cultural and ideological intentions: *Hávamál* is intended to provide in the field of rules for human behaviour what *Gylfaginning* provides in the mythical sphere. And just as in *Gylfaginning* the triad *Hár/Jafnhár/Þriði* (‘High, Just as High, Third’) appear as teachers, so we have *Hávi* (‘The High One’) in the gnomic collection, and Óðinn is behind these names on both occasions. As soon as the currently prevailing prejudice about the age of *Hávamál* is thrown overboard, the possibility begins to dawn that the *Hávamál* compiler was inspired to use

<sup>1</sup> The following sentence in *Gylfaginning* ch. 2 may provide us with a further indication of the age of the *Hávamál* compilation: *þá sá hann þar háva holl, svá at varla mátti hann sjá yfir hana* (‘then he [Gylfi] saw there a high hall, so that he could scarcely see over it’). The words *háva holl* in this passage could only be interpreted as a species of parody, designed to lead the reader astray, if the author of *Gylfaginning* were already acquainted with the *Hávamál* compilation and therefore also with the phrase *Háva holl* (‘the hall of the High One [Hávi]’). A few sentences later the words *háva holl* occur again, but this time they mean something completely different: this time *Hár* refers to his own hall as ‘the hall of the High One’ (*þar í Háva holl*). This phrase is undoubtedly the work of a later scribe who was acquainted with and influenced by *Hávamál*. He either added the phrase to the text or perhaps altered a phrase (*þar í hári holl?*) found in his exemplar. It is hardly plausible that *Hár* would refer to himself in the third person—like Tarzan—and especially implausible that he would suddenly use the weak form *Hávi*. The adjective *hár* occurs several times in Eddic poetry in connection with buildings: *unz at hári kom holl standandi* (*Oddrúnargrátr* 3), *á borg inni há* (*Atlakviða* 14), *unz ec holl Hálfs háva þecþac* (*Guðrúnarkviða II* 13).

the gnomic stanza (*Gáttir allar*) cited in the Gylfi scene of *Gylfaginning* as the first stanza of his *Hávamál*. The gnomic content of *Hugsvinnsmál*, which the tradition of Christian learning had brought northwards, could have suggested to him the idea of creating a background of genuinely Norse tradition for linguistic material of this and similar kinds by setting up the Norse Óðinn as one of the ancient teachers of wisdom beside the Biblical Solomon and the Roman Cato.

In addition to *Hávamál*, there is a second Eddic poem which appears to belong indirectly to the context of the establishment of a genuinely Norse cultural consciousness in the thirteenth century: *Rígsþula*. As is well known, the dating of this poem is strongly contested: it varies from the ninth to the thirteenth century. The influence of Georges Dumézil and his adherents has caused the earlier dating to become more attractive in recent years, as Germanic studies together with Scandinavian studies have accepted Dumézil's theory of the (supposedly typically Indo-European) *idéologie tripartite* somewhat less critically than other branches of the humanities (128–44). Even Ursula Dronke has attempted to prove that *Rígsþula* is 'pagan and archaic' on this basis. She wishes to interpret the words *sem jarlar forðum* 'as the jarls once [did]' in a skaldic stanza by Víga-Glúmr as a reference to *Rígsþula*, and therefore to date the work with certainty as early as the tenth century. But in this stanza, *forðum* is linked with *nú*, and therefore refers not to *sem jarlar* but to *ek*, the subject of the sentence: 'I once won the land, as jarls do [. . .] Now I have lost it.' Jarls were obviously looked upon as the prototype of the violent and warrior-like character, as a proverb in *Málsháttakvæði* shows: *oddar gerva jarli megin* ('Spear-points give a jarl his strength'). Thus there is no obvious reference to *Rígsþula*. Dronke further wishes to trace back to Indo-European tradition not only the tripartite division of society but also the particular motif of the god Rígr's lying between a husband and wife for three nights. It is not, however, the Indian Gandharva himself who lies between the married couple, but rather his symbol, his staff; nor does he beget any offspring. And there is not the remotest suggestion that he might be the creator of a social order. This far-fetched and isolated 'parallel' is therefore unconvincing (408–09).

In contrast, the parallels between *Rígsþula* and the legend of the Völsungar are extremely striking. Jarl's snake-like eyes (*ötul vóro augo sem yrmlingi*, 'his eyes were as sharp as a little snake's') are a reference to the *frægðarmark*, the 'mark of honour' of the Völsung lineage, which gives Sigurðr's grandson of the same name the nickname *ormr-í-auga*. Konr ungr in *Rígsþula*

shares with Sigurðr Fáfnisbani the no less remarkable gift of understanding the speech of birds, and the birds' advice determines the fate not only of Sigurðr but also of Konr ungr. The same is true of the ability to use runic magic, the art of making swords blunt and the art of helping women in labour. The *grænar brautir* on which Sigurðr travels to Gjúki appear in the first lines of *Rígsþula*. And the word *konr*, a word that is central to *Rígsþula* since the word-play with *konungr* is based on it, is found in only one other place in Eddic poetry, in the Sigurðr poems, where he is called *konr Sigmundar* and *Yngva konr*. Dronke calls the fact that Konr ungr as youngest son succeeds Rígr/Jarl 'a rare case of becoming king by ultimogeniture'. However, Sigurðr ormr-í-auga, the grandson of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, is also the youngest of Ragnarr and Aslaug's four sons, and is destined from birth to be the heir and continue the family line (409).

Dronke claims that the word *karl*, which in *Rígsþula* is the name of Rígr's second son, who becomes the founding ancestor of the class of freemen, is not a legal term in Norwegian. This is only correct in as much as in the earliest texts it is used simply for 'man' in general, or for 'husband'. However, it is precisely in the legal reforms of King Hákon Hákonarson and generally from then onwards that *karl* is used for the 'free subject', that is, the representative of the class which stands in the middle between king and serf, thus precisely what is meant by *karl* in *Rígsþula*. The introduction to the *Frostapingslög*, which was written at the instigation of King Hákon, is where the phrase *konungr ok karl* appears for the first time, and it is used several times. This form of words also appears in the Völsung legend. When Áslaug announces the birth of her son Sigurðr ormr-í-auga, she reveals that she is a *konungs dóttir, en eigi karls*. Thus the use of the word *karl* as a political term for the legal definition of social status is best suited to the time of the reign of King Hákon Hákonarson, i.e. the mid-thirteenth century (410).

As it is, Hákon's reign, with its legal reforms and the coronation of 1247, is the most likely political and cultural milieu for the appearance of a poem like *Rígsþula*. It was only in the relatively stable state structures of the High Middle Ages that models of an ideal three-class social order became relevant in western and central Europe (139–40), and it is only with the constitutional reforms that began at the end of the twelfth century that a social division of the kind presented in *Rígsþula* would be conceivable. Moreover, a number of details from the poem seem to have been inspired by events of Hákon's time, such as the figure of Jarl, who is reminiscent of the powerful jarl Skúli, and the name of Konr ungr, which could have been inspired by the nickname of Hákon's own son, Hákon ungi, also referred to as *konungr*

*ungi*. Konr ungr also shares with Hákon ungi a predilection for falconry (410). Even the conflict between Jarl and Konr ungr could be a reflection of the dramatic events of the years 1239–40: jarl Skúli arrogated to himself the royal title, King Hákon then gave the title to his son, Hákon ungi, who was also the jarl's grandson, and then Skúli lost his life after a military defeat. The kingdom was saved, but the early 1250s already saw the beginning of skirmishes with the Danes, to which *Rígsþula* seems to allude. Thus the 1250s may well be the time when *Rígsþula* was composed (411).

The poet of *Rígsþula* may have received some inspiration from *Völsunga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar* which had perhaps been produced shortly before. And this text, too, belongs in its own particular way to the sphere of the efforts to establish a genuine Norse mythical, saga and historical tradition and with it the consciousness of a peculiarly Norse culture. In so doing the author was probably not primarily trying to glorify the ruling dynasty, as Barend Symons thought, but rather to integrate the extremely rich Old Norse heroic saga tradition, which itself was largely of Continental European origin, into the Norse cultural sphere. And how could such an integration be more lastingly established than by genealogically linking the Völsung legend, the story of Sigmundur, Sigurðr and Brynhildr, on the one hand with Óðinn and on the other hand with the Norwegian royal house? The saga text itself points to this political interpretation: it says that a powerful lineage stems from Sigurðr ormr-í-auga, the son of Ragnarr and Áslaug, the daughter of Sigurðr and Brynhildr, since the daughter of Sigurðr ormr-í-auga was Ragnhildr, *modir Harallz ens harfagra, er fyrstr red aullum Noregi einn* ('the mother of Haraldr hárfagri, who was the first sole ruler of all Norway'). This genealogical link was obviously more suited to the needs of the time after the king's coronation in 1247 than the traditional Yngling genealogy. While the paternal line of descent of Haraldr hárfagri, founder of the kingdom, from the Ynglingar made the Norwegian royal house a mere offshoot of the Swedish royal house, the newly established link via his maternal line of descent to the lineage of the Völsungar and further to that of Óðinn asserted the political independence of the Norwegians. Snorri, on the other hand, with his cultural-political conception of the *Norðrlönd*, could continue to accept the idea of the descent of the Norwegian dynasty from the Swedish Ynglingar with no further problems (412).

In several passages, not just in the description of Sigurðr, *Völsunga ok Ragnars saga* made use of *Þiðreks saga*, written about 1250 in Hanseatic Bergen. This latter does not, of course, form part of the courtly literature whose import was so energetically encouraged by Hákon Hákonarson, but

it does nevertheless owe its production to the political and economic conditions the king had created. It is also in some ways related to his cultural programme in that it places the Germanic, and thus also the Norse heroic legends, in a broader European context, which stretched from Apulia and Spain to the North. For the author of *Völsunga ok Ragnars saga* this may have amounted to a challenge to locate the legend of the Völsungar as far as possible (that is, as far as the facts of the traditional legendary material permitted without too much forcing) in the Norse lands and to make Sigurðr Fáfnisbani the greatest hero of the Norse pagan era (405). In so doing the saga author found himself in a dilemma, in as much as the distinguished history of Sigurðr's lineage is one of multiple death and doom. Unlike Carola Gottzmann, however, I feel that he has succeeded in providing the saga with a general underlying meaning which made it suitable for his particular purposes. The multiple deaths and disasters that plague the Völsungar become in his interpretation the proof that the lineage had an indestructible ability to survive and could flout the danger of extinction over and over again (400–03).

By integrating the Völsungar into the Norse historical tradition *Völsunga ok Ragnars saga* achieved for heroic legend what, *mutatis mutandis*, Snorri's *Gylfaginning* had done for Norse mythology. We should, however, perhaps be somewhat sceptical in judging what effect these efforts actually had at the time. King Hákon Hákonarson's cultural programme had a totally different aim, the 'Europeanisation' of the North, so the tendencies introduced by Snorri could be understood as a kind of 'anti-programme'. How little this was able to establish itself in the face of the 'modern' literary genres, which were mainly imported from the Continent, above all the *riddara sögur*, the 'chivalric sagas' translated at Hákon's instigation, can be seen from the very meagre textual tradition. *Völsunga ok Ragnars saga* is found in only a single medieval manuscript, the Eddic collection of poems about gods and heroes only in the rather shabby and carelessly written *Codex regius*. Despite its initial neglect, however, since the 'Scandinavian Renaissance' of the seventeenth century this literature has been far more influential, culturally and ideologically, than the *riddara sögur*, which were more popular and officially promoted at the time. If the peoples of Scandinavia down to the present day still look to the traditions of the late pagan Viking period in defining their identity, this is due less to the merits of the Viking period itself than to the achievement of the high-medieval literature that reactivated these traditions and first made them available for ideological exploitation.

**Bibliography**

- Baetke, Walter 1952. *Die Götterlehre der Snorra Edda*.
- Bagge, Sverre 1991. *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*.
- Beyschlag, Siegfried 1954–55. 'Die Betörung Gylfis'. *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 85, 163–81.
- Clunies Ross, Margaret 1987. *Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson's ars poetica and medieval theories of language*.
- Dronke, Ursula 1981. 'Sem jarlar forðum. The influence of *Rígsþula* on two saga-episodes'. In *Speculum Norrænum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. Ursula Dronke, Guðrún P. Helgadóttir, Gerd Wolfgang Weber and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 56–72.
- Evans, David A. H., ed., 1986. *Hávamál*.
- Fromm, Hans 1967. *Kalevala: das finnische Epos des Elias Lönnrot*.
- Gottzmann, Carola 1987. 'Völsunga saga. Die Geschichte eines Königsgeschlechts'. In Carola Gottzmann, *Heldendichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts*, 73–108.
- Heusler, Andreas 1908. *Die gelehrte Urgeschichte im altisländischen Schrifttum*.
- Hofmann, Dietrich 1955. *Nordisch-englische Lehnbeziehungen der Wikingerzeit*.
- Holtmark, Anne 1964. *Studier i Snorres mytologi*.
- Larrington, Carolyne 1993. *A Store of Common Sense*.
- Lönnroth, Lars 1990. Review of Klaus von See, *Mythos und Theologie im skandinavischen Hochmittelalter* in *Skandinavistik* 20, 43–47.
- Neckel, Gustav and Felix Niedner, trans., 1925. *Die jüngere Edda mit dem sogenannten ersten grammatischen Traktat*.
- See, Klaus von 1999. *Europa und der Norden im Mittelalter*.
- Symons, Barend 1876. 'Untersuchungen ueber die sogenannte Völsunga saga'. *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 3, 199–303.
- Weber, G. W. 1981. 'Irreligiosität und Heldenzeitalter. Zum Mythencharakter der altisländischen Literatur'. In *Speculum Norrænum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. Ursula Dronke, Guðrún P. Helgadóttir, Gerd Wolfgang Weber and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 474–505.
- Weber, G. W. 1985. 'Edda, jüngere'. In *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* 6, 394–412.
- Weber, G. W. 1986. 'Siðaskipti: Das religionsgeschichtliche Modell Snorri Sturlusons in Edda und Heimskringla'. In *Sagnaskemmtun: studies in honour of Hermann Pálsson on his 65th birthday, 26th May 1986*, ed. Rudolf Simek, Jónas Kristjánsson and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, 309–29.

## ON HEIÐR

BY JOHN MCKINNELL

### 1. *Who is Heiðr in Völuspá?*

Þat man hon fólcvíg fyrst í heimi,  
er Gullveigo geirom studdo  
oc í hǫll Hárs hána brendo;  
þrysvar brendo, þrysvar borna,  
opt, ósialdan, þó hon enn lifir.

Heiði hana héto, hvars til húsa kom,  
vǫlo velspá, vitti hon ganda;  
seið hon kunní, seið hon leikin;  
æ var hon angan illrar brúðar. (*Völuspá* 21–22)<sup>1</sup>

She remembers a killing between peoples, the first in the world,  
when they propped up Gullveig with spears,  
and in the hall of Hárr they burned her;  
three times they burned her, three times reborn,  
often, not seldom, and yet she still lives.

They called her Heiðr, wherever she came to houses,  
a prophetess foretelling good fortune, she laid spells on spirits;  
she understood magic, practised magic in a trance;  
she was always the delight of an evil bride.

The interpretation of these two stanzas constitutes one of the most familiar problems in the study of eddic poetry. Most of the critics who have wrestled with them have been mainly concerned to elucidate the enigmatic figure of Gullveig, and since the work of Karl Müllenhoff (1883) and Sigurður Nordal (*Völuspá* 1978) the majority view has been that she is a quasi-allegorical figure associated with the Vanir, that the Æsir burn her in Óðinn's hall in order to try to exorcise the greed for gold which she represents, but that this merely leads to her being reborn as the *vǫlva* Heiðr, whose name is usually translated as the adjective 'Bright'. The attack on her then leads indirectly to the war between the two races of gods, hence to the destruction of the fortress-wall of the Æsir, the

<sup>1</sup> Eddic poems are normally quoted from NK throughout this article, but in *Völuspá* 22/5–6 I reject their emendation of the Codex Regius text, adopting instead the smaller emendation of *leikin* to *leikin* (H reads *hugleikin*); further see *Völuspá* 1978, 44.



employment and betrayal of the Giant Builder, and thus to the moral fall of the gods and the confrontation with the giants which ends at Ragnarøk.

It is a powerful and elegant interpretation which enables us to see the whole poem as a structure combining logical clarity with moral force. But for that very reason, it may be worth revisiting the evidence for it; might it have been accepted, perhaps, more because of the elegance of the construct than because of any independent evidence in its favour? And elegant as it is, it leaves two problems unsolved. First, it does not explain how the burning of Gullveig and her reincarnation as *Heiðr* lead the *Æsir* to attack the *Vanir*, rather than vice versa. Second, if the defining vices of the gods are oathbreaking and murder (in the killing of the Giant Builder, *Völuspá* 26) and greed for gold (in the Gullveig episode), it seems odd that evil men are later punished for oathbreaking, murder and — not the greed for gold, but the seduction of other men's wives (*Völuspá* 39/1–6). The parallel is so nearly perfect that we should perhaps question whether we have understood the point of the Gullveig story correctly.

However, I shall leave Gullveig aside for the moment and concentrate on the identification of *Heiðr*. In the first two lines of st. 22,

*Heiði hana héto hvars til húsa kom*

They called her *Heiðr* wherever she came to houses

does the pronoun *hana* refer back to the last stated feminine subject (i.e. Gullveig), or is it, as Hermann Pálsson (1994, 60) has suggested, part of the pattern whereby the *völva* who is the narrator of the poem opens a number of stanzas by referring to herself in the third person? (stt. 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 35, 38, 39, 59 and 64, and at two other significant moments: introducing the theme of Ragnarøk at 44/5, and when she sinks down at the end of her prophecy, 66/8). The reciting *völva* does not always refer to herself in the nominative case; in st. 29 she unambiguously uses a dative construction:

*Valði henni Herfǫðr hringa oc men.*

*Herfǫðr* (i.e. Óðinn) chose rings and necklace for her.

Nor can we appeal to the moral force and clarity of the poem's structure and outlook as seen by Müllenhoff and Nordal; that would be circular argument, since their view depends in part on the interpretation of this crux. Instead, we must try to place ourselves in the position of the poem's early audiences and ask who they are likely to have assumed *Heiðr* to be.

There is only one other occurrence of the name in Old Norse poetry, in *Hyndluljóð* 32:

Haki var Hvæðno hóti beztr sona,  
enn Hvæðno var Hjørvarðr faðir,  
Heiðr oc Hrossþjófr Hrímnis kindar.

Haki was somewhat the best of Hvæðna's sons,  
but Hjørvarðr was Hvæðna's father,  
Heiðr and Hrossþjófr (were) Hrímnir's children.

Probably because of the conventional identification of Heiðr with Gullveig, *LP* (236) and Simek (1993, 135) treat Heiðr here as an otherwise unrecorded name of a male giant, though Sijmons and Gering refer to Heiðr and Hrossþjófr as 'geschwister', 'brother and sister' (SG III:1 391). *LP* also cites a supposed instance of Heiðr as a masculine name in a skaldic verse by Helgi Ásbjarnarson, but this seems to be a simple use of the masculine noun *heiðr* in the sense 'honour', 'praise (in the form of poetry)' (Kock I 97). *Hyndluljóð* 32 is clearly concerned with the kindred of giants of both sexes (since Hrímnir is a well-known male giant-name and Hvæðna is undoubtedly female); the long lists of names of male giants in *Pulur* IV b, f (Kock I 323–25) do not include Heiðr, although other names listed here do appear (Hrímnir in *Pula* IV b 1/5; Hrossþjófr in *Pula* IV f 3/1; Haki twice, but in the lists of names of sea-kings, *Pula* III a 8 (Kock I 322) and IV a 2/7; Hveðra — probably a variant of Hvæðna — in the list of names of troll-women, *Pula* IV c 2/7).

This section of *Hyndluljóð* has clearly been influenced by *Völuspá*, so much so that it (or perhaps the whole poem) is referred to by Snorri (*Gylfaginning* ch. 5) as *Völuspá in skamma* (ed. Faulkes 1982, 10, 176; trans. Faulkes 1987, 10; and further see *Völuspá* 1978, 119–20; SG III:1 390), and there is no reason to think that Heiðr here is a different figure from the one in *Völuspá*. Hrímnir is a common giant-name, and Hrossþjófr is probably to be connected with the Lappish soothsayer Rostiophus, who prophesies to Othinus in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* III.iv.1 (ed. Olrik and Ræder I 70; trans. Fisher and Davidson I 76) that Rinda will bear him a son who will avenge the killing of Balderus. Davidson suggests (II 56) that Rostiophus may be Loki in disguise, the epithet 'Horse-Thief' referring to his seduction of the giant builder's horse, for which see *Gylfaginning* ch. 42 (ed. Faulkes 1982, 35; trans. Faulkes 1987, 36), and this is quite possible.

The association with magical prophecy is reinforced by the opening of the next stanza in *Hyndluljóð*:

Ero völor allar frá Viðólfi.

All prophetesses derive from Viðólfr.

This link may derive from the fact that *Heiðr* was a traditional name for a *vǫlva*; and the name *Viðólftr*, which appears nowhere else, can most obviously be interpreted as ‘forest wolf’ (SG III:1 392 ‘*lupus silvaticus*’), which would be a ‘wild nature’ name similar to *Heiðr* ‘heath’. However, *Viðólftr* may be the same figure as *Vitolfus*, a retired warrior and magic-worker who heals the wounds of *Haldanus* and magically conceals his own house from the pursuing forces of *Haldanus*’s enemy in Saxo, *Gesta Danorum* VII.ii.2 (ed. Olrik and Ræder I 183; trans. Fisher and Davidson I 203, see notes in II 110). This name is probably to be derived from *vitt* ‘magic’ (in verse only in the phrase *vitta vétr*, *Ynglingatal* 3/3 and 21/3, Kock I 4, 7) and *vitta* ‘to enchant’ (in verse only in *Vǫluspá* 22/4), which perfectly describes the character’s role (see Fisher and Davidson II 110 and Simek 1993, 365). In that case, the poet of *Hyndluljóð* or the scribe of *Flateyjarbók* may have re-interpreted the name.

The poet of *Vǫluspá in skamma* clearly thought of *Heiðr* as a *vǫlva* of giant ancestry, and this would link her, not to *Gullveig*, but rather to the narrator of *Vǫluspá*, who says that she remembers the giants who gave birth to her or brought her up:

Ec man iǫtna, ár um borna,  
þá er forðom mic fœdda hǫfðo. (*Vǫluspá* 2/1–4)  
I remember giants, born of old,  
who had given birth to me (or brought me up) long ago.

