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REVIEWS

WHOM DID AL-GHAZĀL MEET? AN EXCHANGE OF EMBASSIES BETWEEN THE ARABS FROM *AL-ANDALUS* AND THE VIKINGS

By SARA M. PONS-SANZ

THE VIKINGS terrorised most of western Europe from the end of the eighth century to approximately the middle of the eleventh century. The Iberian Peninsula was no exception, though the Viking raids there were much less significant than those on the British Isles and Frankia. Even though these northern marauders visited the north, the south, the east and the west of the Iberian Peninsula (Dozy 1881, II 250–371; González Campo 2002a, 9–30, and 2002b; Jón Stefánsson 1909–10; Melvinger 1955), I will concentrate in this paper on their relations with the territories under the control of the Arabs, known as *al-Andalus*. In particular, out of the six attacks that the Vikings launched against the Arabs (El-Hajji 1967 and 1970, 157–63), I will pay close attention to the first one in 844, and its possible diplomatic consequences.

The *Chronicon Rotensis*, one of the earliest chronicles of the kingdom of Asturias (*c.*883) (Ruiz de la Peña 1985, 38–41), explains that in the year 844 *nordomanorum gens antea nobis incognita, gens pagana et nimis crudelissima, nabali* [*sic*] *exercitu nostris peruenerunt in partibus* (Gil Fernández and Moralejo 1985, 142) 'the race of the Normans, previously unknown to us, a pagan and excessively cruel race, came with their naval army to our regions' (my translation). This *gens pagana et . . . crudelissima* met greater resistance than they may have expected, and, after having lost many ships in Asturias, decided to continue sailing along the Atlantic coast. They went first to Lisbon on the twentieth of August; having been in that city for thirteen days, they moved to the southern coast of Spain. They went up the river Guadalquivir, and turned an island close to Seville into their base camp. From there they attacked interior towns such as Moron or Cordoba. Despite their initial panic, however, the Arabs managed to defeat the Vikings in Seville forty-two days after the first attack on this city. Thus, the Vikings had to make their way back to Frankia after an unsuccessful attempt to take Niebla, the Algarve and Lisbon (cf. Lévi-Provençal 1944, 152–53).

In his *al-Muṭrib fī aš'ār ahl al-Maġrib*, an anthology of Arab poets of the West, the Valencian writer 'Umar b. al-Ḥasan al-Kalbī, known as Ibn

Diḥya (d. 1235), describes an exchange of embassies between a king of the *Majūs* and the emir ʻAbd-ar-Raḥmān II, who was in control of *al-Andalus* (r. 822–52). The circumstances of the first Viking attack on *al-Andalus* are generally equated with those in which this exchange is supposed to have taken place (Allen 1960, 19):

> When the envoys of the king of the Vikings came to Sultan ʻAbd-ar-Raḥmān to ask for peace, after they had left Seville, had attacked its surroundings and had then been defeated there with the loss of the commander of their fleet, ʻAbd-ar-Raḥmān decided to reply accepting this request.

Ibn Diḥya explains that ʻAbd-ar-Raḥmān II decided to send in return the poet Yaḥyā b. Ḥakam al-Jayyānī, known as al-Ghazāl (ʻthe Gazelle') on account of his good looks (Huici Miranda 1965). He had proved to have great diplomatic skills when he was sent to the Byzantine emperor Theophilus in 840 (Arié 1982, 162).

Most of the scholars interested in Viking activities in the Iberian Peninsula identify the *Majūs* mentioned in this account with the Vikings, and present this exchange of embassies as an example of diplomatic relations between the two cultures. There are, however, only three authors who have dealt with al-Ghazāl's second embassy in any detail. Each represents one of the prevailing views on the matter. Lévi-Provençal (1937, 16) discounts the authenticity of the embassy, and considers the account to be a romantic version of the visit that al-Ghazāl had paid to Theophilus in 840. Allen (1960) accepts the authenticity of the account, and supposes that the embassy was sent to Turgeis, a Hiberno–Norse king.[1] El-Hajji (1970, 193–201) prefers to identify the king of the *Majūs* with the Danish king Horik I (d. 854).[2] It is my intention in this paper to support the first view, and to present further evidence against the historical reliability of the story. The problems involved in the identification of Ireland or Denmark as the destination of the embassy will also be discussed.

[1] The identification of the destination of the embassy with Ireland was first made by Steenstrup (1878, 111–13). His suggestion was followed, before Allen (1960), by Dunlop (1957, 13) and Turville-Petre (1951, 68–69).

[2] The identification of the destination of the embassy with Denmark has also been suggested by Vasiliev (1946, 44–45) and Wikander (1978, 15–17), according to whom the embassy could also have been sent to Norway. Jesch (1991, 93), Kendrick (1968, 202) and Smyth (1977, 162–63) accept Ireland and Denmark as possible destinations, but consider the Danish court more likely. Jones (1984, 214–15) also gives both possibilities without preferring one to the other.

Lévi-Provençal (1937, 16) gives two main reasons for rejecting the historicity of the embassy. The first is that the account is known only from Ibn Diḥya's work. This is an important objection because the reliability of the Valencian writer is not free from suspicion:

> Whereas the Andalusians in general praise him highly and refer to his great learning, the Eastern critics regard him as a charlatan because of his false claim to an illustrious genealogy, as a plagiarist . . . or as a liar (Granja 1971).

One cannot, however, rely on this objection alone to reject the authenticity of the story because there are other facts in the history of Muslim Spain which are in the same situation (El-Hajji 1970, 187–90). After all, medieval chronicles are not comprehensive records of events.

Lévi-Provençal's second objection is that there are strong similarities between this story and that of the embassy to Byzantium, which is recorded in a chronicle known as the *Muḳtabis* (described by Huici Miranda 1971). This work was compiled by the eleventh-century historian Ibn Ḥayyān, and Lévi-Provençal (1937, 4) claims to have found it in *une dépendance demeurée longtemps inexplorée de la bibliothèque de la grande-mosquée d'al-Karawiyīn à Fés* 'an outbuilding of the library of the Great Mosque of al-Karawiyīn in Fez which had for a long time remained unexplored' (my translation). It contains the accounts of older chroniclers, including al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Ibn Mufarrij and Īsā b. Aḥmad ar-Rāzī, who lived in the tenth century. These two chroniclers mention the exchanges of embassies between Constantinople and *al-Andalus*. Ar-Rāzī reproduces the full text of the communication between al-Ghazāl and Theophilus, together with a few anecdotes and a poem. His account is currently available only through Lévi-Provençal's summary (1937, 10–14). According to this summary, al-Ghazāl, his companion Yaḥyā (who may be the same person as is said to accompany al-Ghazāl on the embassy to the *Majūs*) and the Greek interpreter had to face terrible storms before arriving at Constantinople, and it seems that al-Ghazāl composed a poem during this dangerous trip. When they arrived at Constantinople, al-Ghazāl was acquainted with the protocol of the Byzantine court, but refused to bow down in front of the emperor. Having been informed about his attitude, the emperor commanded a very low entrance to be made, so that one had to kneel down to approach him through it. Al-Ghazāl could not be tricked, though; he turned round, bent down, and entered the room showing the emperor his least honourable parts first. When he asked for water, it was brought to him in an exceedingly beautiful cup, adorned with gems, which he decided to keep. Afterwards, he met the empress, Theodora, who very soon

surrendered to the ambassador's charming personality and good looks. Al-Ghazāl composed a poem for her son Michael.

Lévi-Provençal (1932, 14–16) expresses his scepticism about the credibility of Ibn Diḥya's story on the basis that it shares important similarities with al-Ghazāl's trip to Byzantium. The first of these is the poem describing the storm. Allen translates the poem which al-Ghazāl is supposed to have composed during his second trip (1960, 19–20):

> When they were opposite the great cape that juts into the sea and is the westernmost limit of Spain, that is the mountain known as Aluwiyah, the sea grew fearsome against them, and a mighty storm blew upon them, and they reached a point which al-Ghazāl has described as follows:
>
> > Yaḥyā said to me, as we passed between waves like mountains
> > And the winds overbore us from West and North,
> > When the two sails were rent and the cable-loops were cut
> > And the angel of death reached for us, without any escape,
> > And we saw death as the eye sees one state after another—
> > 'The sailors have no capital in us, O my comrade!'

Even so, the similarity of the poems is not very problematic. It is conceivable that al-Ghazāl repeated a poem which he had composed in similar circumstances.

The second similarity between the two embassies noticed by Lévi-Provençal refers to the attempt to disconcert al-Ghazāl over protocol. Allen reproduces the ambassador's dealings with the king of the *Majūs* (1960, 20–21):

> After two days the king summoned them to his presence, and al-Ghazāl stipulated that he would not be made to kneel to him and that he and his companions would not be required to do anything contrary to their customs. The king agreed to this. But when they went to him, he sat before them in magnificent guise, and ordered an entrance, through which he must be approached, to be made so low that one could only enter kneeling. When al-Ghazāl came to this, he sat on the ground, stretched forth his two legs, and dragged himself through on his rear. And when he had passed through the doorway, he stood erect.

As scholars interested in the sociological interpretation of Old Norse literature (e.g. Gurevich 1967; Durrenberger and Wilcox 1992; Miller 1992; North 2000) know all too well, the correct understanding (and even the identification) of what other cultures would have found humorous proves sometimes to be a difficult task. However, in Ibn Diḥya's story there is not much doubt about the king's attempt to mock and humiliate al-Ghazāl because he is allowed to express his intention in his own words: 'We sought to humiliate him, and he greeted us with the soles of his shoes. Had he not been an ambassador, we would have taken

this amiss' (Allen 1960, 21). Allen (1960, 43) suggests that the protocol story might express 'the mixture of arrogance and almost boyish buffoonery which was the humour of the Vikings', and that it may be an example of the fact that the Vikings 'were not above sardonic tricks in their diplomatic relations'. This interpretation highlights one of the key issues in the expression of humour in Old Norse literature, namely, its relationship with one's social image. Thus, Durrenberger and Wilcox (1992, 117) point out that

> humor, too, partakes of the poetics of performance and contributes to the same semiotic system as honor . . . The creation of humor acts as a plus to the ledger of account of one's honor, while directing humor at others is a way of marking a minus in the estimation of their esteem.

There are indeed other accounts where Scandinavian characters are said to have used deceit or trickery to assert their social superiority over their victim. In *Haralds saga ins hárfagra* in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, for instance, Haraldr hárfagri succeeds in outwitting King Æthelstan in their contest for superiority by imposing his bastard son Hákon as a foster-son on the English king (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, I 144–45). Similarly, in *Hrólfs saga kraka* King Hrólfr hands his sword to his brother-in-law Hjǫrvarðr while undoing his belt, an act which symbolises his superiority over his kinsman and, hence, his kinsman's duty to pay him tribute (Slay 1960, 51). In the case of the story under analysis, however, the king is not successful, and the reader is reminded time and again of al-Ghazāl's ability to get the better of him. Al-Ghazāl's entrance is mentioned three times, once as part of the description of the chronological succession of events, once with regard to the king's thoughts, 'He wondered at al-Ghazāl's sitting on the ground and entering feet foremost' (Allen 1960, 21), and a third time in the king's own words. Furthermore, given that actions speak louder than words, one is forced to contrast al-Ghazāl's entrance with the greeting with which he meets the king: 'Peace be with you, Oh king, and with those whom your assembly hall contains, and respectful greetings to you!' (Allen 1960, 21). His words cannot but be interpreted as his own assertion of his victory in the battle of wits, a victory which the king recognises again by expressing his admiration of al-Ghazāl's intelligence: 'This is one of the wise and clever ones of his people' (Allen 1960, 21).

According to Hitti (1970, 503), the attempt to humiliate someone by making an entrance so low that the visitor was forced to bow down when entering the room was not uncommon among the Visigothic royalty. Hitti explains that Arab chroniclers record that the Gothic queen Egilona,

who married a Muslim leader in *al-Andalus* in the second decade of the eighth century, persuaded her husband to make the entrance to his chamber so low that no one could get in without bending down. She used the same device in the entrance to her palace chapel, so that her husband had to bend down when entering as if he was showing respect to the Christian god. Allen (1960, 43) concludes that 'we may, therefore, relate the story of the crouching entrance, if it had a basis in fact, to the Viking or Visigothic rather than to the Byzantine milieu'. While accepting this possibility, one could suggest that the story should most appropriately be understood as the exploitation of a common *topos* in Andalusian writings with the aim of exemplifying further the fact that, as pointed out at the beginning of the story, 'al-Ghazāl possessed keenness of mind, quickness of wit, skill in repartee, courage and perseverance, and knew his way in and out of every door' (Allen 1960, 19).[3] Interpreted in this manner, the episode undermines the reliability of the story as an entirely faithful description of al-Ghazāl's embassy. However, that Ibn Diḥya may have decided to boost the qualities of his protagonist by means of an invented episode, which, in any case, would have made more than one of his readers laugh at the expense of the outwitted foreign king, cannot be equated with the invention of the whole story.

The third similarity between the two trips which Lévi-Provençal points out concerns al-Ghazāl's relationships with the Byzantine empress and with the queen of the *Majūs*. Ibn Diḥya's text explains that

> the wife of the king of the Vikings was infatuated with al-Ghazāl and could not suffer a day to pass without her sending for him and his staying with her and telling her of the life of the Muslims, of their history, their countries and the nations that adjoin them. Rarely did he leave her without her sending after him a gift to express her good-will to him—garments or food or perfume, till her dealings with him became notorious, and his companions disapproved of it. (Allen 1960, 23)

According to Lévi-Provençal's summary (1937, 12), the Byzantine empress is equally moved by al-Ghazāl's looks and flattering comments, to which she responds by visiting him frequently and granting him many gifts. The fact that both ladies were impressed by al-Ghazāl's

[3] On the high esteem in which these qualities were also held in the society depicted by the sagas and the derision suffered by those who were lacking in them, see König (1972, 164–72, 191–247), Le Goff (1992, 163), Wilson (1969) and Wolf (2000, 100–02). An extreme example of the benefits which await those who possess these qualities is presented in *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956, 261–95). Halli's wit, fearlessness and resolution gain him everything he desires, including gifts, money and a passage back to Norway.

appearance and words may not jeopardise the reliability of the story either, though. He is supposed to have been a very good-looking man, and this is not the first case in which a foreigner is said to have enticed an important lady. Many parallels are found, for instance, in the sagas themselves: Ingibjǫrg, sister of King Óláfr Tryggvason, is attracted to Kjartan in *Laxdœla saga* (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1934, 131), and Hrútr's life back in Iceland is greatly affected by his relationship with Gunnhildr, the mother of the Norwegian king Haraldr gráfeldr, in *Brennu-Njáls saga* (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954, 11–16, 20–21). The encounter between Earl Rǫgnvaldr and Ermingerðr of Narbonne in *Orkneyinga saga* (Finnbogi Guðmundsson 1954, 209–11) is also an interesting *comparandum.*

The similarity in name of the ladies, Theodora and Nūd, queen of the *Majūs*, is the fourth coincidence noted by Lévi-Provençal. This similarity may be difficult to perceive until one realises that in written Arabic it is easy to confuse *n* (*nūn*) and *t* (*tā*) because they are only distinguished by the fact that *nūn* has one dot at the top of the letter, whereas *tā* has two. Seippel (1896, x lines 15–21) understands *Nūd* as a misinterpretation of the Norse name *Auðr* because, he argues, Arab writers frequently write *n* for ' (*hamza*) in foreign names. The Norse name identified by Seippel would point towards the wife of the Hiberno–Norse king Turgeis (see below, p. 13); it is worth bearing in mind, however, that the confusion which he suggests would involve not only the substitution of one letter for another with a completely different form, but also the replacement of one character which is not normally joined with the following letter by one which is. Jacob (1927, 41 n. 1), followed by Birkeland (1954, 154 n. 16), prefers to see the final part of the name of the queen of the *Majūs* as a clear reference to the word *ru'd*, which appears in the poem on Nūd's beauty said to have been composed by al-Ghazāl (Allen 1960, 24); he associates the first sounds of the name with *Tûd* or *Thûd*. Jacob and Birkeland also point out that the name need not be Norse; she is called 'queen and daughter of a king' (Allen 1960, 22), and, therefore, may belong to a non-Norse dynasty.

Lévi-Provençal's objections do not appear to be very convincing in themselves, nor is his case helped by the fact that ar-Rāzī's own account of the embassy sent to Byzantium is lost, and so no longer available for consultation. Wikander expresses his suspicion in this respect:

> Nu har fatalt nog den av Lévi-Provençal citerade handskriften inte kunnat återfinnas, inte heller någon avskrift eller översättning i hans efterlämnade papper. Vi vet alltså inte hur ordagranna likheterna mellan de två berättelserna kan ha varit. (1978, 15)

> Unfortunately the manuscript quoted by Lévi-Provençal has not been discovered again, nor any copy or translation among the papers he left. Thus, we do not know how verbally close the similarities between the two narratives could have been. (my translation)

Even so, despite the reservations expressed here about Lévi-Provençal's argument, one should not be too quick to accept Ibn Diḥya's account, for there are additional reasons for scepticism about the existence of al-Ghazāl's second embassy or, at the very least, its Irish or Danish destination. Firstly, it should be noted that the account actually says that the embassy was sent not to the Vikings, but to the *Majūs*. Admittedly, this is the name normally used by Arab authors in the West to refer to the Vikings, but it should not be forgotten that this term was originally applied to the 'Magians', the priestly caste among the Zoroastrians, worshippers of fire, a reference to whom appears in the Koran (22: 17) (but see also Pritsak 1990). Thus, the term *Majūs* could refer not only to the Vikings, but also to other groups who were not Jews, Christians or Muslim converts (Epalza 1992, 153; Melvinger 1986; Morony 1986). The translations by Allen (1960, 19–25) and Lewis (1982, 93–94, 284–85), where *Majūs* is unhesitatingly translated as *Vikings*, should be read with this *caveat* in mind.

My second objection has to do with the geographical description of the destination of the embassy. Both Allen (1960, 26–35) and El-Hajji (1970, 197) praise the accuracy with which the land visited by al-Ghazāl is described:

> When al-Ghazāl was saved from the terror and dangers of those seas, he arrived at the first of the lands of the Vikings, at one of their islands, where they stayed several days and repaired their ships and rested. The Viking ship went on to their king and they informed him of the arrival of the envoys. At this he rejoiced and sent for them, and they went to his royal residence which was a great island (or peninsula) in the Ocean, with flowing streams and gardens. It was three days' sail, that is, three hundred miles, from the mainland. In it are Vikings, too numerous to be counted, and around the island are many other islands, large and small, all peopled by Vikings. The adjoining mainland is also theirs for a distance of many days' journey. They were heathens, but they now follow the Christian faith, and have given up fire-worship and their previous religion, except for the people of a few scattered islands of theirs in the sea, where they keep to their old faith, with fire-worship, the marriage of brothers and sisters and various other kinds of abomination. The others wage war against them and enslave them. (Allen 1960, 20)

Allen (1960, 29–35) identifies the destination of the embassy with Ireland, making the island Valentia the point of their first stop and Clonmacnoise

the place where al-Ghazāl met the Hiberno–Norse king Turgeis. His suggestion relies on the information provided in the Irish work *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*, a 'skilful piece of political propaganda written [in the twelfth century] at the behest of a direct descendant of Brian Bórama' (Ní Mhaonaigh 1995, 354; see also Ní Mhaonaigh 1996).[4] This work indicates that Turgeis's wife, Ota (Norse *Auðr*), held her audiences in Clonmacnoise (Todd 1867, §11). El-Hajji (1970, 197–98) prefers to identify the description with Denmark, basing his claim on the fact that in Arabic there is only one word for 'island' and 'peninsula'. The fact that two such divergent identifications have been made shows that the description is not precise at all once the group leaves the Atlantic coast of the Iberian Peninsula. One would expect the destination of the embassy to be specified because by the thirteenth century some Muslims had visited, at any rate, the British Isles (Dunlop 1957, 20–22; Lewis 1982, 144–45, 147–48). Ibn Diḥya was a cultivated, well-travelled man (Granja 1971); one might therefore have expected him to show greater familiarity with the works of Arab geographers (such as the twelfth-century ash-Sharif al-Idrisi), and to provide a much more detailed description of the location of the court of the king of the *Majūs*.

The third problematic point in the description of the embassy is the religion which is attributed to the *Majūs*. According to Allen's translation (1960, 19–25), the story is initially presented in the words of an unidentified narrator. Only with regard to the description of al-Ghazāl's dealings with the queen of the *Majūs* and the return of the embassy to *al-Andalus* are the words of Tammām ibn 'Alḳama, who claims to have spoken with al-Ghazāl and his companions personally, clearly identified: 'Tammām ibn 'Alḳama said', 'Tammām ibn 'Alḳama also said' and 'Tammām says' (Allen 1960, 23).[5] The text explains that 'now' most of the *Majūs* are Christians, while others, especially those living on a few islands surrounding the main one, retain their old religion. This assertion is particularly puzzling because the description is inserted in the part of

[4] Máire Ní Mhaonaigh is currently working on a new edition of this text which should replace Todd's (1867).

[5] Dunlop (1971) identifies two prominent figures named Tammām ibn 'Alḳama in Muslim Spain during the early Umayyad Emirate. One of them is an eighth-century chief who supported 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān I in his succession bid to re-establish the Umayyad rule in *al-Andalus*; the other is one of his descendants, a ninth-century vizier. A reference to the latter could be interpreted as evidence in favour of the historical accuracy of the story; on the other hand, 'in view of the unreliable character of Ibn Diḥya this is not unexceptionable evidence either for the alleged journey' (Dunlop 1971, 702).

the account with no identified narrator. Thus, it is not clear whether it should be assigned to Ibn Diḥya, which would identify 'now' with the thirteenth century, or to Tammām, in which case 'now' would refer to the ninth century. Neither is free from difficulties.

If the description refers to the thirteenth century, one cannot help wondering about the identity of the unconverted peoples because by that time the territories around Ireland and Denmark were already Christian (Fletcher 1997, ch. 11). Allen (1960, 23), El-Hajji (1970, 180) and Lewis (1982, 285) appear to endorse the identification of 'now' with the ninth century because, according to their use of inverted commas, they identify the reference to sexual practices among the *Majūs* 'before the religion of Rome reached them' (Allen 1960, 23) as Tammām's words rather than as a comment inserted by Ibn Diḥya. Similarly, Allen's use of inverted commas assigns the suggestion 'but let us return to the story of al-Ghazāl' (Allen 1960, 25) to Tammām. This dating would place Tammām's comment among other ninth-century texts which affirm the superiority of Islam to other religions by accusing the Zoroastrians of the same abominations as those attributed to the unconverted peoples in our story (Hoyland 1997, 511–12; de Menasce 1975; James E. Montgomery, personal communication; Wolf 1996).[6] This controversy was much less important in the following centuries because Zoroastrianism had dwindled to insignificance by the eleventh or twelfth century (Boyce 1979, 161–62; Lewis 1992, 34). The equation of 'now' with the ninth century requires a consideration of the date of the conversion of the Vikings in both Ireland and Denmark.

The possibility that the embassy was sent to Ireland could be rejected on the basis that *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* mentions that Turgeis usurped the abbacy of Armagh and expelled the abbot (Todd 1867, §9), which does not tally with the description of a Christian leader provided by the present story. Nonetheless, Ó Corráin (1972, 91–92) has argued against the reliability of the image of Turgeis portrayed by the compiler of *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* and, especially, his attack on Armagh (see also Ní Mhaonaigh 1995, 367–68):

> Its author, as can be shown, drew his material from the extant annals, but he telescoped events, omitted references to other Viking leaders and concocted a

[6] These accusations, which were grounded in historical evidence (Boyce 1979, 97), did not come only from the Muslim front, though. Theodore Abū Qurra, a Syrian theologian and bishop of Ḥarran (d. *c*.820), includes the Zoroastrians in his review of the nine principal creeds of his time, attacking them for, among other things, their approval of incestuous marriages (Hoyland 1997, 511).

super-Viking, Turgesius, whose wholesale raiding and, particularly, whose attack on Armagh was intended to demonstrate the inefficiency of the Uí Néill as defenders of the Church and of the country, in contrast to the achievements of the great Brian, whose victories over the Norse and whose concern for the church are set out in hyperbolic prose.

Thus, if this twelfth-century tract cannot be used to discount Ireland as the destination of the embassy, other sources must be consulted for information about the conversion of the Vikings in Ireland. Unfortunately, the evidence in this respect is scarce, and scholars have proposed dates ranging from *c.*850 to the 1020s for this process (Abrams 1997, 4–5). Abrams shows that, at least as far as the annals are concerned, there is no evidence to support the conversion of the Viking leaders before the tenth century. The first Hiberno–Norse ruler of whose Christianity there is clear evidence is King Óláfr Sigtryggsson; he controlled the Danish kingdom of York between 941 and 944, during which period he was baptised at the court of King Edmund of Wessex (Swanton 1996, 111, s.a. 943). In 944 he was expelled from Northumbria and went back to Dublin, where he ruled until 980; in that year he abdicated, and joined the monastic community of Iona (Smyth 1979, II 264).

The situation in Denmark was somewhat different from that in Ireland because of the activities of St Ansgar (Odelman et al. 1986), but it is still difficult to reconcile it with the description in the narrative. The first Scandinavian king to be baptised, at Mainz in 826, was the Danish king Klakk-Haraldr, but he was driven into exile a year later, and it was not until *c.*965 that another Danish king, Haraldr blátǫnn, was baptised. There is indeed a big difference between the toleration of priests and the friendly relations between St Ansgar and the Danish kings on the one hand, and the description of a nation widely converted to Christianity given in the account of al-Ghazāl's embassy. Moreover, even though some Scandinavians or Hiberno–Norse settlers may have been converted at an early date, it is hard to believe that most of them would have abandoned their old religious practices completely, as the text implies (Sawyer 1993, ch. 5; Wood 1987).

In his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik* Ibn Khurradādhbih mentions that the *Rūs* claimed to be Christians by the ninth century, and paid the *jizyah* 'poll-tax' (James E. Montgomery, personal communication). This religious affiliation, however, may have had more to do with economic interests than with faith itself because their claimed Christianity allowed them to be part of the *dhimmīs* 'People of the Pact (*dhimma*)', and, therefore, to be accorded toleration and definite legal status among the Muslims (Fletcher 1997, 382–83; Lewis 1992, 33).

My fourth objection is associated with the diplomatic dealings which al-Ghazāl's visit to the *Majūs* may have involved. It would not be strange if the Muslims from *al-Andalus* had maintained diplomatic relations with the Vikings. Contacts between the Muslims and the Vikings, for both business and war, would have taken place in eastern Europe, as is suggested, for instance, by the hoards of Kufic coins found in Scandinavia (Kromann 1990; Logan 1983, 197–202; Randsborg 1980, 152–62; Roesdahl 1982, ch. 11).[7] Similarly, in western Europe Hiberno–Norse kings may have conducted a trade in slaves with the Andalusian caliphs (Fletcher 1997, 380; Holm 1986, 32–25; Smyth 1977, ch. 11). Even so, it is suspicious that neither the name of the king al-Ghazāl visited nor the reasons for the exchange of embassies is ever mentioned. But this could be explained by the fact that the main focus in Ibn Diḥya's work is on poetry; accordingly, he may have been more interested in the romantic dealings of the ambassador and the queen than in historical details. This focus would be in keeping with the Arab tradition that the wandering poet should present his achievements without any restraint, especially those associated with his love affairs (Wikander 1978, 15).

Moreover, it seems unlikely that a king should have had such control over the activities of the groups of marauders who invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 844, for their actions appear to have been rather those of independent groups. Dozy (1881, II 275) and Allen (1960, 12) suggest that the reason for the embassy may have been to create an alliance against the Franks. This sort of alliance would be similar to others made between the Vikings and some western leaders seeking to exploit their military skills: in 850 one of the petty Irish kings, Cinaed son of Conaing, king of Cianacht, formed an alliance with a group of Vikings against the king of Meath (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983, 309, s.a. 850); in 864 Pippin II of Aquitaine allied himself with the Vikings in his rebellion

[7] The runic inscriptions referring to the Scandinavians who accompanied the eleventh-century leader Yngvarr inn víðfǫrli in his attack against Serkland, thoroughly studied by Larsson (1990, 123–54), could be understood as further evidence for the contact between Arabs and Vikings if one accepts the interpretation of *Serkland* as the 'land of the *serkir*', *serkir* being the Old Norse word for 'Saracens' (e.g. Pritsak 1981, 339, 443; Shepard 1982–85, 235–40). The etymology of this place-name is problematic, however. It has also been associated with the Latin *sericum*, according to which it would refer to a wide area characterised as the 'land of silk' (e.g. Larsson 1990, 40), and with the Turkic tribal name *Sariq* / *Sarik*, for one of the Turkic groups which, together with the Altaic peoples, composed the Khazar state (Jarring 1983, 128–32).

against his uncle Charles the Bald (Nelson 1991, 111, s.a. 864); and *c*.900 Æthelwold, King Alfred's nephew, allied himself with the Vikings against his cousin King Edward (Swanton 1996, 92–93, s.a. 901). Nevertheless, there are no records of any alliance of this sort between the Vikings and the Muslims from *al-Andalus*.

My fifth objection focuses on the sexual freedom of the *Majūs* women portrayed in Ibn Diḥya's text. Both Allen (1960, 50) and El-Hajji (1970, 202) present the description which Nūd gives to al-Ghazāl of the behaviour of Viking women as evidence that this embassy cannot have been the same one as that to Byzantium, and that the story could not have been invented by Ibn Diḥya because this moral ethos would not have prevailed in the Byzantine or the Andalusian court. Nūd is said to have reassured al-Ghazāl about the frequent visits he paid to her, which were causing many comments in the court, with the following words:

> We do not have such things in our religion, nor do we have jealousy. Our women are with our men only of their own choice. A woman stays with her husband as long as it pleases her to do so, and leaves him if it no longer pleases her. (Allen 1960, 23)

Admittedly, the behaviour described by Nūd has some similarities with that presented in the Icelandic sagas. For instance, again in *Laxdœla saga*, Guðrún divorces Þorvaldr (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1934, 93–94), and in *Brennu-Njáls saga* Unnr leaves Hrútr because of his inability to have sexual intercourse with her, a problem which the reader is made to associate with the curse which Gunnhildr cast on him before he left her to go back to Iceland (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954, 23–26). It is worth bearing in mind, however, that each woman has to present legal reasons to divorce her husband, and cannot simply leave him if he 'no longer pleases her'. The Icelandic medieval legal compilation known as *Grágás* states very boldly that 'there shall be no separation of man and wife here in the country' (Dennis et al. 1980–2000, II §149). Nonetheless, in the two major manuscripts of the compilation (the so-called *Konungsbók* or *Codex Regius*, and *Staðarhólsbók*), this proclamation is followed by a thoroughly argued list of automatic exceptions (severe poverty or violence, and the attempt by the husband to force his wife out of the country) and the specification of the circumstances in which the two bishops can grant divorce (Dennis et al. 1980–2000, II 395, s.v. *separation*). Thus, Jochens (1995, 55) concludes that

> divorce was easy to obtain, and in fact may have been a common phenomenon in the pagan society described in the sagas of Icelanders. Realizing the futility of promoting the specific doctrine of indissolubility, ecclesiastical leaders

> therefore compromised with native tradition by allowing exceptions provided, however, that they were left to the bishop's supervision and discretion.

Accordingly, Nūd's words may not be totally out of context in a recently converted society (Byock 2001, 320–23; Jochens 1986 and 1995, 55–61).

Nevertheless, if, as in the case of the geographical description, one looks for parallels in other Arab authors, one finds that the independence of western women is something which frequently attracted the attention of Muslim travellers, some of whom refer to it in terms not dissimilar to those in Ibn Diḥya's story. Thus, the tenth-century ambassador Ibrāhim Ibn Ya'ḳūb made the following comment about the population in Schleswig: 'Among them women have the right to divorce. A woman can herself initiate divorce whenever she pleases' (Lewis 1982, 286).

After Nūd's reassuring explanation, Tammām comments further on the sexual freedom among the *Majūs* women:

> It was the custom of the Vikings before the religion of Rome reached them that no woman refused any man, except that if a noblewoman accepted a man of humble status, she was blamed for this, and her family kept them apart. (Allen 1960, 23)

These words agree, on the one hand, with the extensive treatment of the problem of illegitimate intercourse in Scandinavian laws; for instance, *Grágás* lays out penalties against any kind of seduction of a woman beginning with kisses and continuing, through propositions, to sexual intercourse (Dennis et al. 1980–2000, II §155). This suggests that the problem was endemic in both pagan and Christian society (Jochens 1995, 31–33). On the other hand, Tammām's comment is in accordance with the pagan ideal of marriage: 'a stable association providing a peaceful transfer of property from one generation to the next' (Jochens 1995, 31). In this respect, Jesch's final comment on al-Ghazāl's embassy to the *Majūs* is very appropriate: 'If Arabists reject the story of al-Ghazāl's embassy as a fiction, this cannot be because of its inherent improbability as a reflection of royal viking life in the ninth century' (1991, 95–96).

Leaving aside these correspondences, a close *comparandum* to Tammām's comment can also be found in an anecdote about the lack of jealousy among the Franks recorded by the twelfth-century Syrian Muslim Usāmah (see also Hitti 1987, 164–66):

> The Franks have no trace of jealousy or feeling for the point of honour. One of them may be walking along with his wife, and he meets another man and this man takes his wife aside and chats with her privately, while her husband stands apart for her to finish her conversation; and if she takes too long he leaves her alone with her companion and goes away.