Of course, it is possible that this may be a misinterpretation of *Vǫluspá* 22, but at our distance of centuries we are in no position to assert this; without evidence to the contrary, we should rather assume that the poet of *Hyndluljóð* understood *Vǫluspá* correctly.

## 2. *Heiðr* elsewhere

In prose sources *Heiðr* is a fairly familiar name for a *vǫlva*, and examples of it appear in:

*Orvar-Odds saga* ch. 2 (*FSN* I 286–89; for a discussion of this see Quinn 1998, 34–36);

*Hrólfs saga kraka* ch. 3 (*FSN* II 9–10);

*Landnámabók* (1968, 216–19; in the same story in *Vatnsdæla saga* chs 10–15 (1939, 28–42) the *vǫlva* is not named);

*Hauks þáttur hábrókar* (*Flateyjarbók* II 66–69);

Ch. 5 of the longer version of *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna* (1901, 14; here she is one of a pair of *seiðkonur*, the other being called *Hamgláma*, which may refer to her shape-changing ability. They are unnamed in the shorter version, see *FSN* II 247–70).

These stories share a number of major features besides the name of the *vǫlva*:

1. *Heiðr* is typically seen as a peripatetic *vǫlva* who is invited to prophesy at feasts; this may explain the line *hvars til húsa kom* (*Vǫluspá* 22/2). The only *Heiðr* who does not prophesy is one of a pair of *seiðkonur* in *Friðþjófs saga* who try to destroy the hero and his men by raising a storm at sea.

2. She may be of an alien origin connected with the far north — a Lapp (*Vatnsdæla saga*) or a giantess (*Hauks þátr* and cf. *Hyndluljóð*). If *Heiðr* is the narrator of *Vǫluspá*, she has already claimed to have been *fædd* ('brought forth' or 'brought up') by ancient giants; and *Heiðreikr* (possibly 'heath-wanderer', cf. *reika*, 'to wander') appears as a male giant-name in Eilífr Goðrúnarson's *Pórsdrápa* 18/2 (Kock I 78), a poem which may be roughly contemporary with *Vǫluspá*.

3. The prophecies (or spells) are delivered from a high platform (*Hrólfs saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Friðþjófs saga*) and are preceded by a seizure in which *Heiðr* opens her mouth wide and gasps for breath (*Hrólfs saga*, *Hauks þátr*); sometimes the hidden information is gathered at night (*Qrvar-Odds saga*). These features are not explicit in *Vǫluspá* (though the *vǫlva*'s 'sitting out' in st. 28 probably implies that it is night), but they could easily be imagined in it.

4. The prophecies may be a 'song' which comes into *Heiðr*'s mouth from elsewhere (*Qrvar-Odds saga*, *Hrólfs saga*), in which case she refers in the verse to her own faculty of 'seeing', and may refer to herself either in the first person (*Hrólfs saga*) or in both first and third persons (*Qrvar-Odds saga*). Similarly, in *Vǫluspá* the prophecies clearly represent an external truth, and the narrating *vǫlva* refers to herself in both the first and third persons.

5. The prophetess is paid with gifts, which may include a gold ring (*Hrólfs saga*, *Hauks þátr*, though in the former the ring is given in an attempt to stop *Heiðr*'s revelations); similarly, Óðinn presents the speaking *vǫlva* with *hringa oc men* (*Vǫluspá* 29/2).

6. The story in *Hrólfs saga* suggests that once the questioner has employed the correct procedure, *Heiðr* may be unable to stop her prophecy unless she can escape from the questioner's presence, or at least from the prophecy platform. In the same way, the narrating *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá* is apparently forced to speak when Óðinn looks her in the eye (*Vǫluspá* 28/4).

7. There is usually a powerful hostility between *Heiðr* and her male hearer, who may wish to defy his future or remain ignorant of it, and may attack or threaten her (*Qrvar-Odds saga*, *Hrólfs saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*). We should probably assume a similar hostility between Óðinn and the

narrating *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá*, though in this case, as in *Hrólfs saga*, he is forcing her to speak rather than trying to prevent her.

8. *Heiðr* sometimes prophesies her hearer's death (*Orvar-Odds saga*, *Hrólfs saga*), as the narrating *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá* prophesies that of Óðinn (*Vǫluspá* 53/7–8).

9. *Heiðr*'s prophesies always come true; this must also be assumed to be the case in *Vǫluspá*.

10. In *Landnámabók*, *Vatnsdæla saga* and possibly *Hauks þáttr* *Heiðr* seems to be connected with (or opposed to) the cult of Freyr, though she is never one of the Vanir herself. I shall return to the significance of this for the figure of *Heiðr* in *Vǫluspá*.

It seems, therefore, that nearly all the features traditionally associated with the name *Heiðr* are obviously borne out in what we are told about the narrating *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá*. The fact that some of them also appear in stories about *vǫlur* with other names is not important for this argument; the point is that they recall other parts of *Vǫluspá* besides stt. 21–22. Of course it is true that all the other sources I have looked at are later than *Vǫluspá*, and one might argue that they have all used this famous poem in creating a traditional character for the name; but even if this were so, it would be rash to assume that they had all misunderstood the poem, and in the same way. The balance of likelihood must be either that *Vǫluspá* and the other sources all draw on a pre-existing tradition, or else, if it really is the source for all the others, that they understood it correctly, and consequently that *Heiðr* is the narrator of the poem.

The original meaning of the name *Heiðr* is uncertain. In the study of *Vǫluspá* it has usually been connected with the neuter noun *heið* 'brightness (of the sky)' and especially with the adjective *heiðr* 'bright', but this may be merely because of the assumed identity of *Heiðr* with *Gullveig* and her association with gold.

A second, more complex possibility is that it is derived from the feminine noun *heiðr* 'heath', perhaps with a perceived semantic link to the adjective *heiðinn* 'heathen', which first appears in Old Norse in Eyvindr skáldaspillir's *Hákonarmál* 21/5 (composed c. 962–65; Kock I 37). As Hákon had grown up and been converted to Christianity in England, it may here be a direct borrowing from Old English *hæðen*. There was probably a perceived connection between heathenism and the wild countryside in both Old English and Old Norse; OE *hæðstapa* 'heath-stepper', 'stag' appears in the hellish context of Grendel's mere in *Beowulf* 1368, and ON *heiðingi* occurs both in the sense 'heath-dweller', 'wolf' (seven instances in verse, the oldest of which

are probably *Atlakviða* 8/3 and 8/5), and also meaning ‘heathen’ (four surviving examples in twelfth-century verse, e.g. Einarr Skúlason, *Geisli* 55/4, Kock I 217).

A third derivation would be from the masculine noun *heiðr* ‘honour’, ‘praise’ and the related feminine noun *heið* ‘payment’, ‘fee’. It may seem odd for a *vǫlva* to be given a name like this, but when Loki disguises himself as an old magic-working woman in *Gylfaginning* ch. 49, he adopts the equally curious name *Þokk* (apparently ‘Thanks’, ed. Faulkes 1982, 48; trans. Faulkes 1987, 51). In purely grammatical terms, the second of these derivations seems most likely, since the name *Heiðr* declines like *heiðr* ‘heath’; but to decide which is most probable in cultural terms, we must look at other significant names given to *vǫlur*.

### 3. *Heiðr* and her sisters

The majority of names associated with *vǫlur* and *seiðkonur* in Old Norse prose sources are conventional two-element female names which are also used for women who have no association with magic, and they probably have no particular significance (e.g. Oddbjörg in *Víga-Glúms saga*, Sæunn in *Njáls saga*, Þorbjörg lítilvǫlva in *Eiríks saga rauða*, Þórdís in *Fóstbræðra saga*, Þórdís at spákonufelli and Þórveig in *Kormáks saga*, Þuríður sundafyllir in *Landnámabók*). However, there are some other single-element names besides *Heiðr* which are particularly associated with magic-working women:

1. *Busla* in *Bósa saga* (chs 2, 5, *FSN* II 467, 472–73) is the foster-mother of the hero Bósi, who confronts King Hringr and chants a poem against him, in which she threatens him with various disasters if he refuses to give up his hostility towards Bósi and Herrauðr. *Busla* refers to herself mainly in the first person, but also once in the third person (by her name), and she ends with a question:

eða viltu þulu lengri?

or do you want a longer list?

which strongly recalls the second refrain in *Vǫlusþá*:

vitð ér enn, eða hvat?

do you know enough yet, or what?

The name *Busla* may be connected with the poetic verb *bysja* ‘to gush’ (past tense *busti*), but I have not found any other example of it.

2. The name *Gríma* is used for three different magic-making women, one in *Laxdæla saga* chs 35–37 (1934, 95–107) and two in *Fóstbræðra saga*

chs 9–10 and 23 (1943, 161–69, 242–48), as well as being applied to a troll-woman (*Þula* IV c 1/6, Kock I 324); but there is also one woman in *Landnámabók*, Gríma Hallkelsdóttir, who is not associated with magic (1968, 83, 108–10). The name is linked to the noun *gríma* ‘mask’, ‘cowl’ (and in poetry also ‘night’).

3. *Gróa* is one of the commonest names for a *völva*, and is the only one of this group which is also relatively common as a non-magical female name; *Landnámabók* records twelve different examples of it. In *Svipdagsmál* 1–16 (SG I 196–200), Gróa is awoken from the dead to chant nine protective *galdrar* over her son. Another mythological Gróa (in *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17, ed. Faulkes 1998, I 22; trans. Faulkes 1987, 79–80) begins to extract the fragment of Hrungrnir’s whetstone from Þórr’s head (cf. also Þjóðólfr of Hvin, *Haustlǫng* 20/1–4, early tenth century, Kock I 12); the fact that Þórr has to fetch her husband Aurvandill across Élivágar (‘Frozen Waves’) suggests that she was probably thought of as the wife of a giant. A more sinister Gróa, in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* ch. 2 (*FSN* II 362–63), fosters the foundling Grímr and teaches him her magic. In *Vansdæla saga* ch. 36 (1939, 95–96), Gróa has supernatural foreknowledge of her own fated death. Saxo’s Gróa (*Gesta Danorum* Liv.2–12, ed. Olrik and Ræder I 13–18, trans. Fisher and Davidson I 16–19 and notes II 27) is not a *völva*, but has strong giant associations; she is wooed by King Gram, partly through his champion Bessus, in a sequence of verse reminiscent of *Skírnismál*. The name Gróa is obviously derived from the verb *gróa* ‘to grow’.

4. *Hulð* is a *seiðkona* and *völva* in Finnmark in Snorri’s *Ynglinga saga* chs 13–14 (1941, 29–31), though she does not appear in either of the two stanzas of Þjóðólfr’s *Ynglingatal* which are quoted in these chapters; she may also have been the central figure of a lost *Huldar saga*, about a *trollkona mikil*, which Sturla Þórðarson recited before the court of King Magnús Hákonarson in Bergen in 1263 (*Sturlu þáttr* ch. 2, *Sturlunga saga* II 232–33). She has also been linked to the German fairytale figure of Holda or Frau Holle, Mother Winter (Simek 1993, 165); but her name is related to the verb *hylja* ‘to conceal’ (past participle *huliðr* or *huldr*), and seems to mean ‘Hidden’.

5. *Hyndla*, the wise giantess of *Hyndluljóð*, is called upon to give esoteric information, some of it about the future (*Hyndluljóð* 42–44). Like Busla and the narrating *völva* in *Völuspá*, she challenges her hearer in one of her refrains (*Hyndluljóð* 17/8, 18/10, 34/4, 36/4, 39/4):

viltu enn lengra?

do you want still more?



The name means ‘little bitch’ (see SG III:1 369; *LP* 305), and probably had giant associations (cf. the giant-name *Hundalfr* in *Pula* IV f 3/2, Kock I 325); it also appears as a common noun in *Maríu saga* (1871, 494), where the little bitches symbolise *þarflausar hugsanir* ‘idle thoughts’.

Nearly all these names seem to be connected with wild nature or with concealment, and a derivation of *Heiðr* from *heiðr* ‘heath’ therefore seems more likely than one which connects the word to brightness or to honour; this is also borne out by the grammatical declension of the name (see p. 400 above).

The name *Heiðr* apparently implied an ancient woman, often of giant or Lappish origin, and Hermann Pálsson (1996, 14–26) has suggested that the narrator (and authoress) of *Völuspá* is herself to be assumed to be one of the Saami. I think this unlikely; of all the *völur* considered above, only *Heiðr* in *Vatnsdæla saga* (but not in the same story in *Landnámabók*) is said to be Lappish, and this may be influenced by the male Lappish enchanters whom Ingimundr employs in the same story in an attempt to find his silver Freyr image. *Hulð* in *Ynglinga saga* apparently lives in Finnmark, but her ethnic origin is not stated. Against this, *Heiðr* is a giantess in *Hyndluljóð* and apparently also in *Hauks þáttr*; *Gríma* is a troll-woman in the *þulur*; *Gróa* in *Skáldskaparmál* is the wife of a giant, in Saxo she is betrothed to a giant, and in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* she is the foster-mother of a monstrous son whose actual mother is thought to have been a sea-hag; *Hulð* also has elemental associations which suggest a giant origin; and *Hyndla* is explicitly called *brúðr iqtuns* (*Hyndluljóð* 50/3). Since the narrator of *Völuspá* also says that she was herself brought up by giants, it seems likely that this was a common literary assumption about *völur* in mythological and legendary sources, and that cases where *völur* are said to be of Saami or other remote northern origins represent a later rationalisation of this tradition.

#### 4. *Heiðr and the evil woman*

At the end of *Völuspá* 22 it is said of *Heiðr*,

æ var hon angan illrar brúðar

she was always the joy of an evil woman

and most commentators have merely remarked on the bad reputation of those who practised *seiðr*. Hermann Pálsson (1996, 50) differs from other editors (including his own earlier edition, see Hermann Pálsson 1994, 9) in reading *þjóðar* ‘nation’ instead of *brúðar*, again associating it with the Saami; but as the Codex Regius scribe himself has apparently corrected

this reading to *brúðar* (which is also found in H), it is difficult to justify reading *þjóðar* here. But what exactly does *brúðar* mean in this context? Does it refer to a particular evil woman, or to evil women in general, and what kind of evil is meant?

The word *brúðr* is common in Old Norse verse (*LP* gives 55 examples) in the lexical senses ‘bride’, ‘wife’ and ‘woman’ (which flow into each other to some extent). But most instances of it are of a few specific kinds, some of whose connotations may seem surprising. Since the reference in *Völuspá* is to an *ill brúðr*, three small groups of approving usages may be ignored here (*brúðr* plus the title of a nobleman, e.g. *iarla brúðr*, *Guðrúnarkviða I* 3/2; cases derived from Christian religious expressions of the ‘bride of Jesus’ type, e.g. *brúðir Jésú*, *Heilagra meýja drápa* 4/1; and complimentary addresses to attractive and/or noble women as *brúðir*, e.g. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 35/7).

Most, however, appear in more sinister contexts:

1. The largest group is of ‘brides’ or potential ‘brides’ of giants: *bergrisa brúðr*, *Grottasöngur* 24/1–2; *brúð(i)r iqtuns*, *Hyndluljóð* 4/6, 50/3; *brúðr Aurnis jóða*, *Draumvísur (XI)* 10/3 (Kock I 198); *brúðr bergjarls*, *Anon (X) lausavísa III A* 1/1 (Kock I 92); *brúðir þölvísar*, *Hárbarðsljóð* 23/3; *brúðr sefgrímnis mága*, *Pórsdrápa* 4/7–8 (Kock I 77). Other *brúðir* who fall more loosely into this group include the proposed bride of the dwarf *Alvíss* in *Alvíssmál* 1/2, 2/6, 4/2 and the *brúðir berserkia* whom *Þórr* boasts of having fought in *Hárbarðsljóð* 37/1–2.

2. Other *brúðir*, though sometimes the sexual partners of gods, are themselves giantesses (*Skaði* in *Grímnismál* 11/5; *Jörð* in *Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld’s Hákonardrápa* 6/1–2, *Eyvindr skáldaspillir’s Háleygjatal* 15/3, and *Eyjólfr dádaskáld’s Bandadrápa* 3/5). Others again are hags who appear to have no husbands, like the *gýgr* (‘hag’) who speaks out of a stone and is addressed as *brúðr* by the dead *Brynhildr* in *Helreið Brynhildar* 3/2. A particularly interesting example of a troll-woman ‘bride’ in the context of this argument is the wolf-kenning *heiðingja . . . brúðar* in the last stanza of *Oddi’s drápa* quoted in *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* ch. 9 (1991, 481), referring to *Hléguðr*, who in battle magically acquires a wolf’s head and becomes invisible unless looked at under one’s left hand.

3. Three doubtful cases may refer to the idea of features of the natural world as giantesses: *Snæbjörn’s* reference to waves as *skerja . . . níu brúðir*, (*lausavísa* 1/2–4, Kock I 105); the reference to the sun as *heið brúðr himins* in *Grímnismál* 39/6; and most interestingly, though very uncertainly, *Einarr Skúlason’s* designation of *Freyja* as *Vanabrúðr* in *Øxarflokkr* 5/2 (Kock I 221), though this might be placed in the ‘complimentary’ group.

4. There are four uses of *brúðr* in contexts connected with death: *Atlakviða* 41/7, where Guðrún is setting fire to Atli's hall, killing everyone inside; *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 46/9–10, where Helgi refers to the presence of *brúðir byrgðar í haugi* 'brides buried in a mound'; *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 53/4, where the dying Brynhildr is referring to herself; and Hrafn Önundarson, *lausavísa* 1/3 (Kock I 100), who dreams that the bed of his *brúðr* is reddened with his own blood. Akin to this are at least two references to valkyries as *brúðir*: *Grípisspá* 16/2, referring to the valkyrie Sigdrífa, and *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* 7/3, referring to Sváva. Two other valkyrie-like figures are also called *brúðir*: the favourable dream-woman who will receive Gísli after his death (Gísli Súrsson, *lausavísa* 22/3, Kock I 58); and the figure of Guðrún in armour in *Atlakviða* 43/3.

5. *Brúðr* also appears in a number of contexts which imply the unreliability or treacherous behaviour of women: *Grípisspá* 45/6, 46/2, 49/2 all use *brúðr* to refer to Brynhildr while predicting her resentful and treacherous behaviour; one of the proverbially unreliable things listed in *Hávamál* (86/5) is *brúðar beðmál* 'the words of a woman in bed'; *Sigrdrífumál* 28/2–3 warns against being tempted to kiss *fagrar / brúðir becciom á* 'pretty women on the benches'; and Kormákr (*lausavísa* 23/2, Kock I 45) alludes regretfully to how he used to trust Steingerðr. One might perhaps add *Völundarkviða* 19/2 (which may refer to Völundr's swan-wife and could also belong to the valkyrie group) and 33/9 (referring to the sexually pliant Bøðvildr).

A few of these examples are doubtful, but between them these groups account for up to 41 of the 54 other instances of *brúðr* listed in *LP*. To judge from the surviving uses of the word in verse, therefore, the phrase *illrar brúðar* in *Völuspá* 22/8 is most likely to refer to a giantess or the like, to a context associated with death, or to sexually motivated unreliability. It does not otherwise appear in contexts directly connected with *seiðr*, so we should probably assume that whoever this woman may be, she needs Heiðr's prophetic gifts because she does not share them.

### 5. *Gullveig*

I shall now turn back to the meaning of the name *Gullveig*, which is found only in *Völuspá*. It seems likely that the poet may have invented *Gullveig* himself; if so, her meaning can only be what a contemporary audience could gather from the name. I used to think that this points towards an allegorical interpretation of her; but it is alternatively possible that the poet intended his audience to recognise in her a mythological being who

usually goes by another name. In either case, the interpretation of her must begin from the meaning of her name.

*Gull-* is a rare element in personal names; see *Gullrönd*, Guðrún's sister in *Guðrúnarkviða I*; *Gullmævill*, a dwarf in *Þula* IV ii 4/3 (Kock I 336); *Gullintanni* 'gold-tooth', a by-name of Heimdallr (*Gylfaginning* ch. 27, ed. Faulkes 1982, 25; trans. Faulkes 1987, 25) (and *gulltǫnnr*, a royal nickname in Snorri Sturluson, *Ynglinga saga* ch. 42 (1941, 73), where the divine origins of the family suggest a mythological sense); *Gulla*, *Gulli* and the giant-name *Gullnir*, derived from nicknames denoting wealth; and *Gullkúla* 'gold knob', possibly from a gold possession (for the last four, see Lind 1905–15, cols 349, 400–01). In nicknames *gull-* is commoner (see Lind 1920–25, cols 123–25); it may be prefixed to the names of rich people (e.g. *gull-Ása*, *gull-Haraldr*), can appear alone (*gul(l)i*), or in compounds like *gullkleppr* 'gold-mass', *gullkorni* 'rich farmer', *gullskór* 'gold-shoe' (applied to King Hákon Hákonarson's messenger Hallvarðr). It can also denote owners of gold objects, e.g. *gullberi*, *gullháls*, *gullhjálmr*, *gullkambr*, *gullknappr*. Three names might refer to blonde hair (*gullbrá* 'gold-(eye)brow', *gullkárr* 'gold-curl', *gullskeggr* 'gold-beard'), but Lind sees the latter two as double nicknames = 'rich bearded/curly-haired man'. *Gullbrá* in *Vilmundar saga víðutans* is named after an omen that she will marry a king (Loth 1964, 141), and here it must refer to a gold crown. In the folktale *Gullbrá og Skeggi* (Jón Árnason 1961, I 140–44) she is a witch who owns a chest of gold; perhaps the nickname implied a woman with gold ornaments on her forehead. The only metaphorical *gull-* nicknames are translated from Latin or Greek: *gullmunnr* (= St. John Chrysostom), *gullvarta* (a watchtower in Byzantium, de Vries 1977, 194). It seems that *Gull-* in human names normally refers to wealth or to objects made of gold, not to figurative excellence or golden colour.

There are some other mythological names beginning in *Gull-* (or *Gullin-*), mostly applied to animals which belong to the gods:

1. Freyja's (or Freyr's) sacred boar *Gullinbu(r)sti* 'gold-bristle' (*Hyndluljóð* 7/6; *Gylfaginning* ch. 49, ed. Faulkes 1982, 47; trans. Faulkes 1987, 50; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 7, ed. Faulkes 1998, I 18; trans. Faulkes 1987, 75).