> This is an example which I saw myself. When I visited Nabulus I used to stay at the house of a man called Mu'izz. His place was a lodging house for Muslims, with windows opening onto the road. Opposite it, on the other side of the road, was a house of a Frankish man who used to sell wine for the merchants. He used to take a bottle of wine and go around crying: 'So-and-so, the merchants, had just opened a cask of his wine. If anyone wants some, it is in such and such a place.' His payment for acting as crier was the wine in that bottle.
>
> One day he came home and found a man in bed with his wife, and he asked him 'What brings you here to my wife?' The man replied: 'I was tired so I came in to rest.'
>
> 'And how did you get into my bed?'
>
> 'I found the bed made so I lay down on it.'
>
> 'But the woman was sleeping with you.'
>
> 'It was her bed. Could I have kept her out of her own bed?'
>
> 'By my faith,' said the husband. 'If you do this again, you and I will quarrel.'
>
> This was the whole of his disapproval and of his jealousy. (Lewis 1982, 286–87)

Usāmah's tale, however, has received differing evaluations by scholars. The two extremes in the 'reliability' spectrum are occupied by, among others, Daniel (1979, 168–69) and Irwin (1998), who accept it at face value, and Mattock, who interprets the story as 'a "dirty" joke which Usāmah has heard from someone and misunderstood' (1978, 159). The middle view is represented by Hillenbrand (1999, 262), who believes that many of Usāmah's stories about the Franks should be understood as

> reflections of stereotypes, revealing the exaggerated and often comic behaviour of the newcomers with whom the Muslims were forced into unwanted and unexpected proximity and about whom they would tell tall stories and saucy jokes.

Nūd's and Tammām's comments should be interpreted in the light of the view of al-Azmeh (1992a, 3–7; 1992b, 267–68) and Hillenbrand (1999, 274–82) that Usāmah's and similar stories rely on the exploitation of the inversion of proper order as a means of representing 'the other'. The ethnographic motifs most commonly selected by Muslim writers for this purpose are those which blend readily with ethnological types, sexuality, hygiene and warfare being the most recurrent topics. Within the wider topic of sexuality, the most frequent *topoi* are the lack of jealousy amongst men and the sexual freedom of (un)married women. These two elements are joined in Ibn Ya'ḳūb's typological description of the claimed propensity of Slavic men to divorce the women they marry if they discover that they *are* virgins (al-Azmeh 1992b, 267). Sexual

depravity also plays a significant role in these descriptions. One should not forget the description of the incestuous practices associated with the 'old religion' of the *Majūs* given in Ibn Diḥya's text (see above, p. 12) and the account of the mores of the *Rūs* (*Rūsiyya*) by the tenth-century ambassador Ibn Faḍlān (Montgomery 2000). In both narratives fire and sexual depravity play a highly significant role (al-Azmeh 1992a, 7).[8]

My sixth objection to the argument for the historicity of the story concerns its chronology, which is problematic at least as regards the visit to Turgeis. The only piece of information about him recorded in *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* which has a parallel in the generally more reliable *Annals of Ulster* is that he was drowned in 845 (Todd 1867, §14). The embassy is said to have lasted for twenty months, though al-Ghazāl spent two of these in Santiago de Compostela. So Turgeis would have died while the Arab ambassador was there, and one would expect some mention of such an important event.

Lastly, there are a few problems in the account of al-Ghazāl's return to *al-Andalus*:

> Then al-Ghazāl left them, and, accompanied by the envoys, went to Shent Ya'qūb (St. Iago de Compostella) with a letter from the king of the Vikings to the ruler of that city. He stayed there, greatly honoured, for two months, until the end of their pilgrimage. Then he travelled to Castile with those who were bound for there, and thence to Toledo, eventually reaching the presence of the Sultan 'Abd ar-Raḥmān after an absence of twenty months. (Allen 1960, 25)

At the time of the embassy Santiago de Compostela was part of the kingdom of Asturias, whose king was Ramiro I (r. 842–50). It is difficult to understand why a Viking king should send a message to the king of Asturias after the defeat which the Scandinavian marauders had suffered in 844. The Christian kingdom of Asturias was not particularly important in the politics of the time. Thus, the situation of Ramiro I would not be comparable to that of the Carolingian emperor Louis the Pious; the *Annals*

[8] Ibn Faḍlān's account has to be carefully handled. Smyser believes that 'there is no reason to suppose that Ibn Faḍlān was deceived or has deceived us as to what sort of execution took place in the grave chamber' (1965, 112), and presents similarities between Ibn Faḍlān's narrative and miscellaneous data associated with the Vikings and other Germanic peoples to prove the accuracy of the story. In contrast, Montgomery (2000; forthcoming) indicates that the terrors that Ibn Faḍlān narrates but has not observed should be understood as part of the *Rūs* psychological warfare, an attempt to limit Muslim interest in their territories. See Montgomery (2001) on the different vision of the *Rūs* presented by Ibn Rusta.

of Saint-Bertin mention that the Danish king Horik sent Louis envoys in 836 to inform the emperor that the Vikings who had attacked Dorestad and Frisia were not following his orders (Nelson 1991, 35). It is highly unlikely that the Viking leaders were as concerned about preserving a good relationship with the king of Asturias, who was himself much more interested in maintaining the internal peace in his kingdom and building impressive monuments (Sánchez Albornoz 1975, 97–112). If one accepts the suggestion of Dozy and Allen that the point of the embassy to ʻAbd-ar-Raḥmān was to create an alliance against the Franks, the Vikings might be expected to have been in contact with the leaders of Navarre and Catalonia instead. At this time they were fighting for their independence from the Carolingian empire, and, in fact, in 844 the leaders of Navarre had decided to join the emir's army (Álvarez Palenzuela and Suárez Fernández 1991, 49–52; Martín 1993, 212–19; Riu Riu 1989, 128–37, 155–59).

Furthermore, it was not until 813 that the body of St James the Great was said to have been found in Galicia, and the mass pilgrimages started only at the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth (Stokstad 1978). Thus, in 968 the Vikings thought it tempting enough to launch an attack against this city (Almazán 1986, 99–107). The episcopal see was not officially moved to Santiago de Compostela until 1095 (Plötz 1985, 35). The view of Santiago de Compostela as a great centre of pilgrimage, therefore, appears to be somewhat anachronistic, as if Ibn Diḥya was applying a conception of thirteenth-century Santiago de Compostela to the mid-ninth-century settlement. Plötz (1985, 36) points out that there is no mention of the cult of the saint among ninth-century Arab writers from *al-Andalus*, whereas by the thirteenth century the historian Ibn Idārī had stated that this city was the most important sanctuary in Spain and the near regions of the Continent.

Instead of taking the account of al-Ghazāl's second embassy at face value, one should try to understand it in its own cultural context. Ibn Diḥya's work belongs to a literary tradition based on the compilation of pieces by Andalusian poets, such as the *Kitāb al-Ḥadāʼīḳ* of Ibn Faraj al-Jayyānī (d. 970) or the *al-Badīʻ fī wašf al-Rabīʻ* of Abū al-Walīd al-Ḥimyarī (d. *c.*1048) (Chejne 1974, 276). Ibn Diḥya's compilation should also be associated with a biographical approach to poetry in which it is contextualised in the life of the poet, a tradition which emerged from the religious exegesis of the Koran which took the life of the Prophet Muḥammad as the starting point for the elucidation of the sacred text (James E. Montgomery, personal communication). Within this context, the comment on al-Ghazāl's poetical capacity, assigned to Tammām

according to Allen's (1960) use of inverted commas, acquires particular significance:

> Had this poem been composed by 'Umar ibn abī Rabī'a or Bashshār ibn Burd or 'Abbās bin al Ahnaf or any other of the (Eastern) classical poets who took this path, it would have been highly esteemed. But the poem is forgotten, because the poet was an Andalucian. Otherwise it would not have been left in obscurity, for such a poem does not deserve to be neglected. (Allen 1960, 24–25)

This comment is a reflection of the feeling among Andalusian scholars that

> their poetry and literature were partially cut off from their origins and unrecognised by the masters of the East. The literary centres in the East, where the best poets and critics operated, and where the most heated arguments on poetic creativity took place, were remote, busy with their own burgeoning output and not particularly mindful of literary activity in al-Andalus. (Jayyusi 1992a, 323–24)

In Ibn Diḥya's text, al-Ghazāl, one of the major poets in the emiral period in *al-Andalus*, is reported to have composed poems dealing with some of the most important topics in Arabic poetry:

(1) Nature and, in particular, the idea of man's vulnerability on this earth or of his abiding faith in his endurance, a topic which is especially well developed by Ibn Khafāya (d. 1138) (Jayyusi 1992b, 386).[9]

(2) The expression of sorrow for the passing of youth, which is commonly reflected in the weakening of physical powers and the waning of youthful attractiveness to women; the latter is frequently expressed through the damnation of white hair and references to its dyeing.[10]

(3) Courtly love, a topic in which Andalusian poetry is said to have had considerable influence in Hispanic as well as other European poetry. In fact, Boase (1992, 464) discusses al-Ghazāl's embassy in the context

[9] This was also a frequent topic in the travel books (Chejne 1974, 288). Of particular interest is the parallel which James E. Montgomery has pointed out to me between Ibn Jubyar's account of the beginning of his pilgrimage to Mecca (Broadhurst 1952, 26) and the terrifying experience which al-Ghazāl suffers as soon as he leaves the Galician coasts. In each case the abandonment of the 'known' territory and the entrance into the realms of the 'unknown' is marked by a storm, which imposes a strong eschatological sense onto the account.

[10] This topic is not restricted to poetry either. Thus, the tenth-century scholar and courtier al-Qālī referred to it in his *al-Amālī*; this text is considered to be an *adab* work, which Chejne (1974, 198) describes as one that comprises a broad spectrum of the disciplines and topics praised in Arab education (*adab*).

of the Arabic influence on European courtly love, having identified al-Ghazāl's mission as one which took place *c*.822 with Normandy as its destination (further evidence of the lack of precision in Ibn Diḥya's account) (see also Chejne 1974, ch. 14). Boase believes that the story exemplifies the way in which Arabic poetry would have reached the European troubadours: the Norman queen would have heard the poem that al-Ghazāl composed to 'describe her beauty, her quality and her wisdom' (Allen 1960, 22), and an interpreter would have explained it to her. Likewise, Nykl (1946, 24–26) quotes this poem, and compares it with another of al-Ghazāl's compositions and with an early song of Guilhem IX (William IX of Aquitaine, regarded as the first troubadour).

In conclusion, the answer to the question posed in the title of this paper is probably that al-Ghazāl did not meet anyone, or that, if he did indeed meet someone, this person need not be any of the Viking leaders so far identified. I believe, together with Lévi-Provençal (1937), that it is more likely that the account of the embassy as it stands was a creation of the thirteenth-century Valencian poet, modelled on the account of the visit to Byzantium, and adorned with comments and anecdotes which would have been in the minds of many educated Muslims.

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MEDIEVAL NORSE VISITS TO AMERICA: MILLENNIAL STOCKTAKING

By RICHARD PERKINS

> Um Vínland og hvar það hafi verið hafa ókjörin öll verið skrifuð.
>
> ÓLAFUR HALLDÓRSSON
>
> How far south . . . the Northmen . . . penetrated is not so easily settled.
>
> WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT

WHETHER OR NOT the Norsemen can be regarded as having 'discovered' America (cf. pp. 63–64 below), the fact of their presence on that continent probably as early as about AD 1000 is understandably of considerable fascination to students of Viking-Age history and Norse culture. This presence has little significance for the subsequent history of America, an importance of the same rank as Roman landings in Iceland (if these could be incontrovertibly demonstrated) would have for later Icelandic history. But it is of great interest to those concerned with Norse expansion in the Middle Ages, and America stands as a 'furthest West' symmetrical to the 'furthest East' represented by medieval Norse visits to, for example, the region around the Caspian Sea. The discovery by Helge Ingstad in 1960 of the Norse remains at L'Anse aux Meadows on the northern tip of Newfoundland was a major breakthrough, and huge credit is due to him and his wife for the discovery and excavation of them. But the medieval Norse written sources are of equal relevance. Adam of Bremen,[1] Ari

[1] Adam's (488–90) well-known statement reads: *Preterea unam adhuc insulam recitavit a multis in eo repertam oceano, quae dicitur Winland, eo quod ibi vites sponte nascantur, vinum optimum ferentes. Nam et fruges ibi non seminatas habundare, non fabulosa opinione, sed certa comperimus relatione Danorum.* 'He [i.e. the Danish king, Sven Estridsson] also told me of another island discovered by many in that ocean. It is called Winland because vines grow there of their own accord, producing the most excellent wine. Moreoever, that unsown crops abound there, we have ascertained not from fabulous conjecture but from the reliable report of the Danes.' The subject of *recitavit* is *Suein rex Danorum,* i.e. Sven Estridsson (king of Denmark 1047–74) who was one of Adam's main sources (and a direct one) for his *Gesta*. Finnur Jónsson (1912, 120) plausibly

Þorgilsson[2] and the Iceland annals[3] all have their bit to say. And the two Vínland Sagas, *Grœnlendinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða*, while they pose many problems, tell a fascinating story, however true or false, of enterprising voyages, the discovery of grapes and other rarities in Vínland and encounters with the inhabitants of the country.

It is unfortunate, then, that the study of this subject has been attended by various less than satisfactory circumstances. The fact that the perceived importance of Norse landings in America for the history of that continent has been enormously exaggerated, and the fact that it was argued that the Norsemen (rather than, say, Christopher Columbus) discovered America, have led to unseemly dispute fuelled more by nineteenth- and twentieth-century-style nationalism than by scholarly debate based on any mature, long-term view. This has set Icelander against Spaniard, Norwegian against Italian, Leifr Eiríksson against Columbus in often acrimonious rivalry. In the USA a Leif Erikson Day was proposed, craftily timed for 9th October, a few days in advance of the established Columbus Day (12th October). Zealots have not been slow to erect monuments to Leifr Eiríksson which exist in a number of North American cities and elsewhere (cf. *AV*, 217, note 7; Odd S. Lovoll in *LE*, 119–33). And because stakes have been thought to be high, the matter has often been sensationalised and hit the headlines, thus taking

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suggests that since this passage left the pen of Adam the word *regis* has been lost between *relatione* and *Danorum*. If it has, then Sven Estridsson could well have been the direct source for all his information about Winland.

[2] Ari says of Eiríkr rauði (*Íslendingabók*, ch. 4; *ÍF* I, 13–14) and his companions in Greenland: *Þeir fundu þar manna vistir bæði austr ok vestr á landi ok keiplabrot ok steinsmíði þat es af því má skilja, at þar hafði þess konar þjóð farit, es Vínland hefir byggt ok Grœnlendingar kalla Skrælinga.* 'They found both east and west in that country [i.e. in Greenland's Eastern and Western Settlements] human habitations, remain of boats [or 'skin-boats'] and stone artefacts from which it may be deduced that the same kind of people had passed that way as that which has settled in Vínland and whom the Greenlanders call "Skrælingar".'

[3] This refers to the annal for 1347 (abbreviated hereafter: *Ann* 1347). It may be quoted here (from *Skálholtsannáll*) once and for all: *Þá kom ok skip af Grœnlandi minna at vexti en smá Íslandsfǫr. Þat kom í Straumfjǫrð inn ytra. Þat var akkerislaust. Þar váru á sjautján menn ok hǫfðu farit til Marklands en síðan orðit hingat hafreka* (*Ann*, 213; cf. *Ann*, 403). 'Then there came a ship from Greenland, smaller in size than a small Icelandic trading-vessel. It came into Straumfjörður ytri [in western Iceland]. It was without an anchor. There were seventeen men on board and they had travelled to Markland, but were afterwards storm-driven here.'

on a deceptive appearance of significance. There have been a number of hoaxes in this connection. Most of these have been harmless and transparent enough (like, for example, the Kensington Stone), others less so. The publication of the Vinland Map (= *VM*) by Yale University Press in 1965 was a story of sensationalism preceded by secrecy, secrecy which not only detracted from the quality of the edition (cf. Foote 1966–69) but was also particularly inappropriate in the case of a document which from the start should have been regarded as suspect. It was surprising, then, that in 1995 Yale University Press actually reissued the edition of 1965 in more or less the same form, the only difference being the addition of a few essays (*VM* 1995). At all events, one hopes that the *coup de grâce* has now been delivered by the investigations of Brown and Clark (2002). These reconfirm, by a technique different from those already used to make the same point, the presence of quantities of anatase in yellow lines on the Vinland Map which indicates a twentieth-century origin for it. Even if the Map had proved genuine, that is, if it had been shown to be from the fifteenth century, it would have told us little or nothing that we did not know before it appeared on the scene (cf. *SCVM*, 199–205). And as if follies like these were not enough in themselves, there has been an untoward preoccupation with them in writings on Vínland. For example, Erik Wahlgren (1986, 120) in his study of the Vikings in America rightly finds himself having to defend the whole chapter he devotes to such attempts to defraud. Some may have a taste for the study of forgery and hoax, but it has little to do with the realities of Viking-Age history.

Another unfortunate aspect of scholarship on Norse visits to America is the immense amount of effort which has been expended in attempting to localise the places named or described in the Vínland Sagas. This has often produced highly uncertain and divergent results (see e.g. Gísli Sigurðsson in *VN*, 233). Scholars have often indulged pet theories, sometimes based merely on the part of the Canadian or American coastline they happen to be familiar with (sometimes their own backyards) or where their travels have taken them. There has been a tendency to identify the locations of the sagas with places well known in present-day North America; for example, the Hóp of *Eir* has been located at New York, the Leifsbúðir of *Gr* close to Harvard University (see *AV*, 199). And such theories are often dogmatically presented. Often locations are suggested for place-names which probably never genuinely existed. For example, in Páll Bergþórsson's book of 1997, 'Einfætingaland' is confidently marked (on the southern side of the St Lawrence River) on no fewer than

five maps (pp. 15, 27, 39, 53, 61). And Helge Ingstad (cf. *KL*, s.v. *Vinland*), in his desire to place the site at L'Anse aux Meadows in the Vínland of the sagas, is forced, because grapes can never have grown as far north as northern Newfoundland, to incline to the unacceptable theory that the name was originally '*Vin*-land' (my emphasis) and had some such original sense as 'pasture-land'.

The subject has attracted much attention from laymen. Most of us who concern ourselves with the Vikings are, of course, amateurs in some respect or other, and the combination of philological and archaeological expertise (not to mention mastery of a number of other disciplines) which is desirable for a proper study of the subject is only rarely found in a single scholar. Viking-Age America, however, seems to have drawn to itself more than a fair share of dilettantes. And this amateurish approach has often gone hand in hand with uninformed ideas about the status of the Vínland Sagas (*Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grœnlendinga saga*) as historical sources. It is true, of course, that even expert opinion on the historical trustworthiness of the sagas in general has changed over the past century or so. But we still find writers taking an unwarrantably uncritical approach to *Eir* and *Gr*. Full-length translations of the two sagas are sometimes incorporated into books on the subject with little or no critical comment. And some writers still appear to be unaware of the careful process of sifting to which the narrative material of the two sagas must be submitted to discover what kernels of historical truth they contain. Maps of the North American coast, sometimes quite detailed, tracking the courses of the various expeditions to Vínland described in *Gr* and *Eir* have been presented. This is, of course, a hazardous procedure, and Jørn Sandnes (*LE*, 97) is probably understating the case when he writes: 'Sagaene var ikke tenkt som reisehåndbøker og kan ikke brukes slik.'

Another circumstance that, perhaps paradoxically, may have hindered rather than helped research on this subject is the enormous body of secondary literature surrounding it. Halldór Hermannsson's bibliography of 1909 covered over ninety pages (with some 750 entries). In the course of the twentieth century a huge amount was published, and Robert Bergersen's impressive *Vinland bibliography. Writings relating to the Norse in Greenland and America*, which appeared in 1997, is a book of over 400 closely printed pages. There is, then, a whole library of books and papers on the Norse presence in America and we should, of course, be grateful for this. But there are also disadvantages. It is easy to fail to notice a relevant and sometimes important contribution by a previous

scholar. The present writer, like others, must plead guilty to this charge. But sometimes there seems to have been a blithe indifference to what predecessors have said. Sometimes philologists ignore archaeologists, sometimes archaeologists philologists. This has often meant that the course of research has been uncoordinated and, on various issues, lacked direction. There has been duplication of effort and results. I shall return to this matter below.

I Approaches to Vínland

The idea is apparently current that it was in precisely the year AD 1000 that the Norsemen first landed on the coasts of North America. This certainly seems to be the view of Hillary Rodham Clinton in her Preface to *VN* (p. 8). We must probably allow up to a couple of decades' leeway either side of that date, but it was certainly about this time that the Norsemen got to America, and therefore the turn of the millennium is an appropriate time to reconsider the whole question. There have been at least three major initiatives on this score.[4] Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab held a seminar in October 2000, the proceedings of which (including particularly useful papers by Knut Helle, Vésteinn Ólason and Jørn Sandnes) are published as *LE*. The Smithsonian Institution organised an exhibition that opened in Washington in April 2000 and then went on to other cities in the USA and to Ottawa. Its catalogue (= *VN*), richly illustrated, contains a number of useful essays and valuable bibliography. Thirdly, in August 1999, the Sigurður Nordal Institute (Stofnun Sigurðar Nordals) in Reykjavík held a conference, called '*Vestur um haf*', 'on the written and archaeological sources for (i) the Norse settlements in the North-Atlantic region, and (ii) the exploration of America'. Speakers included scholars from Iceland, the USA, Canada, Denmark, Ireland and the UK, and philology, history, folklore,

[4] In September 2000 a Viking Millennium International Symposium was organised by the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Committee on Medieval Studies of Memorial University of Newfoundland and the Labrador Straits Historical Development Corporation. Sessions were held in St John's, L'Anse aux Meadows and other places in the province. The proceedings of this symposium (see 'Bibliography and abbreviations' under 'Lewis-Simpson') only became available to me in March of 2004, regrettably too late to be taken into account in the present contribution. In February 2003 a Viking Society Student Conference was held at Newnham College, Cambridge, and papers were given by John Hines, Carolyne Larrington, Diana Whaley, Gísli Sigurðsson and Judith Jesch.

archaeology, climatology and sociology all had their representatives. As well as the Norse presence in North America, some of the contributions dealt with the archaeology (and other aspects) of the Norse settlement of Iceland and Greenland. Three participants dealt with various aspects of the reception and 'use' of the Vínland story in modern times. In part I of this paper I offer a review of the items presented in the published proceedings of this Reykjavík conference, by way of a cross-section of recent views arising from the various relevant disciplines, to give an idea of the state of the field at this millennial time. The volume is edited by Andrew Wawn and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir (for further bibliographical details, see 'Bibliography and abbreviations', s.v. *AV*). In part II, I pose and attempt to answer some questions relating to medieval Norse visits to America. And in part III, I briefly and tentatively suggest some approaches that research on this subject might take in the future.

The papers of *AV* are grouped into four sections. The first of these ('Literary and folkloristic perspectives') begins with a paper in which Bo Almqvist (*AV*, 15–30) sets out to elucidate the episode in chapter 6 of *Grœnlendinga saga* in which Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir encounters a mysterious woman in Vínland who also calls herself Guðríðr. Almqvist is certainly fully aware of the problem that in both *Gr* and *Eir*, 'oral tradition and Latin learning are intertwined with inventions (often well nigh impossible to disentangle) of the saga-authors' (p. 15). He considers the possibilities that the second Guðríðr is a supernatural being or another Norse woman but decides against them. He also discounts the theory that the coincidence of name is due to scribal error. His conclusion is that the second Guðríðr was a Native American woman (he makes comparisons with the Beothucks, an Indian tribe of Newfoundland) who had strayed into the Norse camp out of curiosity. When she refers to herself as Guðríðr she is merely parroting her interlocutor's own introduction of herself. Robert Kellogg (*AV*, 31–38) also discusses Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir, but rather the literary depiction of her in *Gr* and *Eir* and her representation in these sources in terms of 'indigenous Icelandic' romance.

Few scholars have studied the Vínland Sagas and other related sources on the Norse in America more closely than the author of the next contribution, Ólafur Halldórsson ('The Vínland Sagas', *AV*, 39–51, translated by Andrew Wawn). Like Bo Almqvist, Ólafur is well aware of the difficulties involved in trying to distinguish history from fiction when using the sagas as historical sources. He gives special attention to the dating of *Gr* and *Eir* and to the aims of the authors of the two sagas. *Eir*

has a *terminus ante quem* in its earliest manuscript, Hauksbók, which Stefán Karlsson (1964) has argued was probably written down between 1302 and 1310. In both Hauksbók (AM 544 4to; *EirHb*) and the only other medieval manuscript of the saga, Skálholtsbók (AM 557 4to; *EirSb*), there is a reference to Bishop Brandr '*inn fyrri*' (i.e. Brandr Sæmundarson, Bishop of Hólar 1163–1201) and this presupposes the existence of the second Bishop Brandr (i.e. Bishop Brandr Jónsson, Bishop of Hólar 1263–64). The year 1263 would therefore be a *terminus post quem* for the writing of *Eir*. Ólafur argues, however, that the words *inn fyrri* might have been added in the latest common archetype of the two surviving manuscripts (rather than have been present in the original of the saga) or even by two scribes working independently of each other; *Eir* might thus have been written before 1264. As far as *Gr* is concerned, Ólafur (*AV*, 43) thinks that 'the only thing which we can say with complete certainty about the age of the saga is that it was written before 1387' (i.e. the date of its sole manuscript, Flateyjarbók), although there are certain indications, based largely on *argumenta e silentio*, that it may have been written considerably earlier, possibly about 1200. We appear to be largely at sea here. But we must be on our guard against wishfully thinking that sagas are older than they really are simply because, as Ólafur puts it (*AV*, 39–40),

> other things being equal, we must assume that it may be worth paying more attention to accounts of late tenth-century events as set out in a saga written around 1200, than to accounts of those same events which are to be found in a saga written a hundred or more years later.

For my own part, I should like to have strong reasons—stronger, perhaps, than those adduced by Ólafur—for concluding that *Eir* was composed before the period 1263–1310. *Gr* might have been written earlier or later than *Eir*. Further, in the present state of research, we cannot, as far as I can see, preclude the possibility that the author of *Gr* had read *Eir* at some time before writing his saga or, alternatively, that the author of *Eir* had read *Gr* at some time before writing his. This does not mean that both sagas might not also have drawn on similar oral traditions. Ólafur's suggestions on the principal aims of the authors of the Vínland Sagas are these: that *Grœnlendinga saga* was indeed composed to provide an account of the discovery of Vínland, of the merits of the place and of voyages thither. *Eir*, on the other hand, was written in honour of Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir, perhaps in support of the candidacy of one of her twelfth-century descendants, Bishop Bjǫrn Gilsson (1147–62), for some sort of sanctification in the Hólar diocese. But despite this bias, the material which most closely

corresponds to the accounts of sixteenth-century explorers of North America (e.g. Jacques Cartier) features more in *Eir* than in *Gr*. Ólafur concludes his paper by listing the main features which *Eir* and *Gr* have in common in what they have to say about the Vínland voyages.

In the fourth paper in this section, Árni Björnsson (*AV*, 52–59) argues that

> the reason why the Icelanders wrote more sagas and other literature than other north-European peoples in the Middle Ages . . . was . . . because . . . of the happy coincidence that the art of writing reached the Icelandic people while many of their farmers were still relatively independent and prosperous. They thus had the means to provide themselves and their households with entertainment such as sagas and poetry (p. 57).

There are some interesting ideas here but I am afraid I did not find Árni's arguments (including some of the causal connections he makes) cogent enough to be entirely convinced.

AV's second section ('Historicity and ethnicity') begins with a noteworthy contribution by Helgi Þorláksson entitled 'The Vínland sagas in a contemporary light' (*AV*, 63–77). Helgi considers the two Vínland Sagas against the background of known historical events of the period in which we may believe them to have been written. This leads him to give close attention to the dating of the two sagas. While he concedes that the only certainties on this matter are that *Eir* was written before 1302–10 and *Gr* before 1387, he eventually inclines to the view that *Gr* is perhaps a product of the first half of the fourteenth century while *Eir* belongs to the latter part of the thirteenth. Helgi also stresses the mutability and vagaries of oral tradition and concludes, for example, that 'it is futile to search the Vínland sagas for the narrative core of what the first European explorers in America actually reported' (p. 75).

Helgi notes the prominence given to Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir in *Gr* and, more especially, *Eir*, and thinks this may have to do with the foundation in 1295 of the Benedictine nunnery at Reynistaður (older: Reyni(s)nes) in Skagafjörður by Hallbera Þorsteinsdóttir, its first abbess (d. 1330) and Bishop Jǫrundr Þorsteinsson of Hólar (d. 1313). In *Eir* (nos 243, 416–17) Reynistaður is represented as the ancestral home of Þorfinnr karlsefni, and it is there that Guðríðr settles down with Þorfinnr after their return from Vínland. Helgi thinks parallels may have been intended between the two mistresses of Reynistaður, Guðríðr and Hallbera, and perhaps that *Eir* 'could have been viewed as appropriate reading matter for the Benedictine nuns at Reynisnes and indeed as a guide for noble women generally'. 'After all,' he continues, 'according to the saga, Guðríðr

was always Christian, behaved with great circumspection, and lived a thoroughly respectable and dignified life in a hazardous world.' Helgi also notes that at the end of his redaction of *Eir* (*EirHb*, no. 421), Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) traces his own ancestry, as well as that of Hallbera, back to Guðríðr. In *Gr*, on the other hand, Reynistaður (Reyni(s)nes) is not mentioned. In that saga, Guðríðr is said to have gone on a pilgrimage to Rome (*gekk suðr*) after her return from Vínland but eventually to have settled down at Glaumbær (which lies a few kilometres south of Reynistaður) and become an anchoress. Helgi is able to offer an explanation for *Gr*'s account here. (One wonders, by the way, in view of this theory, whether the mysterious second Guðríðr of *Gr*, chapter 6 (cf. the discussion of Bo Almqvist's contribution above) might not have had something to do with Hallbera or some other pious lady connected with the nunnery at Reynistaður. Or could she be Guðríðr herself and adumbrate her later life as an anchoress?)

In the latter part of his article Helgi examines the alterations made by Haukr to the text of *Eiríks saga rauða* in Hauksbók. After the acceptance of Norwegian sovereignty by the Greenland colony in 1261, Helgi suggests, the interest of the Crown in the country and the resources it had to offer was renewed. Walrus and narwhal tusks would have been of particular interest, as well as commodities such as eiderdown. There is evidence to suggest that an expedition in 1266 far up the western side of Greenland was made under the auspices of Norwegian officials. And when in 1285 two Icelandic brothers discovered a new land in the west (in reality part of eastern Greenland) called *Nýjaland* or *Duneyjar/Dúneyjar*, the Norwegian king sent a man called Hrólfr to Iceland to mount an expedition thither, although this initiative seems to have come to nothing. Helgi also mentions possible archaeological evidence for connections between the Norse and the aborigines around the Hudson Strait and in Labrador well into the thirteenth century (cf. *VN*, 246, 274–75). From this, and from *Ann* 1347, Helgi thinks it possible that the route to Baffin Island and Labrador was known to the Greenlanders around the year 1300. Now Haukr Erlendsson undoubtedly appears to have had a special interest in Greenland. Indeed he might well have been regarded at the Norwegian court (where he had close connections) as something of an authority on matters relating to Greenland. And in making his changes to the text of *Eir* in Hauksbók he could well have been informed by reports of contemporary voyages to places beyond Greenland and have been at pains to get details as correct as possible. Helgi points to four instances (in *Eir*, nos 280, 283, 285, 301) where he appears to think

that Haukr may have made alterations based on new information or actual experience.

I did not find all of Helgi's arguments entirely easy to follow or to accept and on some points I wish he had expressed himself more carefully. But the connections he makes between the Vínland Sagas (especially *Eir*) and the figure of Guðríðr, on the one hand, and Hallbera Þorsteinsdóttir, Haukr Erlendsson and the nunnery at Reynistaður, on the other, are of considerable interest. His novel approach to Haukr's alterations to the Hauksbók text of *Eir* certainly deserves further attention. And his overall conclusion that the saga accounts bear witness to Norse achievements in sailing and navigation in the seas around Greenland not only in the early eleventh century but also in the period between 1050 and 1350 is an important one. The Norsemen could certainly still have frequented a route between Greenland and Canada in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (cf. below).

Jenny Jochens ('The western voyages: women and Vikings', *AV*, 78–87) ponders the reasons for the Norsemen not establishing permanent settlements in Vínland and, in the longer term, in Greenland. In the British Isles, Scandinavian colonies came into existence as Viking men 'mixed their genes' there with those of indigenous Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Nordic women. And Celtic women contributed not only directly, 'through their own bodies and work', but also indirectly to Iceland's growth. In Greenland things were different. Here there was no sexual mingling with the physically very different Inuit. And, on the evidence, for example, of the skeletons found in the churchyard at Brattahlíð, Jochens detects gender imbalance in Norse Greenland. As a result of these circumstances the population of the colony shrank in every sense of the word. In Vínland it was two similar factors, reluctance to mix with the Skrælingar with their different physiques, and the relative scarcity of women (suggested by e.g. *Eir*, nos 392–93), that led to a long-term problem of insufficient reproduction. While Jochens's theories are interesting, there were probably other, perhaps more significant factors at play, at least as far as Vínland is concerned. Indeed, one may wonder how far 'true colonisation' of Vínland was ever seriously considered or attempted (cf. pp. 40, 61–63 below).