2. The horse *Gull(in)faxi* 'gold-mane' (*Þulur* I a 2/6, IV rr 1/2, Kock I 321, 340), which Snorri explains was given by Þórr to his son Magni after Hrungrnir was killed (*Skáldskaparmál* ch. 17, ed. Faulkes 1998, I 20–22; trans. Faulkes 1987, 77–79).

3. *Gullinhorni* 'gold-horn', a bull, of which nothing else is known (*Þula* IV ö 3/2, Kock I 334).

4. *Gullinkambi* 'gold-comb', the cock that wakes the gods (*Völuspá* 43/2).

5. *Gulltoppr* ‘gold-top’, listed as one of the horses of the Æsir (*Grímnismál* 30/5; *Pulur* I a 1/5, IV rr 1/3, Kock I 321, 340), and said by Snorri to be Heimdallr’s horse (*Gylfaginning* chs 27, 49, ed. Faulkes 1982, 25, 47; trans. Faulkes 1987, 25, 50; *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 8, ed. Faulkes 1998, I 19; trans. Faulkes 1987, 76).

In these cases, the element *Gull(in)-* indicates possession by the gods, sometimes the Vanir, and probably that the animals concerned are in some way made of gold (see p. 409 below).

There are also many common nouns in Old Norse verse which have the first element *gull-*. The largest group of these, which is not relevant to *Völuspá*, is of terms for men who use gold, usually as gatherers or generous distributors of it (*gullbroti*, *gullkennir*, *gullmiðlendr*, *gullsamnandi* and six others), but occasionally as smiths (*gullsmiðr* and probably *Gullmævill*, see p. 405 above). Two terms for snakes, which probably refer to their lying on hoards of treasure, are also irrelevant here (*gullbúi*, *gullormr*).

When these are discarded, two types of compound remain. The first is a large group referring to objects made of or covered with gold: *gullband*, *gullbaugr*, *gullbitill*, *gullbrynja*, *gullhjálmr*, *gullhlað*, *gullhring*, *gullker*, *gullmen*, *gullseimr*, *gullskál*, *gullstafr*. The second is a pair of woman-kennings: *gullfit*, *gullskorð*, to which we should probably add *gull-Skøgul* (where the valkyrie-name *Skøgul* stands for ‘woman’) and *Gullrönd* (perhaps referring to her gold-edged clothing?). There are no compound nouns which refer to any psychological or moral effect of gold; and Lotte Motz’s theory that *Gullveig* simply means ‘golden (coloured) drink’ (Motz 1993, 82–84) also seems unlikely, since there are no other nouns that refer simply to golden colour.

The element *-veig* is not uncommon in female names; in verse we find *Álmveig* (one of the ancestresses of the Skjöldungar, in *Hyndluljóð* 15/5), *Bøðveig* (said in *Sólarljóð* 79/4 to be the eldest daughter of Njörðr), *Rannveig* (Óláfr inn helgi, *lausavísa* 1/3, Kock I 110, and *Málsháttakvæði* 18/4 — referring to two different women, apparently both historical) and *Þórveig* (Kormákr, *lausavísa* 22b, Kock I 45). Also relevant is the woman-kennings *hørveig* (*Víga-Glúms saga* ch. 23, *lausavísa* 7/6, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson 81; ed. Turville-Petre 42 and notes on p. 79), where the first element means ‘flax’, ‘linen’, and clearly refers to what the woman wears; the same might be true in the name *Gullveig*. It is even possible that some poets regarded *-veig* merely as a *heiti* meaning ‘lady’, possibly with ancestral or Vanic connotations. *Veigr* also appears as a male dwarf-name (*Völuspá* 12/1), but the meaning here is no clearer than in the case of the female name-element.

The origin of the element is uncertain. Noreen relates it to Gothic *weihs* ‘place’ and Latin *vicus* ‘village’, but this seems unhelpful (though it is historically possible),<sup>2</sup> for there is no way that a tenth-century poet could have recognised this meaning, or used it in a made-up name. Sijmons and Gering suggest that the root is that found in *víg* ‘war’ and Gothic *weihan* ‘to fight’, and this might have been more meaningful to a tenth-century poet (cf. the sword-*heiti veigarr*, *Pula* IV 1 4/1, Kock I 328). Most commentators, however, have connected it with the feminine noun *veig* ‘alcoholic drink’, though Dronke (II 41) suggests that the poet may also have wished to draw on the sense ‘military strength’, which survives only in prose (see CV 690).

All these interpretations seem philologically possible, but the element should clearly be interpreted in the same way in all the names in which it appears, and it is certainly easier to find other female name elements connected with war than with drink. Common second elements of female names include *-gunnr*, *-hildir*, *-víg*, and among first elements we find *Bǫð-*, *Guð-*, *Hild-*, *Víg-* and the possibly relevant *Val-*. Similar elements connected with drink are much rarer: *Mjað-* among first elements (but not *Ǫl-*, which derives from PON *alu* ‘magic’, ‘ecstasy’, see Krause 1966, 239), but no second elements at all. Of course, *-veig* might be the exception, but the preponderance of military elements in other Norse female names suggests that a connection with military force may be more likely.

The second element of the name *Gullveig* therefore seems most likely to mean either ‘military strength’ or simply ‘lady’; the sense ‘drink’ is possible, but there is no particular reason to favour it, and *veig* never appears in the abstract sense ‘intoxication’, as Müllenhoff’s interpretation (1883, 95–96) would require. The first element could mean ‘made of gold’, ‘wearing gold’, ‘having much gold’, or perhaps ‘belonging to the gods (especially the Vanir)’. If the poem’s first audience were expected to recognise *Gullveig*, therefore, it would probably have been as a female figure made of, wearing or possessing gold, and endowed with military strength. There does not seem to be any warrant in the other uses of the name-elements for taking her as an allegorical figure constructed by the poet to symbolise the intoxicating greed for gold.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the name, *Goldeburh*, of the heroine of the Middle English romance *Havelok*, which has strong Scandinavian connections, and the second element of the Norse personal name *Herborg* (*Guðrúnarkviða* I 6/1), in both of which the second element seems to mean ‘fortress’.

6. *Gullveig, Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr and Hyndla*

Turville-Petre (*MRN* 158–59) regards Gullveig as a version of Freyja, and Ursula Dronke (*II* 41, 129) has usefully linked the gold-adorned and sensual nature of Gullveig/Freyja with that of the Freyja-like figure of Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr, who appears in a variety of sources and was particularly worshipped by Hákon jarl inn ríki, the last great upholder of heathenism in Norway. The sources for the cult of Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr are:

Skúli Þorsteinsson, *lausavísa* 4 (Kock I 145);

Þorkell Gíslason, *Búadrápa* 9–10 (Kock I 261);

Bishop Bjarni Kolbeinnsson, *Jómsvíkingadrápa* 30, 32 (Kock II 4–5);

Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál* ch. 45 (Faulkes 1998, I 60);

*Njáls saga* ch. 88 (1954, 214–15);

*Harðar saga* ch. 19 (1991, 51–52);

*Ketils saga hængs* ch. 5 (*FSN* I 261);

*Flateyjarbók: Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 114 (*Flateyjarbók* I 157, also regarded as *Færeyinga saga* ch. 23, 1967, 43–45);

*Flateyjarbók: Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* chs 154–55 and *Jómsvíkinga saga* chs 32–34 (*Flateyjarbók* I 210–11; *Jómsvíkinga saga* 1962, 36–38);

*Flateyjarbók: Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 173 (*Flateyjarbók* I 235, also regarded as *Þorleifs þátrr jarlsskálds* ch. 7, 1956, 225–27);

*Flateyjarbók: Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 326 (*Flateyjarbók* I 452–54).

Two further possible references to her are Tindr Hallkelsson, *Hákonar-drápa* 1/1–4 (Kock I 75); Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, III.ii.8 (ed. Olrik and Ræder I 65; trans. Fisher and Davidson I 71, see notes in II 53–54).

The sheer variety of sources in which Þorgerðr appears tends to suggest that, although some details are historically improbable, her cult itself is a historical fact. The range of forms of her title (*høldabrúðr*, *Hølgabrúðr*, *Hørdabrúðr*, *hørgabrúðr*, *Hørgatröll*) points to the same conclusion (see Storm 1885 and *Jómsvíkinga saga* 1962, 51–52), and implies that she was worshipped in more than one province of western Norway, and perhaps in southern Iceland as well.

Þorgerðr's first name may be best explained as derived from that of *Gerðr*, the consort of Freyr, with the prefix *Þor-* added to link this Vanir-connected being to the majority cult of the *Æsir*. This suggestion is strengthened by the likelihood that her name may sometimes have been shortened to *Þóra* or (if Tindr Hallkelsson means to refer to her) to *Gerðr* (see Chadwick 1950, 411–12, 400 respectively).

The second element of her title is usually *-brúðr*, though the form *Hørgatröll* in *Ketils saga hængs* shows that she had some giant associations (as



*brúðr* itself often has, see p. 403 above), and the nouns *flagð* and *tröll* are also applied to her and/or her sister in *Jómsvíkingadrápa* and *Jómsvíkinga saga* respectively (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 1962, 37). The various forms of her title may perhaps be translated ‘wife of noblemen’, ‘wife of Hǫlgi’ or ‘woman of the Háleygjar’, ‘woman of the Hǫrðalanders’, ‘woman/trollwoman of the shrines’. Snorri and the writer of *Flatleyjarbók* ch. 173 take *-brúðr* here to mean ‘daughter’, but this sense is never found elsewhere, and these sources have probably misunderstood a situation in which the male ruler of a province and his dead ancestors were regarded as the sexual partners of the goddess. In most surviving sources, her living ‘husband’ is Hákon jarl (in *Flatleyjarbók* ch. 326, Óláfr Tryggvason mocks her by saying, after Hákon’s death, that she has just lost a husband who was very dear to her); dead ancestors are also seen as sexual partners of a goddess in *Ynglingatal* 7, 30–32 (Kock I 5, 8 and with commentary in Snorri Sturluson, *Ynglinga saga* 1941, 33–34, 76–79), where dead kings are said to provide Hel with sexual enjoyment, and probably in *Grímnismál* 14, which claims that Freyja takes half the slain each day.

Þorgerðr is strongly associated with gold, and the jarl had to make offerings of treasure to her in order to keep her favour (see *Skáldskaparmál*, *Flatleyjarbók* chs 114, 154–55, 326 and *Jómsvíkinga saga*). In *Flatleyjarbók* ch. 326 Óláfr Tryggvason even implies that she was so covetous for gold that she could be ‘bought’ like a prostitute (like Freyja, as we can see from *Sǫrla þátr* ch.1, *FSN* II 97–98). The idol of Þorgerðr is described as wearing gold rings (*Njáls saga*, *Flatleyjarbók* ch. 114), as inlaid with gold (*Flatleyjarbók* ch. 114) or as possessing treasure (*Skáldskaparmál*, *Flatleyjarbók* ch. 326). Snorri’s statement that the funeral mound of Hǫlgi was made of alternate courses of gold and silver and of earth and stone is obviously a hyperbole, but it may point to the custom of using *goldgubber* as temple offerings. This has been well illustrated by Margrethe Watt’s recent excavations at Sorte Muld, Bornholm, where about 2300 *goldgubber* were found (Watt 1999, 132–42). They are tiny gold plates, apparently dating from between the late sixth and the late ninth century, stamped with male and/or female figures (or in a few cases with the forms of animals, usually boars), and they were probably deposited as religious offerings at sites connected with the worship of the Vanir. They are extremely difficult to find, and the huge number of them found at Sorte Muld probably reflects the unusually meticulous excavation methods used there, notably the water-sieving of large amounts of spoil. The much smaller numbers found elsewhere may therefore represent only a small proportion

of those that were actually present on the sites concerned; they may have been deposited in very large numbers at these sites. If Gullveig refers to a figure like Freyja or Þorgerðr, it would make perfect sense for her to be referred to as rich in gold, wearing gold, or made of gold. The apparent absence of tenth-century *gubber* may suggest that this kind of cult became less popular in the last century of heathenism; perhaps this may also explain why late heathen Norwegians were not prepared to tolerate Hákon jarl's 'sacred promiscuity' (see p. 412 below).

Þorgerðr also engages in military magic on behalf of her followers, shooting arrows from her fingers and sending driving hail against their enemies, though she sometimes demands human sacrifice in return (*Flateyjarbók* chs 154–55, *Jómsvíkinga saga*, *Flateyjarbók* ch. 173), or kills her followers when she withdraws her patronage from them (*Harðar saga*). It would thus be appropriate, if Gullveig represented a figure like Þorgerðr, for the name-element *-veig* to refer to military strength, and this would also supply an explanation of the battle-magic (*vígspá*) which the Vanir subsequently use in their war against the Æsir (*Völuspá* 23–24).

According to *Flateyjarbók*, *Jómsvíkinga saga* and *Njáls saga*, Þorgerðr has a sister called *Irpa* 'the Swarthy One', who is present in her temple and also helps her in warfare. The name *Irpa* is probably related to *jarpr* 'swarthy' (cf. OE *eorp*, used of dark-skinned peoples, e.g. the Egyptians in *Exodus* 1997, 105, line 194 and note; and cf. the ON personal name *Erpr* applied to sons of foreign fathers, e.g. in *Atlakviða* 38 and *Hamðismál* 14, 28, ed. Dronke I, 11, 164, 167 and note on p. 71; see also Simek 1993, 327). It looks like a nickname substituted for the name of a figure whom it was considered unlucky to name directly. She may have been either a 'dark' aspect of Þorgerðr herself, or a figure of Hel, and perhaps the two things sometimes became synonymous.

*Irpa* is not the only dark sister of a fertility goddess. Freyja opens the narrative framework of *Hyndluljóð* by calling on her 'sister' Hyndla (1/3), who is a giantess and lives in a cave. Freyja's lover Óttarr needs to obtain detailed knowledge of his ancestry from Hyndla in order to assert his land rights in a legal dispute. The relationship between the two female characters, however, is one of bitter enmity, and after Hyndla has given the necessary information and the *minnispl* 'ale of memory' which will enable Óttarr to remember what he has been told, Freyja destroys her with fire (or, if we accept Judy Quinn's interpretation, Hyndla makes an unsuccessful attempt to attack Freyja with fire, see pp. 411–12 below).

After telling Óttarr his ancestry Hyndla turns to the parentage of the gods, giants and other beings, the future collapse of the world, and the

coming of another figure, which seems to resemble the Second Coming of Christ (stt. 29–44). This passage bears such an obvious resemblance to *Völuspá* that Snorri refers to it (or perhaps to *Hyndluljóð* as a whole — see Steinsland 1991, 461–94) as *Völuspá in skamma* (see p. 396 above); it may have a separate origin from the rest of the poem, but even if this is so, it would hardly have been interpolated into *Hyndluljóð* if the interpolator had not seen a parallel between the situation in that poem and the one in *Völuspá*.

Despite her association with *seiðr*, Freyja in *Hyndluljóð* is apparently unable to prophesy herself; nor is Þorgerðr ever portrayed as having magical powers of her own, apart from the ability to intervene in battle (and even there, she is not victorious against the Jómsvíkingar until she and Irpa unite to employ their storm of hailstones). In the same way, Heiðr and Hamgláma in *Friðþjófs saga* unite in an attempt to destroy Friðþjófr by making the air dark *með sjódrifi ok ofveðri, frosti ok fjúki ok feiknarkulda* ‘with sea spray and a violent storm, frost and snowstorm and deadly cold’ (1901, 25).

Freyja needs prophetic information from Hyndla, and similarly, the queen in *Ynglinga saga* chs 13–14 has to employ the *völva* Hulð rather than carry out the required magic herself. If Gullveig is a representative of Freyja (or of a similar deity), she may well also be the *ill brúðr* who takes pleasure in Heiðr, and even the choice of the word *brúðr* itself could be a covert reference to a figure like Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr or Freyja as *Vanabrúðr*. The rare word *angan* ‘delight’ may point in the same direction; it appears only three times in verse, and both the other cases are connected with goddesses (*Friggiar angan*, *Völuspá* 53/7–8; *Freyju angan*, in a small fragment of a love poem by Óláfr Leggsson svartaskáld, Kock II 52). It is probably a figurative variant of *angi* ‘a delightful perfume’, and might well be connected with incense used in burnt sacrifices to goddesses. The only instance of *angi* in verse is in Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld, *lausavísa* 18/8, Kock I 87, where it refers to the delightful scent of a woman; so there could also be a suggestion that Gullveig derives her sexual allure from the magic performed for her by Heiðr.

For Freyja in *Hyndluljóð*, fire is a weapon, whether used by her against the giantess or unsuccessfully by Hyndla against her (depending on who is taken to be the speaker in st. 48); it is also probably a means whereby she is worshipped by Óttarr (st. 10/1–4), so there would be a particular irony in using it as a means of attacking her. There are three apparently distinct stories of sacrilege against shrines of Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr (in *Njáls saga*, *Harðar saga* and *Flateyjarbók* ch. 326); all three

involve the burning of the idol and/or her temple, and in the last case, she is burnt along with an idol of Freyr. Judy Quinn (forthcoming)<sup>3</sup> argues that Hyndla uses fire against Freyja in *Hyndluljóð* 48 rather than vice versa, and if this is correct, that would be a fourth instance of the same thing. These stories may all originate from the Christian taste for destruction of idols, but as two of the burnings are carried out by heathens, it may be worth considering whether there could have been another motive for them.

One of the most notable features of Þorgerðr's *protégé* Hákon jarl is his sexual promiscuity. According to *Ágrip* ch. 12 (ed. Bjarni Einarsson 16; ed. and trans. Driscoll 22–23) *var . . . gørr . . . engi grein, hvers kona hver væri, eða systir, eða dóttir* 'no distinction was made as to whose wife or sister or daughter each one was'; *Fagrskinna* ch. 22 (1985, 139) adds *var hvárki þyrmt frændkonum ríkismanna né eiginkonum bæði ríkra ok óríkra* 'neither the kinswomen of powerful men nor the wives of either great or small were spared'; and in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 45 (Snorri Sturluson 1941, 290–91; see also *Flateyjarbók* I 237–38) Snorri says that his reign was characterised by good harvests and peace, and then immediately passes on to his sexual immorality: *jarl lét taka ríkra manna dætr ok flytja heim til sín ok lá hjá viku eða tvær, sendi heim síðan, ok fekk hann af því óþokka mikinn af frændum kvinnanna* 'the jarl had the daughters of powerful men seized and brought to him, and he would sleep with them for a week or two and then send them home, and because of that he gained great unpopularity among the relatives of the women.' This may be explained by Richard North's suggestion (at a Leeds conference a few years ago) that Hákon's promiscuity was linked with his worship of Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr, and that he saw himself as the sexual partner and agent of the fertility goddess, empowered to pass on her gift of fertility both to the land and to human beings, especially noble families, through brief cohabitations with a large number of women.

## 7. Conclusions

Let me summarise the results of the argument so far. If I am right, *Gullveig* means either 'woman made of gold', 'gold-adorned woman' or 'the gold-adorned military power'; it refers to an idol of Freyja or some similar goddess, which is attacked with spears (the weapon of the rival cult of Óðinn) and subsequently burned, because of the abduction of other men's wives and

<sup>3</sup> I should like to express my thanks to Judy Quinn for allowing me to read this article before publication.

female relatives which is a feature of her cult. One can burn an idol, but just as gold emerges refined from the fire, the cult of the goddess herself survives. Because of this, the Æsir then begin a war against the Vanir which may have had political echoes of the attack of the Jómsvíkingar on Hákon jarl, but they are no more successful against the battle-magic of the Vanir than the Jómsvíkingar were against Þorgerðr and Irpa, and this leads them to a peace-settlement in which they compromise with and absorb the sexual evil represented by the Vanir. So thoroughly do they accept Freyja that they then break their oaths to the Giant Builder and kill him in order to keep her. This would also provide a better explanation of the human sins which the gods choose to punish in *Völuspá* 39; they are vainly trying to prevent the world from getting even worse by punishing the same three errors into which they have themselves fallen: murder, oathbreaking, and the abduction of other men's wives.

More importantly, it seems probable that *Heiðr* is not a reincarnation of Gullveig, but rather the narrating *völva* of the poem. Her name originally means 'heath'. Like Hyndla and perhaps also Irpa, she is of giant origin, and somewhat like *Heiðr* in *Hrólfs saga kraka* she can be induced by magical ritual and by gifts (including gold) to reveal the mysteries she has seen. The other eddic poem whose text and framework resemble those of *Völuspá* is *Baldrs draumar*, and here again we meet a *völva* from whom Óðinn extorts wisdom about the mythic future. This time the *völva* is explicitly raised from her grave, and in the final confrontation between them Óðinn denies that she is a real *völva* at all; rather, she is *þriggia þursa móðir* 'mother of three monsters' (perhaps the trollwoman Angrboða, the mother of Fenrir, the Miðgarðsormr and Hel? — *Baldrs draumar* 13/7–8). When Óðinn says she is not a *völva*, he presumably means the word in its ordinary, non-mythic sense of a travelling female fortune-teller; for the figure he has raised from the dead is not a living and mortal woman, but a giantess or her *draugr*. In view of this parallel, it seems most sensible to interpret *Heiðr*'s statement that she 'remembers nine worlds' (*nío man ec heima*, *Völuspá* 2/5) as a hint that she, too, may have been raised from the dead (or even that she could be a version of Hel herself).

*Heiðr* may be the sinister 'dark sister' of Gullveig/Freyja, but the tenor of her true prophecy is not finally under her own control. In *Völuspá* 22/3, *völu velspá* has been variously translated. Guðbrandur Vigfússon's suggestion (*CPB* I 196) that the second word has a long first vowel, so that *vélsþá* should be translated 'making deceitful prophecies', may be discounted, since all the predictions made by *völur* in these stories can be

relied on to come true (see SG III:1 28; and oddly, Guðbrandur's own subtext translation reads 'the sooth-saying Sybil'). But the compound adjective *velspá* appears nowhere else; so does it mean 'accurate in prophecy' (as in Nordal's translation 'spávís' (*Völuspá* 1978), Hermann Pálsson's (1994) 'réttspá', *LP*'s 'dygtig spáende') or 'making favourable prophecies' (as in Dronke II 12 'a good seer of fair fortunes')? La Farge and Tucker (1992) give both alternatives ('prophesying well or rightly'). The interpretation 'accurate in prophecy' might seem to fit the context of *Völuspá* better, since many of the predictions made by the *völva* are anything but pleasant for Óðinn; but the encounter between the *völva* Oddbjörg and her hostess Saldís in *Víga-Glúms saga* ch. 12 (ed. Jónas Kristjánsson 41; ed. Turville-Petre 21) seems rather to point towards the other translation. Saldís asks Oddbjörg to prophesy something about her two grandsons, *ok spá vel* — and there is no doubt that her meaning here is 'and prophesy something favourable'. When the response is not what she was hoping for, she threatens that the *völva* will be driven away *ef þú ferr með illspár* 'if you go making evil predictions'. If the phrasal verb *spá vel* means 'to make a favourable prophecy' and the noun *illspá* means 'an unfavourable prophecy', we are bound to ask in what sense Heiðr prophesies good fortune: is she speaking from the point of view of her own kind, the giants, to whom any disaster that befalls the gods is good news; and/or is there a deeper hint of the ultimate rebirth of a new and better world, which in the longest possible term is good news for gods and men?

I would like to finish with a word or two about the tools and methods I have used in this paper. I began this investigation with a genuinely open question; I really didn't know how to interpret Heiðr, and the results of looking at other instances of the name were a surprise to me. As we all must, I based my work on that of past scholars — lexicographers, editors and critics from the time of Snorri Sturluson until now — and it is a measure of the sweep of their achievements that I have struggled here to interpret a mere two stanzas with their help, and even so have left much unsaid — for example about the attack on Gullveig with spears, about the *ganda* of 22/4, about the whole process of *seiðr* and about how many *völur* there are in *Völuspá* (I think one, but for a different view see Dronke II 27–30, 99–101). But this is also a measure of how much still remains to be done in eddic research: we have just begun to look seriously at the emotional connotations of vocabulary, at type-scenes and characters, and at the question of how far individual poets were free to diverge from these patterns. And what is true here could be demonstrated with equal force in

any other area of research into Old Norse literature, and more generally in all areas of the study of early Scandinavia.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> An earlier version of this paper was delivered as the Society's presidential address at its annual general meeting in Durham in June 2000.

### Bibliography and Abbreviations

- Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum* 1985. Ed. Bjarni Einarsson in *ÍF* XXIX.  
*Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum* 1995. Ed. and trans. Matthew J. Driscoll.  
*Alvíssmál*. In NK 124–29.  
*ASB* = *Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek* 1–18, 1892–1929.  
*Atlakviða*. In NK 240–47; Dronke I 1–74.  
*Beowulf* 1941. Ed. Frederick Klaeber.  
 Bjarni Kolbeinsson, *Jómsvíkingadrápa*. In Kock II 1–6.  
*Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*. In *FSN* II 463–97.  
 Chadwick, Nora K. 1950. 'Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr and the *trolla þing*: a note on sources'. In Cyril Fox and Bruce Dickins, eds, *The Early Cultures of North-West Europe* (*H. M. Chadwick Memorial Studies*), 395–417.  
*CPB* I–II = Guðbrandur Vigfússon, ed., 1883. *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*.  
 CV = Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1957. *An Icelandic–English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. with supplement by William A. Craigie.  
 Dronke I–II = *The Poetic Edda* 1969–97. Ed. and trans. Ursula Dronke.  
 Eilífr Goðrúnarson, *Þórsdrápa*. In Kock I 76–79.  
 Einarr Skúlason, *Geisli*. In Kock I, 211–19.  
 Einarr Skúlason, *Øxarflokkur*. In Kock I 221–22.  
*Eiríks saga rauða* 1935. Ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson in *ÍF* IV.  
*Eiríks saga rauða* 1985. Ed. Ólafur Halldórsson in *ÍF* IV, viðauki.  
*Exodus* 1977. Ed. Peter Lucas.  
 Eyjólfur dáðaskáld, *Bandadrápa*. In Kock I 100–01.  
 Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *Hákonarmál*. In Kock I 35–37.  
 Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *Háleygjatal*. In Kock I 37–39.  
*Fagrskinna* 1985. Ed. Bjarni Einarsson in *ÍF* XXIX.  
 Faulkes, Anthony, ed., 1982. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*.  
 Faulkes, Anthony, trans., 1987. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*.  
 Faulkes, Anthony, ed., 1998. Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál* I–II.  
*Flateyjarbók* 1944–45. Ed. Sigurður Nordal and others.  
*Fóstbræðra saga* 1943. Ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson in *ÍF* VI.  
*Friðþjófs saga ins frækna* 1901. Ed. Ludvig Larsson. *ASB* 11.  
*FSN* = *Fornaldarsögur norðurlanda* 1943–44. Ed. Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson.  
*Færeyinga saga* 1967. Ed. Ólafur Halldórsson.  
*Grímnismál*. In NK 56–68.  
*Grípisspá*. In NK 164–72.  
*Grottasöngur*. In NK 297–301.  
*Guðrúnarkviða I*. In NK 202–06.



- Göngu-Hrólfs saga*. In *FSN* II 357–461.
- Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld, *Hákonardrápa*. In Kock I 80–81.
- Hamðismál*. In NK 269–74; Dronke I 159–242.
- Hárbarðsljóð*. In NK 78–87.
- Harðar saga* 1991. Ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson in *ÍF* XIII.
- Hauks þáttur hábrókar*. In *Flateyjarbók* 1944–45, II 66–69.
- Hávamál*. In NK 17–44.
- Havelok* 1987. Ed. Geoffrey V. Smithers.
- Heilagra meylla drápa*. In Kock II 321–31.
- Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*. In NK 140–49.
- Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*. In NK 150–61.
- Helreið Brynhildar*. In NK 219–22.
- Hermann Pálsson, ed., 1994. *Völuspá*.
- Hermann Pálsson, ed., 1996. *Völuspá*.
- Hrólfs saga kraka*. In *FSN* II 1–93.
- Hyndluljóð*. In NK 288–96.
- ÍF* = *Íslensk fornrit* 1933– (in progress).
- Jómsvíkinga saga* 1962. Ed. and trans. Norman F. Blake.
- Jón Árnason. 1961. *Íslenskar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* I–VI.
- Ketils saga hængs*. In *FSN* I 243–66.
- Kock I–II = *Den norsk-isländska Skaldediktningen* 1946–49. Ed. Ernst Axel Kock.
- Kormáks saga* 1939. Ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson in *ÍF* VIII.
- Krause, Wolfgang, ed., 1966. *Die Runeninschriften im älteren Futhark*. I. Text.
- La Farge, Beatrice and John Tucker 1992. *Glossary to the Poetic Edda*.
- Landnámabók* 1968. Ed. Jakob Benediktsson in *ÍF* I.
- Laxdæla saga* 1934. Ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson in *ÍF* V.
- Lind, E. H. 1905–15. *Norsk-Isländska dopnamn ock fingerade namn från medeltiden*.
- Lind, E. H. 1920–25. *Norsk-Isländska personbinamn från medeltiden*.
- Loth, A., ed. 1964. *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances* IV.
- LP* = Finnur Jónsson 1931. *Lexicon Poeticum*.
- Málsháttakvæði*. In Kock II 73–78.
- Mariu saga. Legender om jomfru Maria og hendes jærtegn* 1871. Ed. Carl R. Unger.
- Motz, Lotte 1993. ‘Gullveig’s Ordeal: A New Interpretation’. *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 108, 80–92.
- MRN* = Turville-Petre, E. O. G. 1964. *Myth and Religion of the North*.
- Müllenhoff, Karl 1883. ‘Ueber die Völuspá’. *Deutsche Altertumskunde* V, 1–157.
- Njáls saga* 1954. Ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson in *ÍF* XII.
- NK = *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regius*. I. Text 1962. Ed. Gustav Neckel and Hans Kuhn.
- OE = Old English.
- ON = Old Norse (including Old Icelandic).
- Quinn, Judy 1998. ‘“Ok verðr henni ljóð á munni” — Eddic Prophecy in the *fornaldarsögur*’. *Alvissmál* 8, 29–50.

- Quinn, Judy forthcoming [2001]. 'Dialogue with a *völva*'. In Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington, eds, *The Poetic Edda: Essays in Old Norse Mythology. Saxonis Gesta Danorum* 1931–37. Ed. Jørgen Olrik and H. Ræder.
- Saxo Grammaticus. The History of the Danes, Books I–IX* 1979–80. Trans. Peter Fisher and Hilda Ellis Davidson.
- SG I–III = *Die Lieder der Edda* 1924–31. Ed. Barent Sijmons and Hugo Gering.
- Sigrdrífumál*. In NK 189–97.
- Sigurðarkviða in skamma*. In NK 207–18.
- Simek, Rudolf 1993. *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*.
- Skírnismál*. In NK 69–77.
- Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*. See Faulkes 1982, 1987, 1998.
- Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* 1941. Ed. Bjarni Aðalbarnarson in *ÍF* XXVI.
- Snorri Sturluson, *Ynglinga saga* 1941. Ed. Bjarni Aðalbarnarson in *ÍF* XXVI.
- Sólarljóð*. In Kock I 308–16.
- Steinsland, Gro 1991. *Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi*.
- Stjórnu-Odda draumr* 1991. Ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson in *ÍF* XIII.
- Storm, G. 1885. 'Om Thorgerd Hölgebrud'. *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 2, 124–35.
- Sturlunga saga* 1946. Ed. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and Kristján Eldjárn.
- Svipdagsmál*. In SG I 196–200.
- Sþrla þátr*. In *FSN* II 95–110.
- Tindr Hallkelsson, *Hákonardrápa*. In Kock I 75–76.
- Vatnsdæla saga* 1939. Ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson in *ÍF* VIII.
- Víga-Glúms saga* 1956. Ed. Jónas Kristjánsson in *ÍF* IX.
- Víga-Glúms saga* 1960. Ed. E. O. G. Turville-Petre.
- de Vries, Jan 1977. *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*. 2nd ed.
- Völundarkviða*. In NK 116–23; Dronke II 239–328.
- Völuspá*. In NK 1–16; Dronke II 1–153; see also Hermann Pálsson 1994, 1996.
- Völuspá* 1978. Ed. Sigurður Nordal, trans. Benedikt S. Benedikz and John McKinnell.
- Völuspá in skamma*. See *Hyn dluljóð*.
- Watt, Margrethe 1999. 'Gubber'. In *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* XIII, 132–42.
- Þjóðólfr of Hvin, *Haustlög*. In Kock I 9–12.
- Þjóðólfr of Hvin, *Ynglingatal*. In Kock I 4–9.
- Þorkell Gíslason, *Búadrápa*. In Kock I 260–61.
- Þorleifs þátr jarlsskálds* 1956. Ed. Jónas Kristjánsson in *ÍF* IX.
- Þrymskviða*. In NK 111–15.
- Þrvar-Odds saga*. In *FSN* I 281–399.

## REVIEWS

THE LANGUAGE OF THE OGAM INSCRIPTIONS OF SCOTLAND: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF OGAM, RUNIC AND ROMAN ALPHABET INSCRIPTIONS IN SCOTLAND. By RICHARD A. V. COX. *Scottish Gaelic Studies Monograph Series 1. Department of Celtic, University of Aberdeen.* Aberdeen 1999. xvi + 187 pp.

'It was during the afternoon of Wednesday 12 August 1998 that certain possible correspondences between the so-called "Pictish ogam inscriptions" of Scotland and Scandinavian runes presented themselves to me' (p. ix). In this dramatic way the author describes his moment of revelation, in the introduction to his study of the language of nineteen inscriptions of Scottish provenance, of which seventeen are written in ogam and two apparently in the Roman alphabet. It has been assumed that the language of at least some of these inscriptions was that of the Picts, whose reign is thought to have come to an end by the ninth century AD. Innumerable theories have been set forth about the language of the inscriptions. A milestone in this debate was the famous discussion by Kenneth Jackson in 1955, proposing that the Picts had two distinct languages: a non-Indo-European language and a variety akin to Brittonic Celtic. Aside from a few interspersed Celtic elements, Jackson concluded, the Pictish inscriptions would have been written in this non-Indo-European language. Some recently suggested non-Indo-European connections include Sino-Caucasian and Finno-Ugrian. By contrast, it is the contention of the work under review here that the inscriptions are, for the most part, not only considerably younger than is generally thought, dating from the middle of the eleventh century to the early thirteenth century, but that they were written by Scandinavians active in Scotland. Accordingly, the language of the Scottish inscriptions would be Old Norse. As the author himself admits, however, the 'gestation period' for his theory was very short — not least since it is 'ground breaking in subject matter, iconoclastic by implication, and potentially far-reaching in its significance for our understanding of the history of both Scotland and Scandinavia'. The reason for going ahead and publishing the volume anyway is said to be that 'the subject in its broadest terms can only benefit from public debate' (p. ix).

On the interpretation defended in this book, the Scottish inscriptions are memorial texts, apart from two or three. As to the question why Norse texts were carved using ogam rather than runes, the author suggests that 'ogam retained an important place in clerical practice in Scotland in the early Middle Ages' (p. 166). Moreover, he speculates that if these nineteen inscriptions are written in Old Norse, it may provide an answer to the question of why there are so few runic inscriptions in Scotland considering the amount of Scandinavian activity there.

The book is divided into four parts: Part I is an Introduction. Part II contains a detailed discussion of the seventeen ogam inscriptions, while Part III deals with the two inscriptions claimed to be written in the Roman alphabet (this is obviously true of one of them, Fordoun, but not so obvious in the other case, Newton II). Part IV, containing nine sections, is an extensive analysis of the language of the inscriptions: first, there is a summary of the texts; this

is followed by a discussion of alleged formulae occurring in the inscriptions; the third section deals with 'contractions, abbreviations and errors' (of which more below); the next four sections focus on orthography, phonology, morphology and syntax, respectively, based on the author's own readings (which are usually, but not always, in accordance with those of Katherine Forsyth). The last section in Part IV is on the chronology of the inscriptions, as established on the basis of the author's analysis. The book finishes off with some Conclusions and Implications. In addition, there are, near the beginning of the book, lists of symbols and abbreviations and of tables and figures, and a map showing the places where ogam inscriptions have been discovered in Scotland; and at the back are lists of works cited and three indexes (one general, one of runic inscriptions and one of words and names). All in all, the physical appearance of the book is that of a serious scholarly monograph. With the considerable learning that he demonstrates, the author does not, at first glance, come across as a dilettante, but rather as a professional investigator, well versed in Old Norse grammar and in ogam and runic epigraphy.

This appearance is deceptive, however. The method by which the author is able to arrive at the conclusion that the inscriptions are, in fact, written in Old Norse is largely based on his premise that they contain a number of lacunae. These are claimed to be of the three kinds mentioned above: contraction, abbreviation and error. The term 'contraction' is used to describe the alleged omission of word-final inflexional endings and of certain word-internal consonants. 'Abbreviation' involves the assumed shortening of words, even to the extent of using their initials, on what is, by the author's own admission, 'an ad hoc basis' (p. 121). In addition to the omission of graphs through abbreviation or contraction, certain phonemes are said to be omitted from inscriptions, apparently because 'ogam had not been adapted to accommodate their values' (p. 141). Finally, a few other alleged omissions, which are considered unintentional, are simply classed as errors. Independent justification for the assumption of these deficiencies, as well as for some alternative readings deviating from the ones proposed by other scholars, is nowhere presented.

As stated above, almost all the inscriptions are supposed to be considerably younger than is generally assumed, dating from the period between 1050 and 1225. The criteria for the dating are the alleged linguistic characteristics of the inscriptions themselves, as read by the author. There is one exception, involving an inscription found on a building slab at Pool in Orkney, which is dated on archaeological grounds to the sixth century. Accordingly, this is taken as evidence for the presence of Norsemen in Scotland as early as the sixth century. If true, this would, in itself, be a remarkable finding. The actual text can be transliterated as follows: RV AV ORC. The reading suggested by the author is: (H)R[OL]V[R] AV ORC[NEIUM]. This is interpreted as ON *Hrolfr af Orknexjum* 'Hrolfr from (the) Orkneys' (pp. 37–38). Here we see in action the devices at the author's disposal — omission, contraction, abbreviation — to make an otherwise unintelligible inscription consisting of seven ogam characters into an impeccable Old Norse text. The remainder of the inscriptions are subjected to arbitrary emendations

of a similar kind. After working through the author's proposals, it is hard to avoid the suspicion that almost any text could be 'amended' into some kind of Old Norse (or any other language, for that matter) by applying to it the method of this book. That the emendations are in fact invalid is made all the more likely by some of the odd and unparalleled Old Norse forms allegedly occurring in the inscriptions. One example is *\*ettermun* 'in memory' claimed to be found in four inscriptions. In two cases (Brodie, Scoonie) it is written EDDARRNONN, while the other two are read PIDARNOIN (Fordoun) and INEITTEMUN (Gurness). A further example of this kind is *\*sjáluvaka* (lit.) 'soul-wake', i.e. 'anniversary of one's death' (Newton II). This form is claimed to bear witness to a stray East Norse dialect element in these otherwise Old West Scandinavian texts (cf. Danish *sjæl* in contrast to Icelandic *sál*, *sála* 'soul'). Be that as it may, and putting aside the fact that the reading of this inscription is very uncertain (it may be mere gibberish scribbled by someone who was illiterate), the text as presented by the author has the sequence *sialauaka*, and not *\*sjáluvaka*. Further alleged forms would only have parallels in later dialects, including past tense verb forms in *-ade* instead of ON *-adi*, interpreted as *lagade* 'made' and *markade* 'inscribed' for LAQET and MAQQOT, in Buckquoy and Formaston respectively. In order to escape the contradiction that this interpretation would present to his theory, the author makes the following proposal: 'If the suggested chronology for the inscriptions is correct, it provides early evidence for several phonological developments which are not otherwise attested until much later' (p. 168).

In conclusion, the possibility that isolated Old Norse forms do occur in the ogam inscriptions cannot be excluded altogether (for example in the case of the much-discussed DATTRR on the Bressay Cross, which may or may not represent Old Norse *dóttir* 'daughter'). The entire corpus of ogam inscriptions of Scotland, however, can be claimed to be written in Old Norse only by stretching the imagination beyond reasonable limits. If this book has any merit, it demonstrates that even in such an esoteric field as ogam epigraphy it is possible to make a distinction between reasonable and well-founded conjecture and fanciful speculation.

ÞÓRHALLUR EYÞÓRSSON

RECASTING THE RUNES: THE REFORM OF THE ANGLO-SAXON *FUTHORC*. By DAVID N. PARSONS. *Runrön: Runologiska bidrag utgivna av Institutionen för nordiska språk vid Uppsala universitet* 14. *Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet*. Uppsala 1999. 148 pp.

This book contains five chapters, a Bibliography and separate Indexes of Anglo-Saxon and non-Anglo-Saxon inscriptions. Its main contention is that the rune-forms of the Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* were deliberately standardised, probably by the Church, in the middle years of the seventh century (625–675). The evidence for standardisation is the abrupt disappearance, after c.675, of certain distinctive variant rune-forms attested in English inscriptions of the pre-Christian period (from the fifth century to c.625), and an impressive level of consistency in the rune-forms

used in inscriptions produced after *c.*675. Parsons also adds weight to the view that the Anglo-Saxons derived their *futhorc*, not from Frisia as many have thought, but from Scandinavia and/or Schleswig-Holstein. The book's argument is very detailed, and the summary I offer below can only be a broad sketch.

After a brief Introduction (pp. 11–14), Chapter 2 (pp. 15–39) considers the origin and early history of runes. The total runic corpus is then divided into four main groups along geographical lines: (i) eastern European and Scandinavian; (ii) 'continental', mostly sixth and seventh centuries and mainly German, though excluding the eastern European finds included under (i); (iii) Frisian, mostly fifth to eighth centuries; and (iv) Anglo-Saxon, the earliest specimens of which date from the fifth century. Next, variant rune-forms within the older *futhark* are discussed in detail (pp. 26–32), with the *h*-, *s*-, and *e*-runes given particular attention because of the radical differences of shape among the variants. The well-known innovations contained in the Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* are then summarised (pp. 32–36); and the chapter concludes with a discussion of certain problems of transliteration arising from the difficulty of dating precisely the phonological changes reflected in these developments.

Chapter 3 (pp. 40–75) consists largely of a serial account of the sixteen runic inscriptions that have been dated to the pre-650 period of Anglo-Saxon history, with particular emphasis on the rune-forms. Chapter 4 (pp. 76–100) deals first, in less detail, with the runic inscriptions and texts of the Christian period which constitute a corpus 'substantial enough to give a good (though doubtless not exhaustive) idea of the *futhorc* in use across a fairly wide section of Anglo-Saxon rune-literate society in the Christian period' (p. 79). Contrasts are then noted between the runic forms of the early corpus described in the previous chapter. Some early forms (single-barred *h*, for instance) have disappeared in the later corpus. Did the standardised *futhorc* arise by evolution, 'natural selection' of certain existing variants, or was it 'imposed at a single reform' (p. 89)? The fact that no inscriptions so far known show a transitional *futhorc* argues against 'a gradual process of influence and acceptance' (p. 89). The coin evidence suggests that the standard may have been adopted first in Kent *c.*660; but 'the problems of how, when and where the standard later Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* was established remain unresolved' (p. 97). It is maintained, however, that the adoption of the runic standard finds a parallel in 'the dissemination of roman script in inscriptions' which 'is surely due to the Church' (p. 97), and Parsons is tempted 'to wonder whether the dissemination of the standard *futhorc* might also have been due to the Church'.

Chapter 5 (pp. 101–130) considers anew the question of the origins of the Anglo-Saxon *futhorc* on the continent and comes down (for various reasons) in favour of the Scandinavian or Anglian north (i.e., Scandinavia proper, or the territory of the continental Angles, which may have extended into Denmark) rather than Frisia. The chapter continues with a discussion of some of the implications of the standardisation-theory, and considers (only to reject it for lack of compelling evidence) the possibility of a purely secular runic tradition running alongside the Christian one. Finally, the question of whether manuscript runes and epigraphical runes should be taken as evidence of different runic traditions is

reopened; and although Parsons seems to favour the idea of a single tradition, no firm conclusion is reached.