Sverrir Jakobsson also discusses the Skrælingar of Vínland and Markland as described in *Gr* and *Eir* (' "Black men and malignant-looking": the place of the indigenous peoples of North America in the Icelandic world view', *AV*, 88–104). He comments on the accounts of the first meetings with the Skrælingar, with their mutual language difficulties

and differences between Norsemen and natives in physical appearance and material culture. Certainly the sagas seek to represent the natives as simpletons. As Jenny Jochens also argues, the Norse would have had difficulty in coming to terms with peoples of such different race and ethnicity. But the accounts of the two sagas are doubtless also to some extent coloured by descriptions in Icelandic tradition, whether secular or learned, oral or written, of other exotic peoples, real or fabulous. Few would disagree with Sverrir's none too surprising conclusion that we would have little useful knowledge of Native America tribes of North America and the Inuit of Greenland if we had nothing but Norse writings to guide us. On pp. 90–92 Sverrir touches on a point of special interest, likenesses between the Vínland Sagas on the one hand and *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla* on the other. Attention has been given to this recently by Theodore M. Andersson (2000), Sverrir Tómasson (2001) and Vésteinn Ólason (*LE*, 61–62). Sverrir Jakobsson (*AV*, 91) thinks that no traces of textual borrowing are discernible. I am not so sure.[5] At all events, this is a matter into which further investigation may be fruitful. Sverrir (*AV*, 96) also notes the similarity between *Eir* (no. 400 in ch. 12), where the two 'Marklandic' boys captured by Þorfinnr report that in Skrælingaland there are no houses but 'men live in caves or holes' (*ÍF* IV, 432: *lágu menn í hellum eða holum*) and Adam of Bremen's *Gesta* (486) where the Icelanders *in subterraneis habitant speluncis.* Adam's work was known in Iceland and other verbal reminiscences of it have been noticed in *Eir* (cf. *FE*, 55–56 and references).

The third section of *AV*, the longest, covers 'Scientific approaches'. Þorsteinn Vilhjálmsson (*AV*, 107–21) discusses the long experience of trans-oceanic navigation that the Norsemen had behind them when the

[5] In *Gr* (541–42) Þorvaldr and his men, exploring in Vínland, see three hillocks (*hæðir*) on a sandy beach. On closer inspection these prove to be three skin-boats (*húðkeipar*) with three men under each of them. All but one of these men is killed. In *Yngv* (20–21), Yngvarr and his men on their river voyage see five islands that start moving towards them. These turn out to be large fire-spewing warships which Yngvarr eventually manages to destroy with all their crews. Behind the episode in *Yngv* probably lie accounts of the large warships of the Byzantine navy, equipped with Greek fire. This episode in *Yngv* makes more sense than that in *Gr*, and if there has been borrowing here *Yngv* is more likely to have been the source than the recipient. In connection with the explanation of the names of the two Skræling kings in *Eir* given on pp. 51–52, we may note that in Old Norse sources about Russia, the name *Valdimarr* appears as that of a ruler of the country (cf. e.g. *ViR*, 71); and in *Yngv* it is also given to one of Yngvarr's companions. Cf. also *ViR*, 7.

first Vínland voyages were made and how they profited by this expertise. I found some things in his article difficult to follow or accept. For example, he regards the well-known statement in *Gr* about the length of the shortest day at Leifsbúðir (cf. Note 10 below) as 'of central importance' (*AV*, 112, note 2), but does not say to what it is of central importance nor why. It is difficult to come to terms with his use of the word 'report' for the accounts of the various expeditions in *Gr* and *Eir*. For instance, he refers (*AV*, 116) to 'the report on the expedition of Freydís' in *Gr*. But it seems to me unlikely that Freydís ever existed, let alone ever led an expedition to Vínland. One of his conclusions (*AV*, 120) is that the account in *Eir* of Þorfinnr karlsefni's voyage 'is by far the most trustworthy of the Vínland accounts and should be regarded as a frame of reference for the others'. For my part, I have been at pains to stress the historical unreliability of precisely this part of *Eir* (cf. *FE*; cf. also pp. 65–66 below). But his remarks on the failure of the Norsemen to establish any permanent settlement in North America (*AV*, 116) are interesting and may be quoted here in full:

> In hindsight we can say that the Norsemen lacked several of the prerequisites for successful development in North America. Firstly, the Greenland colony was too weak to serve as a base for a decisive settlement further west, because of the distance involved, the alien conditions and the hostility of the Vínland natives. Secondly, the mother countries in Iceland and Norway were too distant to replace the Greenlanders in this role. Thirdly, although the nautical and navigational skills of the Norsemen had proved sufficient to support the settlement of Iceland and Greenland and to maintain regular traffic between Iceland and Norway, these skills were insufficient to sustain regular traffic to Vínland.

I shall return to this matter below.

Birgitta Wallace Ferguson (= BWF) is one of the foremost authorities on the archaeology of L'Anse aux Meadows, and her paper 'L'Anse aux Meadows and Vínland' (*AV*, 134–46) is therefore a very welcome contribution. Her opening sentences are bold, perhaps a bit too bold:

> L'Anse aux Meadows is the Straumsfjörðr and, to some extent, the Leifsbúðir of the Vínland sagas. This is the inescapable conclusion from the archaeological data and from an anthropological analysis of the picture we derive of the Vínland settlements from the sagas.

One of her arguments (p. 140) for this conclusion is that L'Anse aux Meadows is 'too large and well executed to be an anonymous site *not* mentioned in the sagas. It is *the* base in Vínland, Straumsfjörðr'. 'The small Greenland colony', in Leifr's time not more than 500 people, BWF

reckons, 'could not have spared time and labour on the construction of another site of this size.' The argument is an interesting one and undoubtedly has force. On the other hand, over-firm identifications between the localities named or described in the sagas and those in the real North America are to be regarded with caution (cf. pp. 55–57 below). BWF offers us a description of the site at L'Anse aux Meadows with its three largish halls and five other buildings, one of which is a smelting hut. Together, she estimates, the buildings could accommodate 70–90 people. Of Norse artefacts at the site (a rather disappointing collection, one might feel) she notes those suggesting the presence of women; for example, a spindle whorl, bone needles and a small whetstone for sharpening needles. There are also the bronze pin of West Norse type dating from the late tenth or early eleventh centuries and a large number of iron nails (for illustrations see BWF's contribution in *VN*, 208–16). As for dating, radiocarbon analyses suggest that the site was occupied some time between 980 and 1020. Further, rubbish accumulations 'indicate that the occupation was short, a few years at the most'. There is also evidence that occupation there may have been serial and that the site lay unoccupied for a year or two between visits. The various activities at the site (iron production, wood-working) all point to one major concern, the repair of boats and ships. This leads BWF to argue that L'Anse aux Meadows served as a base for further exploration and an over-wintering place; also that the purpose of the Vínland voyages was the search for resources rather than settlement. In this connection, it would have been interesting to know of any archaeological evidence that the Norsemen kept domestic livestock at L'Anse aux Meadows at all, as the written sources say they did in Vínland (cf. pp. 61–63 below). A significant find at L'Anse aux Meadows were some nuts of the butternut-tree (*Juglans cinerea*) together with a partly worked burl from a tree of that same species (cf. *VN*, 216, for illustrations). The butternut-tree is native to eastern North America but, according to BWF, grows no further north, either now or in the eleventh century, than 'the area along the St Lawrence River just east of Quebec city and on west and north-eastern New Brunswick' (*AV*, 141–42; cf. Páll Bergþórsson 1997, 180, for distribution map). These objects appear to have been brought to L'Anse aux Meadows by the Norsemen returning from more southerly areas. This leads BWF to look southwards to the places the Norsemen might have visited from L'Anse aux Meadows and where they might have found grapes. The area she homes in on is on the southern side of the Gulf of St Lawrence around the mouth of the Miramichi River in New

Brunswick. Here butternut-trees grow in the same areas as wild grapes (riverbank grapes, *Vitis riparia*). In eastern New Brunswick there are long, protective sandbars along the entire coast and warm, sheltered lagoons behind them; these she links to the place called Hóp in *Eir*, chapters 10–12. She also notes the densest population of Micmac Indians in this area in former times; they had canoes of scraped moose-skin, and here BWF seems to be making a connection with the *fjǫlði húðkeipa* 'large number of skin-boats' of the Skrælingar who attack Karlsefni and his expedition at Hóp. It is, then, in the coastal area around the Gulf of St Lawrence that BWF thinks Vínland lay. BWF continues (*AV*, 144):

> The pleasant areas of Nova Scotia lie along the Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of St Lawrence. Reaching the Bay of Fundy involves rounding another 3000 kilometers of a rugged, heavily indented Nova Scotia coastline, whereas the distance from L'Anse aux Meadows to the Gulf side of Nova Scotia is less than half that.

In the southern part of the Gulf of St Lawrence, then, the resources the Norsemen were in search of were to be found. 'Why,' BWF asks, 'would anyone accustomed to Greenland and Iceland wish to explore any further?' Her arguments on these points seem entirely reasonable.

On pp. 173–88 Astrid Ogilvie, Lisa Barlow and Anne Jennings discuss the climate of the North Atlantic in the medieval period. Their various sources of information include written texts (mainly from Iceland), ice-core records from the Greenland ice-sheet and marine sediment cores from Nansen Fjord in eastern Greenland. They argue, for example, that climatic factors may have played a significant part in the settlement of Greenland and expeditions to Vínland in the late tenth century and the beginning of the eleventh (when there were above average mean annual temperatures). They also think they played a part in the decline of the Greenland colonies; there appears to have been a particularly cold interval that culminated in *c*.1370.

Shorter contributions to this third section of *AV* are as follows: Jette Arneborg ('The Norse settlement in Greenland: the initial period in written sources and in archaeology', *AV*, 122–33) examines the traditional views about medieval Greenland (based largely on written sources) in the light of modern archaeological discovery. She considers briefly Norse settlement in the country (its *landnám*), its Christianisation and the first meeting between the Norsemen and the Skrælingar. She finds both 'correspondences' and 'discrepancies' between the testimony of the texts and the spade. These, she argues, call for future 'ethnohistorical dialogue'. Guðmundur Ólafsson (*AV*, 147–53) describes the excavations of the

Viking-Age farm at Eiríksstaðir in Haukadalur in Iceland which took place in 1997–99. He carefully suggests that if Eiríkr rauði was in fact a historical person then he probably lived at Eiríksstaðir. He further notes the suggestion that Leifr Eiríksson may have been born there. Guðmundur can also report that a full-scale replica of the Eiríksstaðir farm was built in 1999 some 100 metres from the original site. Thomas H. McGovern, Sophia Perdikaris and Clayton Tinsley (*AV*, 154–65) write on the settlement of the North Atlantic region in the light of zoo-archaeology, 'the study of animal bones recovered from archaeological sites'.[6] Among sites referred to are Åker (Hamar, Norway), Herjólfsdalur (Vestmannaeyjar), Tjarnargata 4 (in Reykjavík), Hofstaðir (near Mývatn; the birthplace of Icelandic zooarchaeology), Aðalból (in Hrafnkelsdalur) and Sandnes (in the Western Settlement of Greenland). Various points are made here: for example, that the keeping of browsing goats and rooting swine by the early settlers of Iceland may have had a particularly deleterious effect on the forests of the country, and that the farmers of medieval Greenland (in contrast to those of Iceland) were particularly reliant on seal-meat for their subsistence. Benjamin J. Vail (*AV*, 166–72) stresses the importance of studying Viking-Age people and civilisation in the context of a whole environmental system. He gives as an example the fieldwork of Albrethsen and Keller (1986) on the seasonal use of shielings in the Qolortoq Valley, the area to the north of Qassiarsuk (Brattahlíð) in Greenland.

The last section of *Approaches to Vínland*, 'Reception studies', contains three papers. In 'Victorian Vínland' (*AV*, 191–206), Andrew Wawn gives a view of how Norse visits to America were perceived by nineteenth-century Britain and America. He points to three factors which, in his view, underpin the Victorian fascination with Vínland: primary texts, pedagogy and popularisation. Primary texts were presented in, for example, C. C. Rafn's *Antiquitates Americanæ* of 1837, described by Wawn as 'the CD Rom disc of nineteenth-century Vínland scholarship' (cf. Barnes 2001, 37–59). He mentions as an example of pedagogy Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell's *An Icelandic prose reader* of 1879 which contains an extensive extract from *Eiríks saga rauða*. Of Victorian popularisations of the Vínland story there are examples aplenty and Wawn gives special attention, for instance, to Rudyard Kipling's

[6] This is the definition give by the authors. A manual of the subject is Reitz and Wing 1999. There is also an '-ology' called 'archaeozoology' (cf. McGovern and Bigelow 1984). On the difference between archaeozoology and zooarchaeology, see Reitz and Wing 1999, 2–7.

'The finest story in the world' in his *Many inventions* of 1893 and to R. M. Ballantyne's *The Norsemen in the West or America before Columbus* of 1872.

Kirsten Wolf calls her essay 'The recovery of Vínland in Western Icelandic literature' (*AV*, 207–19). In it she examines the way in which the stories told in the Vínland Sagas, not especially about Leifr Eiríksson, were used by Western Icelandic writers and poets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As might be expected, there is nationalistic fervour here in no small measure, and the Vínland theme served to lend legitimacy to modern Icelandic settlement in North America in the nineteenth century and generally to enhance feelings of national identity among Western Icelanders. Wolf mentions, for example, Jakobína Johnson's (1883–1977) 'Leifur heppni' (1933; published in her *Kertaljós* of 1939, pp. 23–25), where we find this verse:

> Leif dreymdi vart að Vínland
> jafn voldugt gnæfði síðar,—
> að för hans myndi frægust
> af ferðum þeirrar tíðar,—
> að nafn og orðstýr Íslands
> hans afrek bæri víðar.

Wolf also quotes from 'Vínlandsminni (Drykkjukvæði)', a 'drinking poem' by Guttormur J. Guttormsson (1878–1966) with these somewhat chauvinistic lines addressed to Canada (1976, 159):

> Þú gull og silfursjóða land,
> þú sjós og jarðargróða land,
> þú vatnafjöru og flóða land,
> þú fagra góða land.—
> Fyrst Leifur heppni fyrst þig fann,
> til frægðar sinni þjóð það vann,
> má óhætt kalla útlending
> hvern enskan vesaling.

But not all Western Icelandic literature is in Icelandic. Laura Goodman (i.e. Guðmundsson) Salverson (1890–1970) wrote in English, and counted amongst her writings *Lord of the Silver Dragon* (1927; = *LSD*), a longish and free fictionalisation of the two Vínland Sagas. This is perhaps based more on *Grænlendinga saga* than Wolf (*AV*, 214) suggests (cf. *LSD*, 10, 120 note, 123 note). The plot of *LSD* is dramatic, verging on the melodramatic. While Leif is of course the hero, Freydis is decidedly the villain of the piece, 'Eric the Red's baseborn daughter, an unscrupulous and avaricious woman', who finally forces her half-brother

out of Greenland to the newly-established settlement in Vineland. The Thorgils of *Eir*, chapter 5, gets away with being the 'love-child' of Leif and Thorgunna and eventually becomes 'First Lord of Vineland' after his father's death (cf. *LSD*, 13, 316). An engaging detail of the plot is the construction by Leif of an overland road, 'the East Highway', running through Greenland connecting its settlements; this, Leif intends, will make 'Greenland . . . seem a country fit for men'. This snatch (*LSD*, 338) describing the last voyage of Leif's ship from Greenland to Vineland will serve to give some taste of the book's style:

> And true it is that on her final voyage the gallant *Silver Dragon* seemed a magic ship. Winds and weather favored her, and the caressing sunlight touched her gleaming bows and carven figurehead to matchless splendor. Out of the white and silent North she sailed, borne on the wings of the wind toward a virgin continent wrapped in loveliness and mystery. Out from a land of death they sailed unto a land of life abundant!

Salverson regarded *Lord of the Silver Dragon* as her finest piece of work (cf. *AV*, 214–15) and it certainly makes vivid reading. It is, perhaps, somewhat too romanticised for modern taste.

Finally in the volume (apart from a 'List of contributors' and an 'Index'), Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir ('Leifr Eiríksson versus Christopher Columbus', *AV*, 220–26) seeks to examine some of the ways in which Leifr Eiríksson has figured in American political and cultural discourse. She comments on the attempts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by 'Wasps' and Scandinavians to advance the notion of Leifr as some sort of American hero, the true discoverer of America (as opposed to Columbus). Here hoaxes and lobbying for Leif Erikson Day are relevant. But as Inga Dóra says, things have moved on since the end of the nineteenth century: while many Americans would certainly not wish to cast doubt on Leifr's achievement, there is now general consensus that Native Americans discovered America and had been living on the American continent for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans.

II Some questions and answers

In this part of my article I shall formulate some questions which might reasonably be asked in connection with supposed medieval Norse landings in America and offer answers to them. I should stress, of course, that these are only a few of the large number of questions that might be posed and there is much we should like to know more about on this topic. Further, I emphasise that the answers I give can only be regarded

as imperfect, are subject to correction and invite qualification, improvement and elaboration.

A. *Did the Norsemen land on the mainland of the North American continent in the Middle Ages?*

First it should be noted that the following, while they are regarded as belonging to the North American continent, are in fact only islands off its mainland: Greenland (the world's largest island), Baffin Island and the Canadian islands to the north of it, Newfoundland, Cape Breton Island, Prince Edward Island, Anticosti Island and, of course, a large number of other, smaller, islands.

Few, if any, would dispute that Scandinavians reached Greenland in the Middle Ages, but Greenland is not part of the North American mainland. And as noted, the finds at L'Anse aux Meadows on the northern tip of Newfoundland show irrefutably that they were there in the Middle Ages, probably around AD 1000 (cf. *AV*, 139). But again, Newfoundland is an island. The site at L'Anse aux Meadows, however, lies about 50 kilometres across the Strait of Belle Isle from the Canadian mainland. It seems entirely probable that Norsemen, based at L'Anse aux Meadows, made visits across the Strait to Labrador. At least some of them had probably arrived at L'Anse aux Meadows from Greenland and would, we may presume, have skirted the coast of Labrador on their southward journey. It is difficult to believe that they did not put in on that coast at some time or another. The nearest land over the sea in a south-westerly direction (or indeed in a southerly or westerly direction) from the eastern settlement of Greenland is the coast of Labrador or some small island just off it (for example, Cod Island). It was, then, the mainland of North America that lay closest to the Eastern Settlement of Greenland by sea (closer than Iceland, or Newfoundland, or Baffin Island). One source, *Ann* 1347, tells us of a visit to a place called Markland by some Greenlanders in about 1347. If, as seems far from unlikely, Markland was the Norse name for Labrador (see below) and if we can trust the annal in question, then this more or less clinches the case for Norse landings in mainland North America. And there are various other factors that could be adduced in less direct support of an affirmative answer to this question.

B. *How many of the named characters mentioned in the Vínland Sagas (*Gr/Eir*) as having visited (or sighted or lived in) such places as Vínland or Markland existed in reality and indeed visited, etc., the North American mainland (with Newfoundland)?*

All the relevant named characters in the two sagas may be given attention.

At the beginning of *Gr*, *Bjarni Herjólfsson* is credited with sighting the lands which subsequently in the saga are named Vínland, Markland and Helluland. We may have doubts about Bjarni's existence in reality. He and his mother Þorgerðr are not mentioned in sources other than *Gr* (not even *Landnámabók*; cf. *ÍF* IV, 244, note 6). Finnur Jónsson (1915, 221) remarked on various inconsistencies in his story. He suggested that Bjarni Herjólfsson 'ingen anden er end den Bjarne Grímólfsson' who takes part in Þorfinnr karlsefni's expedition in *Eir*, and noted the similarities in the names of the two characters (cf. also below). On the whole it is probably safest to regard Bjarni Herjólfsson as unhistorical and perhaps, in his apparent lack of enterprise, invented to provide a foil to Leifr Eiríksson (cf. also Helgi Þorláksson in *AV*, 64, 72–73). But we may here be doing an injustice to a historical Norseman who first sighted or even landed in America.

Next we may consider the children of Eiríkr rauði, *Leifr, Þorvaldr* and *Freydís*, all three of whom are said in both *Gr* and *Eir* to have been in Vínland.

Leifr—Ólafur Halldórsson (cf. *AV*, 39) thinks his real name was *Þorleifr*—is represented as visiting Vínland in both *Gr* and *Eir* (although in surprisingly brief terms in *Eir*, nos 179–181) as leader of the ship's crew that appears to be the first to go ashore in Vínland. It would not be unreasonable, then, to represent him, as has commonly been done, as the first known Norseman to set foot in North America.

Both *Gr* and *Eir* represent Þorvaldr as a son of Eiríkr rauði, although he is not mentioned as a son of Þjóðhildr in chapter 5 of *Eir* (nos 150–51; cf. *ÍF* IV, 221, note 8). In *Gr*, ch. 4, he leads his own expedition to Vínland but is killed there by a Skræling arrow. In *Eir*, chs 8–12, he is a member of the expedition led by Þorfinnr karlsefni (although at *Eir,* no. 271, *EirSb* fails to mention him or confuses him with Freydís's husband; cf. Jansson, 1945, 97, 136) but falls fatally victim in Vínland to an arrow shot by a uniped. There is much in the stories told about Þorvaldr which is clearly fictional or, at any rate, arouses suspicion. But he might well have existed in reality, have gone to North America and have been killed there in a skirmish with the native population.

Of Freydís we are told that she was not the daughter of the pious Þjóðhildr (*EirHb*, no. 271, refers to her as *launget*in), and we are perhaps meant to infer that her mother was a pagan woman. Her name has a distinctly heathen ring, typical of those often given to other evil figures in the sagas. Ólafur Halldórsson writes in *AV*, 48:

> When we reflect on all the details which the two sagas [i.e. *Gr* and *Eir*] share, the interesting fact emerges that most of this material relates to Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir, though the saga authors have treated it in different ways.

Given this fact, I would suggest that Freydís is an entirely fictional figure, invented to act as a foil to the pious Guðríðr (cf. the remarks on Bjarni Herjólfsson above). The name of her husband is given as Þorvarðr in both sagas (probably by mistake as *Þorvaldr* in *EirSb*, no. 271; cf. Jansson, 1945, 97 and above). He is described in *Gr* as *lítilmenni*. We are not told who his father was, and his and Freydís's descendants are obscure or non-existent (cf. *Gr*, 548). On the whole, then, it seems unlikely that either Freydís Eiríksdóttir or Þorvarðr ever existed in reality and it is therefore equally unlikely that they took part in any expeditions to North America. The expedition Freydís and Þorvarðr are said to have undertaken to Vínland in *Gr* (pp. 546–48) seems never to have taken place. As Halldór Hermannsson (1944, x–xiv) has argued, the account of this expedition is probably without any foundation in fact. It is most likely to be based on the story of Snæbjǫrn galti Hólmsteinsson on the east coast of Greenland which was probably to be found in a now lost *Snæbjarnar saga galta (cf. *ÍF* I, lx, 190–96; Wahlgren 1969, 60–61).

As many have suggested, it is unlikely that *Tyrkir* of chapters 3–4 of *Gr* ever existed in reality (cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1954; Vésteinn Ólason in *LE*, 53 and note 27). He was probably invented purely to introduce those Wonders of the West, the grapes of Vínland, into the saga. As a *suðrmaðr* (a word often translated as 'German'), he was qualified as a potential expert on wine. But no German personal name has been identified as a basis for the name *Tyrkir* (cf. *ÍO*, 1077). In explanation, I would suggest that the name of an oriental people, the Turks, has been selected for him, simply because it was suitably foreign-sounding. If other medieval Icelanders could juggle with the name *Tyrkir* by making its bearers into Trojans (cf. *SnE*, 6, 55, 175) or descendants of the biblical Tiras (cf. *Hauksbók* 1892–96, 155), why should the author of *Gr* not have used it in this way? It should be noted, incidentally, that a parallel to Tyrkir is found later in *Gr* (p. 548) in another *suðrmaðr* who also shows that he knows the value of the good things of Vínland when he buys from Þorfinnr karlsefni his *húsasnotra* made of *mǫsurr kominn af Vínlandi*.

There appears to be no reason for doubting that *Þorfinnr karlsefni Þórðarson* (introduced in *Gr* in its chapter 6, and in *Eir* in its chapter 7) was a historical figure. His ancestors and descendants are named in *Gr* and *Eir* and in other sources (such as *Landnámabók*). The circumstantial accounts in both *Gr* and *Eir* of an expedition he is said to have made to

Vínland very probably have some basis in reality, and the way in which chapter 48 of *Eyrbyggja saga* (cf. below) alludes in passing to Þorfinnr's voyage to Vínland and his fights there with the Skrælingar suggests that accounts of such a voyage, quite possibly in oral as well as written form, were well known in thirteenth-century Iceland.

The *Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir* whom Þorfinnr is said to have married and taken to Vínland with him is also an important figure in both *Gr* and *Eir*. While her ancestry and origins as presented in the sources are problematic in certain respects (cf. *AV*, 67), she also very possibly existed in reality. And Þorfinnr's and Guðríðr's son, *Snorri*, said in both sagas to have been in Vínland, is probably also historical and may well have been born on the North American mainland or at L'Anse aux Meadows.

In chapter 7 of *Gr* Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir meets in Vínland a woman who gives her name also as *Guðríðr*. We have here a problematic figure. If, as Bo Almqvist (*AV*, 15–30; cf. above) suggests, she is a Native American, then she is, of course, unlikely to have been called *Guðríðr* in reality. But there are a number of other explanations in this connection (cf. e.g. *ÍF* IV, 383–84) and it is difficult to regard this second Guðríðr as a historical figure.

In the penultimate chapter of *Gr* (p. 546) two brothers, *Helgi* and *Finnbogi*, arrive in Greenland and subsequently take part in an expedition to Vínland with Freydís where they are treacherously murdered at her command. I argue above that Freydís herself is probably an invented figure and that the expedition to Vínland as described in *Gr*, 546/26–548/10 probably never took place. It is unlikely, then, that Helgi and Finnbogi, who are described as major participants in it, ever existed either. *Gr* does not give their father's name and, as is noted in *ÍF* IV (264, note 3), they are entirely unknown from other sources. We may safely conclude that they are the product of a saga-author's invention rather than people who existed in reality.

When Þorfinnr karlsefni is introduced in *Eir* in its chapter 7, we are told how he sets sail from Iceland to Greenland (*Eir,* nos 243–49) sharing a ship with *Snorri Þorbrandsson* (according to *EirHb*; *EirSb* has another reading, apparently a misspelling (for *Þorbjarnarson*? cf. *ÍF* IV, 420, note 4; Reeves 1895, 132). Two other men sail with Þorfinnr in their own ship, *Bjarni Grímólfsson*[7] and *Þórhallr Gamlason*, the former

[7] *EirHb* (see *Eir*, no. 403) refers to him as Bjarni *Gunnólfsson* but he is otherwise called Bjarni *Grímólfsson* in that manuscript. Bjarni's name appears in corrupt form in *EirSb* at *Eir*, no. 307; cf. Jansson, 1945, 97.

described as *breiðfirzkr*, the latter as *austfirzkr*. In chapter 8 of *Eir* (nos 269–70) Snorri, Bjarni and Þórhallr are all said to have joined Þorfinnr on his expedition to Vínland.

Of Bjarni Grímólfsson we are told (*Eir*, ch. 13) that, as he returns to Greenland having taken part in Þorfinnr's expedition, he is blown off course into waters infested with wood-eating worms (*maðkasjór*), suffers shipwreck and perishes. Survivors who escape in a ship's boat coated with seal-tar tell of the disaster. Bjarni appears in no other source than *Eir*. This story told of his fate in *Eir* is dramatic to the point of fantasy. And as Vésteinn Ólason (*LE*, 53) notes, similarities exist between Bjarni Grímólfsson's name and another person connected with Vínland, the Bjarni Herjólfsson of *Gr* (cf. p. 47 above and note 7). On the whole, these facts make it difficult to regard the Bjarni Grímólfsson of *Eir* as a historical figure.

We hear nothing more in *Eir* of Þórhallr Gamlason and he is not mentioned in the account of his shipmate Bjarni Grímólfsson's fate in chapter 13 of the saga. On the other hand, a Þórhallr Gamlason (and/or a Gamli Þórhallsson) appears in *Grettis saga* with the nickname *vínlendingr* (cf. *ÍF* VII, 36–37, 101). While there are some obscurities in this context (and the figure in question seems to have no connection with the Austfirðir), the nickname *vínlendingr* is suggestive perhaps of traditions concerning Þórhallr. He may, then, have been a historical figure who visited North America.

As noted, Snorri Þorbrandsson takes part in Þorfinnr's expedition in *Eir* (as, it seems, co-leader). But there is a complication here: in chapter 11 of *Eir* (no. 361), in the account of the attack by the Skrælingar on Þorfinnr's expedition, we are told that Freydís *fann fyrir sér mann dauðan, Þorbrand Snorrason, ok stóð hellusteinn í hǫfði honum*. Nothing has been said in the preceding narrative in *Eir* of any *Þorbrandr Snorrason* taking part in Þorfinnr's expedition, and mention of a person of that name is unexpected. Two explanations present themselves: It is possible that *Þorbrandr Snorrason* is an error for *Snorri Þorbrandsson* and that it is Snorri's death which is reported here (cf. *ÍF* IV, 384, 437). Certainly we never hear what eventually became of Snorri Þorbrandsson at the end of the saga. Alternatively we are perhaps intended to assume that Snorri Þorbrandsson had a son called Þorbrandr with him on the expedition to Vínland and that it is this son who is referred to here. However this may be, in chapter 48 of *Eyrbyggja saga* (*ÍF* IV, 135) we are told how Snorri and Þorleifr, the sons of Þorbrandr Þorfinnsson, move from Iceland to Greenland and further that *Snorri fór til Vínlands ins*

góða með Karlsefni; er þeir bǫrðusk við Skrælinga þar á Vínlandi, þá fell þar Snorri Þorbrandsson (v.l. in AM 448 4to: *Þorbrandr, sonr Snorra*), *inn rǫskvasti maðr*. As will be seen, then, a number of obscurities surround these circumstances (cf. again *ÍF* IV, 383–84) and anything approaching certainty concerning them will be impossible to reach. This reference in a source outside *Eir* and *Gr* to a Snorri Þorbrandsson (or perhaps a son, Þorbrandr Snorrason) who was in Vínland with Þorfinnr karlsefni (and we assume it is Þorfinnr karlsefni Þórðarson who is referred to simply as 'Karlsefni' in the passage) is however interesting. It is not impossible that we are dealing with a person or persons who existed in reality and went on an expedition to America.

At the beginning of chapter 8 of *Eir* the figure of *Þórhallr veiðimaðr* is introduced as a member of Þorfinnr karlsefni's expedition to Vínland. As suggested in *FE* (55, 65–68, 84), Þórhallr is in all probability the invention of the author of the saga and serves very largely as the mouthpiece for the two verses which are attributed to him in chapter 9, but which were probably in reality composed under entirely different circumstances from those described in the saga. The stories told about Þórhallr are highly unlikely to have any basis in reality (cf. Nansen, I 343–44).

Later in chapter 8 of *Eir* (nos 290–97) it is said that when Leifr Eiríksson stayed with Óláfr Tryggvason the king gave him a fleet-footed Scottish couple (*menn skozkir*) called *Haki* and *Hekja* (this latter spelt *hœkia* or *hækia* in *EirSb*; cf. *ÍF* IV, 424, note 8). Leifr has them join Þorfinnr karlsefni's expedition and they are put ashore to reconnoitre after the ships have passed Furðustrandir. Haki and Hekja are clearly fictitious figures (cf. e.g. Nansen, I 339–41; Helgi Guðmundsson 1997, 64).

In chapter 12 of *Eir* (nos 395–401) Þorfinnr karlsefni and his men come across five Skrælingar in Markland, a bearded man, two women and two boys. The adults escape by sinking into the ground (cf. *AV*, 98) but the boys are captured, taught Norse and baptised. They say that their mother was called *Væthildr* (my normalisation; *ÍF* IV: *Vethildr*; *EirSb*: *vætilldi*; *EirHb*: *vethilldi* (accusative)), their father *Óvægir* (*EirSb*: *u uægi*; *EirHb*: *v vege* (accusative)), although *EirSb* has to be emended here to give this sense by the addition of the word *fǫður* (cf. *ÍF* IV, 432). They also say that two kings rule the land of the Skrælingar (*EirSb*: *þeir sǫgðu at konungar stjórnuðu Skrælingalandi*): one was called *Avaldamon* (*EirSb*: *aualldamon*; *EirHb*: *Aualldamon* (nominative)), the other *Valdidida* or *Avaldidida* (*EirSb*: *valldidida*; *EirHb*: *Aualldidida*

(nominative)). The attempts that have been made to interpret the names in terms of Inuit or Native American languages are pointless (cf. e.g. Knut Bergsland's essay 'Four alleged Eskimo words' in Ingstad 1985, 539–40). I would argue that we have here names invented by the author of the saga on the basis of Norse elements or names for other persons who have nothing to do with Vínland (Markland, Skrælingaland). Indeed, the author gives himself away by using the entirely Norse element *-hildr* in the name of the boys' mother (cf. Lind 1905–15, columns 545–47; Lind 1931, column 441). In inventing this name he may have been influenced by the name of the mother of two of the main characters of *Eir*, Þjóðhildr, mother of Leifr and Þorsteinn (cf. *Eir*, no. 150).[8] (It could be argued that folk-etymology of a name or element of a name similar to *Hildr* in some language has been equated with that element, but this is unlikely.) Meanwhile, the first element of the name is, as Nansen (II 20) suggests, probably based on *vættr* '(supernatural) being' (Nansen compares Norwegian *vætt* 'female sprite'). The name of the boys' father, *Óvægir*, is, I would suggest, related to the Old Norse adjectives *óvæginn* 'unyielding, headstrong' and *óvægr* 'unmerciful' (cf. C–V, 667) (cf. the personal name *Óþyrmir* (Lind 1905–15, columns 826–27), the noun *óþyrmir* 'merciless man', and the adjective *óþyrmiligr* 'unmerciful, harsh', (C–V, 668)). As for the names of the two kings, I note a suggestion made by Geraldine Barnes (2001, 30, note 81):

> Oddr Snorrason's *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar* . . . offers a tenuous parallel between these names [i.e. *Avaldamon* and *Valdidida*/*Avaldidida*] and those of the king and queen of Garðaríki, Valdamarr and Allogia [cf. *ÓTOdd*, 23].

I would indeed argue that the names of the two kings are based on the Old Norse name *Valdamarr* (also spelt *Valdimarr*)[9] while the initial letters of *Avaldamon* and *Avaldidida* may well come from the name of the king of Garðaríki's consort as given in *ÓTOdd*. In this connection, we may note Helgi Guðmundsson's suggestion (1997, 63, note 42) concerning the two kings ruling in the land of the Skrælingar, that the author of *Eir* may have had in mind the situation in Norway between 1261 and 1263. Hákon Hákonarson was king 1217–63, while his son Magnús (d. 1280) was crowned in 1261, and there were thus two kings in the country

[8] It is interesting to note that there is even some variation in the first element of Þjóðhildr's name in the manuscripts of *Eir* and that more may lie behind this than mere scribal carelessness; cf. Jansson 1945, 86, note 14; also 103, note 52.

[9] In this connection, we note that the name of the champion (*kappi*) *Kaldimarr* in chapter 4 of *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa* (*ÍF* III, 120–21) is partly 'búið til í líkingu við Valdimar' (so *ÍF* III, lxxviii; cf. Finlay 2000, 11, note 25).

during the period. Helgi also thinks that *Eir* may have been written about this time. He further suggests that in inventing rather long names for the Skræling kings the author of *Eir* might have been influenced by a knowledge of an Inuit language of Greenland.

In concluding the answer to this question, I would divide the relevant characters in *Gr* and *Eir* into two categories:

Group A. Those who may well be historical and could have visited the North American mainland (or Newfoundland), or sighted it: Leifr Eiríksson, Þorvaldr Eiríksson, Þorfinnr karlsefni Þórðarson, Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir, Snorri Þorfinnsson (possibly born there), Þórhallr Gamlason, Snorri Þorbrandsson (and possibly a son of his, Þorbrandr Snorrason).

Group B. Those who are more likely than not to be fictional: Bjarni Herjólfsson, Freydís Eiríksdóttir, her husband Þorvarðr, Tyrkir, the Guðríðr whom Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir encounters in Vínland, the brothers Helgi and Finnbogi of *Gr* chapter 7, Bjarni Grímólfsson, Þórhallr veiðimaðr, Haki and Hekja, the Skrælingar Væthildr, Óvægir, Avaldamon, Valdidida (or Avaldidida).

I would be unwilling to promote any character in Group B to Group A (unless it were perhaps Bjarni Herjólfsson). On the other hand, I would readily demote Þórhallr Gamlason and Snorri Þorbrandsson (with a son Þorbrandr Snorrason who may have been mentioned in *Eir*) from Group A to Group B. If, then, we are to connect the names of historical figures to the Norse voyages to America, we must think primarily of Leifr Eiríksson and Þorfinnr karlsefni Þórðarson, together, perhaps, with Þorvaldr Eiríksson and Þorfinnr's wife, Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir, and his son, Snorri.

Finally, in this context, we may note that outside *Gr* and *Eir*, the annals (*Ann*, 112; cf.19, 59, 252, 320, 473; *Flateyjarbók*, III 512) report that in 1121 *Eiríkr byskup af Grœnlandi fór at leita Vínlands* 'Bishop Eiríkr set out for Vínland' (cf. Foote 1966–69, 75–79). That the Bishop Eiríkr upsi Gnúpsson referred to here is a historical figure is beyond doubt. But we do not know whether he got to Vínland or returned to Greenland from it.

C. *What visits were made by Norsemen to the North American mainland (with Newfoundland)? And when did they take place?*

Apart from Bjarni Herjólfsson's accidental sighting of Vínland, *Gr* tells of four expeditions which reached the country led by: (a) Leifr Eiríksson, (b) Þorvaldr Eiríksson, (c) Þorfinnr karlsefni Þórðarson, (d) Freydís

Eiríksdóttir together with the brothers Helgi and Finnbogi. *Eir* tells of (i) an unplanned landing by Leifr Eiríksson; and (ii) a large expedition by Þorfinnr karlsefni (in which Þorvaldr Eiríkssson and Freydís Eiríksdóttir take part). From a historical point of view, I would discount the expedition said to have been undertaken by Freydís Eiríksdóttir and the brothers Helgi and Finnbogi; as suggested above, all three figures probably never existed in reality and the account of their expedition in *Gr* is probably a literary borrowing. Whether Leifr Eiríksson, Þorvaldr Eiríksson and Þorfinnr karlsefni visited Vínland separately or in each other's company is difficult to say. I am inclined to think that they may have done so separately (or at least, as *Eir* suggests, that Leifr's visit was distinct from any made by Þorvaldr and Þorfinnr together). At all events, the tradition represented by the narrative of *Gr* and *Eir* that an Icelander called Þorfinnr karlsefni Þórðarson led a major expedition from Greenland to the North American mainland or Newfoundland could well have, indeed is likely to have, some basis in historical reality. Þorfinnr's enterprise may have distinguished itself from any previous ones by its larger size and perhaps by the fact that its leader's intention was to settle in Vínland rather than simply to explore it or to fetch resources from it. As noted, it is referred to allusively in *Eyrbyggja saga* in a way which may suggest that knowledge of the voyage was widespread. But such historical expeditions to America as are reflected in *Gr* and *Eir* were not, of course, the only ones. Radiocarbon datings from L'Anse aux Meadows indicate occupation for several years at least, some time between 980 and 1020 (cf. p. 41 above; *AV*, 139). During its period of occupation, there would have been comings and goings between it and the Greenland colony, although not necessarily annually (cf. BWF in *AV*, 139). By the time Adam of Bremen was writing around 1070, he could talk of Vínland as an '*insula . . . reperta . . . a multis*', and, if we assign the voyages described in *Gr* and *Eir* to before about 1020, we may reasonably reckon with a number of further visits over the half century or so before 1070. As noted, the annals tell of an attempt, at least, by Bishop Eiríkr Gnúpsson to reach Vínland, but we do not know what his mission there was. (Could it have been to minister to Norsemen stationed there? Or a quixotic attempt to convert Skrælingar?) Ari Þorgilsson (*ÍF* I, 13–14; cf. Note 2 above), writing probably in the 1120s or 1130s, refers to a people '*es Vínland hefir byggt ok Grœnlendingar kalla Skrælinga*', and the use of the present tense of *kalla* suggests relatively recent experience by the Greenlanders of the Skrælingar of Vínland. But the annal for 1347 (cf. Note 3) is of particular interest in this connection. The voyage to Markland

made by the seventeen men aboard the ship in question would scarcely have been a one-off business (cf. Helgi Þorláksson in *AV*, 73). If it was, it is strange that precisely this ship should have been storm-driven all the way to Iceland. More probably this voyage was just one (although conceivably the last) of a number of such voyages which the Greenlanders hazarded to North America during the course of the fourteenth century. Such enterprises would, very possibly, have been directed to Labrador (and many scholars identify Markland with Labrador), and then with the aim of fetching timber back to Greenland. All in all, then, we may conclude that the three or so historical expeditions which could well lie behind the accounts in the Vínland Sagas represent only a small proportion of a much larger number of journeys (and here I think of certainly no fewer than twenty) from Greenland to North America (with Newfoundland), and then perhaps mainly to Labrador, during the period AD 1000–1350.

D (i). *Which of the place-names of* Gr *and* Eir *were genuinely used for places or areas in North America, particularly by Norsemen who actually visited them?*

Fifteen names are relevant:

(a) Those which appear in both *Gr* and *Eir*: (i) *Vínland*: confirmed as a genuine place-name by Adam of Bremen (cf. Note 1), chapter 6 of Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók* (*ÍF*, I 13) (cf. Note 2), chapter 48 of *Eyrbyggja saga* (*ÍF* IV, 135) and other sources. (ii) *Markland*: best confirmed by *Ann* 1347 (cf. also *GM* 427, s.v. *Markland*). (iii) *Helluland*: again confirmed in sources other than *Gr* and *Eir*. (iv) *Kjalarnes*: an exact parallel is found in Iceland and the name could well have had genuine currency as a place-name (*FE* 58).

(b) Those which appear only in *Gr*: (v) *Leifsbúðir*: paralleled by at least three place-names in Greenland (i.e. *Skjálgsbúðir*, *Finnsbúðir*, *Karlbúðir*; cf. *FE* 58). (vi) *Krossanes*: an exact parallel is found in Iceland and the names *Krossey* and *Krosseyjar* are found in Greenland (cf. *FE* 58).

(c) Those which appear only in *Eir* (or sometimes in only one of its two redactions): (vii) *Hvítramannaland*: found also in *Landnámabók* (*ÍF* I, 162) but hardly a real place-name. (viii) *Einfœtingaland*: highly unlikely to have had any genuine currency as a place-name (cf. however, Páll Bergþórsson 1997, 61, 81–83). (ix) *Skrælingaland* (in *EirSb* only) and (x) *Írland it mikla* (in *EirHb* only) may be found in sources other than *Gr* and *Eir* (cf. *GM,* 38; *ÍF* I, 162) but both names have an air of

fantasy to them, particularly the latter. (xi) *Furðustrandir*: unlikely to have been used for any place in North America (cf. *FE*; Hermann Pálsson 2000, 20 and note 17). The names (xii) *Bjarney* (said to be off Markland; *Eir* no. 284), (xiii) *Straum*(*s*)*ey*, (xiv) *Straum*(*s*)*fjǫrðr* and (xv) *Hóp* are exactly matched as place-names in Greenland or Iceland and could be genuine as names for localities in North America (cf. *FE*, 59). But even in these four cases we should exercise care and note the remarks of Björn Þorsteinsson (1962–65, 191): Björn appears to suggest that the author of *Eir* could have invented such names as *Straum*(*s*)*fjǫrðr* and *Hóp* on the basis of place-names he knew from Iceland.

We may conclude that only the following ten names could have been used as genuine place-names for places in North America (with Baffin Island and Newfoundland): *Vínland, Markland*, *Helluland*, *Kjalarnes*; *Leifsbúðir*; *Krossanes*; *Bjarney*; *Straum*(*s*)*ey*; *Straum*(*s*)*fjǫrðr*; *Hóp*.

D (ii). *Which place-names in* Gr *and* Eir *that were used as genuine place-names can be attached to actual places in North America?*

On this issue, then, only ten names are likely to be relevant (cf. answer to Question D (i)). The following remarks may be made on them: *Helluland* may have been used of Baffin Island (or part of it) but may also have been used for northern Labrador (cf. *AV*, 135). *Markland* might very well have been used for Labrador (or part of it). It is perhaps in connection with this name that we may be least tentative. *Vínland* would have been used for an area in North America in at least part of which wild grapes grew, and would therefore probably have covered at least the southern part of the Gulf of St Lawrence (e.g. New Brunswick) and perhaps also an area on a more southerly latitude (e.g. Nova Scotia, Maine). But this does not mean that it was not also used to cover the more northerly parts of the Gulf of St Lawrence, perhaps even as far north as L'Anse aux Meadows**.** Cape Porcupine on the Labrador coast, with its keel-like shape, may represent the *Kjalarnes* mentioned in both *Gr* and *Eir*, although there could well be other just as probable candidates (cf. *FE*, 58, note 7; Wahlgren 1986, 159–60). The mouth of the St Lawrence River is a major geographical feature of the part of North America in question and the name *Straum*(*s*)*fjǫrðr* might have been used for it (although it might, perhaps just as easily, have been used for the Strait of Belle Isle, as argued by BWF (see above); cf. Gísli Sigurðsson in *VN*, 233 and refs.). The name *Leifsbúðir* could have been used for the site at L'Anse aux Meadows, although again there is no certainty here and the main Norse buildings excavated at L'Anse aux Meadows scarcely answer to the

description *búðir*. Any firm identifications of the places referred to in the sagas as *Krossanes* (*Gr*), *Bjarney* (*Eir*), *Straum*(*s*)*ey* (*Eir*) and *Hóp* (*Eir*) are likely to be highly uncertain.

Thus the answer to Question D (ii) must be that it is not possible to identify the location of more than one or two (or two or three) of the place-names of *Gr* and *Eir* with any measure of certainty. Other identifications can only be made with a considerable degree of uncertainty, which in most cases is so great that it would be unsafe to base further arguments on them.

E. *What parts of North America were visited by the Norsemen?*

Answers to this question have very often been substantially influenced by identifications of the place-names mentioned in the Vínland Sagas. But as has been indicated in the answers to Questions D (i) and D (ii), most such identifications are difficult to make and it is often hazardous to base arguments on them. And generally on this issue, we must be wary of too great a reliance on the narratives of the Vínland Sagas. But, not least after the discovery of the site at L'Anse aux Meadows, it is possible to give an answer to this question based on other factors, some of them quite obvious and commonsensical. We may assume that (i) the most usual starting-point for the Norse visits to America would have been the Norse Eastern Settlement of Greenland; and (ii) that Norse travel in the relevant areas was for the most part water-borne and that the Norsemen never travelled far from the vessels that brought them from Greenland. Now, the point on the North American continent closest to the Eastern Settlement must lie on the Atlantic coast of Labrador, probably not far from the modern community of Hebron at about 58° North. This point would have roughly corresponded to the tree-line and it was to these parts of the Labrador coast (or perhaps rather further to the south) that such Norse expeditions to America as were seeking timber were directed and here that they often ended, with as immediate and direct a return to Greenland as possible. From here, there were two possible routes: One lay northwards, rounded Cape Chidley (the northern tip of Labrador) and went into Ungava Bay. It must remain undecided how often this route was followed (cf. Wahlgren 1986, 133–37; *VN*, 195, 275). But we know, of course, that Norsemen, their ships propelled to some extent by the Labrador Current, found their way south from here, skirting the southern part of the peninsula and going on to L'Anse aux Meadows in northernmost Newfoundland where their presence is incontrovertibly attested. And there is evidence, perhaps not as strong,

that L'Anse aux Meadows cannot have been the Norsemen's furthest south in these regions.[10] Theoretically, there are four main possible routes (with, of course, a number of minor variations) they may have taken southwards beyond L'Anse aux Meadows. The Labrador Current (here particularly strong) again would have assisted passage through the Strait of Belle Isle and into the Gulf of St Lawrence from where (i) they may have turned westwards and then southwards up the St Lawrence River. Or (ii) once in the Gulf of St Lawrence, they may have headed southwards and ended up on its southern side, on Prince Edward Island, in eastern New Brunswick, or on the Gulf side of Nova Scotia. Or (iii) they could have passed from the Gulf eastwards through the Cabot Strait into the Atlantic north of Cape Breton Island and from there rounded the inhospitable Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia to the more pleasant Bay of Fundy and then perhaps gone on further south from there. Lastly from L'Anse aux Meadows (iv) they may have sailed east of Newfoundland and joined the route outlined under (iii). These, then, are the theoretical possibilities and to dismiss any of them would probably be unjustified. But it is perhaps easiest to be persuaded by BWF's arguments in favour of (ii) as the most likely (cf. *AV*, 141–45). It seems the simplest route. Travel up the St Lawrence would probably have been more laborious and difficult, rounding Nova Scotia more dangerous. Indeed, perhaps one of the more interesting issues in the discussion of the Norsemen in America is whether or not they can have sailed further south along the eastern seaboard than Nova Scotia. They may have done so. But it would probably rather have been on the southern side of the Gulf of St Lawrence with its relatively rich vegetation that the Norsemen found such resources

[10] It is naturally incumbent on those who wish to show that the Norse got further south than L'Anse aux Meadows to produce evidence to that effect. While this is not a task that can be undertaken here in detail, three of a number of further pieces of such evidence may be mentioned: (a) The butternuts and related piece of wood found at L'Anse aux Meadows (see above) must have come from a region well to the south. (b) Attempts have been made to establish the latitude of Leifr's base in Vínland from the well-known statement in *Gr* (539, lines 29–31) about the length of the day there: *Meira uar þar iafnndęgri en a Grænlande edr Jslande. sol hafde þar eyktarstad ok dagmalastad um skamdegi*. These have produced widely differing results and are perhaps methodologically questionable. But different though they are, the calculations of the majority of scholars suggest a latitude south of 50° North (cf. Gísli Sigurðsson in *VN*, 234). L'Anse aux Meadows is at about 51° 35' North. (c) As BWF (*AV*, 138–39) argues, the archaeological evidence makes it clear that L'Anse aux Meadows served the function of a base for further explorations and at least some of these must have been directed southwards from there.

(including grapes) as they might have been seeking. And it is far from impossible that it was for this area that the medieval Norsemen used the term *Vínland*.

F. *Did the Norsemen find wild grapes in North America in the Middle Ages?*

In answering this question we may recall the following facts: (i) Adam of Bremen (cf. Note 1), *Grœnlendinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða* all say that grapes grow in a place called *Vínland* (Adam of Bremen: *Winland*), and Adam and *Grœnlendinga saga* more or less specifically connect the name of the country with the presence of grapes there. (ii) Wild grapes (e.g. riverbank grapes, *Vitis riparia*) grow in North America, in the present day apparently as far north as the St Lawrence River, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (cf. pp. 41–42 above and Birgitta Wallace Ferguson in *AV*, 142; Páll Bergþórsson 1997, 185–89, plate xv). In the more favourable climatic conditions of the Middle Ages they may have grown considerably further north than they do today (cf. the article in *AV*, 173–88, by Ogilvie, Barlow and Jennings reviewed above). These grapes were remarked upon by some of the early post-Columbian explorers of the area, for example Jacques Cartier (1491–1557), who also gave the name 'Ile de Bacchus' to the Ile d'Orléans in the St Lawrence just downstream from Quebec city (cf. Gathorne-Hardy 1921, 158–59). (iii) During the medieval period the Norsemen sailed at least as far south along the eastern side of North America as L'Anse aux Meadows and quite possibly further south than that to areas where wild grapes grow (e.g. New Brunswick) (cf. Question E above).

In view of these facts, it seems highly probable, and certainly more probable than not, that the Norsemen encountered wild grapes in North America. It is true that Adam's work and the two sagas all contain a fair measure of fictional or fantastic material which has nothing to do with the realities of North America. It has been argued that the accounts of wild grapes mentioned in these sources are purely literary and go back to classical accounts of Insulae Fortunatae, or like places, in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* and classical sources (cf. Nansen, I 345–84; II 1–65). But such arguments are to some extent anticipated and countered by, for instance, Adam's own statement on this matter. Furthermore, the name *Vínland* was a genuine place-name and can hardly mean anything else than 'Wine-land'. Attempts to interpret the first element as *vin* 'pasture' are unconvincing (cf. p. 32 above) and have been rightly dismissed by a number of philologists (including e.g.

Finnur Jónsson (1912, 142) who amongst other things points to the spelling *Vijnlandz* (for *Vínlands*) in Flateyjarbók (*Flateyjarbók*, I 541, line 13) as evidence for the length of the *i* in the first syllable of the word). The wild grapes of North America would have been an object of fascination for the visitors from Norse Greenland, a place where, we are told in chapter 22 of *Fóstbræðra saga* (*ÍF* VI, 226), drinking-bouts were rare.

G. *Did the Norsemen encounter non-Norse peoples in America? If so, which ones? And what form did their encounters take?*

Ari Þorgilsson's statement about the 'Skræling' artefacts found by Eiríkr rauði and his companions in Greenland is cited and translated in Note 2 above. The clear implication of this statement is that the Norse Greenlanders had encountered (a) non-Norse people(s) in North America (with Newfoundland) and we have no reason to doubt this. It is borne out by the mention of *Skrælingar* in Vínland and Markland in *Gr* and *Eir*. The artefacts mentioned by Ari were most probably left behind by the Dorset Inuit who had visited and moved on from southern Greenland before the arrival of the Norsemen and, on this basis, the Skrælingar of Vínland should strictly be identified with that people. And it is entirely likely that the Norsemen encountered Dorset Inuit at some time in North America where they are known to have lived side by side with Indians in Newfoundland and Labrador (cf. *VN*, 207).[11] But such a strict identification of Ari's Skrælingar with Dorset Inuit is probably not warranted. At the time he was writing, the Norsemen may well not have encountered the Inuit in Greenland and they probably did not necessarily distinguish very carefully between the different non-Norse people they met in these parts. They probably used the word *Skrælingar* indiscriminately for most of them. And they would doubtless have encountered such Native American peoples as inhabited the parts of North America they visited (cf. Daniel Odess, Stephen Loring and William W. Fitzhugh in *VN*, 193–205). I have suggested that Labrador was perhaps the main area for Norse activity in America and here they might have met with Innu Indians. The main Indian tribe of Newfoundland were the Beothuks, now an extinct people. And if the Norsemen got to the southern parts of the Gulf of St Lawrence (cf. above) they may well have encountered the Micmacs (cf. *Br*, VI 863), probably the largest and most important tribe in the area and

[11] A Dorset soapstone lamp has been found at L'Anse aux Meadows although its presence there is problematic in certain respects; cf. *VN*, 216.

capable canoeists (cf. the *húðkeipar* of the Skrælingar in *Gr* and *Eir*). And there was probably also contact with members of other tribes. There has, of course, been much discussion concerning the depiction of the Skrælingar in *Gr* and *Eir* and about how far it can be based on genuine observations of the native peoples of North America (cf. the somewhat differing approaches of Bo Almqvist and Sverrir Jakobsson in *AV*), and the topic is probably not exhausted. But when the two sagas represent dealings between Norseman and Skrælingar as mainly taking the form of trade on the one hand and hostilities on the other, this may reflect reality. For example, chapter 11 of *Eir* gives this picture of trade with the Skrælingar (*ÍF* IV, 428–29):

> . . . ok vildi þat fólk helzt kaupa rautt klæði. Þeir vildu ok kaupa sverð ok spjót, en þat bǫnnuðu þeir Karlsefni ok Snorri. Þeir hǫfðu ófǫlvan belg fyrir klæðit ok tóku spannarlangt klæði fyrir belg ok bundu um hǫfuð sér, ok fór svá um stund. En er minnka tók klæðit, þá skáru þeir í sundr svá at eigi var breiðara en þvers fingrar breitt; gáfu þó Skrælingar jafnmikit fyrir eða meira.

Whatever its misrepresentations, this passage possibly gives some idea of how trade between the two peoples may actually have taken place. (And we think here, perhaps, of the predilection of the Beothuks of Newfoundland for the colour red which may have made them the original 'Red' Indians; cf. *Br*, I 989). Certainly both Vínland Sagas make much of the hostility of the Skrælingar. And Þorvaldr Eiríksson's death from an Indian arrow in chapter 4 of *Gr*, if it actually took place, would not be untypical of the fate of many Europeans at the hands of the native population in America.[12]

The possibility of sexual liaisons between the Norsemen and the natives of Greenland and America is discussed by Jenny Jochens in her paper in *AV* (78–87). She reasonably expresses scepticism that any such took place.

As noted above, in chapter 12 of *Eir* Þorfinnr karlsefni and his companions are said to have captured two Skræling boys in Markland and appear to take them back to Greenland with them. The episode may reflect some sort of reality: Cartier, for example, returned to France after his first voyage with two captured Indians (cf. *Br*, II 599).

[12] In this context, the quarzite arrowhead found in or near the cemetery at Sandnes in Greenland's Western Settlement is of interest. It is (according to *VN*, 239) 'of a type of stone unknown in Greenland but common to Labrador and Newfoundland Indian cultures of A.D.1000'. It reminds us graphically of Þorvaldr's fate as recounted in the Vínland Sagas. Cf. Jones 1986, 132.

H. *Why did the Norsemen fail to establish permanent settlements in North America?*

Certainly *Gr* and *Eir* give the impression that the Norsemen intended to establish some sort of permanent settlement in Vínland. For example, chapter 6 of *Gr* says of Þorfinnr's expedition that *Þeir hǫfðu með sér alls konar fénað, því at þeir ætluðu at byggja landit, ef þeir mætti þat*. There is further reference to livestock taken by the Norse to Vínland (e.g. the mention of a Norse bull there in *Gr*, 545, line 5; *Eir*, no. 348). But the archaeological evidence of L'Anse aux Meadows, at least, presents little or no sign of permanent agrarian settlement and, as far as I understand it, there is no unequivocal sign (e.g. in the zooarchaeology) of domestic livestock there. As has been suggested, L'Anse aux Meadows probably had more the function of an out-station for voyages to other places. The Norsemen could conceivably have taken livestock to other places in North America but there is, as far as I know, little or no archaeological evidence for this. It is probably safest to be sceptical of the sagas' testimony on this matter and indeed to wonder how far agrarian settlement west of Greenland was ever seriously contemplated by the Norsemen at all. At all events it never took place in any permanent form, and we are left to speculate on the reasons. Again, the impression given by the sagas is that the hostility of the Skrælingar played a major part in discouraging settlement by the Norse. *Eir* (nos 370–371) is more or less explicit on this point: *Þeir* [Þorfinnr karlsefni and his band] *þóttusk nú sjá, þótt þar væri landskostir góðir, at þar myndi jafnan ótti ok ófriðr á liggja af þeim, er fyrir bjuggu. Síðan bjuggusk þeir á brottu ok ætluðu til síns lands* (so *ÍF* IV, 230). This may certainly have been a factor. But one might ask oneself whether it was of overriding importance and whether it would not have been possible for the Norsemen and the natives to have lived side by side in relatively peaceful coexistence in at least some places in the area in question. Nor is it likely that gender imbalance amongst Norse groups in America was of any decisive significance (cf. Jenny Jochens's rather different view in *AV*, 78–87). But some of the suggestions made on this matter by, for example, Þorsteinn Vilhjálmsson and Birgitta Wallace Ferguson in *AV* probably come closest to the truth. Relevant remarks by Þorsteinn Vilhjálmsson have already been cited on page 40 above. BWF concludes her article as follows (*AV*, 144–45):

> Even with all the resources of Vínland, the Greenlanders still had to maintain trade with Europe for those necessities unobtainable in Vínland. The colony was too small to sustain expeditions to two such distant areas, in opposite directions. After all, just because we *are able* to fly to the moon today, we are

> not yet establishing bases there. It was the same with Vínland and L'Anse aux Meadows. Their time had not yet come.

One can only accept the general tenor of this. Lines of communication were long and tenuous, journeys were hazardous. According to BWF (*AV*, 143–44), the distance from eastern New Brunswick (where she suggests Vínland may have lain) to Brattahlíð in Greenland was about 3550 kilometres, the same as that from Brattahlíð to Bergen in Norway. Along long stretches of these routes there was the danger of sea-ice, and navigation was out of the question at certain times of the year. Just as voyages from Iceland to Norway and back in a single summer were often impossible, so too would have been the return voyage from Greenland to the North American coast (cf. Perkins 2001, 157; *AV*, 139). And the majority of expeditions to Markland and Vínland would, doubtless, have had their starting point in Greenland. But the Greenland colony was, as BWF suggests, small and quite probably lacked the resources in manpower to sustain regular sailings. The deteriorating climate cannot have helped (cf. *AV*, 185). And as the Greenland colony itself went into terminal decline in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it stands to reason that expeditions to North America (as well as to, say, Norðrseta) would have decreased in number and eventually ceased. The unhappy outcome of the Greenland expedition to Markland mentioned in *Ann* 1347 would scarcely have encouraged further such ventures.

(I) *Did the Norsemen discover America in the Middle Ages?*

Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir remarks in her article in *AV* (224) that there is now general consensus that Native Americans discovered America and had been living on the American continent for thousands of years before the arrival of the Europeans. Although this is more or less a truism, it is appropriate that the point is acknowledged in *AV*. We know that modern human beings (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) must have arrived in what is now Alaska from Siberia by at least 20,000 BC at the very latest and perhaps by 35,000 BC or even earlier. Over long periods of time they moved eastwards and southwards and dispersed themselves to practically every part of the North American continent. Passing through the Isthmus of Panama, they entered South America. By approximately 6000 BC at the latest, some of them, quite possibly gratefully or with relief, had left the South American continent at its southern end and one wonders what the first human beings to reach Tierra del Fuego might have made of claims that the continental mainland they had just quitted was discovered several millennia later by Leifr Eiríksson or Christopher Columbus or

anyone else. At all events, there were many developments in both the Americas between this time and the appearance of the Norsemen in medieval Canada. A few examples: The potato was first cultivated, as were the tomato, avocado, maize, cocoa and tobacco. The llama was domesticated and the dog-sled probably developed. Rubber began to be used in clothing and footwear. There was urbanisation and in Meso-America such towns were built as Monte Albán, Teotihuacán (with perhaps some 100,000 inhabitants in AD 500) and Palenque. Between about AD 250 and 950, Mayan civilisation flourished with considerable achievements in architecture and sculpture, mathematics and astronomy, and significant literary activity. All these things happened in the Americas before AD 1000. Whether the Norsemen were the first Europeans to get to North America is perhaps not entirely certain. Seafarers of other nations (e.g. the Irish) might have been storm-driven there before the Scandinavians arrived. At all events, the proposition that Snorri Þorfinnsson (who, as suggested, was quite possibly a historical person) was the first European to be born in America (cf. e.g. Wahlgren 1969, 23; Wawn in *AV*, 197, note 8) may need qualification. Snorri might have been born at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, an island which is really no more a part of the North American mainland than is Greenland; priority on this not very important issue might, then, belong to some person born in the Norse colony in Greenland (cf. p. 46 above). Intelligence of Markland and Vínland would doubtless have faded in detail and become distorted the further east from Greenland and Iceland it was received. In mainland Europe and the British Isles, it may often have assumed a more or less legendary character and perhaps become indistinguishable from other mariners' tales about lands west across the Atlantic. It is true that, as Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (1965, 43) suggest, stories about Vínland could have been current in the seaports of Europe, for example, Bristol, in the fifteenth century. But the idea that Columbus got wind of them from whatever source (e.g. on a visit to Iceland, even during a sojourn on Snæfellsnes) is conjectural. If he had thoughts in his mind of lands which lay beyond Iceland when he set out from Palos de la Frontera in Spain on his first voyage of 1492, these were scarcely reflected in the course he took: he headed south-westwards straight for the Canary Islands, whence he sailed to make his landfall on San Salvador in the Bahamas on 12th October of that year.

Any claim that the Norsemen discovered America in the Middle Ages would have to be accompanied by a clear definition of what is meant by the word 'discover' (cf. on this matter Kaufhold 2001, 62–63).

III Future approaches

I return to the book reviewed above, *Approaches to Vínland*. In Section I, I have here and there expressed reservations about opinions put forward by various authors or advanced views which differ from theirs. This is only to be expected. But taken as a whole, the articles in *AV* present us with a useful contribution to the study of the Norsemen in America and in the North-Atlantic region in general. The overall perspective of the papers is broad and open-minded and the range of expertise behind them impressive. Andrew Wawn and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir are to be thanked for their careful work as editors. And the Sigurður Nordal Institute is to be congratulated for arranging what was clearly a very successful and productive conference and for bringing together such a diverse array of competent scholars.

What then of research in the next millennium? What more is to be said, and what new approaches might we take to Vínland? I have remarked above on the nationalism that has beset this subject. But we are now in the twenty-first century and there is clearly no room for such parochial attitudes. I have also grumbled about the fact that Vínland research has, at times, been rather uncoordinated. I offer a specific example: in a Festschrift for Jonna Louis-Jensen, Ian McDougall (1997) published a short article entitled 'The enigmatic *einfætingr* of *Eiríks saga rauða*'. In this, he argues that the anonymous *kviðlingr* about the uniped in chapter 12 of *Eir* (no. 388; *ÍF* IV, 232, 432: *Eltu seggir*, etc.) is based on a riddle for a pen. He produces persuasive parallels not only from amongst Icelandic riddles but also from those of Old English. He argues that the verse was inserted into *Eir* by its author to support the saga's reference to the exotic place-name *Einfætingaland* and that it was 'introduced in keeping with the learned tradition that Vínland extended to Africa, an area of the world believed to be populated by fantastic creatures such as unipeds'. Tentative although he is about them himself, I find McDougall's conclusions entirely convincing. And their implications for the use of *Eir* as a source for history are important: they show how fast and loose the author of *Eir* was prepared to play with any reliable evidence he had about voyages to Vínland and thus the complete lack of historical trustworthiness of parts of his saga. Now, McDougall's article is not referred to in any of the millennial publications about the Norse in America (e.g. in *VN* 2000, or *LE* 2001, or *AV* 2001). And it appeared too late for inclusion in Bergersen 1997. Had Gísli Sigurðsson taken account of it, he might have thought twice before presenting a map with 'Land of the One-Legged People' marked on the

Gaspé Peninsula (*VN*, 237; cf. pp. 31–32 above). And it might have given Þorsteinn Vilhjálmsson (*AV*, 120) pause in praising the reliability of *Eir*'s account of Þorfinnr karlsefni's voyage (cf. p. 40 above). In mentioning these things here, I do not for one moment imply criticism of these two scholars. (As I have said, it is easy, with the huge literature on this subject, to overlook a relevant contribution by a predecessor and I have been as much at fault as others in this.) I draw attention to McDougall's article here rather because it shows that there are still discoveries to be made in the field. The *kviðlingr* in *Eir* has puzzled or ought to have puzzled scholars for at least 150 years. And as recently as 1997 it has been possible to find a solution to the problem. This suggests, then, that on the philological side the subject is far from exhausted.