Parsons's argument throughout is learned and well-organised. It is, naturally, possible to query his conclusions, though to be fair, most of these are expressed very tentatively. Perhaps the chief weakness of the standardisation idea is that we do not, and probably cannot, know how a programme of standardisation might have worked. The hierarchical Church was well placed in theory to impose standard practices on all ecclesiastical centres; but the sort of administrative efficiency needed to reach and call to order every runemaster in the country is not easy to imagine in the Church of the mid-seventh century, when the conversion was still progressing. Furthermore, Parsons's identification of the Church as the agent of standardisation appears to rest rather heavily on the absence of any rival institution that might have got the job done. The argument is that if the Church could impose its wishes in the matter of the use of the roman alphabet for inscriptions, it possessed the sort of machinery that could also be used to impose runic standardisation; but we have no particular reason to suppose that the use of the roman alphabet in inscriptions arose from a centrally-defined policy within the Church, and it is not very difficult to imagine it arising through independent, spontaneous developments at different centres of roman literacy. I also suggest that more attention might have been given here to 'standardisation' as an idea, as well as to possible parallels to runic standardisation within Anglo-Saxon literary culture—the standardisation of Old English spelling in the tenth century, for instance. More to the point, perhaps, is the question of why there was no central standardisation of roman letter-forms in manuscript writings as well.

Parsons has made an important contribution to runic studies here by drawing attention to some significant chronological variations within the Anglo-Saxon corpus of runic inscriptions. We may look forward confidently to much interesting discussion of his findings.

PETER ORTON

AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH RUNES. Second Edition. By R. I. PAGE. *The Boydell Press*. Woodbridge 1999. xv + 249 pp.

The first edition (1973) of this invaluable book has long been out of print and a revised edition is therefore very welcome. There are some improvements in its organisation, as well as the sort of changes of content that are inevitable after nearly thirty years of work, by the author and others, on English runes. The plates, presented centrally *en bloc* in the first edition, are now distributed so that each appears close to the text referring to it. Many of the longer paragraphs in the first edition have been broken up. Added to the original fourteen chapters is a fifteenth, 'Runic and Roman', on aspects of the relationship between the two scripts. Some twenty additional runic inscriptions discovered since the first edition went to press are now included. The Bibliography and Indexes are, of course, brought up to date.



In spite of these changes, the general nature of Page's book remains very much the same: an entertaining, often drily humorous history of runic studies in England, followed by an account of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions, coins and manuscript texts using runes, with a distinctive emphasis on the practical and intellectual problems faced by the working runologist. Only a small part of the book is devoted to a systematic account of English runic inscriptions: Chapter 9 covers runic coin-legends, Chapter 10 inscriptions on stone and Chapter 11 the remainder of the corpus: inscriptions preserved on other kinds of object or material. Most chapters deal with some particular aspect of English runology, drawing on the extant inscriptions as illustrations. Information about individual runic texts is thus scattered throughout the book, so that a reader interested in certain texts in particular must rely heavily on the Indexes. Individual inscriptions seem to be fully indexed, though in one case—the York wooden spoon—I could find no actual transcription of the runic text anywhere in the book, even though the artefact itself receives five separate mentions according to the 'Index of Inscriptions'. The 'General Index' gives reasonable coverage, though it is not always helpful, as I found when I tried to locate discussion of the use of runes for Latin in England: 'Latin' is not listed, either as an independent headword or as a sub-entry under 'runes'. These are minor problems in themselves, though they draw attention to the fact that we still lack a standard edition of the English runic corpus. It seems strange that Page's book, designed as a basic introduction to English runology, remains the natural first port of call for the non-runologist interested in any aspect of the subject or in particular inscriptions. Page is not, of course, to be blamed for not writing a different kind of book; but a computerised database of English runic texts, accessible to scholars everywhere and regularly updated as new inscriptions come to light and new knowledge illuminates those already known, is an obvious desideratum, and has been for a long time.

The failure to produce such a resource is partly excused by the inherent volatility of English runology (see Page's essay, 'Anglo-Saxon Runic Studies: The Way Ahead?' in *Old English Runes and their Continental Background*, ed. Alfred Bammesberger (Carl Winter: Heidelberg, 1991), 15–39, at 15–16). Given the modest size of the corpus, it only takes a few new discoveries to upset the apple-cart, as is shown here by the revisions Page is obliged to make (pp. 18–19) to his original remarks about the use of the single-barred *h*-rune in England in the light of the more recent discoveries at Wakerley and Watchfield (the former mentioned briefly in a footnote in the 1973 edition, p. 37). Furthermore, the runologist is dependent upon (or at the mercy of) experts in other fields. He needs to shape his conclusions to fit into a cross-disciplinary chain of mutually compatible findings and implications. Historians, archaeologists and other specialists must all have their say and contribute their individual links to the chain. But it only takes one expert to change his or her mind to necessitate an extensive revision of ideas. The dates of some inscriptions are here revised, for example the Chester-le-Street stone is now ninth century (p. 139) instead of late tenth or eleventh century, as the 1973 edition suggested (p. 143); and the Thames scramasax is now tenth century (pp. 29, 80, 113), whereas the 1973 edition wavered (apparently, at least) between eighth (p. 30) and ninth century (p. 115). These two are among the latest

runic inscriptions in England, and in the latter case especially, the question of date impinges heavily on the interpretation of the inscription. The Thames scramasax, which lacks any very specific provenance (it was found in the river Thames in the nineteenth century), is inscribed with (1) a 28-rune *futhorc* (a form I prefer to Page's *futhorc*, simply because the whole point of the word is to spell the first six letters of the standard runic series) with a somewhat unconventional order of characters and some unusual rune-forms, and (2) the word *beagnob*, also in runes, and attested elsewhere in Old English as a personal name. Page thinks that *beagnob* (which might, I imagine, mean something of the order of 'ring-bold') may be the name of the smith who made the sword and produced its text (p. 169), though a warrior-name might suit the sword itself and might have been inscribed upon it with the aim of enhancing its effectiveness as a weapon. There is some evidence for this procedure among the early continental inscriptions in the older *futhorc*, some of which are mentioned on p. 108. But it is the irregular *futhorc* that drives Page's interpretation. In both editions of his book, he sees the Thames scramasax as 'a late survival'. Its *futhorc* shows a deliberate revival of an outdated, originally magical use of runes. Knowing of the old practice of inscribing magical runes on weapons, 'the man who ordered the Thames scramasax wanted an old tradition followed for prestige purposes, so his smith bodged up a *futhorc* for him' (p. 113). The sword thus constitutes 'a tentative and indirect piece of evidence for English rune magic'.

The most striking aspect of this interpretation is that it contains much more speculation than Page normally permits himself: the sword was not just made, it was commissioned from a runically semi-literate smith by a man who wanted the prestige of a rune-inscribed weapon. But if prestige still attached to runic weapons in the tenth century, why were they no longer manufactured? This is not to say, of course, that Page is necessarily wrong. I only suggest that he may have been too strongly influenced here by the idea of the weapon's date (on which expert opinion seems to have changed, or is perhaps still divided), combined with an instinct to confine the use of runes for magical purposes to the pre-Christian period of Anglo-Saxon history. Only by seeing the sword's manufacture as an antiquarian exercise (itself, perhaps, a rather too modern concept to command unquestioning assent) can he leave the tenth century clear of any primary use of runes for magical ends. Page's interpretation completes the chain; but it raises the question of how strong the other links really are.

It cannot have been easy to pitch an introduction to such a complex field of study at a consistent and appropriate level; but although it is occasionally frustrating to find interesting problems merely sketched in and then abandoned (as for example in the rather abruptly truncated discussion of the Anglo-Frisian question on pp. 43–44), the book is very clearly written and fulfils its purpose as an introduction admirably. The few errors and editorial failings I noted are mainly in new or revised passages. Typographical mistakes seem rare (9/14 'Anglo-Saxon' for 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'retinence' for 'reticence', 119/5 'of' for 'or'); the wrong font is occasionally used (4/12 '*is*' should be in roman, 177/21 'saga' should be in italic); the punctuation is sometimes inappropriate (15/9, 17/3, 170/3) or is omitted where it is needed (22/24 requires a comma after 'Sculpture'); and xiii/18 'the

latter' is used in a context where there is no former. In the 'Index of Inscriptions' I noted only two inaccuracies: 'Lindisfarne stone II' refers to '139' instead of '140', and 'Mortain casket' refers to '36' instead of '37'.

PETER ORTON

VIKINGS IN SCOTLAND: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY. By JAMES GRAHAM-CAMPBELL and COLLEEN E. BATEY. *Edinburgh University Press*. Edinburgh 1998. 296 pp. 96 black and white illustrations.

For over a decade Barbara Crawford's *Scandinavian Scotland* (1987) has been the standard work on Viking Scotland; it now has an excellent and complementary companion. Although Crawford's work drew its material from a range of types of evidence it took a largely historical perspective. This volume, as its sub-title suggests, is primarily an archaeological survey. The authors admit that it has had a long gestation. It was conceived in 1979 by James Graham-Campbell; Colleen Batey was brought on board in 1991 to provide input on settlement and environmental archaeology; and the volume still took a further six years to complete. Despite this lengthy process it does not suffer from dated evidence; account is taken of the latest archaeological discoveries, many of them still unpublished.

The volume is organised very much as a survey of evidence. Brief introductory chapters set the scene. The first provides a conventional introduction to the topography of Scotland, including its geology and geography, to the peoples who inhabited Scotland before the Scandinavian settlements, and to their economy. Chapter 2 looks at Scandinavia, focusing especially on Norway. Chapter 3 then outlines those sources that may be used to study Viking Scotland, although for documentary evidence the reader is referred to Crawford. Here the limitations of the archaeological evidence are revealed and we see the need for much more work before sound conclusions can be drawn. Although there are 130 pagan Norse graves from Scotland, many were excavated in the distant past; there are few settlements, with only a single known site from mainland Scotland.

Following these background chapters the reader is introduced to the evidence, region by region, in three chapter surveys: Northern Scotland, the West Highlands and Islands, and South-West, Central, Eastern and Southern Scotland. With further work this might allow regional comparisons to be drawn, but the reader is left with the impression that any differences in established interpretations may be as much a product of ways in which the evidence has been treated as a reflection of underlying realities in the nature of the Scandinavian settlers and their relationship with the native population. No comparisons are drawn beyond Scotland.

The following chapters then survey the evidence theme by theme, starting with two chapters on the pagan Norse graves. The first describes the better documented graves in detail; the second, a shorter but important chapter, focuses on their interpretation. It is suggested that all the burials date from the late ninth century to the second half of the tenth century, with most concentrated in the

middle of that period. Again, problems of interpreting the evidence are emphasised, including the lack of contemporaneous cemeteries and settlements; the difficulties involved in distinguishing between dress accessories and deliberately placed offerings; and the danger of drawing simplistic conclusions. Whilst balance scales might denote a trader, a raider, it is suggested, would have had just as great a need of weighing silver. One firm conclusion is advanced. With the increase in sample size Brøgger's 1929 conclusion — that whereas the graves from the Northern Isles represented complete peasant families, those from the Hebrides were aristocrats — can now be dismissed, with no significant difference in wealth apparent.

The next two chapters consider excavated settlements, first of the Early and then of the Late Norse period, although this is an artificial division and inevitably some sites appear in both. The inadequate attention to environmental sampling in the past and the lack of excavation of middens hamper our current understanding of settlement. There are also problems with chronology and sequence at classic sites such as Jarlshof. Uncertainties about the security of deposits at Skaill and Buckquoy further impede attempts to come to firm conclusions on the relationship between Picts and Norse, as the authors acknowledge, and they refuse to be drawn on this issue. Finally, there are chapters on the Norse economy, on silver and gold, and on earls and bishops, the last focusing on the construction of churches and erection of crosses. Again, these chapters are rich in detailed description of the evidence, but cautious in drawing conclusions from it, emphasising, for example, that we do not understand the pattern behind the practice of burying treasure at this period, although some significant observations are made.

A major difficulty in attempting any synthesis for a large and diverse area over a long period is whether to organise it geographically or thematically. By doing both, Graham-Campbell and Batey allow readers to use this book in several ways, but some repetition is inevitable and most sites are dealt with twice: by region and by theme. This leads to some frustration in identifying where to go for the most complete description of a specific site, and there is also a lack of cross-referencing between sections. Odin's Law, for example, is quoted extensively on pp. 143–44 in the context of burials, and again on p. 245 in the discussion of hoards. In referencing sources and further reading the authors have avoided footnotes or Harvard-style citations, preferring to name the authority for specific research or interpretations. This can make it difficult to locate the appropriate bibliographical references, and some are missing. On p. 48 we are told that hogbacks have been catalogued by James Lang, but Lang's paper is not in the further reading for this chapter.

However, these are relatively minor reservations about a book which will be the standard secondary source for the archaeology of Viking Scotland for many years. Graham-Campbell and Batey have succeeded in providing a thorough comprehensive description of the current state of data gathering, and have written an essential text for those who will seek to use it further.

THE EMERGENCE OF RUS 750–1200. By SIMON FRANKLIN and JONATHAN SHEPARD. *Longman*. London and New York 1996. xxii + 450 pp.

The initial volume of the *Longman History of Russia* has been eagerly anticipated by Russian scholars. Since the publication in the 1960s of the *History of the USSR* in eight volumes there has been no large-scale project incorporating both new and old material. Another reason for the advance interest in the book was that its authors, Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, are well known and highly esteemed in Russia for their scholarly writings on the history and culture of Ancient Rus', as well as for their editions of source texts. In their competent survey Franklin and Shepard investigate the beginnings of the country, placing their emphasis on the gradual transformation that took place from the time when the Eastern European region was sparsely settled by scattered tribes of different ethnic origins to the period when Ancient Rus' had become a strong and prosperous state with a unified culture firmly anchored in Orthodox Christianity (the word 'emergence' in the title indicates the authors' particular interest). Especially noteworthy here is the year 750, incorporated into the title — a date not found in any of the Russian chronicles (where the dating begins in 852/6360), nor in other written sources. The earliest archaeological finds from the town of Ladoga (called *Aldeigjuborg* in Old Norse written sources), however, point to 750 as the time from which we can clearly trace the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe. Thus, according to Franklin and Shepard, the emergence of Rus' or, as they put it on p. xvii, of 'the land of the Rus', begins around that year with the arrival of the Scandinavians (the Rus').

The term *Rus'* is understood by Franklin and Shepard in its traditional sense to designate the groups of Scandinavians, mainly traders, who first came to the Russian North in the vicinity of Lakes Ladoga and Ilmen', drawn by easy access to fur trade and Oriental silver, and then gradually penetrated to the east and south. The authors depict them vividly as 'small bands of traders trekking along the rivers through the dense and sparsely populated northern forests between the Baltic and the Middle Volga, lured towards the silver of the east; faint specks on a vast landscape; transient Scandinavians among Finno-Ugrian tribes' (p. xvii). This definition places emphasis on only one of the many characteristics of the Rus': their role as merchants in Eastern Europe (which necessarily involved being warriors as well). The authors also call attention to the inconsistency and inaccuracy in the use of *Rūs/Rhōs* by southern writers (Latin, Greek and Arab) who undoubtedly denoted by it 'a grouping of predominantly Scandinavian characteristics', referring either to their social roles or to ethnic origins (p. 29). Franklin and Shepard do not specify the changes in the meaning of the term with the development of the society to which it refers. To clarify the question, reference to the Old Russian sources, where the word *русь* is used more consistently than in the southern written sources as both an ethnic and a social term, is helpful. The evolution of its meaning roughly corresponds to the stages of the development of the Ancient Russian state: *Rus'* as an ethnic term for the Scandinavians—*Rus'* as a social term for the élite—*Rus'* as the term for designating the population of Rus'. A discussion of this problem based on the comparison of the sources would have been useful in the book.

The first part of the book (pp. 3–180) deals mainly with the activity of the Scandinavians before 1015, a period of great importance for the formation of Rus', and of course of keenest interest for the readers of this journal. The lack of firm support from written sources for this dark age of Russian history is generously compensated for by numismatic and archaeological data, which, however, are liable to different interpretations, and therefore require thorough coverage of the evidence. According to the Introduction, one of the main purposes of the book is to survey recent developments and Russian scholarship for those who are not well acquainted with it, while at the same time providing a 'fresh synthesis' for specialists in the field (p. xviii).

For a long time the 'Norman aspect' of our history was hidden and hushed up by official Soviet historiography. Only in the 1970s did Russian scholars gain access to the archaeological finds supporting a special role for the Scandinavians in the earliest stages of our history. The primary question for historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — the role played by the Scandinavians in the formation of the Russian state — has naturally been replaced by other issues, which reveal the different stages and various aspects of the Norman presence in Rus', such as the time and intensity of the Scandinavians' connections with different tribes, their sphere of interest and main activity in Eastern Europe and their contribution to and connections with the ruling élite. The timeliness of the summing up put forward by Franklin and Shepard cannot be overestimated. As a way of reducing the immensity of their task, however, the authors decided not to 'qualify in detail every judgement which may happen *not* to coincide with received opinion', so as not 'to distort the balance of narrative by making a fetish of innovation' (p. xxi). Disputed matters dealing with the Scandinavian exploration of Eastern Europe, irrespective of how important they are, are deliberately confined to footnotes, and thus the treatment is rather scanty and might suggest that there exists no controversy about the subjects discussed and that the solutions presented in the book are the only possible ones.

The weakness of such an approach can be demonstrated in, for example, the presentation by Franklin and Shepard of the reasons why the Rus' were attracted to Eastern Europe. The first was undoubtedly easy access to Northern pelts, discussed only briefly by Franklin and Shepard, who emphasise the Scandinavian role in the silver trade with the Orient. The authors give the impression that from the very arrival of the Rus' in Eastern Europe to the time when the route from the Baltic in the North-West to the Volga and the Baghdad Caliphate in the South-East was intensively used (tenth century), the Scandinavians themselves were engaged in trading and travelling the whole length of the 'silver route'. It is more likely that silver was delivered mainly by non-Scandinavian traders with whom the Rus' had to barter for it. The development of a permanent long-distance route was an extensive process, in which the Rus' played a variety of roles.

What is known testifies that along with the fur and silver trade there were other attractions for the Rus' in Eastern Europe, including the existence of a possible site for migration. Anthropology tells us that Nordic elements contributed to the formation of one of the two main racial types existing in northern Russia, and it has

been proved that in some settlements in this area the proportion of Norsemen reached ten per cent of the population. This is a clear indication that some of the Scandinavians settled there permanently and integrated into local society. In addition, Rus' in the tenth century provided the poorest of the Northern nobility and bonders with an opportunity for well-paid service in the guard of Russian rulers. It was the kind of service which allowed them to ascend the social ladder and become part of the emerging new Russian élite which was replacing the old tribal élite.

The question of the relations between the Rus' and the local population has been the subject of harsh dispute, and the emphasis given by Franklin and Shepard to the material distorts the picture of the ethnic situation revealed by archaeology. Their Rus' seem to have existed in an almost complete vacuum. Brief references to the early (fifth to early eighth century) appearance of the Finno-Ugric and Baltic population (p. 6) in the Russian North — the area of the earliest Rus' arrival — and to the Slav migration to the Middle Dnieper and from there in different directions, especially eastward and northward, including to the great lakes Ilmen' and Pskov (pp. 72–75, 82), do not improve the picture. The presence of these tribes in the same territory that the Scandinavians came to is affirmed by the authors, though the nature of the relations between them is not specified. From this book one could infer that the Rus' isolated themselves from the local population, never intermingling with it; the evidence of archaeology, however, points to close and friendly contact between the Scandinavians and the peoples of the forest zone of the Russian North, in contrast to the stereotype of endless hostility between them furnished by the Scandinavian written sources.

Franklin and Shepard focus their attention upon the Rus' as one of, if not the main ethnic and cultural components in the formation of Eastern Europe. Against a background of thorough studies of other ethnic groups (the Slavs, the Finno-Ugrians and the Balts) that took part in the genesis of Russian culture, such an approach seems to be fully justified. Nonetheless, for research of this kind the principal problem is achieving a balanced approach, necessary for presenting the historical process as a unified whole. In the case of Franklin and Shepard, the balance is lacking. Their historical interpretation is strongly affected by the choice of source material and scholarly works. While many readers will share the ideas of Franklin and Shepard, some would prefer to be able to consider the opposing side in the discussion and evaluate for themselves the view imposed on them by the book. Unfortunately, the authors have not provided this opportunity.

The way Franklin and Shepard work with written historical sources deserves special mention, as it is an improvement in many respects on other histories of Russia written both in Russia and in the West. The book is a perfect example of an effective combination of data taken from sources of wide provenance. Its first merit is the abundant use of Old Russian sources in the original. The second is the authors' generous citation of foreign sources in creating a living picture of historical events not adequately described in Russian writings. The list of the sources that the authors employ to substantiate their position is almost endless (strangely enough, the sources of Scandinavian origin occupy a very modest place). Thirdly,



the range of genres of the sources quoted is quite overwhelming: chronicles and codes of law, church documents and secular literature, birchbark inscriptions and graffiti, etc. Unfortunately, however, the work is completely devoid of source-criticism (the only exception is the treatment of the *Russkaja Pravda*). The impression received is that all the data derived from the writings of different peoples from different times have equal historical value and deserve equal treatment. An appeal to a later source in describing an earlier event is often misleading. A short guide to the written sources, giving the basic data about the author, date and place of creation, sources, genre and tradition, the main manuscripts, as well as pointing to further reading, would have been of great help in the book. This is especially desirable because a remarkable feature of the authors' account is their keen attention to the slightest hints of early historical events in the sources and their bold presentation of their own hypotheses.

GALINA GLAZYRINA

THE NORWEGIAN INVASION OF ENGLAND IN 1066. By KELLY DeVRIES. *The Boydell Press*. Woodbridge 1999. xii + 322 pp.

Nobody loves a loser. In what he concedes to be 'an old-fashioned war story' (p. 3), Kelly deVries attempts to rescue the reputations of two considerable 'warlords' who met their respective Waterloos in 1066. On 25th September of that year the invasion of Northumbria by the Norwegian king Haraldr harðráði ended in his death in the battle of Stamford Bridge. Less than three weeks later his conqueror Harold Godwinson, his troops weakened by a remarkable forced march to meet this northern threat, was himself defeated at Hastings. This book aims to present Harold, however briefly, in a victorious light, and to cast some reflected glory also on Haraldr, whose intervention presumably influenced the outcome at Hastings. Despite deVries's partisan spirit, however, this ambition is weakened by his avowed unwillingness to pursue issues of cause and effect. As old-fashioned as the preference for narrative is the book's biographical style of analysis, devoting much of its space to introductory and often repetitive chapters on Haraldr, Harold's father Godwine and Harold himself.