Here are one or two suggestions for future work. I have indicated above that further study of the relationship between the Vínland Sagas and *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla* might be worthwhile. Indeed, a systematic re-examination of the literary sources of *Eir* and *Gr* might well pay dividends. In the use of *Eir* as a source, Sven B. F. Jansson's sentence-by-sentence study in *Sagorna om Vinland* (1945) is still an indispensable aid. Not only does it provide the most authoritative published text of the saga but its detailed commentary on, *inter alia,* the differences between the two redactions is of enormous value. Even so, an up-dated revision of it, made more user-friendly and perhaps offering parallel computer-based translations of the two texts, might be a desideratum. On the archaeological side, the Ingstads' 1960 discovery of L'Anse aux Meadows was sensational enough. The study of the site begun by them has been productively and interestingly continued by Birgitta Wallace Fergusson and others. And perhaps L'Anse aux Meadows may still produce finds of broader significance. What, then, of possible yet undiscovered Norse sites elsewhere in Canada (or even the USA)? It is not for armchair archaeologists and amateurs like myself to find work for those who actually discover the sites and do the digging. In what precedes, however, I have suggested that many, if not most, of the Norse voyages to North America got no further south than Labrador. (In this context we may note Helgi Þorláksson's tentative suggestion (*AV*, 73) that ship-building and iron production may even have gone on in Markland.) In any search for possible further Norse remains or sites in these parts, then, it might be more profitable to begin to the north of L'Anse aux Meadows than to the south of it. There is very possibly something waiting to be found on the coasts of Labrador.

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON MARTYRDOM IN POST-CONVERSION SCANDINAVIA

By HAKI ANTONSSON

THE IRISH *COGADH CÁEDHAL RE GALLAIBH* ('The War of the Irish with the Foreigners'), composed in the early twelfth century, tells in an epic fashion of the battle of Clontarf which was fought in 1014 between the followers of Brian Boru, king of Munster, and the Vikings of Dublin and their Irish allies (Todd 1867, 51–59). The late-thirteenth-century *Njáls saga* also tells in detail of the same encounter (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954, 440–53), possibly following here a lost **Brjáns saga* which may have dated from the late twelfth century (1954, xlv–xlix). For a study of the two texts I refer to Goedheer's monograph (1938; see also Hudson 2002), but for the present purpose I wish only to draw attention to a single comparative feature: their presentation of King Brian's death in battle.

In the *Cogadh* Brian stays away from the battle and instead occupies himself with prayers in his tent. There is no explicit reason given for Brian's conduct although it is implied that he is kept from fighting by old age. Nevertheless, when Brian is attacked by the Viking Bróðir the king is still able to wield his sword. In the ensuing combat both Brian and his assailant are slain. *Njáls saga*, on the other hand, is more forthcoming about Brian Boru's absence from battle. The king will not join the fight because the day is Good Friday; even when Bróðir has fought his way through the king's shield-wall, Brian refuses to draw his sword. Instead he is defended by the young Taðkr, but to no avail; Bróðir's sword slices through the boy's hand and the same stroke decapitates the king of Munster. In turn, the Viking is killed by Brian's retinue. Two miracles are noted: the king's severed head re-attaches itself to his body and Brian's blood heals Taðkr's wound.

King Brian Boru's death scenes in both the *Cogadh* and *Njáls saga* are clearly influenced by hagiography. In the case of the Irish work this is scarcely surprising, for it was composed, at least partly, with the purpose of bestowing an aura of greater legitimacy and lustre on his descendants, the kings of Munster (Ní Mhaonaigh 1995, 359–61). Brian Boru is presented as an heroic figure of an *almost* saintly status: like many a saint he foresees his own death and in the well-known eulogy he is

compared to Moses, the Emperor Augustus and the heroes of antiquity. It is interesting to observe, however, that at no point does the *Cogadh* explicitly refer to Brian's sanctity, although the so-called *Debide scáilte*, a poem which relies on the *Cogadh*, may hint in that direction when it says that angels from Paradise 'carried away the soul of Brian without sin'.[1] *Njáls saga*, in contrast, brings the saintly dimension to the fore with greater clarity. Emphasis is placed on the day of Brian's death, Good Friday, which naturally evokes Christ's passion, as indeed does his refusal to fight his foes on principle. Moreover, the posthumous miracles which the king performs leave little room for doubt that he has joined the ranks of the blessed. The gruesome fate of Bróðir also follows a hagiographical tradition: he suffers disembowelment, which is the punishment allotted to apostates and slayers of martyrs (Hill 1981).[2] Thus in the Icelandic saga, unlike the *Cogadh*, Brian Boru dies as a martyr. Naturally the saga's presentation of the battle of Clontarf as a conflict between Christians and pagans may have contributed to this portrayal.

I have chosen to begin my discussion of martyrdom in post-Conversion Scandinavia with this particular example for two reasons. First, it brings into contrast two cultural zones with notably different ideas and traditions about sainthood. In Ireland there are few references to royal saints and none at all to princely martyrs (Ó Corráin 1982, 226–29); in Scandinavia, by contrast, martyrdom was in effect the sole form of saintliness until the late twelfth century. Second, the example illustrates that even in Iceland, where royal cults were understandably absent, the literary paradigm of martyrdom was so deep-rooted and familiar that the unknown author was effortlessly able to place an Irish king within it. Brian Boru was the only Irish king to receive this treatment in the medieval period.[3]

I

Martyrdom—here defined as the perceived attainment of sanctity through the suffering of violent death—is widely attested in early Scandinavian

[1] See the translation of this poem in Goedheer 1938, 45–55. The verse in question is no. 50, p. 55.

[2] It is worth observing that, whether by design or not, Brian's martyrdom is echoed in the death of another stoic figure in *Njáls saga*. Before the burning of Bergþórshvoll Njáll Þorgeirsson refuses to fight his enemies, and after his death his salvation (if not sanctity) is indicated by the incorrupt state of his body.

[3] On the Irish attitude towards sanctity achieved through martyrdom see Gougaud 1907, 360–70; Stancliffe 1982.

written sources. The first martyr-cult, that of King Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway, emerged in the 1030s, only a decade or two after what can be termed the official conversion of the country. It must be noted, however, that the earliest indigenous sources for his cult, Þórarinn loftunga's *Glælognskviða* (*c.*1034; Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, B I 300–01) and Sighvatr Þórðarson's *Erfidrápa* (*c.* 1040; 1912–15, B I 239–45), do not dwell on St Óláfr's status as a martyr. The earliest depiction of Óláfr's death at the battle of Stiklastaðir as martyrdom appears in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* composed *c.*1080 (Schmeidler 1917, II xvi, 121). Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson's *Passio et Miracula Beati Olavi* (probably from the 1170s), the oldest preserved prose hagiography on the Norwegian saint, further elaborated on the nature of Óláfr's martyrdom (Metcalfe 1881, 71–72). Adam's *Gesta* also refers to the martyrdom of Alfward (Hallvard), a Norwegian nobleman, who 'was killed by friends' while he 'was protecting an enemy' (Tschan 2002, 161; Schmeidler 1917, III liii, 199). Hallvard's cult is attested in the third decade of the twelfth century in Oslo (Bjarni Einarsson 1985, 331) and his Life may date from as early as the 1170s (Gunnes 1949–51, 133–54). In Denmark, in the anonymous *Passio Sancti Kanuti*, written soon after Knud II's exhumation in 1095, the king's death at the hands of his subjects is presented as martyrdom (Gertz 1908–12, 68–71), and in his *Gesta Swenomagni* (*c.* 1120) Aelnoth of Canterbury lingers on Knud's martyrdom in greater detail and places the event within the context of Danish and indeed universal history (Gertz 1908–12, 78–85). In a *Necrologium* for Lund Cathedral, brough into use in 1145, the assassination of King Erik emune (d. 1137) is referred to in words which cannot fail to suggest martyrdom (Weeke 1884–89, 37; Breengaard 1986, 39–44). The murder of Knud Lavard in 1131 by his cousin led to his promotion as a martyr; his sanctity was papally sanctioned in 1169 and a year later his relics were translated at the Ringsted assembly (Gertz 1908–12, 239–40). Sven Aggesen in his *Historia brevis* (*c.*1185) also describes the murder of King Knud Magnusson in 1157 in 'martyr-like' language (Gertz 1917–22, II 137) and in the Icelandic *Knýtlinga saga* he is referred to as holy, albeit not as a martyr (Bjarni Guðnason 1982, 288). In 1176 a certain Margrete from the town of Roskilde was executed, although guilty of no crime, and soon afterwards she was regarded as a saint (Gertz 1917–22, II 57).

Twelfth-century Norway did not produce a princely martyr-cult to rival that of St Óláfr, but still there is ample evidence that killed or murdered kings, pretenders and leaders of political factions were

considered holy by sections of the population. According to Snorri Sturluson, King Haraldr gilli, murdered in Bergen in 1136 by his rival to the throne, was considered a saint (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, III 303), as was his son King Eysteinn Haraldsson, executed in 1158 by a supporter of his co-ruler, King Ingi (Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, III 305). *Sverris saga* mentions a certain Þorleifr who claimed to be King Eysteinn's son and who in the 1190s began an insurrection against King Sverrir Sigurðarson. Þorleifr and his followers were routed and he himself was killed, but rumours of his sanctity began to circulate, and one of King Sverrir's poets, Blakkr, deemed it necessary to mock these claims in verse (Indrebø 1920, 121–22).

The earldom of Orkney also had its share of martyr-cults, most notably that of Earl Magnús of Orkney, who had been killed by his cousin and co-ruler in 1116/17 (see Haki Antonsson, forthcoming A). There is also evidence of two late-twelfth-century cults: those of Earl Rǫgnvaldr Kali (d. 1158), who was killed in an ambush in Caithness, and Earl Haraldr ungi, who fell in battle against Haraldr Maddaðarson and his retainers in 1197/98. While Rǫgnvaldr's sanctity was recognised and promoted by Bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson of Orkney in the 1190s, the only trace of Haraldr ungi's cult appears in *Orkneyinga saga*, which notes that a church was dedicated to him in Caithness and that miracles had occurred at his grave (Finnbogi Guðmundsson 1965, 322).

As I have already suggested, Iceland was obviously not a good breeding ground for princely martyrs, but this did not prevent the murders or killings of regional chieftains from being narrated in the language of martyrdom. Of particular interest in this respect is Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, a prominent chieftain from the Vestfirðir, whose feud with a rival chieftain ended in his beheading in 1213. *Hrafns saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, which was later incorporated into the *Sturlunga saga* compilation, is clearly influenced by hagiographic literature on martyrs, notably by a *Vita* of St Magnús of Orkney and an early Life of St Thomas of Canterbury (Guðrún P. Helgadóttir 1987, lxi–lxxiv; Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2004). *Sturlunga saga* itself contains numerous references to participants in the thirteenth-century Civil War whose dying moments are described in a noticeably martyr-like fashion. Whether the authors of contemporary sagas were here influenced by hagiographic literature or whether these descriptions represent an actual pattern of behaviour among dying Icelanders (or perhaps both) is difficult to judge (Cormack 1994; Guðrún Nordal 1998, 203–11). Lastly, mention must be made of King Erik Jedvardsson, the first native saint of Sweden, who was killed *c.*1160

while battling against a Danish pretender to the throne. His cult is attested at the end of the twelfth century (Cross 1961).

What is to be made of the apparent prevalence and popularity of the idea of martyrdom in post-Conversion Scandinavia? Before an attempt is made to answer this question it is advisable to broach a different question. In discussing martyrdom in Scandinavia in this period are we in danger of picking and choosing features from diverse sources and different regions in order to establish some sort of common pattern? This is a valid objection that cannot be dismissed lightly. One key observation should be considered: namely, the absence of native confessor saints in Scandinavia until the last quarter of the twelfth century. It is only from this period onwards that cults of non-martyrs begin to appear. The earliest is Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson of Skálholt, who was locally canonised in 1199. In 1187 Archbishop Absalon of Lund tried to gain papal recognition of the saintly status of Bishop Ketill of Viborg (d. 1150) (Gertz 1908–12, 251–52) and in 1229 the Norwegian Church began a lengthy campaign to secure papal approval for the sanctity of Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson of Nidaros (Bjørgo 1978, 55–57).

Naturally this late emergence of native confessor saints does not signify that Scandinavians were only familiar with the martyr-type of sanctity. My point is rather that *native* saints' cults, whether officially recognised or not, were exclusively confined to secular figures who had suffered a violent death. There is a considerable difference between adopting foreign, established, confessor saints into the liturgical calendar and generating enough enthusiasm among the general population to institute and maintain a new saint's cult. Indeed until the last decades of the twelfth century there is a conspicuous lack of references in the Scandinavian sources to either secular or ecclesiastical figures who were deemed worthy of sainthood on account of their exemplary conduct, pastoral activity or miraculous powers.

Scandinavia is not the only region in Christian Europe where native princely saints preceded the appearance of bishops and abbots as objects of veneration. In the more peripheral, relatively newly converted regions, such as Kievan Rus' and Bohemia, the earliest native saints were also rulers who had met a violent death. In the eleventh and the twelfth centuries the princely martyrs Boris and Gleb (1015) were the sole native saints of Kievan Rus'. In Bohemia the cults of St Wenceslas, murdered in 929, and the Princess Ludmilla, killed in 921, took root in the eleventh century, and the Bohemians had to wait almost a century for their next native saint (Graus 1975). The kingdom of Poland is something of an

exception in this context. There the earliest native saints were not rulers but bishops, St Adalbert and St Stanislaz, who had both suffered martyrdom in the tenth century in their efforts to convert the Poles (Kloczowski 2000, 210). In Hungary the royal saints Stephen (d. 1038) and Ladislas (1095) did not suffer martyrdom; their sanctity rested rather on the ideals of just Christian kingship (Klaniczay 2002, 134–94). But in general it appears that martyrdom as a form of sanctity was particularly popular in these more recently converted lands of Christian Europe (Ingham 1973).

Although the nature and scarcity of the sources does not allow us to answer conclusively the question why martyrdom as a form of sanctity proved so attractive in Scandinavia, some general observations can nevertheless be presented. First, it is evident that Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics were involved in introducing the notion of princely martyr-cults to Scandinavia. An Anglo-Saxon bishop, Grímkell, was instrumental in establishing King Óláfr's sanctity and the authors of the hagiography on Knud of Odense and St Magnús of Orkney were also of English provenance. Moreover, martyrdom as a form of sanctity received an added impetus with the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket in 1170; it is clear that subsequent Lives composed in his honour influenced the writings on Scandinavian martyr-princes (see Haki Antonsson 2004; Haki Antonsson forthcoming B).

Secondly, these martyr-cults were promoted by Scandinavian princely dynasties (or by particular branches of dynasties) in order to consolidate their power and present themselves as divinely ordained to rule. The most blatant example of this sort of dynastic advertisement is the assembly at Ringsted already mentioned, where the relics of Knud Lavard were translated in the presence of his son, King Valdemar. On the same occasion, Valdemar's son was crowned his co-ruler and heir.[4]

Thirdly, the fledgling Scandinavian Church was not averse to bestowing sanctity on royal or princely figures. After all it was only with the support of the secular authority that the Church was able to establish itself within a deeply traditional society. Until the second half of the twelfth century the organisation of the Scandinavian Church (if that term can be applied in this period) was weak, and the figure of the saintly bishop or abbot was probably far removed from the experience of most people. The only ecclesiastics who were in fact associated with sanctity

[4] For a dynastic interpretation of the emergence of the Scandinavian princely cults see Hoffmann 1973; 1994.

within Scandinavia in this period were those who had been killed in their missionary efforts, for instance the somewhat mysterious Erik 'the pilgrim' whom Adam of Bremen mentions in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (Schmeidler 1917, III liii, 199).

Fourthly, it could be argued that the very idea of achieving heavenly reward/sanctity through suffering violent death struck a particular chord in post-Conversion Scandinavia. For example, the concept of dying while fighting against overwhelming odds, and in the heroic defence of one's lord, was probably easily adaptable to the notion of the heavenly reward for martyrdom. Otherwise it is difficult to explain the attempt in 1095 by the clerical community of Odense to promote the cult, not only of Knud II himself, but also of the brave retainers who had died in his defence (Gertz 1908–12, 61–62).[5] Naturally it would be wholly wrong to argue that such sentiments were particularly 'Nordic' in nature. A similar interpretation has been proposed for the popularity of royal martyrs in Anglo-Saxon England (Cormack 2002, 65–70) and in a twelfth-century Old French epic, *Garin le Loherenc*, those who have given their lives for their lords are celebrated as true martyrs.[6]

In addition, judging from the skaldic and runic evidence, acts of treachery and murder were seen as the most heinous of crimes in late Viking-Age Scandinavia (Jesch 2001, 254–65). For instance, the following inscription is found on a Christian memorial stone from Bornholm (D 387; Jesch 2001, 255): 'Ásvaldi set up this stone in memory of Alfarr, his brother. A noble *drengr* killed shamefully, and Skógi betrayed him innocent.' It is not hard to envisage that when Anglo-Saxon missionaries introduced martyr-cults into Scandinavia they found it easy to relate to sentiments of this kind. In passing one may note that a praise-poem for Waltheof, earl of Northumberland and Huntington, executed on the orders of William the Conquerer in 1076, presents the earl as a victim of treachery (Jesch 2001, 256). Waltheof, of course, became the focus of a saint's cult. In the thirteenth-century *Sólarljóð* this combination of betrayal and heavenly reward is powerfully brought home: a former brigand shows an act of kindness by offering lodgings to a traveller who in turn betrays and kills his host. Angels escort the former brigand's soul to his reward: a place in paradise (Fidjestøl 1979, 60–61).

[5] For a discussion of this attempt within the context of men dying for their lords see Frank 1991, 104–05.

[6] For the relevant Old French text and accompanying English translation see Frank 1991, 103.

Lastly, Peter Foote has noted that in the course of the turbulent twelfth century in Scandinavia, political factions, royal pretenders and incumbent kings frequently claimed that their cause was hallowed by the divine will. Thus in Halldórr skvaldri's half-stanza in *Haraldsdrápa*, the ruthless machinations of Haraldr gilli, which eventually brought him to sole power in Norway, are seen as part of God's plan (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, B I 461): 'Now, wealth-sender, the whole of Norway has fallen under your sway. Your fortune lies on the green land. That is God's plan.' (Foote 1984, 36) Similarly, shortly after King Valdemar defeated King Svend Eriksson in battle in 1157, he issued a letter of donation in which he claimed that God had been on his side during the conflict (Weibull 1963, 226). An even earlier attestation of a similar sentiment appears in Þorleikr fagri's stanza from his *Sveinsflokkr,* composed in honour of King Svend Estrithsson (Úlfsson) of Denmark (1047–74/76). There God is said to choose between Sveinn (Svend) and King Haraldr harðráði of Norway; the one he favours will rule Denmark (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15, B I 368).

All these factors go some way to explain the popularity of martyrdom in eleventh- and especially twelfth-century Scandinavia. But in order to understand this phenomenon more fully it is imperative to place the Scandinavian experience within the context of a broader development of the idea of martyrdom in Christian Europe.

II

In the early centuries of Christianity violent death at the hands of persecuting pagans was the commonest road to sanctity. The 'Age of the Martyrs', which can be dated roughly between the death of the protomartyr St Stephen *c.*35 AD and the adoption of Christanity by the Roman Empire in the fourth century, produced a body of 'sanctae vitae' which formed the bedrock of saints' cults in the early medieval period and beyond. But the official acceptance of Christianity effectively ended the supply of Christians who underwent 'baptism through blood', and a different type of saint then came to the fore: the bishop or ecclesiastic who through his missionary efforts, miracles and holy and/or ascetic life proved himself to be a vessel of God's grace. This development was concomitant both with the spread of Christianity to the outlying regions of the Roman Empire and with the increasing strength of ecclesiastical organisation in the more central lands. The main model for this type of saint was of course St Martin of Tours (d. 397) whose life, as presented by Sulpicius Severus (d. *c.*430), struck the ideal balance between the

contemplative, the active and the miraculous. It should be emphasised, however, that the distinction between martyr saints and confessor saints was never completely clear-cut; the language of martyrdom was reinterpreted and applied to the confessor saints, so that their renunciation of worldly pleasures and dedication to their task was equated with martyrdom.

In the early Middle Ages the ideal of achieving sanctity by dying for the faith was still very much alive. For instance, Rimbert tells in his *Vita Anskari* that Anskar regretted the fact that he would not suffer martyrdom in his efforts to convert the Scandinavians (Waitz 1884, 87). Other ecclesiastics who undertook missionary works among the more peripheral peoples of Europe had their wish fulfilled. As I have already mentioned, Bishop Adalbert of Prague was killed by pagan Slavs during his mission to the Prussians and the same fate befell Boniface on his mission to the Frisians (d. 754). In exceptional cases the death of a secular ruler at the hands of pagans was deemed worthy of being regarded as martyrdom. Thus Count Gerold, who was killed in combat against the Avars in 799, was upheld as a martyr by the monastery of Reichenau (Noth 1966, 156), and the same status was bestowed on King Edmund of East Anglia, killed by a Viking war-band in 869/70.

In the early Middle Ages, by far the largest category of martyrs consisted of princes and kings of the Christian dominions of Northern and Eastern Europe who had been murdered by rivals or enemies; Edward the Martyr and St Wigstan (d. 840) in England, and the East European saints Wenceslas, Boris and Gleb, to name only a few. Their cults were established and maintained through cooperation between rulers and monastic foundations and/or episcopal authorities.[7] In Scandinavia the cults of St Óláfr of Norway, St Knud of Odense and St Magnús of Orkney should be placed within the same context.

So in the early Middle Ages the crown of martyrdom was the preserve of royal and princely figures whom the local ecclesiastical authorities deemed worthy of being regarded as saints for various reasons. But in the eleventh century there are signs that the idea of martyrdom was escaping the confines of official cults and acquiring a dynamic of its own. There were two main interrelated reasons behind this development. First, the Gregorian papacy adopted the idea of martyrdom in its efforts to further ecclesiastical independence and moral reform (Cowdrey 1991). An echo of this can be heard in Pope Gregory VII's letter of 1077, addressed

[7] See for instance Rollason 1983; Ridyard 1988.

to the Danish King Harald hen, in which he is exhorted, if necessary, to suffer a glorious death in defence of the fledgling Danish Church (Cowdrey 2002, 255):[8]

> Quapropter monemus et obsecramus, ut posthabito omni humano odio, invidia, postpositia etiam, si incubuerit, morte eam eruere protegere fovere tueri et ab insidiantium faucibus luporum eripere pro posse labores sciens pro certo, quod nullam orationem nullumque gratius sacrificium in supreme artbitri oculis poteris offere (Casper 1920–23, 363).
>
> Wherefore we warn and beseech that, disregarding all human hatred and envy, disregarding also, should it come to that, even death itself, you should labour to deliver, protect, foster, and safeguard her, and seize her from the jaws of marauding wolves, knowing surely that you will be able to offer no prayer and no sacrifice that is more pleasing in the eyes of the supreme judge.

Although it is a moot point whether the letter implies that Harald's death on behalf of the Church would count as martyrdom, it makes a clear connection between offering such a sacrifice and heavenly reward.

Secondly, from the last decades of the eleventh century onwards the European knightly class, which now increasingly began to identify itself with the Christian cause, appropriated for itself the idea of martyrdom.[9] Both these factors, I believe, are relevant to the twelfth-century Scandinavian scene.

III

At this point I wish to introduce another exhortation which was composed about a century later than the one Pope Gregory aimed at King Harald hen (Skånland 1969, 22):

> Volumus autem ut episcopi, abbates et reliqui sacerdotes per singulas ciuitates, burgos et uillas populum sibi commissum modis omnibus exhortentur quatenus contra excommunicatos et turbatores pacis uiriliter studeant dimicare, eos pariter commonentes quod si pro defensione pacis et saluatione patriae fideliter morientur, regna celestia, consequentur.
>
> We wish, however, that the bishops, abbots and other priests in every city, town, and village should by every means exhort the people entrusted to them that they strive to fight manfully against excommunicates and disturbers of the peace, reminding them at the same time that if they should die faithfully for the defence of peace and the safety of the fatherland, they shall attain the heavenly kingdom.

[8] For the background to this letter see Cowdrey 1989, 330–31.
[9] This development is succinctly summed up in Green 1966, 228–95.

This passage derives from the so-called *Canones Nidrosienses*, which contains fifteen *canones* (or decrees) addressed to the clergy and people under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the archbishop of Nidaros/Trondheim. The *Canones Nidrosienses* is only preserved in a single English manuscript, dated to *c.*1200, which Walter Holtzmann discovered in the British Library in the 1930s and published soon thereafter (Holtzmann 1938). There has been a long-standing debate about the date of the *Canones*. Thus the creation of the document has been connected with the establishment of the archbishopric of Nidaros in 1152/53 (Johnsen 1970); the assembly (*riksmøtet*) which met in Bergen in 1163 and paved the way for the coronation of Magnús Erlingsson (d. 1184) shortly thereafter (Gunnes 1970); the latter part of Magnús's reign (l170s) (Skånland 1969); and even with the early years of King Sverrir Sigurðarson's rule (1177–1202) (Sandaaker 1986).

There is, however, a general consensus that Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson of Nidaros (1161–88) was intimately involved in drawing up the *Canones Nidrosienses*. Eysteinn's general contribution to the political and intellectual life of late twelfth-century Norway has long been recognised. As the second archbishop of Nidaros, Eysteinn is credited with composing an ecclesiastical law-code for Norway (*Gullfjǫðr*), drawing up the ground-breaking *Coronation Oath* and *Letter of Privileges* (*Priviligebrev*) for King Magnús Erlingsson, writing a hagiographical work on St Óláfr Haraldsson, *Passio et Miracula Beati Olavi*, and, perhaps most impressively, with initiating the building programme which made Nidaros Cathedral the pre-eminent example of Romanesque architecture in Scandinavia. In all this Eysteinn, who had studied abroad (perhaps at the monastery of St Victor in the emerging university of Paris), served as conduit for new ideas between the mainland of Europe and his homeland.[10]

The fifteen articles of the *Canones Nidrosienses* deal with various issues relating to the status of the Church within Norwegian society. Among other things the document defines the rights and duties of church-owners, the procedure for ordaining priests and the extent to which the clergy should participate in secular affairs. The passage quoted above derives from *Canones* 2, which deals with the duties and responsibilities of ecclesiastics at times when the kingdom is threatened by external or internal enemies. For instance, it decrees that if a pagan army invades the realm the king can seek help from the Church. Our particular passage,

[10] On Eysteinn in general see Gunnes 1996.

however, is an exhortation to the population at large that they should be ready to lay down their lives in defence of the *patria*.

It has been established that the author(s) of the *Canones Nidrosienses* appropriated, sometimes in a creative manner, passages from Gratian's *Decretum*, a textbook on canon law compiled *c.*1140, which contains a collection of patristic texts, conciliar decrees and Papal pronouncements relating to all fields of Church discipline.[11] In his section on *bellum iustum*, or the 'just war', Gratian cites a passage from a letter issued by Leo IV in or around 853 in which he expresses the hope that anyone who dies fighting the enemies of the faith will attain eternal salvation. This is the authority from which the author of the *Canones Nidrosienses* derived his inspiration when he wrote the passage under discussion.

The immediate background to Pope Leo's words was the threat posed by Saracen marauders to the Papal lands in general and the city of Rome in particular.[12] Reminding the Franks of their earlier victories against the same enemies, the Pope held out the promise that those who died combating this menace could expect a reward laid up for them in heaven. James Brundage, the eminent authority on medieval canon law, has pointed out that Leo's words should not be confused with any sort of papal indulgence, that is, the power of the pontiff to remit temporal punishments owed for sins in return for fighting on behalf of Christendom. Rather, 'it was a hortatory expression of pious hope and prayer comparable to the absolutio super tumulum of the burial service' (Brundage 1976, 23). For the first time, however, the papacy had made a clear link between death on the battlefield against the heathen and spiritual rewards, that is a place in paradise.

This notion gained an added momentum following Urban II's launch of the First Crusade in 1095. It was in the course of this undertaking that the idea became prevalent that not only did those who were killed in battle receive eternal life but that they would also join the ranks of the saints. It should be emphasised that although there is no evidence that Urban II promised the rewards of martyrdom to those who died on the armed pilgrimage to the Holy Land (as opposed to a general remittance of penance), the chroniclers of the First Crusade were in no doubt that this was the case (Riley-Smith 1986; Morris 1993; Flori 1991). From the perspective of the Church there is naturally a great

[11] See Skånland 1969, which is largely a study of the relationship between the *Canones Nidrosienses* and Gratian's *Decretum*. On can. 2 see pp. 20–29.

[12] On the context of this letter see Herbers 1996, 120–27.

difference between gaining eternal salvation and attaining the status of a martyr. The former signifies entry into heaven, the latter denotes sanctity as well. By their nature, however, it is not difficult to envisage how the perceived promise of salvation could be easily conflated with the promise of the crown of martyrdom to anyone who died fighting for Christendom. Thus from the First Crusade onwards the boundaries between the two concepts became blurred (as they would remain throughout the Middle Ages).[13]

This is clearly revealed in the earliest chronicles of the First Crusade (like the *Gesta Francorum*), but also in Crusading songs composed about the same expedition. In addition, from the early twelfth century onwards, a particular stock-scene begins to appear in both epic poetry and semi-historical works: the bishop who promises heavenly reward, even the status of martyrs, to those who die fighting for the fatherland against the enemies of Christianity. Thus in the *Chanson de Roland* Archbishop Turpin addresses the soldiers before a battle against the Saracens in the following manner:

> Seignurs baruns, Carles nus laissat ci,
> Pur nostre rei devum nus ben murir:
> Chrestïentet aidez a sustenir!
> Bataille avrez, voz en enstes tuz fiz,
> Kar a voz oilz veez les Sarrazins.
> Clamez voz culpes, si preiez Deu mercit!
> Asoldrai vos pur voz anmes guarir.
> Se vos murez, esterez seinz martirs,
> Sieges avrez el greignor pareïs.
>
> My lord barons, Charles left us here,
> We must die well for our King:
> Help us sustain Christianity!
> You are to fight a battle, you are all certain of that,
> For you see the Saracens before your eyes.
> Say your confessions and pray for God's mercy!
> I will absolve you to save your souls.
> If you die, you'll be holy martyrs,
> You'll have seats in highest Paradise.
>
> (Brault 1978, 71–73)

In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittanie*, Bishop Dubricius delivers a rousing speech to the army of King Arthur as it prepares for battle against the pagan Saxons (Wright 1985–91, 183):

[13] For the hesitant attitude towards martyrdom of crusaders as late as the thirteenth century, see Smith 2003.

> Lectio sacra docet Christum posuisse sub hoste
> Pro nobis animam: pro Christi ponite uestras
> Membris, que laniat furiis inuecta tyrannis
> Saxonice gentis; patriam defendite uestram
> Ecclesiasque Dei, quas destruit hosticus ignis.
>
> The sacred text teaches that Christ laid down His soul at His enemy's feet for our sake; lay down your souls for Christ's limbs, which are being torn by the insanely motivated tyranny of the Saxon people. Defend your motherland and the churches of God, which are being destroyed by hostile fire.

Bishop Dubricius then directly associates death in battle with martyrdom (Wright 1985–91, 182–83):

> Si uos contigerit mortem pugnando subire,
> Perpetuum regnum capietis pro perituro.
> Purpura martirii, precio preciosior omni,
> Preminet in cello cunctosque excellit honores:
> Martiribus debetur honos cum martire Christo,
> Cui laus et uirtus et honor per secular cuncta.
>
> If it happens that you die in battle, you will receive the Eternal Kingdom in return for one that is transient. The purple of martyrdom, precious beyond all price, is foremost in heaven, excelling all honours; reverence is owed to martyrs along with Christ, Himself a martyr, to Whom be glory, power, and honour for all time.

It appears that in the twelfth century exhortations of this sort by real-life preachers became so prevalent (and perhaps so extravagant) that they laid themselves open to parody. Thus in the *Couronnement de Louis*, which forms a part of the twelfth-century cycle on Guillaume d'Orange (William of Orange), the Pope tells the hero that he can eat flesh on all days of the year, take as many wives as he desires and that in the end he will forever rest in paradise because all his sins will be forgiven if he takes up arms against the Saracens (Ferrante 1974, 74).

Erik Gunnes has argued that our passage in *Canones Nidrosienses* 2 encapsulates Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson's ideology of cooperation between Church and Crown, an ideology which is also expressed in the coronation oath he composed for the young King Magnús Erlingsson. For this purpose Eysteinn recruited, among other things, Pope Leo IV's letter of 853 (Gunnes 1970). I concur here with Gunnes's analysis but I would like to emphasise the startling novelty of the passage, which has hitherto not been commented on. The decree draws together and modifies a potent set of ideas which had come to the fore in the course of the twelfth century. Namely, *Canones* 2 expresses *within a legal context* the notion that death for *patria*, the homeland, merited heavenly reward.

From Late Antiquity onwards, as Ernst Kantorowich has demonstrated, the notion of dying for the *patria* had been interpreted within the framework of the celestial homeland of Christians, i.e. paradise. In other words those who gave up their life for the *patria* did not do so in defence of a political entity or a temporal lord but rather for God and the celestial body of the saints or, alternatively, the advancement of Christianity here on earth (Kantorowicz 1951; 1957). This changed in the thirteenth century: with the growing self-confidence of the main monarchies of Western Europe (and the accompanying growth in nationalism) it happened that 'the crown of martyrdom began to descend on the war victims of the secular state' (Kantorowicz 1957, 244).[14] In a sense *Canones* 2 represents an interesting intermediary stage in this process. True, the people of Norway are exhorted to defend the Norwegian realm, but this political entity is not in the possession of the temporal lord, King Magnús Erlingsson. Rather it is the preserve of the saintly Óláfr Haraldsson, who resides in heaven and whose sacrifice his countrymen are in a sense being encouraged to imitate.

The other striking feature relates more specifically to the promise of heavenly reward. In the wake of the First Crusade, as I have mentioned, it became commonplace to equate death in battle against the Saracens with automatic entry into paradise or even the attainment of martyrdom. At no point did the Papacy state that those who died on the battlefield would be guaranteed eternal salvation. Urban II, as far as his words at Clermont can be reconstructed, only promised commutation of penance to those who took the cross, i.e. satisfaction for the penance meted out by a confessor for sins confessed. In the twelfth century other popes followed in Urban's footsteps and issued encyclicals which promised those who participated in the Crusade that their temporal punishments for all confessed sins would be commuted (Brundage 1976, 119–20). But, and this is the main point, there was no question of issuing *carte-blanche* promises of eternal salvation. True, Eugenius III's bull *Quantum praedecessores* (1145/46), which launched the Second Crusade, promised not only commutation of penance but also the remission of all sins confessed (i.e. full indulgence) and, by implication, everlasting life for

[14] This model of development, although generally accepted, is of course a simplified one. Thus Abbo's Life of St Edmund of East Anglia (from the later tenth century) portrays the king dying in defence of his realm: 'realising how glorious it would be for me to die for my country [*pro patria*]; and now I will of my own free will surrender myself' (Hervey 1907, 27). For the Latin see Winterbottom 1972, 75.

those who died in the East (see further below). Indeed in formulating his bull Eugenius himself had been influenced by chronicles of the Crusades that had simply assumed (incorrectly) that Urban II in 1095/96 promised full indulgence (Robertson 1990, 322–48). But his successors would be more circumspect, as is illustrated by Alexander III's letter *Non parum animus* which he addressed in 1171/72 to the Scandinavian princes who made war on the pagan Estonians.[15]

> Nos enim eis, qui aduersus sæpe dictos paganos potenter et magnanimiter decertauerint, de peccatis suis, de quibus confessi fuerint et poenitentiam acceperint, remissionem unius anni, confisi de misericordia dei, et merities apostolorum Petri et Pauli, concedimus, sicut his qui sepulcrum dominicum uisitant concedere consueuimus. Illis autem, qui in conflictu illo decesserint, omnium suorum, si poenitentiam acceperint, remissionem indulgemus peccatorum (Christiansen 1976–77, no. 27, p. 38).
>
> Trusting God's mercy and merits of the apostles Peter and Paul, we thus concede to those forcefully and magnanimously fighting these often mentioned pagans one year's remission of the sins for which they have made confession and received a penance as we are accustomed to grant those who go to the Lord's Sepulchre. To those who die in this fight we grant remission of all their sins, if they have received penance (Schmidt 2003, 56).

In other words, even when the papacy offered full remission of sins to those who would die on the Crusades, this was always related to the developing system of indulgence. This is not the case in the *Canones Nidrosienses*, which without any caveats simply promises eternal life to those who fight against enemies of the fatherland and usurpers.[16]

But interestingly, the archbishopric of Nidaros was not the only regional ecclesiastical authority which connected defence of the realm with spiritual rewards in this period. In 1166 a synod was held in Segovia in the Spanish kingdom of Castile. The synod, which was led by the Bishop of Toledo, decreed that anyone who fought against the threat posed by the enemies of Castile would enjoy a remission of their sins identical to those which had traditionally been granted to pilgrims to the Holy Land (Linehan 1981; Housley 1985, 24–25; Vann 1997,

[15] For the context and significance of this letter see Schmidt 2003, 56–60. I thank Iben Schmidt for discussing this passage with me and allowing me to use her translation of it.

[16] This considered, it appears unlikely that the papacy would ever have ratified *Canones Nidrosienses*, and even more unlikely that the papal legate to Norway who oversaw the establishment of the archbishopric of Nidaros in 1152 was behind the decree in question.

49–50). It is particularly interesting to observe that the political circumstances which shaped the provincial statute of Segovia are comparable to what we encounter in Norway in the early years of King Magnús's reign.[17] When the synod was called in 1166 Alfonso VIII of Castile (1155–1214), only eleven years of age, was caught in a power-struggle between two political factions, the Laras and the Castos, who both strove to dominate the young king. Previous kings of Castile had provided the archbishopric of Toledo with considerable rights and privileges, which the Synod of Segovia was keen to defend against any potential threats, whether internal or external. At the Synod the archbishopric threw its weight behind the Laras as the protectors of its interests. Hence the Synod insisted on the spiritual rewards that would be bestowed on those who fought in defence of the anointed King Alfonso VIII. In Norway the archbishopric of Nidaros, under the leadership of Eysteinn Erlendsson, supported unswervingly the kingship of Magnús Erlingsson. In 1164 the archbishop crowned the four-year-old Magnús (the first ecclesiastical coronation in Scandinavia) and on the same occasion, or shortly thereafter, a document was produced that established not only the sole right of Magnús and his descendants to the Norwegian throne but also their obligations to the archbishopric of Nidaros. Composed in the 1160s, or possibly in the 1170s, the decree in the *Canones Nidrosienses* should be placed within the same political context. In it the mutual cause of the Church and Crown is hallowed with divine blessing and protection against any potential enemies. This is precisely the notion behind the decree issued in 1166 by the Synod of Segovia.

Thus we have here two cases of regional, and one can say peripheral, Church authorities promising spiritual rewards for those who fought in defence of the 'rightful' royal authority. It is of particular interest that the enemies to be combated are not only Muslims or pagans, but also Christians who threaten the divinely established order. There is, however, a subtle difference between the stipulations of the Synod of Segovia and the decree in *Canones Nidrosienses*. Like Alexander III's *Non parum animus*, the former document firmly connects the spiritual rewards on offer with the evolving system of penance. Those who fought under the banner of Alfonso VIII would be rewarded with the same benefits that were extended to pilgrims to Jerusalem, presumably the remission of all temporal punishments owed for confessed sins. In this

[17] For a succinct overview of the minority of Alfonso VIII see Vann 2003, 61.

respect the Synod of Segovia adapted for its purpose an idea that had developed in relation to Crusades in the East as well as the *reconquista* of the Iberian peninsula. The Norwegian statute, on the other hand, goes much further and promises what *in effect* amounts to a full and unequivocal indulgence to those who die in the defence of the *patria*: no sins need to be confessed for they will simply be washed away by suffering death in battle. So far as I can establish, this is one of the earliest such promises given in a legal context by any Church authority in the Middle Ages.

IV

Knýtlinga saga, the saga of the kings of Denmark, an Icelandic work composed around the middle of the thirteenth century, tells how after the fall of Jerusalem the news reached Denmark that Pope Eugenius III had decreed

> at hverr skyldi lauss af ǫllum syndum, þeim er hann hafði til skripta borit, hvat sem hann hafði hent, þegar hann var krossaðr til útferðar. Ok fyrr skyldi ǫnd hans í himinríki, en blóð hans væri kalt á jǫrðu, ef hann létisk í þeiri ferð. (Bjarni Guðnason 1982, 273).
>
> that everyone who took up the cross for the great journey should be forgiven all the sins that he confessed to, no matter what he had done, and were he to die on that journey, his soul should be in Heaven before his blood grew cold in the earth (Hermann Pálsson 1981, 147).

As we have seen, in 1145 (and again in 1146) Pope Eugenius III did indeed issue a papal bull, *Quantum praedecessores*, in response to the fall of Edessa two years before (not Jerusalem as the saga claims). The encyclical referred back to Urban II's speech at Clermont and decreed that the pope granted such remission and absolution of sin

> ut qui sanctum iter devote incœerit et perfecerit, sive ibidem mortuus fuerit, de omnibus peccatis suis, de quibus corder contrito et humilito confessionem susceperit, absolutionem obtineat, et sempiterne retributionis fructum ab omnium renumeratore percipiant (Migne 1855, col. 1065–66).
>
> that he who shall devotedly begin so sacred a journey and shall accomplish it, or shall die during it, shall obtain absolution for all his sins which with a humble and contrite heart he shall confess, and shall receive the fruit of eternal retribution from the Remunerator of all (Henderson 1910, 336).

A comparison of the passage in *Knýtlinga saga* with *Quantum praedecessores* reveals some notable similarities. The saga clearly echoes the encyclical's emphasis on confession as the prerequisite for any absolution of sins. It adds to Eugenius's words, however, when it claims that

any committed sin will be forgiven, reminding one somewhat of the parodic scene in the French epic on William of Orange, mentioned above. More noteworthy is the statement that the soul of the crusader 'should be in Heaven before his blood grew cold in the earth'. No such promise was made by Eugenius III or, for that matter, any other pope before or after the Second Crusade. From where did the author of *Knýtlinga saga* adopt this phrase? Obviously not from Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* (*c.*1200) which only relates in general terms the papal call for a new Crusade and makes no mention of the spiritual privileges involved (Christiansen 1981, 364).[18] The phrase does however bear, I believe, the mark of a rhetorical device which may have been applied by those who distilled the papal pronouncement for general consumption. It certainly adds an emotive dimension to the significant, albeit somewhat dry, message of the *Quantum praedecessores*. It is possible that the author of *Knýtlinga saga* had encountered this in a now-lost Danish annal or annals from which, as Bjarni Guðnason has argued, he derived much of his material on the history of Denmark in the twelfth century (Bjarni Guðnason 1981, clv–clxxix).

The hypothesis that this particular expression originates in preaching or oral exhortations which aimed at illustrating the spiritual merits of fighting against ungodly enemies is strengthened by its appearance in a still earlier saga, *Sverris saga*, composed at the turn of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. It appears in the well-known speech which King Sverrir Sigurðarson made in Nidaros in 1179 at the grave of his sworn enemy, Earl Erlingr skakki, who had been killed in battle along with many of his men (Indrebø 1920, 42–43):

> her ero nu morg tiþindi at sia oc vita. þau er mikils ero verþ. oc monnum mego vera þacsamleg. at bæði til þesarrar kirkio. oc annarra ero bornir margir licamir þeira manna er fylgt hava Magnusi konungi. En þat er sem morgum man cunnict vera at Eysteinn erkibyscup oc margir aðrir lendir ['Feil for *lærðir*', Indrebø 1920, 42, n. 5] menn. hafa iafnan sagt at allir þeir menn er berþiz með Magnusi konungi. oc verþi land hans. oc letiz með þvi. at salur þeira manna allra væri fyr í Paradiso. en bloðit væri callt a iorðunne Nu megum ver allir fagna her sva margra manna heilagleic sem her muno helgir hava orðit ef þetta er sva sem erkibyscup hefir sagt. at allir se þeir orðnir helgir menn er fallit hafa með Erlingi Jarli.

[18] Pope Eugenius III, with Bernard of Clairvaux's encouragement, also stipulated in a later bull that Danish aggression against the pagan Wends should be placed on par with the crusades to the East. For the background to this development see Villads Jensen 2001, 67–70.

> Much to be seen and known is taking place here now, of great importance and a cause of thankfulness to men, in that both here and to other churches are carried the bodies of many who followed King Magnus. For, indeed, it is known to many that Archbishop Eystein and many other learned men have constantly said concerning all who die fighting for King Magnus and defending his land, that their souls will enter Paradise before their blood is cold on the ground. We may here rejoice at the holiness of many men who have become saints, if it is correct what the archbishop has said, that all those who died fighting under Earl Erling have become saints.

The sarcastic nature of Sverrir's speech has been noted (Foote 1984, 40–42); the king effectively implies that the followers of Erlingr and his son, King Magnús Erlingsson, have been duped into believing that they would attain paradise if they died in the struggle against him. The speech also echoes the promise of *Canones Nidrosienses* 2 that those who were killed while fighting the enemies of the *patria* would be granted eternal salvation.[19] Considering that *Sverris saga* was composed at least partly under the guidance of Sverrir himself, it is safe to assume that the speech reflects what the king actually said in Nidaros in 1179 or, at least, what he wanted the reader to believe he had said.

Did Archbishop Eysteinn really promise the rewards of martyrdom to those who fell in Magnús Erlingson's cause, or is the wily Sverrir here distorting the message of the *Canones Nidrosienses* for his own polemical purposes? The answer to this question can only be guessed at. I believe, however, that the following observations can be made with some confidence. First, the clause from *Canones Nidrosienses* 2 was used in the propaganda war between the rival factions in the Norwegian Civil War. This in itself is a remarkably early example of the Church offering spiritual rewards to those who fight against *Christian* enemies. Secondly, it is likely that rhetorical and emotive language was used to convey this message to the rank and file of King Magnús's supporters; the words that 'their souls will enter Paradise before their blood is cold on the ground' may well stem from arguments of the kind alluded to by Sverrir. Finally, Sverrir says that Eysteinn and his men promised sanctity, i.e. the rewards of martyrdom, to those who gave up their lives for Magnús and Erlingr. Although the veracity of this claim is impossible to establish, it is to be expected that the subtle, albeit important, distinction between eternal salvation and martyrdom would have become blurred in the course of the bitter Civil War. This, as already noted, is precisely what also happened in the minds of participants in the Crusades.

[19] This connection has been made by Gunnes 1996, 103.

V

In conclusion I would propose the following model for the introduction and development of the idea of martyrdom in post-Conversion Scandinavia. The notion of martyrdom was introduced in the eleventh century by Anglo-Saxon missionaries, who are known to have been instrumental in establishing the two earliest Scandinavian saints' cults, those of King Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway and King Knud II of Denmark. They may well have taken advantage of prevailing attitudes towards heroic death (St Óláfr, St Knud and his retainers, St Erik, and Earl Haraldr ungi) and the shamefulness associated with betrayals and covert killings (St Hallvard, St Magnús, St Knud Lavard and Earl Rǫgnvaldr of Orkney). But the many references to murdered factional leaders during the turbulent twelfth century must be placed within the context of changing attitudes towards martyrdom, which began with the Gregorian papacy and gained momentum with the Crusades. This involved what can be termed a 'democratisation' of martyrdom, whereby death for a perceived divine cause provided not only eternal salvation but also a place in the company of the saints. The most conspicuous attestation of this development is contained in *Canones Nidrosienses* 2, which promises a place in paradise to those who die in defence of the fatherland. This appears to be the earliest known instance in Europe of such a promise being included in ecclesiastical law, an especially striking fact considering that the enemies involved are not pagans or Saracens but fellow Norwegians and Christians. The introduction of this idea into Norwegian society in the 1160s (or, less likely, the 1170s) must be connected with the popularity of martyr-cults in the same period. We have seen how these ideas were connected at least in the mind of King Sverrir Sigurðarson, and they were probably also linked in the minds of preachers and the population at large.

In Gerald of Wales's *Topographia Hibernica*, composed in the 1180s, the following words are put into the mouth of the bishop of Cashel in Ireland: 'bloodthirsty though they [the Irish] are, they have never slain any of the saints who are so numerous in the land; the holy men who have dwelt there have died on their sick bed' (Dimock 1869, 178–79). The author of the Norwegian *Konungs skuggsjá*, composed around the middle of the thirteenth century, found this observation interesting enough to warrant inclusion in his work (Finnur Jónsson 1920, 57). By contrast, in eleventh- and twelfth-century Scandinavia saints did not die on their sickbeds. Indeed, the narrative of the martyrdom of Brian Boru of Munster in *Njáls saga* is an indication of the popularity of the

literary paradigm of martyrdom among the Norsemen: a thirteenth-century Icelander was the only medieval writer to associate this form of sanctity with an Irish king.

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WORD-PLAY ON *BJQRG* IN DREAMS AND ELSEWHERE

By JAMIE COCHRANE

IN HIS COLLECTION OF FOLK-TALES and local legends Oddur Björnsson (1977, 18) records two dreams told by the householder Guðmundur of Bergþórshvoll in southern Iceland. In the first dream, which occurred in 1878, Guðmundur dreamed that he was out walking when a thigh-length boot appeared on his right foot. In the dream Guðmundur continued walking until suddenly blood gushed up from the boot and he woke up. In the second dream Guðmundur thought that a childhood friend named Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir gave him money, to the value of eighteen krónur and a few aurar. Both these dreams were harbingers of an illness that afflicted Guðmundur later that year, when he suffered from a swelling sickness (*bólguveiki*) which caused his right leg below the thigh to swell up. Upon first inspection, these dreams seem to have little in common with the dreams we find in the Icelandic sagas; nonetheless they use a combination of direct representation, object symbolism (i.e. using inanimate objects as symbols), and word-play, just as saga dreams do, to represent the dreamer's future. In the first dream the boot symbolises the swollen foot. As only one boot is mentioned, it would have seemed to Guðmundur as if his right foot (the booted one) was considerably larger than the other. Furthermore, as anyone who has ever worn odd shoes will know, to wear one boot causes the walker to limp. Thus the single boot represents the swelling and festering which will occur on Guðmundur's right leg, with the extent of swelling matching exactly the length of the boot. The blood gushing from the boot at the end of the dream makes this connection complete, symbolising the blood or pus gushing from a sore.

In the second dream the eighteen krónur and spare change signify the exact length of time in weeks and days that Guðmundur was incapacitated. This fits the common motif in which an apparently positive dream symbol, in this case the gift of money, has a negative meaning, the length of Guðmundur's sickness. At the heart of this dream, however, is the childhood friend Ingibjörg Sigurðardóttir from Búðarhólar. Ingibjörg's name can be broken down into two elements. The first morpheme *Ingi-* is similar in sound to the Old Norse and Modern Icelandic *enginn*, which means 'none', 'no', or 'not any'.[1] Though the vowel sounds are

not identical, the similarity allows this word-play to be understood, particularly as it occurs in a dream to which the dreamer naturally would like to attach an interpretation (a desire apparently shared by medieval, nineteenth-century and modern dreamers alike, though perhaps for somewhat different reasons). The second element *björg* means 'help', 'deliverance from danger' and 'means of subsistence'. Thus the name of Guðmundur's dream-woman means something like 'No-rescue'. Guðmundur will have a swollen leg, which gushes blood, and receive no salvation or respite for some eighteen weeks and several days.

Dreams in Icelandic folktales and folk-belief in which names have some significance are not uncommon. Many of these dreams and the meanings associated with them seem to have been derived from foreign, non-Scandinavian sources (Jónas Jónasson 1934, 416). Among this folk material, however, we find other examples of names very similar to Guðmundur's Ingibjörg, such as Aðalbjörg (which could be translated as 'Chief-salvation') and Guðbjörg (which could mean 'God-salvation') (Jónas Jónasson 1934, 416). Another tale, this time from Sigfús Sigfússon's collection, uses a similar pun. Around 1870 a woman, herself coincidentally named Ingibjörg Níelsdóttir, dreamed of an unfamiliar woman named Sæbjörg 'Sea-salvation'. Later that year the region in which she lived benefited from an unusually good fishing yield and from a beached whale (Sigfús Sigfússon 1922–58, II 31).

Such word-play is also a common feature of saga dreams, and there are similar puns involving names in the sagas.[2] In *Íslendinga saga*, while on a mission to attack Gizurr Þorvaldsson, a man named Svarthǫfði Dufgusson dreams that a certain Vigfúss Gunnsteinsson has left their party (*Stu* 1906–11, II 222). The name Vigfúss can be broken down into *Vig*, the form taken by the word *víg* 'battle' when it occurs as the first element of a personal name, and *fúss* 'eager'. The patronymic is slightly less clear but might be taken to mean 'war-stone-son' (*gunnr* + *steinn* + *sonr*). As one might expect, given the disappearance of this man in the dream, the raiding party returns home unsuccessful. In *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* there is a whole series of dreams involving word-play, including another example of a pun upon the word *bjǫrg*. Prior to his conflict with Þorsteinn Síðu-Hallsson, Þórhaddr Hafljótsson has a series of twelve dreams which he tells to a dream interpreter named

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, translations of Old Norse words come from Cleasby 1957 and Modern Icelandic from Sverrir Hólmarsson et al. 1989.

[2] On word-play in saga dreams see Henzen 1890, 44–49; Faulkes 1966, 23–29; Turville-Petre 1972a, 34–36; and Perkins 1974–77, 212–13.

Hlíðar-Steinn (*ÞSH* 1950, ch. 4, pp. 308–13). In the sixth of these dreams Þórhaddr is walking with his sons when he sees a cliff. A large wave drives them into a cleft, but Þórhaddr has remarkably long arms which enable him to pull both himself and his sons onto the top of the cliff. Steinn interprets this strange vision in the following way (*ÞSH* 1950, ch. 4, p. 311):

> Þar sem hendr þínar váru lengri en at hætti ok at eðli, þat sýndisk í því, at þú munt langarmr verða fyrir þínar tiltekjur ok draga þar eptir þér sonu þína á þat óráð, en þar sem þér stóðuð á bjargi, þar munu þér alla yðra bjǫrg undir fótum troða.
>
> The fact that your arms were longer than is common and natural was a sign that you will become long-wretched in your actions and drag your sons after you into that folly, and since you stood on the cliff, you will trample on all your support.

The meaning of this dream turns upon two puns. The first of these is upon the word *armr*, which is both a masculine noun meaning 'arm' and an adjective meaning 'unhappy', 'poor' or 'wretched'. As a first element *lang-* usually indicates 'long' in terms of size, distance or time (for example *langfœttr* 'long-legged', *langferð* 'long journey', *langmælgi* 'long-winded'). Thus Þórhaddr's long arms in the dream indicate that he is *langarmr*, 'long-wretched', i.e. wretched or wicked for a long time, in his actions. The second pun is on the word *bjarg* 'cliff', plural *bjǫrg*, exploiting its similarity to the noun *bjǫrg* and the related verb *bjarga* 'to help', 'to save'. Therefore the long arms indicate how wicked Þórhaddr is and how his actions bring shame not only on himself, but also on his sons and kinsmen, while standing on the cliff indicates how ungratefully he treats those men who attempt to support and aid him. The same pun (on *bjarg* and *bjǫrg*) also seems to operate in a dream in *Grœnlendinga þáttr* (*Grœnl* 1935, ch. 2, p. 277). It seems that the word *bjǫrg* has appeared as an operative word in Icelandic dreams since the Saga Age.

The *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* gives three separate glosses of the word *bjǫrg* (*ONP*, 2 395–96). The first is 'deliverance', 'rescue', 'assistance', 'help'; the second, used in the plural, 'illegal help to an outlawed person often in the form of board and lodging', and the third, 'maintenance', 'basic necessities', 'employment and livelihood'. Among the citations given for the first of these senses is the passage in *Skáldskaparmál* where the god Þórr is attempting to cross the river Vimur but is swept away by the torrent caused by the giantess Gjálp urinating further upstream (*SnE* 1998, I 25). After throwing a rock at the giantess,

Þórr manages to grasp a rowan bush (*reynirunnr*) and pull himself from the river. At this point Bragi (who is telling the story in the narrative frame) helpfully tells us, *Því er þat orðtak haft at reynir er bjǫrg Þórs* 'Hence we have the expression that the rowan is Þórr's *bjǫrg*'. Magnus Olsen (1940, 145–46) suggests that there is a further word-play on the word *bjǫrg* here. According to Olsen, Snorri's work preserves a recollection of an Old Norwegian tradition of using shavings from rowan trees as animal fodder (Old Norse *skaf* 'bark-shaving'), when no other food was available. Therefore the rowan tree represents *bjǫrg* in the sense of 'aid' or 'rescue' for Þórr, but with a further meaning of 'life-support' or 'sustenance'.

Allusion to the rowan as Þórr's salvation is also found in a verse in *Grettis saga*, where it is once again used in a play on words. At this point in the saga Grettir, having been sentenced to outlawry, and hence relying on extortion to survive, stays for short periods in each area, and takes 'presents' in return for moving on. However, in Ísafjǫrðr he is caught sleeping by some farmers, overpowered and taken captive (*Gr* 1936, ch. 52, pp. 166–72). The farmers eventually decide that the best means of preventing Grettir from causing further trouble is to hang him. Þorbjǫrg Óláfsdóttir, the wife of the local chieftain Vermundr inn mjóvi, intervenes, however. Granting Grettir his life, she persuades him to agree never to trouble the people of Ísafjǫrðr again. This same story is also told in the Möðruvallabók version of *Fóstbræðra saga* (*Fbr* 1943, ch. 1, pp. 121–22). Both sagas associate this story with a poem, sometimes referred to as Grettir's *Ævikviða*. Four stanzas of this poem are quoted in *Grettis saga*, the third of which is also quoted in *Fóstbræðra saga*. These verses cannot be attributed to Grettir with any certainty, but are in the *kviðuháttr* metre and seem likely to be old (Clunies Ross 1998, 68). The second stanza (in *Grettis saga*) reads as follows (*Gr* 1936, ch. 52, p. 171):

Sǫgðu mér,
þaus Sigarr veitti,
mægða laun
margir hœfa,
unz lofgróinn
laufi sœmðar
reynirunn
rekkar fundu.

Many said that I deserved the reward for kinship by marriage that Sigarr granted (i.e. hanging), until men met the rowan bush, praised for being verdant with the foliage of honour.

The first section of this verse compares Grettir's potential fate at the hands of the farmers with that of the legendary figure Hagbarðr, who was hanged by Sigarr, the father of his wife Signý (Poole 2003, 29–30). More relevant for this argument, however, is the second *helmingr*, where the poet seems to refer to Þorbjǫrg as *reynirunnr* 'rowan bush'. As Clunies Ross (1998, 73) observes, the skald uses the poetic convention of referring to the rowan as Þórr's *bjǫrg* to create a pun on Þorbjǫrg's name (also see Olsen 1940, 146, note; and Poole 2003, 30). Only with knowledge of the story in *Skáldskaparmál* can the word-play in the second half of the verse be understood; that the word *reynirunnr* refers to *Þórs bjǫrg*, i.e. Þorbjǫrg.

The use of word-play involving names is a relatively common feature of skaldic verses, particularly where skalds had some reason for disguising the identity of the person whom the verses concerned. Roberta Frank (1970, 9–12) cites fears of accusations of impropriety or potential prosecution as one possible reason for such onomastic word-play in verses by Egill Skallagrímsson and Kormakr Ǫgmundarson. The same cannot be said of Grettir's verses to Þorbjǫrg, as the stanza following the *reynirunnr* verse contains Þorbjǫrg's name and because (if *Grettis saga* is to be believed) the verses are in fact addressed to Þorbjǫrg's husband Vermundr. Nonetheless, Grettir's onomastic play is of the type employed by Egill and Kormakr, suggesting that necessity created a poetic convention of disguising women's names in verse. Even King Óláfr inn helgi was thought to engage in such word-play. In a verse preserved in *The Legendary saga of Óláfr helgi* and Flateyjarbók (but not *Heimskringla*), Óláfr recites a verse in praise of Ingibjǫrg Finnsdóttir, referring to his muse as *Gramr ok brattir hamrar* 'King and steep crags' (*Skjaldedigtning*, B I 211–12; *ÓH* 1922, 57; *Flat* 1860–68, III 241). In this case the word-play turns on the skald's ability to identify homonyms for each element in the name Ingibjǫrg and then replace these homonyms with synonyms. (Snorri Sturluson describes such puns as *ofljóst*, *SnE* 1998, I 109.) *Ingi-* can be interpreted as the poetic word *ingi* meaning 'king' (possibly associated with the legendary King Yngvi, *Lexicon Poeticum* 319) and can therefore be replaced by another word also meaning 'king' such as *gramr*; and *-bjǫrg* is once again linked to *bjarg* meaning 'cliff', the plural of which is *bjǫrg*; it is therefore replaced by *brattir hamrar* 'steep crags'. Thus *Gramr* + *brattir hamrar* = *Ingi* + *bjǫrg* = Ingibjǫrg.

The concept of *bjǫrg*, in the sense of protection, subsistence, and even salvation, runs as a theme through much of the latter half of *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. After Gísli has killed Þorgrímr goði, Bǫrkr inn digri (Þorgrímr's

brother) pays the sorcerer Þorgrímr nef to cast a spell (*seiðr*) with this effect: *at þeim manni yrði ekki at bjǫrg, er Þorgrím hefði vegit, þó at menn vildi duga honum* 'that the man who had killed Þorgrímr would receive no *bjǫrg*, even if men wanted to help him' (*Gísl* 1943, ch. 18, p. 56). In the longer version of the saga this reads: *svá at þeim manni verði ekki at bjǫrg, er Þorgrím hefir vegit ok hann megi sér hvergi ró eiga á landi* '. . . and he might find peace for himself nowhere in the land' (*Gísl* 1960, ch. 20, p. 37). In this case *bjǫrg* probably means 'aid' and 'support', and also implied is the specific legal sense of 'protection given to an outlaw'. Þorgrímr does not know the identity of the killer for certain, hence the non-specific nature of this prophecy. The spell proves effective when Gísli asks many chieftains for support (*Gísl* 1943, ch. 21, p. 69):

> En sakar þess trollskapar, er Þorgrímr nef hafði haft í seiðinum, ok atkvæða, þá verðr þess eigi auðit, at hǫfðingjar tœki við honum, ok þó at stundum þœtti þeim eigi svá ólíkliga horfa, þá bar þó alls staðar nǫkkut við.
>
> But on account of the witchcraft and the incantations which Þorgrímr nef had used in his spell, it was not to be that chieftains would receive him, and though it might sometimes seem not unlikely that they would be inclined to do so, nevertheless something always got in the way.

Gísli would normally expect help from his kinsmen. In Chapter 21, however, his brother Þorkell says that, though he will offer him some shelter, he will not risk his property on his account. When Gísli approaches his brother a second time he is again turned down (*Gísl* 1934, ch. 23, p. 74): *Þorkell svarar inu sama ok kvezk enga bjǫrg munu veita honum* 'Þorkell answered in the same way and said that he would grant him no aid'. Gísli returns again to his brother in the following chapter and is refused aid for a third time. Þorkell's refusal is motivated simultaneously by supernatural and natural causes. On the supernatural side, Þorkell is bound to act in accordance with Þorgrímr nef's spell. However his actions might also be motivated by disapproval of the killing of his close friend Þorgrímr goði and perhaps even by his own cowardice.

Nevertheless, the spell proves less effective than it appears at first when Gísli rows to Hergilsey to his cousin Ingjaldr. He proves rather more amenable than Þorkell (*Gísl* 1943, ch. 24, pp. 78–79): *Ok er þeir hittask, býðr hann Gísla allan greiða ok alla bjǫrg, þá er hann mátti honum veita* 'And when they met, he offered Gísli all the accommodation and support that he could give him'. The author justifies this inconsistency by explaining a loophole in the wording of the spell (*Gísl* 1943, ch. 26, p. 84):

> Ok þat hafa menn mælt, at Ingjaldr hafi Gísla mest veitt ok þat at mestu gagni orðit; ok þat er sagt, at þá er Þorgrímr nef gerði seiðinn, at hann mælti svá fyrir at Gísla skyldi ekki at gagni verða, þó at menn byrgi honum hér á landi; en þat kom honum eigi í hug at skilja til um úteyjar, ok endisk því þetta hóti lengst, þótt eigi yrði þess álengðar auðit.
>
> And people have said that Ingjaldr gave Gísli most help and that that had been the most use to him. But it is said that when Þorgrímr nef performed the spell, he stipulated that Gísli should get no advantage even if men aided him here on the (main-)land, but it didn't occur to him to specify the outlying islands, and so this help lasted a little longer, though it was bound to end eventually.

Thus on the many islands scattered along the coast of Vestfirðir Gísli can receive *bjǫrg*, but on the mainland of Iceland he cannot, and this distinction is reflected in several of Gísli's adventures in the latter half of the saga.

Thus a division runs through *Gísla saga*, dividing the characters into those who offer Gísli *bjǫrg* and those who do not. This division is mirrored in the dreams Gísli has during his period of outlawry. He is repeatedly visited by two dream-women, who appear alternately to him, one of whom is kind and prophesies good things, while the other is unpleasant and predicts his death. These dream-women, while undoubtedly encompassing aspects of traditional pagan ancestral spirits (*dísir*, *fylgjur*), have also been likened to Christian guardian angels (Henzen 1890, 60; Turville-Petre 1972b, 141). In one of these dreams, Gísli accompanies his better dream-woman into a hall where he sees seven fires burning. She explains that these represent the number of years until Gísli's death. Upon waking Gísli tells his dreams to his wife Auðr and then speaks four verses. The second of these verses explains the meaning of the fires (*Gísl* 1943, ch. 22, p. 71):

> Hyggið at, kvað Egða
> annspilli Vǫr banda,
> mildr, hvé margir eldar,
> malmrunnr, í sal brunnu.
> Svá átt, kvað Bil blæju,
> bjargs ólifat marga,
> veðrs Skjǫldunga valdi,
> vetr; nú's skammt til betra.

> 'Mark, gentle sword-tree, how many fires burned in the hall,' said the goddess of bands to the one who speaks with the men of Agðir [i.e. Norseman]. 'Just as many years of aid have you yet unlived,' said the goddess of linen, 'O ruler of the wind of the Skjǫldungar; now there is not long until the better times.'