Unfortunately, the author's zeal in his heroes' cause is not matched by competence. He alludes to the reluctance of modern historians to rely on the almost exclusively Norse sources — for English and Norman chroniclers, like modern commentators, were distracted from Haraldr's campaign by the more significant southern aftermath — but does not adequately justify his own extensive reliance on them. He fails to explain the complex relationships between the various Norse kings' sagas or their claims to represent earlier sources. Throughout his detailed account of the battle of Stamford Bridge and of Haraldr's earlier, successful, encounter at Fulford Gate he quotes extensively, though indiscriminately, from the parallel Norse sources, *Heimskringla*, *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna* and a fifteenth-century addition to *Flateyjarbók*. An explanation for this anxious parade of learning emerges in his defence of the historical use of these

sources, generally discounted because of their late date. The author attempts to bolster their credibility by arguing that ‘this is not just *an* account found in *one* Saga, but slightly different accounts found in three’ (p. 275). His vague speculations on the nature of their relationship (‘Was there some collaboration between the authors of these sagas?’) go no way towards establishing any evaluation of historical reliability. Puzzling though the relationship between these texts may be, it is uncontroversial that the account of Haraldr’s campaign in all derives from *Morkinskinna* (and that the *Flateyjarbók* addition preserves an earlier version than that now extant of the *Morkinskinna* text).

The author’s understanding of the significance of the incorporated verse sources may be evaluated from his mistranslation of Snorri’s *sumt er ritat eptir fornum kvæðum* as ‘some is written from old declarations’ (p. 12) and the unwary statement that Snorri ‘puts [a] detail into the verses of the poet Þjóðólfr’ (p. 27). The ‘poems’ are dismissed as ‘later literary flourish’ (p. 287). Nor has he read the sagas carefully, as witness the startling assertion that ‘*Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, Snorri Sturluson, and *Flateyjarbók* do not mention Magnús’ [Ólafsson’s] reign without Haraldr’ (p. 40), thus wiping out at a stroke a whole saga in *Heimskringla* as well as shorter accounts in the other texts. A reference in *Fagrskinna* to Haraldr’s early battles in Russia is transposed to Byzantium (p. 28). The thinness and inaccuracy in the treatment of these sources is not helped by a perverse preference for elderly editions. Unfortunately Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade’s translation of *Morkinskinna* (also reviewed in this number of *Saga-Book*, pp. 432–35) was not yet available, but deVries cites Unger’s 1867 edition rather than Finnur Jónsson’s of 1932; he relies throughout on Munch and Unger’s 1847 edition of *Fagrskinna*, seemingly unaware of Finnur Jónsson’s of 1902–03, let alone that of Bjarni Einarsson in 1985. Out-of-date editions are also used for *Ágrip* and Saxo Grammaticus, and the recent translation of Theodoricus is not mentioned. *Knýtlinga saga* is dated to ‘the mid-twelfth century’ (p. 75), rather than, as now believed, later than 1257; this may be an outdated opinion inherited from E.A. Freeman, though elsewhere deVries confuses centuries again, dating early Viking incursions in England to the eighth rather than to the ninth century (p. 15).

Historians have also drawn back, deVries claims, from the linguistic difficulty of the texts. By way of remedy he cites these extensively, proffering his own translations — even where, in the case of *Heimskringla*, adequate published translations are available. The rashness of this decision is demonstrated on almost every page, starting with the inability to handle inflected name forms: ‘Sverri’ (p. 11), ‘Rögnvaldr Brusáson’ (p. 25), and the doubly inept ‘Þóru, the daughter of Þorbergs Árnasonar’ (p. 48). The mistrust induced by elementary blunders such as *var þat* ‘it is true’ (p. 23), *bjó í skógi* ‘a farmhouse in a forest’ (p. 25), *saga mikil* ‘many stories’ (p. 49) and rather colourfully, ‘weapons’ birth’ for *vápnaburðrinn* (p. 206), is deepened by the garbling of more significant terms: *húskalr* (for *húskarl*), *bóndaherinn* translated as ‘householder’ (p. 204), and ‘he was called *berserksgangr* by the Scandinavians’ (p. 205). Muddle is added to linguistic incompetence when Haraldr’s remark on his division of Norway with Magnús, ‘*Ertu maðr miklu þrvari en ek*’, is put in the mouth of Magnús (p. 44), flying in the face of frequent allusions to Haraldr’s stinginess in sagas and *þættir*; sometimes the context is

misread, as in Harold Godwinson's observation when Haraldr falls off his horse before Stamford Bridge: '*Mikill maðr ok ríkmannlígr, ok er vænna, at farinn sé at hamingju*'. Kelly deVries translates this (from *Heimskringla*): 'He is a large and powerful man. Here it is likely that we have come to the end of our luck', noting a similar form of words in *Fagrskinna* (he misses its appearance also in *Morkinskinna*) (p. 68). But the remark, as the published translations agree, refers to Haraldr's luck. The misreading is repeated on p. 284 and compounded by the added mangling of Haraldr's own comment, *Fall er fararheill*, as 'That fall is the farewell of fortune'. Space does not permit the detailed unpicking of deVries's translations of longer passages essential to his narrative of the campaign, but the examples already cited will vouch for their unreliability. It can be said in partial mitigation, however, that this is not the result of distortion in order to fit any particular theory.

Kelly deVries's departures from straightforward narrative are few. On controversial points, such as the question of the reliability of Norse reports of the English use of cavalry charges at Stamford Bridge, he rehearses the arguments of earlier historians before falling back on inconclusive generality and over-use of the rhetorical question. Even his main thesis, that Harold's forced march and encounter with his namesake contributed to his defeat at Hastings by reducing and weakening his troops, is not so much argued as implied, within the confines of a two-page 'Aftermath'. If the Norse sources have the potential to rehabilitate the reputation of 'the other Conqueror, the warlord Harold Godwinson' (p. 299), their treatment in this book must be assessed as a wasted opportunity.

ALISON FINLAY

*MORKINSKINNA: THE EARLIEST ICELANDIC CHRONICLE OF THE NORWEGIAN KINGS (1030–1157)*. Translated with Introduction and Notes by THEODORE M. ANDERSSON and KARI ELLEN GADE. *Islandica* LI. Cornell University Press. Ithaca and London 2000. xiv + 556 pp.

Theodore Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade have done the history of Icelandic literature an enormous service with this elegant and substantial volume, and yet they are the first to admit that much remains to be done. The earliest version of *Morkinskinna*, composed in Iceland in the early thirteenth century, 'established a new literary type, the historical compendium . . . *Morkinskinna* revolutionized history writing almost immediately. The chronicle form was imitated in *Fagrskinna* about five years later and in *Heimskringla* about a decade later . . . Both works . . . capitalized extensively on the narrative provided in *Morkinskinna*' (p. 497). It is hard to believe that this seminal text has never been available in a reader's edition or translated into any modern language, but the translators are no doubt right in their surmise that 'the book is not much read except by scholars' (p. 11) — always excepting the much-anthologised *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka*, one of the sixteen (on the count of Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Om de norske kongesagaer*, 1937, pp. 154–55) semi-independent narratives mostly about encounters of Icelanders with the king of Norway that cluster in *Morkinskinna* about the figure of King

Haraldr harðráði. Not the least of the virtues of this translation is the reinstatement of the *þættir* to their proper context in the narrative of Norwegian political history, though their role in contributing to the distinctive 'Icelandic assertiveness' (p. 65) of the text is given due weight. Andersson and Gade incline to the view, following Jonna Louis-Jensen (*Kongesagastudier: Kompilationen Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*, 1977, pp. 77–78), that the bulk of the *þættir*, often supposed by scholars to be interpolated in the late thirteenth-century version of *Morkinskinna* that now survives, were integral to the original work: 'Louis-Jensen's argument seems to shift the burden of proof to those who believe in wholesale interpolation. The original author clearly cultivated an episodic style, and strong reasons are needed to demonstrate that any particular episode is not part of his conception. That does not, of course, preclude the possibility that a number of the *þættir* were composed separately by other writers, but there seems no strong reason for believing that they were not included in *Morkinskinna* from the outset' (p. 24).

Characterisation of *Morkinskinna*'s episodic style also figures in the closely argued discussion of the extent of poetic interpolation in the surviving *Morkinskinna*. Differing conclusions are drawn on this issue for various parts of the text, but an overall picture is built up of an author with a taste for inclusion using his extensive familiarity with skaldic verse for his own individual ends. The author of *Morkinskinna* was, after all, a pioneer in the use of verse sources as he was in the art of historical compilation. A most fruitful comparison of the use of verse in the three compilations shows that the compilers of *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* 'were consciously selective in their use of the poetic corpus of [*Morkinskinna*], and that they included only stanzas that provided concrete information with a direct bearing on the events narrated in the prose', in contrast to the interest in 'seemingly superfluous stanzas describing ferocious beasts of battle and ships struggling on the wind-swept sea' revealed by the author of *Morkinskinna* and identified by Andersson and Gade as part and parcel of the text's preoccupation with poets and poetry: 'It is more than likely that the many *þættir* and smaller anecdotes about skalds and the composition of skaldic poetry in *Morkinskinna* reflect the interests and knowledge of the same author' (pp. 56–57).

At first sight the authors' claim in their preface: 'We hope that this first step may hasten the appearance of a standard edition in Icelandic with the necessary aids' (p. ix) seems unduly modest, for in addition to their extensive investigation of the literary and historical context of *Morkinskinna* and its textual relationships, and a series of annotations appropriate to different readerships, they include in their very readable text a complete re-editing of its 320 skaldic stanzas, Gade's principal contribution to the work. The Icelandic text of these is included in the translation, followed in each case by the 'prose word order' rendition conventional in skaldic editions and by a prose translation; notes on the stanzas appear in an appendix. While this layout does little to render the verses less intimidating, the thoroughness of the procedure suggests that the translators have taken more than a first step to earning the title of editors. But scrutiny of their translated text and the appended textual notes reveals the extent of the problem. The only existing manuscript of *Morkinskinna*, whether or not heavily interpolated, is defective,

lacking one of its original seven quires and five further leaves, and riddled with smaller lacunae. These were usually left blank by Finnur Jónsson in his edition of 1928–32, though footnotes provide some textual information about the readings to be deduced from later kings' saga texts which made use of earlier versions of *Morkinskinna* (primarily a fifteenth-century addition to *Flateyjarbók*, the *Frísþbók* version of *Heimskringla* and *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*). The earlier scholarly editor, C. R. Unger in 1867, filled in the blanks in smaller print, but without the formality of identifying his sources, be they manuscript readings later illegible, readings from other texts in manuscript or printed editions, or in some cases his own speculation. Unger's strategy of filling the gaps is adopted here 'for the sake of readability' (p. 405), though the enclosure of substituted text between asterisks, without any difference in text size, makes it difficult to see the demarcation of longer interpolations. The 'textual notes' signalling these uncertainties, and incidentally identifying a number of misreadings and misprints in Finnur Jónsson's text, confirm the need for an up-to-date edition based on full re-examination of the manuscripts.

The translation itself has a freshness and resourcefulness which does credit to the ambition to introduce this crucial, but also individual, work to a new readership. The original's characteristic blend of colloquialism and formality comes through well, and the translators are alert to the need to mediate its occasionally enigmatic style. In places colloquialism tips over into anachronism, to my taste: 'That is a mouthful' (p. 143) (*Mjök er mælt*), 'I have no management skills' (p. 171) (*ek kann engi forræði*), 'You're going all out' (p. 174) (*Mikinn tekr þú af*), 'He wound up on land' (p. 96) (*því næst er hann á landi*), 'as rich as Croesus' (p. 207) (*svá festerkr*), and quaintly, 'You are a gentleman' (p. 250) (*Vel fer þér*). Gentlemanliness rears its ambiguous head again on p. 290, where 'a very fine gentleman' translates *enn kurteisasti maðr*. Occasionally the translators reach for a colloquialism totally foreign to this reviewer, presumably representing American usage: 'not everyone should be cut over the same comb' (p. 92) for *eigi munu allir jafnir í því*; 'there was no overage' (p. 250) for *ekki er um fram* (Webster's dictionary gives the sense 'surplus goods' for 'overage'). Specialised vocabulary gives rise to some inelegant coinages: 'thingmeeting' for *þing*, 'nonnoble men' (p. 183) for *ótignir menn*, 'not chieftainly' for *óhofðingligt* (p. 201), and 'compose a counterstanza' (p. 253) for *yrkið nú í móti*. *Lendir menn* are 'magnates' on p. 191, elsewhere 'district chieftains'. *Fór at veizlum* is 'made the rounds' on p. 209; with more appropriate dignity on p. 217, the king 'made a circuit of feasts'.

In an obscure passage recording the report of a bystander on the threatened punishment of Bishop Magni who had dared to remonstrate with the mentally unbalanced King Sigurðr Magnússon, *Morkinskinna* has it that *svá hefir Sigurðr frá sagt . . . at eigi þótti honum meiri himinn en kálfskinn, svá þótti honum konungrinn ógurligr*. This is boldly rendered here as 'Sigurðr . . . related that he seemed to see no more of the heavens than a piece of parchment because the king was so monstrous in his rage' (p. 257). But there is no justification for translating *kálfskinn* as other than 'a calf's skin', an interpretation supported by the proverbial instances cited by Fritzner (*Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* II, p. 249) — and in any case the translators' alternative hardly clarifies the obscurity of the phrase. Another

rare, and perverse, mistranslation comes at the end of the *þáttur* of Þorvarðr krákunef, where it is said of the sail given by Þorvarðr to King Haraldr: *Konungr þakkaði honum ok hafði þetta segl yfir sínu skipi, ok stóðzk þat eigi þessu konungs skipinu í kappsiglingum, því at skip var mikit, en þó þótti þat vera en mesta gorsimi*. Andersson and Gade translate: ‘The king thanked him and raised the sail on his ship. The king’s sail could not be rivalled in racing, for it was a large ship but nonetheless thought to be a great miracle of construction’ (p. 225). But *stóðzk þat eigi þessu konungs skipinu* must mean ‘it was not adequate for this ship of the king’s’ (*standask e-u* ‘stand up to, be adequate for’; see Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* III, p. 523). A better rendering is that of a recent translation of the *þáttur*: ‘The king thanked him and used that sail on his ship. It was not large enough for the royal vessel in competitive sailing because the ship was large, but the sail was considered to be of very great value’ (George Clark, *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* I, p. 399).

The translators are misleadingly self-deprecating with regard to their provision of commentary: ‘Most particularly we are aware of the preliminary nature of the “Explanatory Notes”, which supply a bare minimum of information. In another five or ten years we could probably have worked out a proper commentary . . .’ (p. ix). One suspects that these generous scholars’ idea of ‘a proper commentary’ would have filled a much larger volume, for the notes are thoughtful and wide-ranging, though often suggestive rather than definitive. They offer a thematic and stylistic running commentary on the narrative, with suggestions for wider reading on cultural and literary topics. Notes are confined to the back of the book and arranged under chapter headings, which makes them difficult to find when they relate to chapters extending over several pages, and raises yet again the question why publishers are so resistant to the appearance of notes at the foot of each page of text. Relegation to the back of the book would in any case have been the inevitable fate of the more specialist ‘Textual Notes’, ‘Notes on Stanzas’ and ‘Concordance of Episodes in *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*’, but the separation of this material probably does make the book easier to use. It is sometimes difficult to know, though, why some commentary was assigned to the ‘Notes on Stanzas’ rather than the ‘Explanatory Notes’, and the occasional cross-reference from one to the other adds an unnecessary layer of complication.

A few minor slips, mainly typographical, can be pointed out: the omission of ‘been’ from p. 15, l. 12 (‘that may well have [been] the high point . . .’), and of a comma on p. 16: ‘In the service of the Danish king, Sveinn Úlfsson, . . .’ Chapter 5, note 12 refers erroneously to *Ágrip* Chapter 35; it should be 37 in the cited edition by Bjarni Einarsson.

It is a pleasure to see *Morkinskinna* set so firmly on the road to its reinstatement as a key text in the development of Old Norse historiographical writing and the creation of a distinctively Icelandic literary personality. This translation should win it ‘the wider circulation that it surely deserves’ (p. x); let us hope that the challenge set by the translators can soon be met by a new edition with full scholarly apparatus.

THE POETRY OF ARNÓRR JARLASKÁLD. AN EDITION AND STUDY. By DIANA WHALEY. *Westfield Publications in Medieval Studies* 8. Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. *Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London*. London 1998. xvi + 369 pp.

Arnórr jarlaskáld Þórðarson is one of the most important poets in the skaldic canon, not just because of the aesthetic quality of his poetry, but also because of the prominent place he is given in scholarly works and kings' sagas by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century writers. His verse is cited in sagas of eleventh-century kings and earls, or in works of skaldic poetics, where his stanzas are quoted for their relevance in historical or scholarly contexts. None of his poems is preserved complete, and one of the greatest challenges facing an editor of his verse, as of that of other skalds, is how to set about the task of reconstructing the original poems from the fragments and disjointed sections that are scattered here and there in various kinds of sources.

Diana Whaley has taken on this challenge, and produced an edition that is almost unique in skaldic studies, not only in its thoroughness and attention to detail, but also in its presentation of the *œuvre* of a single skald. She notes in her Preface the striking fact that her own edition and Krause's of the work of Eyvindr skáldaspillir (1990) are the only ones dedicated to the corpus of a single poet to have appeared in recent decades. Whaley has thus had to construct her own method of presenting the poetry of Arnórr. She divides her task into a study of his verse on the one hand and an edition on the other, the latter taking up two thirds of the book, the overall outcome being an edition with an introduction. This method is sensible, since it enables the edition to serve as an introduction for the inexperienced reader of skaldic verse while at the same time catering for the needs of those familiar with the field of skaldic studies.

Whaley starts with a thorough account of the manuscripts of the various sources containing the verse of Arnórr jarlaskáld. The presentation of this material is comprehensive, and she has given close attention to the textual history of the verse, which is the basis for her presentation of the text in the second part of the book. One minor oversight may be noted: she states that the author of *The Third Grammatical Treatise* is not named, but Óláfr Þórðarson is in fact recorded as its author in the A manuscript of the treatise and his authorship is therefore as well attested as Snorri Sturluson's of the prose *Edda*. The complexities involved in editing skaldic verse are immediately revealed in this chapter in the sense that it is not possible to trace the transmission of each stanza, only to present the different sources containing the verse, each source having its own particular textual history. The result is that the reader is not clear as to which source is the most reliable, in the cases, that is, where a stanza is preserved in more than one source. This question resurfaces when the reader attempts to judge the merit of one variant against another in the diplomatic edition of the text. This dilemma is not limited to Whaley's edition, but haunts everyone who undertakes an edition of skaldic verse, particularly of verse preserved in the kings' sagas.

The reconstruction of skaldic poetry is perhaps the other most controversial aspect of any edition of skaldic verse, and Arnórr's poems are not, as already indicated, preserved in their original contexts or as complete entities. The editor



must therefore put the poems together piece by piece. While generally indebted here to the editions of Finnur Jónsson and E. A. Kock, who agreed on the reconstruction of the poems, Whaley adopts an independent approach, deviating from those earlier editors in her presentation of the poems (as is shown lucidly in Appendix B). She also departs from Bjarne Fidjestøl's reconstruction in his book *Det norrøne fyrstediktet* (1982). She does not give 'a verse-by-verse rationale' (p. 27) for her reconstruction of the poems, referring instead to the more thorough discussion in her doctoral dissertation of 1979; readers of this edition would have been well served by being given the gist of those arguments here, as they are fundamental to her editorial principles. Her reasons for the placing of the stanzas within each of the five poems that can be attributed to Arnórr are well explained, even though the original contexts of the verses preserved outside the historical sources, such as the skaldic citations in *Skáldskaparmál*, remain questionable. Whaley's category of 'Fragments' is large compared with Finnur's; she has eleven fragments, all drawn from *Snorra Edda* or *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, where he had five. This result illustrates the caution she has exercised in presenting the material.

Whaley systematically documents the many sides to Arnórr's life and his verse-making, beginning with an account of his life-story as it can be deduced from the sources and the verse. Arnórr was the son of Þórðr Kolbeinsson, a well-known court poet famous for his quarrels with Björn Hítðælakappi in *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*. He belongs, therefore, to an established family of poets. Whaley does not question the attribution of the verse to Arnórr, and indeed it would be problematic to enter into the attribution question here. There is, relatively speaking, good evidence for Arnórr's authorship: he was one of the most respected poets in the skaldic canon and his popularity was well established within the learned community in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The most important part of the study of Arnórr's verse relates to his poetic diction. Whaley gives a clear overview of the characteristics of his poetic vocabulary, moving from the more common elements to conclude with poeticisms and rare words. The difficulty in tracing a poet's use of particular poetic synonyms and diction inevitably highlights the weak foundations on which we base our sense of chronology in tracing the development of ideas in skaldic diction. Whaley's treatment of Arnórr's poetic diction is, in consequence, more descriptive than analytical.

The edition of Arnórr's verse falls into two parts, the first part giving the edited text and the second a diplomatic text, with full commentary. The choice of the main manuscript is the 'best manuscript' available (p. 101), but the arguments in each case are not always clear. For instance, the main manuscript within the same poem may differ from stanza to stanza, even though the stanzas are preserved in the same corpus of manuscripts. While I do not doubt Whaley's reasons for changing the main manuscript from one stanza to another, I would nevertheless draw attention to *Haraldsdrápa*, stanzas 4, 11, and 13, where *Heimskringla* takes precedence over *Morkinskinna* as the main text in her edition. Thirteen stanzas of the reconstructed poem are cited in *Morkinskinna*, whereas only five are in *Heimskringla*. This raises the question whether *Morkinskinna* should not have been used as the main text for all thirteen of the relevant stanzas, as it is for the ten where *Heimskringla* is not one of the sources.

Whaley gives the context in which each stanza is found, noting how the verse is introduced in the sagas or the scholarly works, as the case may be. This aspect of her commentary is particularly valuable. She furthermore presents admirably the ambiguities involved in interpreting skaldic verse in her commentary on each stanza, never simplifying the issue, but presenting the evidence concisely and taking account of the many sides of the argument. The edition is followed by some very useful tables in Appendix A, listing the distribution of Arnórr's verse in the manuscripts of any given work.