I take the form *bjargs* (line 6) to be the genitive of *bjarg* (n.), a variant of *bjǫrg* appearing elsewhere only in compounds (e.g. *bjargsmaðr*). Whether the verses of *Gísla saga* can be attributed to an historical Gísli, to the saga writer, or to a poet composing at some date before the writing of the extant saga, has been the subject of considerable debate (see for example Krijn 1935, Foote 1963, Andersson 1969, Turville-Petre 1972b). The fact that this verse accurately predicts the death of Gísli some seven years in the future reduces the likelihood, though it does not preclude the possibility, that it was composed by Gísli himself. Strong Christian elements in many of the verses also make it highly unlikely that they could have been composed by the tenth-century Gísli Súrsson, but it is possible that the verses were composed after the conversion of Iceland to Christianity, but prior to the composition of the surrounding prose of the saga. Despite this, the details of this verse match relatively well with the prose and there is no real reason to suspect that the 'I' of the verse is not intended by the poet to refer to Gísli Súrsson. The translation above is based on the assumption that *valdi veðrs Skjǫldunga* is a kenning meaning warrior (literally 'ruler of the wind of the Skjǫldungar' i.e. 'ruler of battle') and refers to Gísli (compare Finnur Jónsson's interpretation, *Gísl* 1929, 100). If this is the case, then in the verse the dream-woman specifically equates the number of fires burning with the number of winters of *bjǫrg* (*bjarg*) provided to Gísli, that is, the number of winters he has yet to live. Here *bjǫrg* can mean the aid provided by the dream-woman in keeping Gísli alive and/or the subsistence in the waking world which will keep him alive. Given the fact that several of the verses about the better dream-woman have strong Christian implications, *bjǫrg* could even mean Christian salvation, absolution from the murder which Gísli has committed. In contrast, the worse dream-woman is among those characters denying Gísli support. When she appears and says that she will undo all the things the better woman had promised (*Gísl* 1943, ch. 33, p. 102), the reader knows that Gísli's death is imminent and has to question his prospects in the afterlife. As is often the case, what is only implied in the shorter version of the saga is made explicit in the longer, where the dream-woman says, *Ek skal bregða því ǫllu, er en betri draumkonan mælti við þik, ok skal ek þess vera ráðandi at þér verði ekki at bjǫrg né at gagni þat er hon mælti við þik* 'I shall overturn everything which the better dream-woman promised you, and I shall arrange it so that what she promised you will be no *bjǫrg* or advantage to you' (*Gísl* 1960, ch. 26, p. 69). Thus even the characters within Gísli's dreams and nightmares can be divided into those who

offer him *bjǫrg* and those who offer him *engi bjǫrg* (to use his brother Þorkell's words).

Which brings us back to Guðmundur's dream in Bergþórshvoll in 1878. It is part of the enigmatic nature of *Gísla saga* that both Gísli's dream-women are nameless. If one were to try to invent a name for Gísli's worse dream-woman, however, one might do a lot worse than Ingibjǫrg, she who offers him *engi bjǫrg*. Furthermore one might notice some similarity between the way in which the fires symbolise the number of years Gísli has yet to live and the way that the money in Guðmundur's dream symbolises the number of weeks he will spend incapacitated. Assuming that *Gísla saga* was composed shortly after 1225 (see Foote 1963, 131), some six and half centuries separate Gísli's dream-women and Guðmundur's (more if one believes that the verses predate *Gísla saga*). Yet through the continued reading, telling and retelling of sagas throughout Iceland during this time, it is likely that such saga material was absorbed into folklore. Gísli's bad dream-woman and her association with *engi bjǫrg* could easily pass from specific saga lore into general folklore. Influenced by puns in other sagas on the word *bjǫrg*, the phrase *engi bjǫrg* becomes the punning name Ingibjörg and thus the story surfaces once more in Bergþórshvoll in 1878.

Note: I am grateful to Professor Richard Perkins, who has made a number of invaluable comments and suggestions regarding this article.

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DESMOND SLAY

1927–2004

Until very recently the tall and genial figure of Desmond Slay was one of the most familiar and reassuring sights at the Viking Society's thrice-yearly meetings. Latterly his presence was missed increasingly often, as cancer cast its shadow over an otherwise active retirement. It was still a shock to learn, a few days after the A.G.M. of the Society in Cardiff where many were asking for news of him, that he had died of a heart attack on Thursday 20th May. The Viking Society has lost a loyal and hard-working senior member: a member of Council since the 1960s, President from 1970 to 1972, and co-editor of *Saga-Book* for more than a quarter of a century from 1978.

The research into and teaching of Old Norse literature in Britain moved into an exceptionally strong phase after the Second World War, as a new generation of specialists found posts in the expanding university system. Desmond Slay, an undergraduate student of what was then St Catherine's Society in Oxford, graduated with First Class Honours in English Language and Literature in 1948. Unable because of asthma to join the R.A.F. as he had wished, he was instead immediately offered a post by his external examiner, Professor Gwyn Jones, and took up a lectureship at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. Here he spent his whole professional career, combining an energetic involvement in local non-academic affairs with major contributions to his chosen field of scholarship, both nationally and internationally. The latter were based particularly upon a long association with the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen.

Desmond Slay's personal research was devoted to the meticulous and practical study of the manuscripts in which Old Norse texts are preserved. His earliest major project was on *Hrólfs saga kraka*, leading to a monograph on the manuscripts of the saga published in 1960, for which he was also awarded a doctorate of the University of Wales under the regulations for university academic staff. His approach of exploring the entire history of the text's transmission, giving serious attention to manuscript copies that had been considered secondary, had been encouraged by Jón Helgason, but it was none the less a brave innovation to carry it through so extensively on a text of this prominence at that date. It anticipated by decades ideas promoted as the 'New Philology' of the 1990s. Taking another important step

forward, this study of the manuscripts was accompanied by an edition of the text that in many ways set a standard for subsequent scholarly editions of Old Norse prose works. Shortly after he retired from his final post of Research Professor in Aberystwyth, his edition of *Mírmanns saga* appeared in the same Arnamagnæan series.

Equally important was his work on making facsimiles of manuscripts available. He collaborated with Jón Helgason on a facsimile of *Alexanders saga* that was published in 1966, and in 1972 produced a facsimile of a volume of romances in the Royal Library of Stockholm. His most dramatic achievement as a textual authority came, however, while he was still working on *Hrólfs saga kraka*, when he succeeded in tracking down the great Icelandic Codex Scardensis (*Skarðsbók*), containing the *Postulasögur*. This was known to have left Iceland in the nineteenth century, and to have been in the library of Sir Thomas Phillips at Thirlestaine House, Cheltenham, in the early 1890s, but was lost to scholarly sight thereafter. At the end of a summer's work in Copenhagen, before they returned to Iceland and Wales respectively for the autumn, Jón Helgason urged Desmond to see if he could find out what had happened to the volume. Ólafur Halldórsson's introduction to his edition of *Sögur úr Skarðsbók* reveals the Icelandic scholars' immense admiration for the diligence and shrewdness Desmond then applied without delay, successfully tracing the codex via its sale in 1945, and obtaining the new owners' permission and cooperation in having the manuscript photographed for the publication of a facsimile. When it came up for auction again in 1965 the Icelanders were fully alerted to the fact, and a consortium of Icelandic banks purchased and subsequently presented the codex to the Icelandic nation. In the circle of Icelandic literary scholarship, Desmond Slay is credited as a vital figure in retrieving a treasure for the nation. This and other services to the enhancement and dissemination of knowledge of the medieval Icelandic heritage were recognised with the award of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon on the occasion of the centenary of the Viking Society in 1992.

With Peter Foote and Hermann Pálsson, Slay was co-editor of the proceedings of the First International Saga Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1971. He remained a stalwart supporter of those gatherings, making it to Sydney for the eleventh conference in the year 2000. In his editorial work he insisted upon the same high standards for published academic work as he imposed upon his own research. He was

honestly critical of work given to him for evaluation, but always in a kindly manner, and never without constructive suggestions for how it could be rectified or improved; he showed impatience only at incurable pretentiousness.

His career in Aberystwyth proved the qualities of a highly capable though unassuming man. He took on many important practical tasks in the University College, such as that of Supervisor of Examinations—a coordinating role requiring limitless patience—for much of the 1960s, and was appointed to the Rendel Chair of English Language and Literature there in 1978. Both balancing and reflecting his commitment to the Viking Society, he continued throughout his life to support associations that had meant much to him from his early years, eventually being able to give them too the benefit of his experience and abilities, contributing to the running of the Scout Association in Ceredigion and the Old Tamensians Association of his school, Lord Williams's (Thame). Showing a healthy desire to bridge any divide between town and gown he became an active member of the Round Table in Aberystwyth, then an association for young business and professional men, and on being required to give up his membership when he passed the upper age-limit of 40 promptly set about establishing a local branch of the 41 Club, the national association for ex-members determined to maintain the work and contacts the Round Table fostered. This particularly enabled him to continue to forge links with individuals and groups in Scandinavia.

At the very centre of his life, meanwhile, was home, and a large and secure family. Showing a proper sense of priorities, he married, before completing his doctorate, Leontia McCartan—herself as regular and popular an attender at Viking Society meetings in later years as Desmond. They have five children and nine grandchildren.

Of the qualities of Desmond Slay that have been remembered and talked over amongst his academic colleagues since the sad news of his death reached us, calmness and decency, a humility of manner and a willingness to serve to the best of his ability are the characteristics that have come recurrently to the fore. These were manifestly the key elements of a happy and successful life, the ending of which is mourned, while the memory is kept and valued.

JOHN HINES

REVIEWS

ODDAANNÁLAR OG ODDVERJAANNÁLL. Edited by EIRÍKUR ÞORMÓÐSSON and GUÐRÚN ÁSA GRÍMSDÓTTIR. *Rit* 59. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi*. Reykjavík, 2003. clxxxi + 236 pp.

Scholars from Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir and Eiríkur Þormóðsson, are responsible for the publication of these two sixteenth-century annals. According to the short but succinct 'Fylgt úr hlaði', Eiríkur had worked on the edition from 1971 until he left the institute in 1981. The project was then continued by Guðrún Ása who augmented and rewrote the work and prepared it for publication. The editors' aims, as set out in the preamble, were to publish, for the first time in their entirety, accurate editions of the annals, to discuss the provenance of the relevant manuscripts and to examine the intellectual and local influences which shaped their composition. The editors emphasise that their intention is not to provide a general study of the intellectual background to these annals; in this they are following the tradition established in past publications by Stofnun Árna Magnússsonar.

These aims cannot be met without setting the annals within their literary and historical contexts. A delicate balancing act is therefore required in the introduction between the general and the specific if the non-specialist reader is to follow the often intricate argumentation and to digest the copious minutiae presented. For the most part this is achieved with admirable intellectual and linguistic clarity. Given the relative unfamiliarity of both annals, however—indeed, neither *Oddaannálar* nor *Oddverjaannáll* is even mentioned in *Íslensk bókmenntasaga II* or Stefán Einarsson's *History of Icelandic Literature*—a brief general introduction to Icelandic annalistic writings in this period would have been valuable. It might also have been interesting to set the annals in the context of known near-contemporary works within this genre such as *Gottskálksannáll*.

The two annals edited in *Oddaannálar og Oddverjaannáll* have through the ages been associated with the learned family at Oddi; indeed the translation from Latin of the latter has in several manuscripts been attributed to Sæmundr fróði. As the editors make clear in their exemplary introduction, the two annals have little to do with the Oddaverjar family of the Commonwealth period and much more to do with historical writing in Reformation and Post-Reformation Iceland. *Oddaannálar*, the shorter of the two annals, begins with Adam and Eve and ends in AD 67. The original version of the work is now lost and the preserved version is extant in fourteen manuscripts, none of which contains the annals in its entirety. The present edition is based on BL Add. 11153 (A), a seventeenth-century manuscript containing the fullest version of the work. Included are numerous variants from the other manuscript witnesses to the annals which give the reader the opportunity to consider readings that differ from those of the base manuscript. In the introduction the editors also elucidate in considerable detail the complex relationship between the fourteen manuscripts of *Oddaannálar* and provide a hypothetical manuscript stemma. But the most notable contribution of the introduction is probably the affirmation that *Oddaannálar* is not, as Gustav

Storm maintained, simply a translation from a hitherto unidentified Danish history, but that the compiler of the annals independently appropriated classical and medieval material for his use, albeit through the intermediary of later compilations. Of especial interest is the suggestion that the author had used an Icelandic *Heimsaldrar* 'Ages of the World', written in 1387. This in itself should establish *Oddaannálar* as an original composition and not a translation of a foreign source. *Oddverjaannáll* extends (with a pleasing sense of symmetry) from the installation of the first Roman emperor, Julius Caesar (100–44 BC), to AD 1427, a year in which we are told that many strange fish were washed ashore in Iceland. The annals survive only in one sixteenth-century manuscript, AM 417 4to, which is apparently an autograph copy. The introduction focuses on the identity of the author, the sources he used in compiling the annals and the manner in which the material was adapted to the religious climate of post-Reformation Iceland. The editors undertake an extensive and extremely erudite examination of the palaeographical and codicological evidence to determine the author / compiler of AM 417 4to. One could argue, however, that the process of this examination is of more interest than the actual outcome. The editors dismiss a previous suspect, Gísli Þórðarson *lögmaður* (*c.*1545–1608), as a possible writer / compiler but show that *Oddverjaannáll* was in all likelihood put together between 1540 and 1591 by a cleric connected with the bishopric of Skálholt. Their analysis is authoritative, but weighed down by an excess of incidental information which hinders rather than aids the reader. For example, it is not apparent why we need to be told that Ormur Vigfússon, the one-time owner of AM 417 4to, was one of eleven siblings or that his grandfather had been the brother of the abbot at Viðey (p. cxix).

Students of the intellectual history of post-Reformation Iceland will be interested to observe the manner in which the author of *Oddverjaannáll* shaped his material according to post-Reformation thinking. While the editors' hypothesis that the author may have been a former monk who retained some affection for Catholicism is plausible, his appreciation of St Augustine's scholarship and his assertion that the writings of the Church Father are 'not very tainted' (*eci miog meingadar*) can scarcely be cited as evidence for his partial attachment to the old ways (p. cxxx). On the contrary, Augustine was greatly admired by both Luther and Calvin and his writings provided an invaluable quarry for Protestant ideas.

This is a source edition of the highest order which will be welcomed by both philologists and historians working on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One can only hope that someone will soon take up the challenge of writing a general study of historical writings in Reformation / post-Reformation Iceland and, in particular, its links with the medieval period.

HAKI ANTONSSON

BISKUPA SÖGUR II: HUNGRVAKA, ÞORLÁKS SAGA BYSKUPS IN ELZTA, JARTEINABÓK ÞORLÁKS BYSKUPS IN FORNA, ÞORLÁKS SAGA BYSKUPS YNGRI, JARTEINABÓK ÞORLÁKS BYSKUPS ÖNNUR, ÞORLÁKS SAGA BYSKUPS C, ÞORLÁKS SAGA BYSKUPS E, PÁLS SAGA BYSKUPS, ÍSLEIFS ÞÁTTR BYSKUPS, LATÍNUBROT UM ÞORLÁK BYSKUP. Edited by ÁSDÍS EGILSDÓTTIR. *Íslenzk fornrit* XVI. *Hið Íslenzka fornritafélag*. Reykjavík, 2002. cliv + 382 pp. 4 genealogical tables, 7 maps, 16 colour plates.

This volume of the Íslenzk fornrit series, which is the second volume of the planned five-part edition of all the Bishops' Sagas, contains the sagas of the first bishops of Skálholt from Ísleifr Gizurarson, who was consecrated in 1056, to Páll Jónsson, who died in 1211. All of the texts included have previously been the object of careful philological analysis by Jón Helgason and exist in a scholarly and up-to-date diplomatic edition (*Byskupa sǫgur* 1 and 2 1938, 1978). As far as the study of the manuscripts is concerned, the new volume must therefore be said to have a very reliable basis.

Hungrvaka gives a brief account of the establishment of the Skálholt diocese and of its first five bishops: Ísleifr Gizurarson, Gizurr Ísleifsson, Þorlákr Rúnólfsson, Magnús Einarsson and Klœngr Þorsteinsson. It ranks as one of the most important historical documents about the early Icelandic church, and together with *Þorláks saga* and *Páls saga* it forms a continuous history of the bishopric until 1211. The final paragraph of *Hungrvaka* links it to *Þorláks saga*, and despite differences in style, it is generally considered that the three works were all composed by the same writer. Because of references to the sanctity of Saint Þorlákr and Jón Ǫgmundarson, *Hungrvaka* cannot have been composed before 1200 and probably dates from after 1206 when Gizurr Hallsson, an immediate informant, died, though Ásdís Egilsdóttir argues that 'ekki er . . . hægt að útiloka að Hungurvaka hafi verið tekin saman meðan Gissur var enn á lífi og höfundur hafi haft aðgang að honum og þekkingu hans' [it cannot be excluded that *Hungrvaka* was composed while Gizurr was still alive and the author had access to him and his knowledge] (p. xxvii). She further argues that the sagas of the bishops of Skálholt may have been written at Gizurr's instigation. Ásdís draws attention to the author's interest in dates, the church building, the church's treasures, and its finances, and points to similarities between *Hungrvaka* and foreign *gesta episcoporum* which, she suggests, may have served as a model. She also notes the influence of saints' lives in the author's portrayal of the five bishops. As for direct sources, she concurs with previous scholarship that the author used Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók* and probably also Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*. *Hungrvaka* survives only in late manuscript copies, the oldest being from the seventeenth century. As in Jón Helgason's edition, the text is based on AM 380 4to from 1641 with variants from AM 379 4to (1654), AM 205 fol. (first half of the seventeenth century), AM 375 4to (*c.*1650), AM 378 4to (mid-seventeenth century), and AM 110 8vo (1601), which contains only an excerpt.

Þorláks saga byskups is a life of Saint Þorlákr Þorhallsson (d. 1193). It exists in three main versions, generally designated *A*, *B* and *C*. *Þorláks saga A* (also called *Þorláks saga byskups in elzta*) is the oldest and quite typical of a saint's life. Ásdís notes striking similarities between *Þorláks saga A* and the legend of Saint

Ambrose in particular. It opens with an account of Þorlákr's *vita*; then follows an account of his death and burial (*mors*) and the translation of his remains (*translatio*); finally there is a list of miracles that took place after his death (*miracula*). *Þorláks saga B* (also called *Þorláks saga byskups yngri*) postdates the death of Sæmundr, the son of Jón Loptsson, in 1222 and may, as the editor suggests, have been composed on the occasion of the translation of Þorlákr's remains. It opens with a prologue in which the redactor points out that the composer of the original saga did not sufficiently treat of the hardship Þorlákr endured because of his opponents' attempts to harm the church in his bishopric, and this he remedies by adding the so-called *Oddaverja þáttr* (although it is not preserved in its entirety in the *B* version). Ásdís argues that 'tilgangurinn með ritun B-gerðar virðist því fyrst og fremst sá að leggja nýjar kirkjupólitískar áherslur og skapa nýja ímynd dýrlingsins sem félli betur að þeirri hugmyndafræði sem kennd hefur verið við kirkjuvaldsstefnu' [the purpose of the composition of the *B*-version thus seems primarily to have been to emphasise new church policies and to create a new model of sainthood, which was better suited for the ideology which has been associated with the doctrine of church ownership] (p. li). *Þorláks saga C* postdates a miracle that took place in 1325. Its *vita* corresponds to that in *B*. It is somewhat abridged, though it does contain material not found in *A* and *B*. Moreover, *Oddaverja þáttr* in *C* is inserted later in the saga than in *B*. As the editor points out: 'Þó að A-gerð sé elsta varðveitta gerðin á móðurmálinu, er líklegt að yngri gerðir sögunnar geymi að einhverju leyti upphaflegra efni' [although the *A*-version is the oldest extant version in the native language, it is probable that the younger versions of the saga preserve to some extent more original matter] (pp. li–lii). Ásdís Egilsdóttir follows Jón Helgason in basing *Þorláks saga A* on Stock. Perg. fol. nr. 5 (*c.*1360) but with emendations from the *B* and *C* versions. With regard to *Þorláks saga B*, she, like Jón Helgason, bases the text on AM 382 4to (first half of the fourteenth century) and BL Add. 11242, which preserves a small fragment copied from AM 382 4to when it was in a somewhat more complete state than it is now. Unlike Jón Helgason, however, who printed the first part of the text only as variants to *Þorláks saga A*, she prints *Þorláks saga B* in its entirety with emendations and selective variants from AM 219 fol., AM 383 4to IV, AM 380 4to, AM 379 4to, AM 383 4to III, AM 388 4to, AM 209 fol. and AM 383 4to I. *Þorláks saga C* is preserved in several manuscripts: AM 219 fol. (end of the fourteenth century), AM 383 4to IV (fourteenth century), AM 380 4to (seventeenth century), AM 379 4to (1654), AM 383 4to III (*c.* 1400), AM 388 4to (seventeenth century), AM 209 fol. (seventeenth century) and AM 385 4to II (1375–1400). Ásdís follows Jón Helgason in printing chapters 1–56 in the form of emendations and variants to *B*, chapters 57–70 separately, chapters 71–106 in the form of emendations and variants to *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups in forna*, and chapters 107–32 separately. The manuscripts used are AM 219 fol., AM 380 4to, AM 379 4to and the hitherto unedited AM 385 4to II. The *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups in forna* (also referred to as *Jarteinabók I*) is one of the miracle collections added to *Þorláks saga C*; it contains accounts of miracles that took place around and after 1300 and is found also in an older manuscript, AM 645 4to (*c.*1220), which serves as the primary manuscript for the text (with variants from

AM 383 4to IV, AM 380 4to, AM 379 4to, and AM 209 fol.). Another, *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups önnur* (also referred to as *Jarteinabók II*), contains miracles that took place in Bishop Páll Jónsson's time (1195–1211); the text of this collection is based on AM 379 4to. A third is a collection of miracles dating from 1300–25, which in the edition is similarly based on AM 379 4to. Finally, Ásdís includes (as does Jón Helgason) the text of the fragment AM 383 4to II (*c.*1300) designated *Þorláks saga E* and reprints (though with some corrections) Jón Helgason's edition of the Latin texts concerning Þorlákr. These comprise a fragment of a *vita* and fragments of liturgical texts, which in this edition are accompanied by a translation into modern Icelandic by Gottskálk Jensson.

Páls saga byskups is a short biography of Páll Jónsson (d. 1211). Ásdís draws attention to the close similarities in style and structure between *Hungrvaka* and *Páls saga* and notes also a close resemblance between *Páls saga* and the *vitae* of German courtier bishops composed in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries; she is, however, reluctant to posit them as direct models. The saga is extant in three seventeenth-century manuscripts: Stock. Papp. 4to nr. 4, AM 204 fol. and AM 205 fol. Ásdís follows Jón Helgason in basing the text on Stock. Papp. fol. nr. 4 with emendations from the two other manuscripts.

The last text included is *Ísleifs þáttr byskups*, a tale relating two episodes from the life of Ísleifr Gizurarson (d. 1080). It is preserved in Flateyjarbók (*c.*1400), AM 75 e fol. (fifteenth century) and Stock. Papp. 4to nr. 4 (a copy made of AM 75 e fol. while it was in a somewhat more complete state). The text is based on Flateyjarbók, but with emendations from the two other manuscripts.

The Introduction concludes with a bibliography; an overview of the terms of office of popes, archbishops of Niðaróss, bishops in Skálholt and Hólar, and kings of Norway from Óláfr Tryggvason to Magnús Eiríksson; genealogical lists pertaining to the early bishops of Skálholt; and maps. Photographs are interspersed throughout the edition and range from W. G. Collingwood's painting of Hliðarendi to an illuminated initial showing Saints Óláfr and Þorlákr in a Jónsbók manuscript.

The editorial principles are sound and have evidently been the object of careful consideration. *Hungrvaka*, *Þorláks saga A* and *Páls saga* are all ancient texts, originally composed shortly after 1200, but preserved only in late manuscripts. As Ásdís points out, 'er þá mikill vandi á höndum þegar fyrna skal stafsetningu og orðmyndir hinna ungu handrita miðað við þennan gamla ritunartíma' [it is then a difficult task to archaise the spelling and word forms of the young manuscripts in light of this ancient date of composition] (p. cxxxiv). She has chosen to rely on *Ordförrådet i de älsta islänska handskrifterna* (1891) by Ludvig Larsson, who makes use of the old manuscript of *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups in forna*, and has decided to retain in her normalised edition of this particular text some of the early word forms, such as the definite article *enn* (later *inn*), *nekkverr* (later *nǫkkurr*), *nekkverja* (later *nǫkkura*), and *umb* (later *um*). As far as the texts of *Hungrvaka*, *Þorláks saga A*, *B* and *E, Páls saga* and *Ísleifs þáttr* are concerned, she has included a few of the later word forms (*inn*, *nǫkkurr*, *um*, etc.) in conformity with the general practice in the Íslenzk fornrit editions. *Þorláks saga C* and *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups önnur* are later compositions and printed with an even later orthography than that typically used in the series with regard to texts dating from around 1300 or

the fourteenth century. In these texts, *œ* is printed *æ*, and no distinction is made between *ø* and *ǫ* (both are printed *ö*).

The volume maintains the high standards set for the Íslenzk fornrit series of the bishops' sagas by Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir's edition of the writings concerning Bishops Árni Þorláksson, Lárentíus Kálfsson and Jón Halldórsson (Íslenzk fornrit XVII, reviewed in *Saga-Book* XXVII (2003), 118–20). The introduction is informative and reflects Ásdís Egilsdóttir's scholarly interests and publications. It consists primarily of literary analysis, and attempts are made to place the texts in a European hagiographical context. As one might expect, the texts concerning Saint Þorlákr are treated in greatest detail and with the greatest enthusiasm. There is little historical research and little in the way of discussion of manuscripts and the transmission of the texts included in the volume; the editor evidently considered it unnecessary to repeat the conclusions of Jón Helgason's philological analysis of the texts (though the reader could have wished for at least a summary). Nonetheless, there is no question that Ásdís Egilsdóttir has done justice to these important documents about the first bishops of Skálholt, and her very accessible edition will prove very valuable to students and scholars in the field of Old Norse–Icelandic.

KIRSTEN WOLF

SAGA HEILAGRAR ÖNNU. Edited by KIRSTEN WOLF. *Rit* 52. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi*. Reykjavík, 2001. cliii + 166 pp.

Two Old Norse–Icelandic prose lives of Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, are extant. The first, an incomplete text edited under the title *Emmerencia, Anna og Maria*, has been the subject of considerable attention from philologists and literary historians, largely as a result of its inclusion in the great sixteenth-century Icelandic legendary *Reykjahólabók* (Stock. Perg. fol. nr. 3; see, for example, Loth, *Reykjahólabók: Islandske helgenlegender* (Copenhagen, 1969–70); Widding and Bekker-Nielsen, 'En senmiddelalderlig legendesamling', *Maal og minne* (1960), 239–62; Kalinke, *The Book of Reykjahólar: The Last of the Great Medieval Legendaries* (Toronto, 1996)). The other, *Saga heilagrar Önnu*, is less well-known, and is edited here for the first time.

Saga heilagrar Önnu is a translation of a Low German version of the legend of Saint Anne, 'Sunte Annen legend und all oeres geschlechtes', printed as the second part of *De historie von der hilligen moder Anna* by Hans Dorn in Braunschweig in 1507. Dorn's work is more generally known as the *St. Annen Büchlein*. The saga is preserved in two manuscripts, AM 82 8vo, a paper manuscript from the first half of the seventeenth century, and AM 238 fol. III, two vellum leaves dated to the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Neither manuscript has the complete text, and, although AM 82 8vo breaks off some fifty lines after the AM 238 fol. III text begins, it is not possible to say with any certainty how much of the work has been lost. Kirsten Wolf's edition (pp. 2–163) comprises semi-diplomatic transcripts of both manuscripts, with the relevant sections of the 1507 imprint of the *St. Annen Büchlein* reproduced as a parallel text.

As in her earlier treatments of the legends of the virgin saints Dorothy (*The Icelandic Legend of Saint Dorothy*; Toronto, 1997) and Barbara (*The Old Norse–Icelandic Legend of Saint Barbara*; Toronto, 2000), Wolf prefaces her edition with a wide-ranging and painstakingly researched contextual introduction. In Section 1.0 (pp. xi–xxix), she establishes the general background to the *vita* and cult of Saint Anne, tracing the saint's development from the somewhat formulaic character of the second-century *Protevangelium Jacobi*, which describes the conception and birth of the Virgin to an aged childless couple in terms strikingly similar to the birth narratives of Samuel and John the Baptist, to the flowering of her cult in Europe in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Wolf's summary of the lengthy patristic and scholastic debates concerning the Immaculacy of the Virgin's conception, and the related doctrine of the Trinubium (pp. xiv–xviii)—whereby Saint Anne married three men in turn and gave birth to three daughters, all called Mary, thus resolving the relationships between the Virgin and Marys Cleophas and Salome and providing an explanation for the 'fratres Domini' of the Gospels—is admirable for its conciseness and clarity. In the end, of course, the Middle Ages resolved this theological tangle (or, rather, sidelined it, for later generations to unravel) with the adoption of Saint Anne, her three husbands, her identically-named daughters and an extended holy family into the mythological pantheon represented by the *Speculum Historiale* and the *Legenda aurea*. Wolf's introduction charts the development of the popular cult of Saint Anne from the standard iconography of devotional art and texts (pp. xxi–xxvi), through the renewed theological debate about the saint's significance during the Reformation (pp. xxvi–xxviii) to the present popularity of her shrines in Brittany and Quebec (pp. xxviii–xxix).

In section 1.1 (pp. xxix–xlv), Wolf examines the evidence for knowledge of and devotion to Saint Anne in Iceland. Her research, once again, is exhaustive, and is very impressive in its scope, taking its bearings not only from literary sources, church dedications and wills, but also from devotional images and evidence of personal names. Perhaps the most fascinating of the evidence assembled here, however, is the establishment in 1500 of a merchants' fraternity in Hamburg, the 'Sunte Annen der Iszlandesfarer'. Wolf contextualises the fraternity—which appears to have lasted into the nineteenth century—with a useful account of the Hanseatic trade through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (pp. xxxvii–xxxix), before broadening her discussion to include scholarly and literary connections between Germany and Iceland, offering a tantalising glimpse of a possible transmission route for both books and story material.

The second, and longer, part of the introduction (pp. xlvi–cxxxix) is devoted to *Saga heilagrar Önnu* itself. The discussion in section 2.0 (pp. xlvi–lxii) concerns the literary qualities of the saga. In a close comparison of the saga and the *St. Annen Büchlein* (pp. xlvii-lxii), Wolf demonstrates that the Icelandic text is a somewhat slavish translation of the Low German version, and adduces, from shared omissions and errors, that the 1507 Braunschweig imprint, or at least a text very closely related to it, is the saga's direct source. Interestingly, Wolf suggests, on the basis of the literalness of the translation and the consequent divergences from usual Icelandic syntax and usage, that *Saga heilagrar Önnu* might represent

an immature work by the translator or, perhaps, a draft version (p. lvi). Section 2.1 (pp. lxii–cxxxix) comprises an exhaustive discussion of the palaeographical, orthographical and grammatical features of the saga, as represented by the two surviving manuscripts. Particularly valuable is the catalogue of loan-words in the saga (pp. cxv–cxxxv), which offers both a useful supplement to Westergård-Nielsen's 1946 study of the loan-words in sixteenth-century printed Icelandic literature and a fascinating insight into the nature of Icelandic usage at a significant stage in its development. The introduction is rounded off with a comprehensive bibliography (pp. cxl–cxlviii) and an Icelandic summary (pp. cxlix–cliii).

As one has come to expect from Kirsten Wolf's treatments of the Old Norse–Icelandic lives of female saints, this edition and study of *Saga heilagrar Önnu* is an extremely erudite, well-researched scholarly work. In my reviews of Kirsten's studies of the lives of Saints Dorothy (*Saga-Book* XXV:3 (2000), 332–33) and Barbara (*Saga-Book* XXVI (2002), 152–55) I have commented on the occasionally unhappy tension between the demands of general scholarship and those of philological specialism which is, to the outsider's mind at least, one of the major challenges facing those engaged in Old Norse–Icelandic studies in the English-speaking world in this, the age of the collaborative, interdisciplinary research project. I feel that this book, by virtue of its having been published in Iceland by the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, rather than in the Pontifical Institute's Studies and Texts series, is able to focus honestly on the linguistic and literary interests of its subject-matter and its author, a focus which is made clear from the title onwards. The result is a well-balanced, fascinating study, which makes a valuable contribution to research into the development of the Icelandic language and its literature and which does justice to both the saga and its editor.

KATRINA ATTWOOD

BEVERS SAGA. Edited by CHRISTOPHER SANDERS. *Rit* 51. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi*. Reykjavík, 2001. clxxii + 399 pp. 6 black-and-white illustrations.

There have been two previous editions of *Bevers saga*, an Old Norse translation of the Anglo-Norman poem *Boeve de Haumonte*: one by Gustav Cederschiöld in *Fornsögur Suðrlanda* (1884), and another, based on that of Cederschiöld, by Bjarni Vilhjálmsson in Íslendingasagnaútgáfan (1954). The saga has also been discussed by Eugen Kölbing in the article 'Studien zur Bevis saga' (*Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 19 (1894), 209–67). Christopher Sanders's edition is the first to print the various versions of *Bevers saga* together in full and to include the Anglo-Norman original.