Diana Whaley's work on Arnórr jarlaskáld's poetry must be highly commended. Unfortunately we have had to wait a frustratingly long time for the publication of this important book, which appears almost twenty years after the completion of the author's Oxford D.Phil. thesis, on which it is based. But the passing of time has done nothing to outdate her scholarship and the thoroughness of her approach, which now challenge others to follow in her footsteps.

GUDRÚN NORDAL

SKALDSAGAS: TEXT, VOCATION AND DESIRE IN THE ICELANDIC SAGAS OF POETS. Edited by RUSSELL POOLE. *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde (herausgegeben von Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, Heiko Steuer)* 27. *Walter de Gruyter*. Berlin and New York 2001. vi + 365 pp.

As Russell Poole notes in his introduction to this collection of essays, although the Icelandic skalds' sagas offer a 'convenient and attractive' introduction to saga literature (p. 22), this is the first English-language monograph devoted to them. What his excellent volume clearly demonstrates is not only that this small body of sagas amply repays the attention paid to it, but also that in spite of — or perhaps even because of — their closeness of form and subject matter, the skalds' sagas raise all the fundamental questions of saga criticism: genre, authorial intention and audience expectation, the development and dating of saga writing, its relation with other (continental) literatures, the literary potential of prosimetrum, and finally, two of the most engaging themes in saga literature, one time-honoured and one relatively new: the relationship between paganism and Christianity, and gender politics.

As core skalds' sagas, this volume uncontroversially specifies *Kormáks saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*, *Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa* and *Gunnlaugs saga orms tungu*. The first essay, by Margaret Clunies Ross, not only defines (and provides useful plot summaries of) these four, but also considers their relation with 'outliers' such as *Grettis saga*, *Gísla saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga* and *Egils saga*, in 'an aetiology of the literary form and content of the skald saga' (p. 25). Some long-held assumptions are given a shake in the process: Clunies Ross notes that there is 'curiously little evidence outside the saga' for Egill Skalla-Grímsson's poetry (p. 37) — beyond, as she suggestively points out, the work of Snorri. On the other hand, some are let lie: although Clunies Ross defines poets' stereotypical appearance as 'dark, with prominent, ugly features' (p. 45), of the core poet-heroes, Gunnlaugr and Hallfreðr are red-haired and ugly, Kormákr is dark but not ugly, and Bjørn is

good-looking. But there is something Odinic in the practice of poetry; Clunies Ross shows how the skalds' saga writers were especially interested in these awkward individuals 'on the cusp' of Christianity (p. 46).

The representation of the poet as professional Icelander is well treated by Diana Whaley, and Jenny Jochens carefully assesses not only the poets' ostensible heterosexuality, but also the evidence of 'homosocial desire' in their relations with both their poetic rivals and their royal patrons. As Clunies Ross points out, one of the essential themes of the skalds' sagas is the place of the poet in society, and the similarity of this theme to the basic plot structure of the *báttir* is developed by John Lindow in his essay exploring the so-called 'travel pattern' (essentially, Joseph Harris's 'King and Icelander' plot), that structure of 'alienation and reconciliation that the Icelander and prince play out' (p. 218). Lindow shows that even the core skalds' sagas differ greatly in how closely they fit the basic travel pattern, noting that the author of *Kormáks saga*, for instance, was 'simply not interested in the possibilities inherent in [it]' (p. 222), and does not suggest that the skalds' sagas are a straightforward literary development from *báttir*. But since three of the four core skalds' sagas (*Kormáks saga*, *Hallfreðar saga* and *Bjarnar saga*), as well as two of the outliers (*Egils saga* and *Fóstbræðra saga*), have sometimes been identified as amongst the oldest sagas of Icelanders, the question of the genre's inception naturally arises. Both P. M. Sørensen and Clunies Ross make the connection between the poets' sagas on the one hand and, on the other, anecdotes about court poets in the kings' sagas, though it is hard to get beyond Clunies Ross's chicken-and-egg question: 'which came first, the discontinuous narratives about poets within kings' sagas, which may have given other saga writers the idea of concentrating and giving literary shape to that material in a separate saga devoted to the poet's life alone, or the continuous narrative which was then cut up and dispersed within the framework of royal sagas [?]' (p. 41).

Kari Ellen Gade applies her research on skaldic metrics to dating the verses in the skalds' sagas, moving on from the old criteria of recognised archaisms which younger poets might easily have imitated to reveal the much more integral use of forms which had ceased to be productive after the eleventh century. As a corollary, she notes instances in which later skalds used metrical types which by and large do not occur in earlier poems. As always, there is a danger of circularity in adopting Finnur Jónsson's *Skjaldedigting* datings, but it is minimised by the subtlety and complexity of Gade's analysis, which is full of interest and potential — rather as the old intractabilities about the dating of *Beowulf* have been usefully opened up by metrical analyses. Gade is careful to note that her method is not a failsafe way of dating stanzas individually, but her conclusion, that 'the bulk of the poetry [in *Kormáks saga*] antedated the earliest Provençal troubadour lyric by almost two hundred years' (p. 74), is a clear advance.

The question of continental influence has always been a vexed one. Bjarni Einarsson has repeatedly claimed that the verse attributed to Kormákr was written under the influence of troubadour love lyrics, while Peter Dronke argues that literary representations of idealised love sprang up in many places at different times — early medieval Iceland amongst them. Here, Alison Finlay concludes that the love-triangle element in the skalds' sagas 'is not derived in any significant way

from the Tristan romance' (p. 269), but, as she rightly adds, this goes no way towards explaining its somewhat surprising appearance in saga literature. Finlay interestingly develops her analysis of the relationship between *níð* and sexual rivalry, pointing out that the verses alone make surprisingly little reference to the latter, which, she suggests, may have developed because the law proscribed *níð* and it lost its place in saga literature. T. M. Andersson suggests tracing the love-triangle theme to a 'general context of impulses from a refashioned Brynhildr legend, a first exposure to German bridal-quest narrative perhaps in oral form, and the first glimmerings of Continental romance' (pp. 280–81).

Two essays practise what Russell Poole calls 'compositional stratigraphy' (p. 11): the attempt to establish the compositional relationship between the verse and the prose. Edith Marold gives a good demonstration in her essay on *Bjarnar saga*, and Poole himself traces the contours of possible formal poems or informal sequences of stanzas which may have been dismantled in the production of *Hallfreðar saga* and *Gumlaugs saga*. This is Poole's own special area of expertise, and though it is bound to be speculative to some degree, its conclusions are very persuasive. But it is at least equally important to evaluate the finished saga prosimetrum — to answer the question of why the saga author went to all this compositional trouble — as P. M. Sørensen does in a fine piece. Torfi Tulinius develops Lee Hollander's idea that the structure of saga narrative echoes the micro-structure of the skaldic stanza with its interlaced juxtapositions, polysemous syntax and absent connectors.

Poole raises the intriguing idea that saga audiences had what he calls 'double vision' (p. 13): an awareness of the original contexts (perhaps as long poems) of stanzas quoted in saga narratives even as they listened to the new prosimetrum, valuing the ingenuity with which the saga author recontextualised his material. The reworking of the love triangle theme in the skalds' sagas is in itself clear indication of their fictionality, and P. M. Sørensen also addresses the difficult but insistent questions of intention and reception in his piece on saga prosimetrum; perhaps, he argues, the audience would not regard such recycling, or re-modelling, as in any way 'fraudulent' (p. 188), but would enjoy hearing what *might have* happened. Sørensen notes (pp. 189–90) that in *Fóstbræðra saga*, when King Haraldr completes Pormóðr's dying verse, he says, 'Svá mundi skáldit vilja kveðit hafa' (this is what the poet would have wanted to say) — a fitting epigraph to the whole issue of the fictionality of saga literature.

HEATHER O'DONOGHUE

SORG OCH ELEGI I EDDANS HJÄLTEDIKTNING. By DANIEL SÄVBORG. *Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Stockholm Studies in History of Literature* 36. Almqvist & Wiksell International. Stockholm 1997. 485 pp.

This study of the eddic elegies, especially their age, origin and coherence as a genre, brings to bear at least one novel approach to counter their traditional literary historical placement as late, medieval and sentimental: constructed

differences are invalidated by disagreements among the users of the resulting categories (ch. 1) and by continuities across category lines (especially ch. 3) —procedures prominent in deconstruction, here presumably home-grown. The primary distinction is Heusler's group of old heroic poems versus his much younger elegy group (at one point Heusler posits half a millennium between the groups! (p. 8)), and Sävborg's first chapter shows how, before Heusler and to some extent after, scholars offered wildly different groupings and datings.

This is rhetorically effective and makes amusing reading, but a historically fairer way of viewing this portion of eddic scholarship would be in terms of progress through hypotheses, corrections, new syntheses, and so on, inspired by institutions, personalities and outside influences. Sävborg's purpose here is instead polemical, and a full study, especially of the sources of Heusler's vision (as in n. 17) and the growth of the consensus from his seminal paper of 1906 through the first edition of *Die altgermanische Dichtung* in 1923 (Sävborg's reference exclusively to the revised second edition of 1941 obscures the story) down to Mohr on the eve of the war would be a desideratum. Such a study would reveal gems like Finnur Jónsson's uncited anticipation of Sävborg's main theme in a scorching review of Neckel's important book of 1908, which includes unrestrained scorn for Neckel's subjective historical judgements, especially concerning the lateness of those soft elegiac feelings; Finnur Jónsson asks how Neckel knows all this:

Ich meine im gegensatz zu den verfasser, dass elegische stimmungen bei den Nordleuten ebensowohl im 9. und 10. wie im 11. jahrhundert sich äussern konnten und dass dieses moment überhaupt kein brauchbares kriterium für die datierung der alten lieder abgibt. Dass die Nordleute, speziell die Norweger, in den sogenannten wikingerzeit durchweg rohe, grausame, blutgierige gesellen gewesen sind, lässt sich nicht beweisen, wie es auch apriori höchst unwahrscheinlich ist (*Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 41 (1909), 382).

The remainder of Chapter 1 is filled out chiefly with methodological positions (which I will return to) and other introductory matters.

The 'deconstruction' continues in a more general sense in Chapter 2, on dating, perhaps the liveliest section of the book. First Sävborg shows how thin and intuitive were Heusler's dating methods, then goes on to demonstrate the logical gap between the lists of dating methods (*of/um* and so on) and actual literary-historical sitings of poems and groups of poems. An encyclopædia article of mine becomes whipping boy number one here, but I am in good company: with Jan de Vries, Jón Helgason, and many others. Like these authors, I did point out that the so-called scientific dating methods were weak, but it is amusing to see that after such a tip of the hat to 'objective science', literary historians make virtually no use of the listed criteria. Mercifully Sävborg also devotes a paragraph to pointing out that an encyclopædia article, by its nature, is attempting to represent dominant opinion and that my original work had in fact challenged the orthodoxy on some of the same points Sävborg himself is interested in (p. 57). Sävborg is particularly successful in showing the circular reasoning behind the

datings of de Vries and Kuhn — an innocent eye describing the king's new clothes by the device of abstracting an argument to the simplest level.

Chapter 3, at about 260 pages the weighty central section of the thesis, produces Sävborg's secret weapon, 'grief'. He reasons that grief (usually *sorg*) is the element without which no one would have arrived at a group called elegy and proceeds to break down the distinction on which the group depends by showing that eddic heroic poems, of both the old warlike and the young elegiac types, 'have' this element to some extent. Moreover grief in eddic heroic poems of both types is predominantly grief over a slain kinsman, and the presence of grief, and grief of this particular type, is paralleled outside the Poetic Edda in Viking Age skaldic poetry and older West Germanic poetry, but not extensively in literature of the High Middle Ages. These similarities and differences are patiently demonstrated in a carefully defined corpus for comparison, generally all preserved literature that might be contemporaneous with or antecedent to eddic poetry: Old West Germanic and skaldic poetry and High Medieval literature such as sagas, Norse translations of continental writings, Latin, Middle High German and Old French. Obviously the 170 pages devoted to the 'genomgång' of eddic and non-eddic poetry are subtler than the establishment on a plus-or-minus basis of the presence or absence of grief, but these pages do require a determined reader.

It is the chapter's last hundred pages that I find most interesting. The section on 'the presentation of grief' (pp. 229–87) comes close to being the kind of catalogue of elegiac elements I had myself once envisaged, and these pages may be useful even to students who cannot subscribe to Sävborg's genre interpretations (pp. 293–320). In two well-argued sections the author shows that 'love' in the elegies functions only to highlight grief and that grief and revenge are the twin (not complementary) outputs of a killing. These three elements — a killing, grief, and revenge — constitute a kind of structural definition of the Norse heroic lay and show the elegies to be at most a subtype of that genre.

Thus, if one can date by affinities tied to genre or more basically to the central emotion of the 'elegiac', the Old Norse eddic elegies belong to the same tradition as Old English, Old High German and Old Norse heroic poetry — an Old Germanic tradition — and not to traditions of the High Middle Ages. This is the basic teaching of Sävborg's study, though his method leads immediately to an apparent contradiction. Although the boundary between old and young, warlike and elegiac has been deconstructed, we are still left with a feeling for an elegiac group which has more emphasis on grief than in the other poems:

Gruppåtskillnadstanken har i detta kapitel fått sig många törnar. Likväl kvarstår frågan varför ett antal eddadikter, ungefär motsvarande gruppen 'elegier' . . . utmärker sig ifråga om intresset för sorg. De uppvisar inga fundamentala skillnader mot övriga ed[d]adikter eller några (avvikande) kopplingar till någon annan diktning, men de skildrar dock sorgen betydligt utförligare, utvecklar den mer och låter den dominera helheten mer än i de övriga eddadiktterna. Kan man ändå se dessa dikter som en grupp, 'typ' eller 'subgenre' av sorgdikter inom Eddan? (p. 320).

The remaining four chapters imply a 'yes' answer.

Chapter 4 (pp. 321–67) studies the relationship between form and the perception of an elegiac genre. As the formal feature known as ‘retrospective’ is surveyed, the *Eddica minora* are treated for the first time to extensive discussion, but Sävborg eliminates all these poems, including those identified as ‘elegies’ and the like by Heusler, from consideration by showing how this feature functions differently in different groups of poems, only the eddic elegies (discounting *Helreið Brynhildar* and *Guðrúnarkviða III*) using it consistently as a rhetorical device to foreground grief. Along the way the author does seek a common denominator of all retrospect in a brief section on ‘spelet med tidsperspektivet inom hjältesagan’ (pp. 348–49); this strikes me as one of the few poorly reasoned sections of the book, partly because it misuses the idea of a ‘heroic age’, borrowed from English. In general, I have portrayed the balance between form (or ‘elegiac form’, as I have called retrospect) and ‘elegiac content’ (‘grief’) rather differently in my articles; but Sävborg’s single footnote reference to my study of the death song just by-passes such arguments and concludes that retrospective is too various a feature to serve as foundation for a category (p. 350). A second formal feature studied is called ‘non-narrative form’. Under this phrase Sävborg collects a number of tendencies and proceeds to show (as with ‘grief’) that they are shared between the old heroic poems and the eddic elegies. There is a real confusion here (explicit on p. 356), however, between, on the one hand, *Situationsgedicht* and its synonyms and ‘lyric’ on the other; the author is more successful in attacking the latter. There are some good points here, especially the analogy of the springing style of the lay to the avoidance of action in the elegies; but on the whole the arguments in this chapter are debatable.

By contrast, I am in agreement with Chapter 5 (pp. 368–94), which treats the spirit of the supposed older and younger groups. In a first section dealing with explicit moralising, Sävborg shows that neither group is widely comparable to High Medieval literature such as the *Nibelungenlied* in authorial judgments; the conclusion of *Atlamál* (which linguistic tests show to be truly late) is the only exception. Parenthetical outbursts of the ‘þæt wæs god cyning’ type (which is not used) seem to be a different phenomenon, as are, more obviously, dramatic evaluations such as those that pepper *Hamðismál*. The Icelandic sagas, with their famous objectivity, are, however, conspicuously absent from the comparative material here. A second section, dealing with the more slippery concept of ideals (or perhaps mentality?), focuses on the ‘hard/soft’ contrast and on the gentle ideals of medieval Christianity — which are shown, through examples from Middle High German heroic poetry and skaldic verse, to be more aligned with the inflictors of grief than with their victims. After a collection of examples of harsh ethics in the Bible itself, Sävborg comments: ‘Tanken på en nära koppling mellan kristendomen och drag som känslighet, mildhet, fredlighet och medkänsla med den sörjande motståndaren hör snarare hemma i söndagsskolornas uppbyggelseskriterier än i forn- och medeltida kristna diktverk’ (p. 392). Amen!

By this point necessary differences in dating, structure, and meaning have been largely levelled to the author’s satisfaction, but the coherence of a sub-group of eddic heroic poems that foreground grief, roughly the elegy group, continues to persist. In the sixth and last substantial chapter (ch. 7 is chiefly a recapitulation of



results), Sävborg correlates this feature with focus on women, the chief expressers of *sorg*. In a good exercise in gender analysis, the author shows, among other things, that the 'hard' female model associated especially with the Guðrún of *Atla-kviða* is explicitly marked as exceptional in the poem itself and in fact correlates better with High Medieval images of literary women than with attested Old English and Viking Age images. However, in his effort to maintain that the eddic elegies are poems of the same type as the 'old' double-sided lays and at most a subtype of them, he goes so far as to say, not that the foregrounding of grief and the focus on women *co-vary*, but that it is the focus shift (which he twice calls 'tillfälligt') which creates the subgenre, for example: 'Därmed kan "eddaelegierna" knappast betecknas som en kategori av sorg- eller klagodikter; inte heller har deras större sensibilitet och känslolinriktning en primär betydelse. Detta är sekundärt. Det är en följd av att huvudpersonen är kvinna och huvudperspektivet därmed en kvinnas' (p. 413, his emphasis; also explicitly p. 438: 'avhängigt'). But *Helreið Brynhildar* (which Sävborg had excluded from the remaining elegy group because it lacks *sorg*) proves that merely shifting the focus to a woman is not a sufficient condition.

If I am in agreement with Sävborg's main claims, I am less enthusiastic about his methods and modes of realisation. The book is unconscionably long, drastically inflated by repetitions and circumstantial swelling; every new section must begin and end with summary of the argument (my favourite example carries unconscious irony: 'Mina undersökningar är slut. Jag har varit generös med sammanfattningar av resonemang och resultat . . .', p. 450). Obviously an Anglo-American '(critical) book' is a different animal from a Swedish '(doktors)avhandling', but a reader from outside that (thankfully closed) system is likely to ask: Does the series have no *editor*? (The book is not free of typographical errors and bibliographical confusions, but such superficial flaws seem unimportant in what is essentially a printed dissertation.) With the sheer volume, which may in the end serve to make points that are, on the whole, worth making, goes a dogged adherence to the limited number of unsubtle ideas I have summarised, even though detailed textual work which I cannot review here often has new offerings.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of method, however, is the author's insistence that his work is an objective investigation, lacking preconceptions or even a hypothesis and independent of antecedent literature on the subject; this is especially enunciated under 'Principer och metod' (pp. 31–36), but the claim, though obviously untrue, is repeated countless times. This stance leads the author to squander space (and his reader's patience) by arranging the book as a series of laborious, ostensibly objective problem-solving 'investigations' instead of as a complete argument (which would be very much shorter) and to leave his formal *Forschungsbericht* until near the end. It does not mean that the predecessors with whom Sävborg disagrees are not soundly thrashed along the way, but it enables positive predecessors to be presented as (more or less accidentally) falling into agreement with the author. Since I have myself been deeply involved in the book's subject, I may be more aware than others of this flaw in method — though Sävborg makes several generous allusions to my work on elegy (especially on p. 445; but compare the review by Mats Malm in *Samlaren* 119 (1998), 129–37). Still, any

reader must see immediately that there is a deeply fallacious claim to some kind of scientific objectivity — a claim we are now cautious of even in relation to science. Humanistic scholars, at least, are the product of all they have read, in fact of ‘discourses’ of all kinds. I believe one should face this squarely and make it clear how one is building on the past.

Resisting the temptation to pursue more details (I *do* have an editor!), I shall close with my major agreements and disagreements with Sävborg’s essential points. The similarities of the ‘old’ and ‘young’ groups are established, but the significance of similarity and dissimilarity in terms of ‘genre’ hovers unresolved in the absence of any explicit genre theory. (Indeed, the whole thesis would be called ‘undertheorised’ in the current Anglo-American literary context.) Established also is the inadequacy of all cultural dating; yet the late dating of *Gripisspá* and *Atlamál*, where indicators of literary affiliation coincide with linguistic indicators, is convincing. Some of the prejudices on which cultural dating depended are well and truly exposed in Sävborg’s book, but among the remaining desiderata is a history of their formation and growth, part of the history of disciplines such as *altgermanische Altertumskunde*.

I still harbour a very different view of genre in which form (especially retrospective) is of prime importance and find that Sävborg’s notion of genre development (the elegies are simply double-sided lays in which the focus ‘accidentally’ falls on a woman) leaves too much unexplained, for example, connections with Old English elegies, the Old English-Old Norse connection in death song (whether or not this is ‘elegy’), male grief as in Hrothgar’s tearful performance (which goes unmentioned), and the tradition of male elegy represented by *Sonatorrek*. In his discussion of (relative) dating, I find that the author underrates *Sagenform* (p. 49); while I agree that it is a weak criterion, Sävborg neglects eddic hints of German influence in the main example he gives (Guðrún’s relation to her brothers) and does not mention harder questions such as Oddrún’s addition to the story. The author elects to limit his corpus to certain heroic poems, accepting the evidence of the manuscript: ‘Uppdelningen i guda- och hjältedikter har stöd i Codex Regius och ligger också utanför mig och den moderna forskningen’ (p. 36). But his treatment of *Völundarkviða* as ‘heroic’ and of the Young Sigurd group as ‘märchenhaft’ (if not mythological, especially pp. 294–300) violates this boundary. In fact, Sävborg has not applied his deconstruction evenhandedly. He prefers to deal only with poems that seem whole and closed (more like modern poetry), excluding prosimetrum and the many ‘voices’ of generic mixtures, while I tend to see all eddic poetry as ultimately vestiges of oral performances, a babble of discourses which were never pure and whole.

Yet Sävborg has wielded his positivistic scalpel to good effect, and the demolition work is to be welcomed. It has already stirred good discussion in reviews by Malm (see above) and Klaus von See (*Skandinavistik* 28 (1998), 87–100) and, together with Bjarne Fidjestøl’s just published posthumous book on the dating of eddic poetry, should become a focal point for a fresh assault on the dating question as well as a more nuanced interpretation of genre.

THE SAGAS OF ICELANDERS: A SELECTION. Preface by JANE SMILEY. Introduction by ROBERT KELLOGG. *World of the Sagas*. Editor: ÖRNÓLFUR THORSSON. Assistant Editor: BERNARD SCUDDER. *Allen Lane, The Penguin Press*. London 2000. lxvi + 782 pp.

The volume reviewed here is the first selection (one may hope, only the first selection) from the five-volume set of all the 'Sagas of Icelanders', some forty full-length sagas plus close on fifty *þættir* or short stories, brought out in 1997 by an international team of translators working under the general editorship of Viðar Hreinsson, published by Leifur Eiríksson Press, and reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXV:3 (2000), 327–29. The major virtues of that set, apart from its very welcome completeness, included an agreed editorial policy which ensured that all translators translated some common terms in exactly the same way, together with an elaborate apparatus of maps, indexes, diagrams and notes on translation.

Many of these latter are reproduced in the volume of selections. Indeed one may as well say at the start that this 800-page volume, with its ten sagas, seven *þættir*, 'Preface' by Jane Smiley, 'Introduction' by Robert Kellogg, and full supporting apparatus, all at an extremely affordable price, makes life immensely easier for anyone considering teaching a course on sagas, as indeed for any privately interested reader. It gives a very fair survey of the entire field (poets' sagas, family sagas, a comic and a trickster's saga and the two 'Vinland' sagas as well), all done with professional competence but without intimidating academic apparatus. In all those respects it is an essential buy.

What it does not do is broaden horizons for the reader who has been buying saga translations already. Most of the works offered here are familiar staples. *Hrafnkels saga* and *Laxdæla saga* have been recently in print from Penguin, as have the two Vinland sagas; *Egils saga* and *Gísla saga* have been available from Everyman for many years, and *Bandamanna saga* from Southside Press's New Saga Library. *Gunnlaugs saga* figures in the World's Classics volume of selections, along with the *þáttir* of 'Authun and the Bear'. Of the full-length sagas translated here, only *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Króka-Refs saga* are likely not to be on a reasonably well-stocked shelf, and while both are welcome (as are the *þættir* like 'Bolli Bollason's Tale' which expand the saga narratives), it would be possible to wish for a selection which got further away from the old Anglophone favourites — though this would admittedly entail moving away from the aim of a cheap, substantial volume for (one hopes) a new mass market.

In spite of their familiarity, however, there remains a sense that the best of these sagas have kept their power to puzzle and challenge even the most professional of modern translators and commentators. Jane Smiley in her 1988 novel *The Greenlanders* caught the tone and behaviour-patterns of the saga-world better than any other modern writer, but both she and Robert Kellogg, in their respective 'Preface' and 'Introduction', seem fixed on the sagas' clear surface rather than their turbid depths. Both he and she thus pick out the simplicity of saga-prose as a main characteristic, 'Plain, unvarnished, and direct' being her words (p. xi), 'straight-forward' and 'clear' being his (p. xviii).

Really? What, then, might one make of the well-known scene in *Hrafnkels saga* where the serving-woman rushes in and berates Hrafnkell for allowing his enemy's brother Eyvindr to ride by unchallenged? Rightly do they say in the old proverb,

she says (or perhaps shrieks), 'svá ergisk hverr sem eldisk'. Two of the five words here are clear enough, *hverr* for 'each man' and *sem* for 'who' (though *svá* here also gives *sem* something of the sense of 'as'). The middle-voice verbs are familiar enough too, and there can be no doubt about *eldask* as 'to grow old'. What about *ergjask*, though, related as it is to the adjective *argr*, meaning 'cowardly'? The adjective can also notoriously mean 'unmanly' and by extension 'impotent', but this does not seem to fit the context. Or does it? Probably what the serving-woman is using the proverb to say is (undeniable surface meaning): 'each man loses sexual virility as he grows old', but further (strong contextual meaning): 'and this explains why you have turned coward as well'. The complex and barbed insult is especially wounding when said by a woman to a man, and perhaps even more so when said by a woman of low status. But how to render it in English? Hermann Pálsson's Penguin translation runs here: 'The older a man, the feebler'; Gwyn Jones's World Classics one: 'Grow old, and grow afraid'. Terry Gunnell, in the volume reviewed here, prefers 'the older you get, the wetter you become' (p. 457). None of these really digs deep enough. Perhaps 'the older a man gets, the softer he gets' would catch some of the sexual scorn implied.

But in any case the woman seems to have got Hrafnkell dead wrong, and so, I fear, has Jane Smiley, who says here (p. xiii) that the woman 'goads him into seeking revenge'. Female goading is common enough in Norse literature, but in this case there is a strong suspicion (and this is the view of the Þjóstarsson brothers at the end) that Hrafnkell had sat quiet in disgrace so long, not out of fear of his main enemy Sámr, whom he had written off long since as a nobody, but so as to be able to take out Sámr's brother Eyvindr, identified as the real danger-man of the family, who until that moment had been out of range. His revenge would have taken the same form if the woman had never said a word. Her insult just shows how well he had everyone fooled; and also, perhaps, the self-control with which he endured not just physical torture but also years of scorn from the countryside's many dimwits. This is a lot to build on five words, but it is the way sagas work: verbally clear, direct to the point of taciturnity, hinting frequently at unknowable depths of motivation.

The sagas translated here offer several similar cruces. What does Guðrún mean in *Laxdæla saga* with her famously enigmatic remark when her husband comes back from killing his cousin and her lover Kjartan, 'Misjöfn verða morginverkin. Ek hefi spunnit tólf álna garn, en þú hefir vegit Kjartan'? Is she complimenting Bolli? Complaining about women's work? Wishing she were a man? What in fact is she saying? Keneva Kunz translates it here (p. 372) as 'A poor match they make, our morning's work — I have spun twelve ells of yarn while you have slain Kjartan', but the Penguin version of Hermann Pálsson and Magnus Magnusson gives her first three words quite differently, and more proverbially, as 'Morning tasks are often mixed'. (For a judicious review of various possible interpretations, and for a conclusion rather different from Kunz's, see Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'A good day's work: *Laxdæla saga*, ch. 49', *NOWELE* 21/22 (1993), 267–81.)

Meanwhile *Gísli saga* raises the now-vexed question — by generations of scribes and readers it was never even noticed — who did kill Vésteinn? Was it Þorgrímr, as has long been assumed, from the evident fact that Gísli goes out and kills

Þorgrímr in revenge? Or could it have been Gísli's brother Þorkell, in which case the saga could be seen as neatly and grimly symmetrical, with two brothers each killing their wives' putative first lovers, and then covering up for each other, with further obscure suggestions of incestuous feeling and homosocial bonding? Either way, much depends on how the overheard words of the wives Auðr and Ásgerðr are translated, as simultaneously clear and enigmatic as usual. 'Prose narrative is prose narrative', declares Jane Smiley (p. xiv), and one appreciates the intended compliment from a modern novelist to her anonymous and relatively unsung predecessors. But sagas are not novels. It would not be unfair to say that the best of them make modern novels, with their continuous pointers and extended explanations, look flat-footed; and they certainly test the abilities of translators to the limit. The translations here are consistently able, even if no translation can be absolutely reliable. And as said above, every assistance is given to the new reader, from the careful explanation of one representative *dróttkvætt* stanza from *Egils saga* to the handy diagrams of Icelandic farms and Icelandic political structures. Andrew Wawn's *Vatnsdæla saga* and George Clark's *Króka-Refs saga* alone are worth the very moderate price of the volume, even for those who already possess translations of most of the others. And if one would have liked to see the former accompanied by, say, *Finnboga saga*, with its competing version of the feud between the Vatnsdalers and the family of Finnbogi the Mighty, one can always hope that this and others will be coming along in succeeding volumes.

TOM SHIPPEY

UNDER THE CLOAK: A PAGAN RITUAL TURNING POINT IN THE CONVERSION OF ICELAND. By JÓN HNEFILL AÐALSTEINSSON. Edited by JAKOB S. JÓNSSON. Appendix translated by TERRY GUNNELL. *Háskólaútgáfan, Félagsvísindastofnun*. Second, extended edition. Reykjavík 1999. 236 pp.

With the millenary celebrations of Iceland's conversion to Christianity last year there have been a number of new publications on the subject, including this new extended edition of Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson's earlier work on Iceland's conversion, *Under the Cloak: The Acceptance of Christianity in Iceland with Particular Reference to the Religious Attitudes Prevailing at the Time* (Uppsala, 1978). This was itself a revised version of his *Kristnitakan á Íslandi* (Reykjavík, 1971), which was based on his doctoral thesis. The new edition draws on the research he himself has done over the last twenty years, as well as on other recent research on the conversion, in order to present a more thorough approach to the problem with which the earlier works were concerned, namely the meaning of Þorgeirr Ljósvetningagoði's sojourn under the cloak and its implications for the motives behind Iceland's unusually peaceful conversion to Christianity. The text of the first edition of *Under the Cloak* has been printed unchanged with the same pagination in order to facilitate ease of reference, but a new Preface, a seventy-page Appendix and an Index have been added. The Bibliography has also been rearranged and updated, including both works published after the first edition of *Under the Cloak* and earlier works that are referred to in the Appendix.

The Appendix is used both to revise aspects of the argumentation in the first edition and to take these arguments further. It is divided into seven chapters, the first four of which make specific reference to the chapters of the first edition on which they draw. The first (Chapter 15) serves as an appendix to Chapters 1 and 2 and summarises the conclusions drawn in Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson's recent work supporting the reliability of the accounts of sacrifices in *Landnámabók*. Chapters 16 and 17 pick up on details from Chapter 3 (on pagan gods in Iceland) and discuss two *níð* stanzas from *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* and the three articles of Úlfjótsslög in *Landnámabók*. Revising to some extent his earlier views on Úlfjótsslög, Jón Hnefill suggests that *hin almáttki áss* referred to there is not Þórr but the rather more obscure god Týr, and that the first two articles of the law must therefore be very ancient, coming from a time when the worship of Týr was still alive: they 'provide us with a living example of a legal text from the time of the Old Norse faith' (p. 177). Chapter 18 is an appendix to Chapter 5 (sources on the acceptance of Christianity in Iceland) and provides a response to the criticism that Jón Hnefill placed too much reliance in the first edition on the historicity of Ari's work. In particular, he refutes the view that *Íslendingabók* should be read as a medieval religious history, arguing that it is better understood, like *Landnámabók*, as a folkloristic text, designed 'to preserve certain kinds of folk knowledge for posterity' (p. 180).

In Chapters 19–21 of the Appendix, Jón Hnefill turns to what he sees as the central event of the conversion, Þorgeirr's sojourn under the cloak, and connects this to the human sacrifice which, according to *Kristni saga* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, took place the day before Christianity was accepted in Iceland. This was a connection previously made in *Kristnitakan á Íslandi*, but omitted from the first version of *Under the Cloak* because of the author's uncertainty about whether human sacrifice could actually have taken place in Iceland. Jón Hnefill argues that there are a number of reasons for believing in the authenticity of this account: it is objective and unbiased, contains snippets of otherwise lost information reminiscent of Ari's method of working, and corresponds closely to other Icelandic sources on human sacrifice in *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Skarðs-árbók*, *Reykðæla saga*, and Þorvaldr veili's verse against Þangbrandr. Rather than simply representing Christian propaganda against the heathen, these examples 'give complete support to the strong likelihood that human sacrifices were actually carried out at Þingvellir on the day before Christianity was accepted' (p. 196). He suggests that, given that Ari stresses Þorgeirr's paganism prior to the conversion, 'it is of course quite natural to assume' (p. 209) that he took a leading role in these sacrifices, and that they formed an important part of a traditional religious ritual for attaining knowledge about the future, a ritual for which he finds a parallel in the account of Brutus's journeys given by Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.

Although Jón Hnefill is careful to make clear that his interpretation is 'only one part of a much larger overall pattern' (p. 210), he is perhaps rather too ready to affirm the absolute reliability of Ari's narrative, especially given that a number of recent works on the conversion of Iceland have sought to modify the view of Ari as an unbiased and objective historian. Despite his emphasis on the importance of

'watertight scientific logic' (p. 5) in discussions of the conversion, the reader may question whether his own argumentation fits that description, indeed whether any reconstruction of the events leading up to the conversion of Iceland can be other than conjectural. While he is clearly right to emphasise the unconventionality of Ari's account of the conversion against attempts to read it as exemplifying medieval religious doctrine, there is perhaps too little attention paid to recent work on the literary conventions which might have influenced conversion narratives in the Middle Ages, and his emphasis on reconstructing pagan thought and belief at the time of the conversion, over and above Christian ideology at the time when Ari was writing, inevitably leads to some distortion. Nevertheless, this new edition of *Under the Cloak* represents an important continuation of the ideas in the original version, and provides a useful survey in English of Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson's more recent research on human sacrifice in Iceland.

In terms of presentation, the relationship of the Appendix to the first edition is clear and well co-ordinated, but there are a number of typographical errors and omissions, both new and old, throughout the work (see for example pp. 3, 4, 8, 13, 17, 18, 27). The Index is an extremely useful addition, although it is somewhat eccentric both in its choice of what to include and in the page numbers cited (for *Kristni saga*, for example, which is mentioned frequently, the reader is referred only to p. 12). The translations from Old Icelandic into English also run into trouble in some places, most noticeably in the extracts from the admittedly syntactically complex and non-normalised text of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (see pp. 186–88).

SIÂN DUKE



## PUBLICATIONS LIST 2001

All in card covers unless noted as bound. Prices quoted as Members/Non-Members, postage and packing for **one item** as [UK/Abroad] in £.p. For more than one item invoice will be sent for pre-payment. E-mail address: vsnr@ucl.ac.uk

### TEXT SERIES

- I Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu. With introduction, notes and glossary by P. G. Foote and R. Quirk. 1953, repr. 1974. ISBN 0 903521 31 8. Students £1. Others £3 [0.70/1.10].
- II Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks. With notes and glossary by G. Turville-Petre. Introduction by C. Tolkien. 1956, repr. 1997. ISBN 0 903521 11 3. £3/£4.50 [0.70/1.10].
- IV Two Icelandic Stories: Hreiðars þáttur, Orms þáttur. Edited by A. Faulkes. 1967, repr. 1978. ISBN 0 903521 00 8. £3/£4.50 [0.85/1.35]
- VI D. Strömbäck: The Conversion of Iceland. 1975, repr. 1997. ISBN 0 903521 07 5. £3/£4.50 [0.85/1.35].
- VII Hávamál. Edited by D. A. H. Evans. 1986, repr. 2000. ISBN 0 903521 19 9. £4/£6 [1.00/1.55].
- VII (ii) Hávamál. Glossary and Index. Compiled by A. Faulkes. 1987. ISBN 0 903521 20 2. £2/3 [0.60/0.95].
- VIII D. Whaley: Heimskringla. An Introduction. 1991. ISBN 0 903521 23 7. £7/£10.50 [1.00/1.55].
- IX The Works of Sven Aggesen, Twelfth-Century Danish Historian. Translated with introduction and notes by E. Christiansen. 1992. ISBN 0 903521 24 5. £6/£9 [1.10/1.75].
- X Ágrip af Noregskonungasögum: A Twelfth-Century Synoptic History of the Kings of Norway. Edited and translated with introduction and notes by M. J. Driscoll. 1995. ISBN 0 903521 27 X. £6/£9 [1.00/1.55]
- XI Theodoricus Monachus: Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium. An Account of the Ancient History of the Norwegian Kings. Translated and annotated by D. and I. McDougall, with introduction by P. Foote. 1998. ISBN 0 903521 40 7. £4/£6 [1.00/1.55]
- XII Guta saga: The History of the Gotlanders. Edited by C. Peel. 1999. ISBN 0 903521 44 X. £4/£6 [1.00/1.55]
- XIII A History of Norway and the Passion and Miracles of the Blessed Óláfr. Translated by D. Kunin. Edited with introduction and notes by C. Phelpstead. 2001. ISBN 0 903521 48 2. £5/£7.50 [1.00/1.55]
- XIV Fourteenth-Century Icelandic Verse on the Virgin Mary. Drápa af Maríuþrátt. Vitnisvísur af Maríu. Maríuþráttur I–III. Edited by K. Wrightson. 2001. ISBN 0 903521 46 6. £5/£7.50 [1.00/1.55].

### DOROTHEA COKE MEMORIAL LECTURES. £2/£3 [0.70/1.00].

- B. Malmer: King Canute's Coinage in the Northern Countries. 1974. ISBN 0 903521 03 2
- U. Dronke: The Role of Sexual Themes in Njáls saga. 1981. ISBN 0 903521 17 2
- R. I. Page: 'A Most Vile People'. Early English Historians on the Vikings. 1987. ISBN 0 903521 30 X
- G. Fellows-Jensen: The Vikings and their Victims. The Verdict of the Names. 1995, repr. 1998. ISBN 0 903521 39 3
- A. Faulkes: Poetical Inspiration in Old Norse and Old English Poetry. 1997. ISBN 0 903521 32 6

### MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

- Icelandic Journal by Alice Selby. Edited by A. R. Taylor. 1974. ISBN 0 903521 04 0 [= Saga-Book 19:1]. £10 [0.70/1.10].
- Stories from the Sagas of the Kings: Halldórs þáttur Snorrasonar inn fyrri, Halldórs þáttur Snorrasonar inn síðari, Stúfs þáttur inn skemmri, Stúfs þáttur inn meiri, Völsa þáttur, Brands þáttur örva. With introduction, notes and glossary by A. Faulkes. 1980. ISBN 0 903521 18 0. £2/£3 [1.35/2.10].

- Bandamanna saga. Edited by H. Magerøy. 1981. (Published jointly with Dreyers forlag, Oslo.) ISBN 0 903521 15 6. £3/£4.50 [1.10/1.75].
- A. S. C. Ross: *The Terfinnas and Beormas of Othere*. Leeds 1940, repr. with an additional note by the author and an afterword by Michael Chesnutt. 1981. ISBN 0 903521 14 8. £2/£3 [0.70/1.10].
- Snorri Sturluson: *Edda. Prologue and Gylfaginning*. Edited by A. Faulkes. Clarendon Press 1982, repr. 1988, 2000. ISBN 0 903521 21 0. £6/£9 [1.20/1.95].
- N. S. Price: *The Vikings in Brittany*. 1989. ISBN 0 903521 22 9 [= *Saga-Book* 22:6]. £10 [0.95/1.30].
- Introductory Essays on Egils saga and Njáls saga*. Edited by J. Hines and D. Slay. 1992. ISBN 0 903521 25 3. £3 [1.10/1.75].
- Viking Revaluations*. Viking Society Centenary Symposium 14–15 May 1992. Edited by A. Faulkes and R. Perkins. 1993. ISBN 0 903521 28 8. £7/£10.50 [1.20/1.95].
- J. A. B. Townsend: *Index to Old-Lore Miscellany*. 1992. ISBN 0 903521 26 1. £1/£1.50 [0.60/0.75].
- Snorri Sturluson: *Edda. Skáldskaparmál*. Edited by A. Faulkes. 2 vols. 1998. ISBN 0 903521 33 4 (bound). £20/£30 [3.70/4.95]. 0 903521 34 2 (paperback). £12/£18 [3.30/4.05].
- Snorri Sturluson: *Edda. Háttatal*. Edited by A. Faulkes. Clarendon Press 1991, repr. with addenda and corrigenda 1999. ISBN 0 903521 41 5. £6/£9 [1.20/1.95].
- The Icelandic Rune-Poem*. Edited by R. I. Page. 1999 (first published in *Nottingham Medieval Studies* XLII). ISBN 0 903521 43 1. £3/£4.50 [0.65/1.00].
- J. A. B. Townsend: *Index to Saga-Book Volumes 1–23*. 1999. ISBN 0 903521 42 3. £4 [0.60/0.95].
- M. Barnes: *A New Introduction to Old Norse. Part I. Grammar*. 1999. ISBN 0 903521 45 8. £5/£7.50 [1.20/1.95].
- A New Introduction to Old Norse. Part II. Reader*. Edited by A. Faulkes. 2001. ISBN 0 903521 50 4. £3/£4.50 [1.00/1.55]
- A New Introduction to Old Norse. Part III. Glossary and Index of Names*. Compiled by A. Faulkes. 2001. ISBN 0903521 51 2. £3/£4.50 [1.00/1.55]
- Ólafur Halldórsson: *Danish Kings and the Jomsvikings in the Greatest Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason*. ISBN 0903521 47 4 £5/£7.50 [0.85/1.35]
- Ólafur Halldórsson: *Text by Snorri Sturluson in Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*. 2001. ISBN 0903521 49 0. £5/£7.50 [1.20/1.95]
- PUBLICATIONS DISTRIBUTED BY THE VIKING SOCIETY**
- P. G. Foote: *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle in Iceland*. 1959. £1 [0.70/0.95].
- Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress, Dublin, 1973*. Edited by B. Almqvist and D. Greene. 1976. ISBN 0 903521 09 1. Bound. £8 [2.10/3.15].
- Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*. Edited by U. Dronke et al. 1981. ISBN 87 7492 289 0. Bound. £12 [3.70/5.10].
- Jean Young: *Letters from Iceland 1936*. 1992. ISBN 0 7044 1247 0. £4 [0.60/0.95].
- M. P. Barnes: *The Runic Inscriptions of Maeshowe, Orkney*. 1994. ISBN 91 506 1042 2. £13.50/£20.25 [2.00/3.10].
- The Schemers and Víga-Glúm*. *Bandamanna Saga and Víga-Glúms Saga*. Translated with introduction and notes by G. Johnston. 1999. ISBN 0 88984 189 6. £10 [1.25/2.00].
- P. Meulengracht Sørensen: *At fortælle Historien. Telling History. Studies in Norse Literature*. 2001. ISBN 88 86474 31 8. £18.50 [2.25/3.50].
- Laws of Early Iceland. Grágás. The Codex Regius of Grágás with Material from Other Manuscripts*. Translated by A. Dennis, P. Foote and R. Perkins. Volume I. 1980. ISBN 0 88755 115 7. Bound. £20 [1.20/1.95]
- Laws of Early Iceland. Grágás. The Codex Regius of Grágás with Material from Other Manuscripts*. Translated by A. Dennis, P. Foote and R. Perkins. Volume II. 2000. ISBN 0 88755 158 0. Bound. £30 [3.30/4.05]