The extensive introduction is mainly concerned with the various manuscripts of *Bevers saga*, often referring to the studies of Cederschiöld and Kölbing. The primary manuscripts are examined in detail and a photograph of a sample page of each is included. The first manuscript examined is Stockholm Perg. 4to nr. 6 (B), dating from around 1400 (pp. xv–xxxiv). The description includes details of scribes and provenance, as well as a transcript of the text made by C. R. Unger in the nineteenth

century. The main focus is on palaeography and language, including the different letters, word-forms and syntax, abbreviations, proper names, capital letters, word division, and punctuation. The descriptions are supported by detailed textual evidence, expecially in the case of the various representations of vowels and consonants. There follows a description of Stockholm Perg. fol. nr. 7 (C; 1450–75), another primary manuscript most likely dating from 1450–75 (pp. xxxv–xlv), in which the state of the text is said to be problematic. The emphasis is again on palaeography and language backed by textual evidence. Stockholm Papp. fol. nr. 46 (S46) is a comparatively late manuscript, written in 1690 by Jón Vigfússon and copied from the lost Ormsbók (pp. xlvi–lix). After a short account of palaeography and language, the editor investigates how accurately the scribe of S46 renders the presumed contents of Ormsbók (pp. li–lii). He also extends Eugen Kölbing's discussion of the relationship between B and C to a consideration of S46, determining that the three versions belong to the same manuscript tradition (pp. lii–liv). A comparison with B, C and the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumonte* shows that S46 is more concise in most cases. Sanders demonstrates, moreover, that some details are changed in the Ormsbók version, as are larger elements of narrative and structure (pp. lv–lviii).

The textual relationship between B, C and Ormsbók is then examined more closely by comparing excerpts of those three versions with the Anglo-Norman text (pp. lx–lxvii). Sanders's conclusion, based on textual evidence and age, is that none of the manuscripts is directly dependent on another. It is therefore problematic to locate S46 in the manuscript stemma.

The introduction goes on to discuss the fragments AM 567 II 4to (A) and AM 567 VII 4to (D), dating from *c.*1350 and 1400 respectively (pp. lxvii–lxxxvi). After the usual description and dating of the manuscripts—and reference to a copy of A (AM 920 4to; p. lxxv)—the editor examines their relationship to the other primary texts (pp. lxxxi–lxxxvi). In disagreement with Eugen Kölbing, he argues that A and D are sister manuscripts of version C.

After a short passage on Norwegianisms in the medieval manuscripts of *Bevers saga* (p. lxxxvi), Sanders gives some attention to AM 118a 8vo (γ), a relatively late version (*c.*1650) most likely derived from C (pp. lxxxvii–xc). The examination of the primary manuscripts concludes with the mention of a lost Norwegian text written before 1366 (pp. xc–xci).

The secondary manuscripts are divided into those dependent on B and those which descend from C. Only AM 179 fol. (α), AM 181c fol. (β) and Lbs 946 4to, as well as a later summary of *Bevers saga* in Nks 1144 fol. (pp. xcii–cv), derive from B. Besides version α mentioned above, a large number of manuscripts are derived from the C branch of the transmission (pp. cv–cxxxiv). The secondary manuscripts are included in a stemma with the primary texts, representing the textual relationship of the various versions (p. xciii).

There follows a discussion of two *rímur*, now lost, based on *Bevers saga*. From linguistic evidence it can be assumed that the Faroese ballad surviving as *Bevusar tættir* and *Bevusar ríma* derives from the lost *rímur* (pp. cxxxv–cxxxviii). The editor speculates on the basis of different forms of names that the *rímur* may also have influenced manuscripts of the saga on both sides of the manuscript tradition

(pp. cxxxviii–cxl). The occurrence of Bevers in *kappakvæði* and *vikivakakvæði* is also briefly mentioned (pp. cxli–cxlii).

Boeve de Haumonte, the Anglo-Norman text dating from the late twelfth century on which the Old Norse translation is based, is then described (pp. cxliii–cxlviii). The only edition of this narrative poem is by Albert Stimming (1899), whose text represents two complementary manuscripts; the Anglo-Norman text printed in the present volume is based on Stimming's edition. *Bevers saga* appears to be translated from a slightly different version, now lost.

A guide to the use of the edition (pp. clix–cli) explains that the major manuscripts B, C, S46 and the fragments A and D are printed in full on split pages. The derivative of C, γ, is used to fill the lacunae of C. A diagram visualises the course of the different texts. The Anglo-Norman versions are printed on the facing pages, corresponding as closely as possible to the Old Norse. Between two and four different versions appear together on each of the split pages. The presentation on each page is complemented by the designation of the different manuscripts, chapter numbers and lines for each chapter, as well as the pagination of the manuscripts. The text is furthermore accompanied by textual notes at the bottom of the page detailing matters such as the editor's corrections, emendations and normalisation of spelling.

Following the text a commentary deals with difficulties in *Bevers saga* and *Boeve de Haumonte* as well as major differences between the Norse and the Anglo-Norman version (pp. 369–79). There are two appendices, one containing the textual apparatus for *Boeve de Haumonte* (pp. 380–83), the other giving an account of Stimming's emendations to the Anglo-Norman text based on *Bevers saga*, also referring to the Middle English translation *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* and the Middle Welsh *Ystorya Bown de Hamtwn* (pp. 384–90).

Christopher Sanders certainly deserves credit for his detailed research into the manuscripts and their interdependence. He emends and adds to the work of Cederschiöld and Kölbing, for example by including Ormsbók in his consideration by means of the examination of S46, and his detailed study of the secondary manuscripts, and thus gives an extensive and well-structured overview of the manuscript tradition.

The presentation of the text does not make for easy reading; it is not suited for readers who just wish to enjoy *Bevers saga*. The edition is ideal for thorough research, however: the different manuscripts can be compared very closely with each other and with the Anglo-Norman text. It forms a solid basis for investigation from a linguistic, textual, or comparative point of view. Altogether Christopher Sanders' edition of *Bevers saga* is a fitting companion to Foster W. Blaisdell's excellent editions of *Erex saga* (1965) and *Ívens saga* (1979) in the Arnamagnaean series.

CHRISTINE LORENZ

ÚLFHAMS SAGA. Edited by AÐALHEIÐUR GUÐMUNDSDÓTTIR. *Rit* 53. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi*. Reykjavík, 2001. cclxxxi + 64 pp.

In his *Book of Werewolves* (1865) Sabine Baring-Gould acknowledges that old northern literature is 'all important towards the elucidation of the truth which lies at the bottom of the medieval superstition . . . [about] were-wolves and animal transformations'. He cites instances from eddic poetry and sagas as part of his search for the rational centre of the phenomenon around which popular superstition had crystallised. No mention is made of *Úlfhams saga*, however, because, like many other non-Icelandic old northernists before and since, Baring-Gould had no knowledge of this tale in any of its Icelandic realisations. How he would have relished Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir's fine new edition of the six-part *rímur* and the three *rímur*-derived prose versions.

The basic Úlfhamur story assembles a generous handful of familiar narrative motifs from the bran-tub of wondertale: the summer king who, cursed by a vengeful Valkyrie, becomes a winter werewolf; the necromantic queen with murderous designs on her absent husband and incestuous longings for her dutiful son; the son cursed to a life of sterile entombment unless rescued by a desirable maiden; his loyal companions doomed to a life of erotic infatuation with birds (cranes, no less) rather than women; a self-sacrificial maiden who takes the place of the entombed hero but is then, thanks to a further curse, promptly forgotten by him; the protagonist's success in redirecting his companions' emotions towards the desirable young women hidden under the crane-skins; the hero's eventual recognition of his maidenly saviour and bride-to-be; and, inevitably, the multiple weddings at the end of this heady bridal-quest sequence.

The fullest treatment of the story is to be found in *Úlfhams rímur*, also known as *Vargstökur*, one of more than 30 sets of *rímur* preserved in the mid-sixteenth-century Staðarhólsbók (AM 604 4to), one of the oldest, largest and most influential collections of such verse, and much mined by E. J. Björner for his *Nordiska kämpa dater* (1737). As ever in the series of text editions from Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi codicological, orthographic and linguistic analysis, drawing on and developing the work of eminent scholars past and present, offers intriguing insights into the households and human lives connected with each manuscript. For AM 604 4to a north-west Iceland provenance is identified, with the editor, in one of many well-stocked footnotes, noting Sverrir Tómasson's recent subtle suggestion that it may have been written at Staður in Súgandafjörður. The genesis of AM Accessoria 22, whose variant readings are listed, can also be traced to Ísafjarðarsýsla and its vigorous late-medieval tradition of *rímur* composition and performance. The manuscripts of the three prose versions of the Úlfhamur tale, and the reception narrative to which they bear witness, are no less interesting. AM 601 (Version A of the saga: *c.*1700) appears to have been written out at Árni Magnússon's request. Kall 613 4to (B version: *c.*1750) is certainly the work of the celebrated Jón Ólafsson úr Grunnavík, and, the editor argues persuasively, may well have been specially prepared as a reading book for children—or, more specifically, for Jón's niece Ragnheiður Einarsdóttir (1742–1814). Indeed, Aðalheiður suggests that the second hand identifiable at one point in the manuscript could be that of young Ragnheiður herself as she learnt to write as well as

read. As for Lbs. 4485 4to (C version: 1895–96), the scribe was Guðbrandur Sturlaugsson á Hvítadal, whose flexible attitude towards textual authenticity and scribal responsibility recalls that of the tireless Magnús Jónsson á Tjaldanesi: 'vildi . . . heldr hafa þessa uppfyllingu en ecki neitt'.

As an editorial principle Aðalheiður retains the orthography of the selected base manuscript, for both verse and prose texts, thereby making available important dating evidence. This seems a sensible approach, as few non-modernised texts of Icelandic post-medieval manuscripts have been published. More impatient readers who simply wish to 'read the story' will have no trouble in coping with the late nineteenth-century Guðbrandur Sturlaugsson version, which is as near to a modernised text as makes no difference. The intertextual relations posited by Aðalheiður are complex. They point to the phenomenon of *rímur*-derived prose sagas, as discussed, for example, by Peter Jorgensen in relation to *Jónatas saga* (*Gripla* VII (1990), 187–201). The process seems clear: oral *rímur* versions eventually achieve written form, and these, in turn, dissolve and reconfigure as authored prose, with different redactions developing from parallel but independent routes of transmission. The transition from verse to prose may have been hastened in the mid-nineteenth century by the increasingly uncertain prestige of *rímur* verse in the wake of Sigurður Breiðfjörð's celebrated denunciation in *Fjölnir*.

The post-medieval popularity of *Úlfhams saga* in Iceland is demonstrable, and the editor points to evidence of comparable late-medieval circulation. The last section of the lengthy Introduction explores why so many Icelandic listeners and readers might have found this defiantly non-naturalistic tale so absorbing. Some may simply have sought to escape the cares of the day and linger awhile in a fantasy world whose temporary dislocations lead only to happy endings. Yet Aðalheiður's discussion encourages more searching readings, to the effect that *Úlfhams saga* offers not so much an escape from reality as an alternative means of engaging with it. Put another way, fantasy narratives can be unreal and yet true, with the latent truths in question relating to what Derek Brewer (*Symbolic Stories*, 1980) has influentially categorised as the 'family drama': the rite of passage journey first within and then beyond the family circle on which all adolescents set out and from which not all emerge unscathed. The wolfish father, incestuous mother, supportive siblings, paralysing curses, threatening woods, claustrating caves, silenced crane-maidens and much else besides can be decoded within a *þroskasaga* framework. We observe the adolescent escaping the gravitational pull of parents, the contradictory emotions of parents involved in that process, the desirability of the protagonist mating outside the family circle, the temptations of regression, the many forms in which beauty disguises itself, and the help offered to a protagonist along the way as a reward for somehow lying along the grain of natural process, and so on. Readers of Marie de France's *lais* in twelfth-century France, or of *Vargstökur* in sixteenth-century Ísafjarðarsýsla, or of the *Märchen* of the Brothers Grimm in nineteenth-century Prussia will not, of course, have rationalised their responses in such terms. Yet it need hardly surprise us if both traditional lore and authored *lai* can be read as giving symbolic expression to the many-sided drama of growing up, for both types of discourse might be expected to give

expression to fundamental truths of the tribe, including those involving rites of passage. It was, after all, only through the successful completion of such rites that societies survived and flourished. In Chaucer's phrase they have to 'enduren by successioun'.

Aðalheiður's analysis explores undogmatically the meanings discernible in the texts. She notes the pattern of semi-allegorical binaries in the protagonists' names (Vörn and Hildur, Skjöld and Hermann, Álfsól and Sólbjört), and the ways in which these adversarial elements are resolved in love and marriage. She traces the origins and significance of werewolf legends, transformation scenes and cursing sequences. She draws attention to mythic underlays, generic expectations, and, at yet another level, to the possibility of female authorship for at least one saga version. Inclusion of Bruno Bettelheim's pioneering *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) as an interpretative reference point might have encouraged even more daring readings. Overall, as Aðalheiður's Introduction confirms, *Úlfhams saga* 'er heillandi viðfangsefni fyrir táknfræðinga, bókmenntatúlkendur og hvað ekki síst þá sem kjósa að beita sálfræðikenningum á bókmenntir' (p. ccxxviii). The same can be said of the many similar sagas which keep *Úlfhams saga* company in several manuscripts.

This worthwhile edition makes available an unfamiliar Icelandic tale with a fourteenth-century provenance and an intriguing post-medieval reception history. The editor is a conscientious and clear-voiced guide. The volume has been carefully seen through the press, although it must be reported that in the Bibliography 'Sydney' (of all places) appears as 'Sidney'! As for the attractive paperback format, some years ago a sour review of a fragile book by a trendy bishop concluded: 'the publishers have contrived a binding which, like the contents, disintegrates on a first reading'. Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir's *Úlfhams saga* is safe from any such strictures.

ANDREW WAWN

LJÓÐMÆLI 2. By HALLGRÍMUR PÉTURSSON. Edited by MARGRÉT EGGERTSDÓTTIR, KRISTJÁN EIRÍKSSON and SVANHILDUR ÓSKARSDÓTTIR. *Rit* 57. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi*. Reykjavík, 2002. xvii + 216 pp.

Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614–74) is undoubtedly the most famous of all Icelandic poets. Ordained priest at the age of thirty, he is most celebrated as a religious poet whose *Passíusálmar*, fifty hymns on the Passion of Christ, are traditionally recited in Iceland each year during the fifty days of Lent. Hallgrímur was in fact a prolific writer in many other genres, as well versed in ancient eddic traditions as in contemporary European baroque metres. His writings range from religious poetry to *rímur*, from satire to rhymes for children, from gnomic verse to explanatory notes on the verses contained in *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*. During his lifetime he was no stranger to controversy: there was the scandal of his relationship with an older, married woman who had converted to Islam; there was the fact that he conceived a child with her outside wedlock; and there was his ordination, deplored by those who regarded him as a socially inferior and over-promoted

protégé of Bishop Guðbrandur Þorlákssson. Yet through his experience of sin, humiliation and shame in life, and of the physical agony of leprosy as death approached, Hallgrímur developed a profound understanding of the human soul to which he gave masterly and memorable expression in his writings. His poetry has left a profound mark on the Icelandic consciousness both spiritually and linguistically. Many of his verses have achieved proverbial status and continue to enrich the Icelandic language today. Although Hallgrímur Péturssons links with seventeenth-century contemporary European literature have as yet been little explored, his poetry possesses an international dimension which itself is a source of pride for Icelandic culture.

Some years ago scholars in Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi began work on a critical edition of the whole corpus of Hallgrímur Péturssons works. Some six hundred manuscripts contain works ascribed to the poet, evidence enough of the popularity which his writings came to enjoy. Yet in this profusion of manuscripts authoritative texts of individual works are not easy to establish: there are only two surviving holograph manuscripts. In a culture based on a long oral tradition where the concept of authorship was an unfamiliar one, and when even printed versions were not regarded as authoritative, Hallgrímur Péturssons himself was well aware of the possibility of changes being made to his texts—he himself produced several non-identical copies of the same piece. The aim of the Reykjavík edition is therefore, as the editor of the first volume herself puts it in her preface, to provide a comprehensive sense of the written tradition of the poet's works. While the editors select an extant text believed to be closest to the original, drawing sometimes on early printed editions that are as old as some manuscripts and that preserve a less altered text, they also provide readers with the opportunity to engage with other versions of each poem.

The whole corpus is divided into four parts: poetry (*ljóðmæli*), groups of psalms, *rímur* and prose works. So far two of the five volumes containing poetry have been published. In view of the problems associated with dating Hallgrímur's works the editors arrange the items according to content. The first *Ljóðmæli* volume (2000), edited by Margrét Eggertsdóttir, who has devoted much of her scholarly life to Hallgrímur Péturssons, contains thirty-three hymns on the evanescence of life, injustice, death, and *vanitas* in general. In editing *Ljóðmæli* 2 Margrét has been joined by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir and Kristján Eiríksson. This handsome volume, in a sober and sturdy Stofnun Árna Magnússonar paperback binding, presents the texts in a layout which is generally pleasing. The volume provides its readers with edited texts of thirty-eight occasional poems composed for a variety of circumstances; anything from journeys to weddings to New Year celebrations. It includes seasonal hymns, epitaphs—the most noteworthy of which is one for the death of Hallgrímur's beloved little daughter Steinunn—and strophes of greeting addressed to a variety of folk, from young girls to fishermen. There are drinking poems, reflections on life, death and the pursuit of happiness, and there are gnomic verses, and acrostics, such as a so-called alphabet poem, translated and adapted from German and Danish, in which each stanza begins with a different letter in alphabetical order. In the edition the pieces themselves are also arranged alphabetically, by first line, as the manuscripts offer no consistent system of titles.

The contents of the *Ljóðmæli* 2 edition are better understood when read alongside the introduction to *Ljóðmæli* 1, where the textual history of Hallgrímur's works is analysed in detail and more general selection criteria, editorial choices and questions of attribution are discussed. The present volume's brief foreword analyses doubtful attributions, as in the case of the psalm *Almáttugi og mildi Guð*, which, although far from being Hallgrímur's best work, had never been ascribed to any other writer. The editors also offer a brief discussion of the contents of and methodology behind the edition, and an extensive bibliography. Each edited poem is accompanied by a detailed introduction discussing textual provenance and preservation. In most cases a stemmatic reconstruction is attempted. Each edited text is accompanied by full critical apparatus. Although poetry in Iceland was always meant to be 'used' by readers and transcribers and could thus be modified according to individual taste, the fixed and elaborate metres of baroque Icelandic poetry allowed very little variation if alliterative schemes and internal rhyming were to survive unaltered. The last section contains a palaeographical description of the manuscripts. None of the poems in the *Ljóðmæli* 2 volume is preserved in the two surviving autograph manuscripts.

The Hallgrímur Pétursson project in Reykjavík will take some years to complete. It represents a titanic but thoroughly worthwhile task. It is an excellent example of the ways in which scrupulous scholarship can illuminate a major poet's life, works, and ways of working. It also represents a heartfelt tribute to a great icon of Icelandic literary culture.

SILVIA COSIMINI

FAGRSKINNA, A CATALOGUE OF THE KINGS OF NORWAY. A TRANSLATION WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES. By ALISON FINLAY. *The Northern World* 7. *Brill* (Leiden and Boston, 2004). 334 pp. 3 maps, 2 illustrations.

There has been a quick succession of translations into English of kings' sagas in recent years: *Ágrip* (1995), Theodoricus's *De Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium* (1998), *Morkinskinna* (2000), *Historia Norwegiae* (2001 and 2003), Oddr Snorrason's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (2003), and now Alison Finlay's version of *Fagrskinna*. A new translation of *Sverris saga* and a translation of *The Legendary Saga* (already available in German) would complete the first phase of kings' saga writing. In particular, the new *Fagrskinna* completes the cycle of the greater compendia, *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*. Perhaps *Fagrskinna* came last because it has neither the narrative verve of *Morkinskinna* nor the analytical qualities of *Heimskringla*, although Finlay makes the point that it lies closer to the latter than the former, in its treatment of both the narrative and the verse. Like other recent translators she provides not only a readable text but also copious aids and commentaries.

Translation has become an increasingly self-conscious exercise as more and more people try their hands at it. The latitude ranges from a rather literal option advocated recently by Robert Cook ('On Translating Sagas', *Gripla* 13 (2002), 107–45) to a freer approximation *ad sensum* practised by Hermann Pálsson

and favoured by the present reviewer. On this scale Finlay might be described as a moderate literalist. She sticks rather closely to the wording of the original but usually avoids an overly literal rendering. To my taste her phrasing is now and then a trifle too literal, but taste is the problem; one translator's idiom is another's anathema. I have noted about three dozen passages in which I would have exercised a little more licence. The following examples may convey a sense of Finlay's style. I give her translation first and then offer a slightly less literal alternative:

p. 66: Now they answered each other that each would rather fall across the other than flee before the Danes.
alt.: . . . that they would rather be stacked dead one atop the other than . . .

p. 108: Jarl Hákon . . . said that it would turn out to be a very bad decision for them (*þat myndi vera þeim mikit óráð*).
alt: . . . Jarl Hákon . . . said that it would turn out very badly for them.

p. 123: Járnbarðinn, which was the biggest of all ships (*er allra skipa var mest*).
alt: . . . a very big ship. (We should bear in mind that in this passage Járnbarðinn cannot be biggest because Ormr inn langi is presumably even bigger.)

p. 137: . . . but some had perished under stones and missiles . . .
alt: . . . but some had succumbed to stones and missiles . . .

p. 146: . . . the landed men then were so quarrelsome and unyielding that some would not give way in their suits (*láta sitt mál*) to kings or jarls.
alt: . . . that some would not give in to kings and jarls.

pp. 154–55: He had accepted payment from King Knútr to hold the land under Jarl Hákon . . .
alt. . . . to keep Jarl Hákon in power . . .

p. 170: Then both kings swore oaths that each should stand to the other in the place of a brother . . .
alt: . . . that they would be like brothers to each other . . .

p. 213: The one who got away first was happiest . . .
alt: The more quickly they got away, the happier they were . . .

p. 219: It was discussed in everyone's house . . .
alt: It was discussed far and wide . . .

p. 226: Then something is on offer other than the enmity and disgrace offered in the winter . . .
alt: That's a better offer than the enmity and disgrace you offered last winter

p. 228: . . . and the slaughter was slow to begin with . . .
alt: . . . the casualties were light at first . . .

p. 241: . . . but some called him Styrjaldar-Magnús before the finish (*áðr létti*).
alt.: . . . but some called him Styrjaldar-Magnús before all was said and done.

p. 258: . . . and next they were killing each other's men for it (*fyrir*).
alt: . . . the next thing that happened was that they started killing each other's men in reprisal.

p. 260: It may be then than others will be by (*við*) and not want to wait for such visits at home.
alt: . . . that others will be on hand and not want . . .

p. 288: . . . he both adduced old precedents to the king and showed (*téði*) him how peace had been established . . .
alt: . . . and described to him how peace . . .

These are trivial differences that serve merely to illustrate Finlay's preference for a close translation. Only once did I encounter a translation that struck me as too loose, in the famous replique of King Óláfr Haraldsson to Áslákr Fitjaskalli (p. 156): 'Damn you for your blow; you have just struck Norway out of my hands' (*Høgg allra manna armastr . . .*). In this case I would have avoided the modern imprecation and chosen something more stilted such as 'That was the most wretched of strokes.'

I have also noted perhaps fifty cases in which it seemed possible to query a detail in the translation. On p. 91 *fekk* should be rendered 'gave' rather than 'got'. On pp. 99 and 128 *sóttir* and *sótt* probably mean 'overcome' rather than 'caught' and 'attacked'. On p. 110 the context dictates that *á sundi* should be 'on the fjord' rather than 'in the sea'. On p. 193 'harry both lands' seems better than 'take both lands'. On p. 216 *brenndi víða byggðina* should be 'burned the district far and wide' rather than 'burned settlements extensively'. On p. 269 *komsk á skip* should be 'got to the ship' or 'escaped onto the ship' rather than 'got the ship'. And so forth.

Such matters are quite minor, but a few endemic renderings caught my attention. The Old Icelandic word *lið* (referring to a large body of men, frequently on the march) is regularly translated 'troop' (not 'troops'), e.g., on pp. 58, 126, 150–51. I am unable to get clarification from the *OED*, but my own usage is that 'troop' designates a small body of men, whereas a large body might rather be called a 'force' or 'forces'.

On a number of occasions it seems to me that the word *njósn* is undertranslated, often as 'news'. Thus on p. 99 *hónum kom engi njósn* might be rendered 'he got no wind of this' rather than 'no news of this came to him'. On p. 265 *Var hónum þar sagt, at njósn myndi komin vera fyrir hann í bœinn* might be rendered 'He was told that word [rather than 'news'] of his arrival had probably reached the town before him'. On pp. 276, 277 and 279 the sense of *njósn* seems to be 'intelligence'. On pp. 286 and 289 Finlay translates 'information', but there is something more subversive about *njósn* than news or information.

Another little problem is the preposition *á fund*, indicating travel to meet up with someone. Cases occur on pp. 111, 176, 182, 191, 218, 243 and 263. Finlay solves the problem with 'to see'. Hence on p. 111: 'Eiríkr headed east to Sweden to see (*á fund*) King Óláfr of the Swedes.' It seems to me that *á fund* means a little more, perhaps even 'to join'. Elsewhere 'to meet up with', 'to rejoin' or 'into the presence of' might serve. An even smaller matter is the verb *hǫggva*, which

Finlay translates 'strike' on p. 235 and 'cut down' on p. 281. In both cases I think the meaning is 'execute'.

There are very few cases of awkward translations, though I have noted an occasional exception. An anomalous sentence of seven lines can be found at the top of p. 127. The last sentence on p. 168 ends in an odd spondee ('there then'). On p. 171 there is another seven-line sentence with awkward word-order in the middle. The first sentence in Chapter 104 (p. 276) is similarly strained. For the most part, however, the text reads very easily and puts up no artificial barriers.

A built-in impediment in all translations is the rendering of skaldic verse. Finlay closely follows Bjarni Einarsson's readings in the Íslenzk fornrit edition but develops her own translation system, which she explains on p. 38:

> I have endeavoured to translate literally the actual information in the verse, as well as the distinctive poetic kennings, and to retain the syntax in so far as this is possible in the transfer from an inflected to an uninflected language.

She notes that if the result is obscure, the same is true for the originals. The question is how much work the translator wants to impose on the reader. The answer in this book is, a good deal. Even the translation of a simple stanza from *Haraldskvæði* (p. 44, stanza 6) can boggle the mind at first glance. Other recalcitrant renderings can be found on pp. 70 (stanza 41), 86 (stanza 73) and 206 (stanza 216). Finlay explains the kennings in footnotes, but she abandons the Íslenzk fornrit practice of providing prose rephrasings to straighten out the word order. She also tries to reproduce some of the prosodic features, sometimes trading off strict accuracy for alliteration. There are some spirited translations (e.g. pp. 50 and 182), but on the whole Finlay is at a maximum remove from Hermann Pálsson and his associates, whose simplified translations make the content immediately comprehensible. Her renderings may puzzle the general reader; on the other hand, the general reader may be a phantom. Historians with a smattering of Old Icelandic may well prefer Finlay's versions.

The text is supplemented by 818 explanatory footnotes, a good bibliography, an index of places and peoples, and an index of persons. An innovation compared to other recent translations is the italicising of certain terms such as *bœndr*, *drápa*, *gestr*, *landed man*, *þingamaðr* and so forth, terms that are judged to be too technical to translate readily and appear with explanations in a special 'Glossary'. This is a useful device.

The treatment of place names is a recurrent problem in translations from Icelandic. As far as I can see, there is no generally accepted system for handling them. Finlay addresses the problem on pp. 37–38, opting to use Old Icelandic nominative forms with English or Scandinavian equivalents in parentheses at the first occurrence. Subsequently the Old Icelandic forms are retained if the places are Scandinavian or given in English if they are not. Thus *Sikiley* becomes Sicily. The helpful maps of Scandinavia are keyed to this practice and give only Old Icelandic forms. The index of place names provides explanations and modern Scandinavian equivalents.

This system is clear and normally works well, perhaps better for the practised reader than for the beginner, who will have to resort to the index rather frequently.

Readers with some knowledge of Scandinavian geography might prefer 'Skåne' to 'Skáni' in the text (p. 79). The island of Sjælland (Zealand) is rendered in four different spellings (Sjóland, Sjáland, Selund and Sjǫland). That might have been simplified by using either the Danish or the English form throughout. On p. 96 the series 'Fjón', 'Falstr' and 'Borgundarhólmr' might have been more readily recognisable as 'Fyn', 'Falster' and 'Bornholm'. On p. 114 the form 'Syllingar' obscures the Scilly Isles and is not glossed parenthetically. On p. 136 the Loire and the Seine are not given in their Icelandic forms (*Leira*, *Signa*) in their first and only occurrence. Finlay normally refers to the Oslo Fjord as 'the Vík' (e.g. pp. 280–81), apparently guided by the common noun *víkin* 'the bay', but on p. 150 she drops the article and lets King Óláfr Haraldsson go down 'into Vík'. Some readers may find that more natural. On p. 154, 'in Óslóarfjǫrðr' is rather a mouthful. On pp. 162, 174 and 200, 'Vébjargaþing' is not parenthetically glossed and is not included in the index. 'The Viborg assembly' might have been easier. On p. 223 'York' and 'Stamford Bridge' are not given in their Icelandic forms in their first and only occurrence. On p. 255 'Sætt' (Sidon) is not glossed in its first and only occurrence. On p. 267 'Álaborg' is not identified as Aalborg in the text or index. The upshot is that any system is very hard to maintain with perfect consistency, but since there is no standard, the solution is entirely in the hands of the individual translator. Some will wish to emphasise immediate comprehension while others, like Finlay, will prefer to familiarise the reader with the Icelandic forms.

The introductory essay covers thirty-nine pages. It is not so much a survey of the research on *Fagrskinna* (the studies are duly recorded in the Bibliography) as it is an orientation on the tradition of the kings' sagas. This task it performs exceptionally well. The presentation is clear, well informed and accessible, providing the reader with a full account of the literary background against which *Fagrskinna* was written. On the most debated questions (Icelandic or Norwegian authorship, relationship to *Heimskringla*) Finlay does not take hard and fast positions but gives balanced assessments of what others have said. She reviews two famous episodes (the competition between Harald Fairhair and King Athelstan of England; the Battle of Svǫlðr) in order to convey some sense of the literary qualities of *Fagrskinna*. She also writes instructively on the use of skaldic stanzas in the text. Overall the introduction is skilfully managed and conveys much information in a relatively small compass.

A great deal of labour has gone into the book, notably the footnotes and the carefully dissected stanzas. I have dwelt on a few translation details (perhaps only to create an illusion of attentiveness), but my total impression is that the text is faithfully rendered. The great care taken with the book is ironically belied on p. 1, where a parenthetic reference ('p. 000') remained unresolved (perhaps the intended reference is to p. 15). We can only imagine the writer's chagrin, but any reader who thinks that this early slip is an ominous sign can be reassured that it is practically the only proof-reading lapse in this unusually complicated book. A few others may be ferreted out: on p. 36, where the forms 'Arnmœðlingar' and 'Árnmóðr' occur almost side by side; on p. 65, where Eyvindr Finnsson is missing an 's'; on p. 173, where 'Nidaróss' stands for 'Niðaróss'; and on p.

270, where 'inn víkverska' stands for 'inn víkverski'. That is all I have been able to find.

There is one other indicative irony. At the top of p. 183 (line 3) a sentence has been omitted. It might be rendered, 'Now he prepared his journey, and a large contingent of Norsemen went with him; he continued his journey until he came to Miklagarðr.' It appears that the translator's eye skipped from 'Miklagarðs' at the end of the previous sentence to 'Miklagarðr' near the beginning of the following sentence. Considering the vagaries to which a translator's eye is subject, I find it nothing less than astonishing that I have been unable to locate any other omission, even of the smallest denomination. The absence of such lapses testifies to the exceptional concentration and no doubt repeated rechecking that have been lavished on this painstaking work. It is sure to be greeted with warm appreciation.

THEODORE M. ANDERSSON

THE SAGA OF OLAF TRYGGVASON. By ODDR SNORRASON. Translated by THEODORE M. ANDERSSON. *Islandica* 52. *Cornell University Press*. Ithaca and London, 2003. ix + 180 pp.

Oddr Snorrason was a monk at the Benedictine monastery of Þingeyrar in northern Iceland towards the end of the twelfth century. He is believed to be the author of two of the earliest sagas, one about the mid-eleventh-century expedition of the Swede Yngvarr Eymundarson to Russia, and the other about Óláfr Tryggvason (d. 999 or 1000), the king of Norway who initiated the conversion of Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Shetland, Orkney and the Faroe Islands. Written between around 1180 and 1200, these texts were composed in Latin, but only Old Norse translations of them from around 1200 survive. Three manuscripts preserve the Old Norse version of the saga of King Óláfr, and it is this that Andersson has translated into English. Andersson also supplies notes giving references to the earlier scholarship on the saga, and an appendix contains translations of the material about King Óláfr from the earlier histories of the kings of Norway, namely Theodoricus Monachus's *De Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, *Historia Norwegiae* and *Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sǫgum*. A bibliography and an index complete the volume.

Andersson's thorough introduction discusses the issues relating to the author and his sources; it also offers an interpretation of the text and surveys the manuscripts, editions, and translations of the saga. Andersson provides the evidence attributing this saga to Oddr Snorrason, evidence that also lists Oddr's informants. He next brings in the attribution of *Yngvars saga* to Oddr and reviews the unfortunately inconclusive arguments for the dates of Oddr's composition of these works. Andersson's analysis of the sources of *Óláfs saga* is particularly valuable, demonstrating that the similarities between Theodoricus's history and Oddr's saga can be explained better by common sources than by direct borrowing. Oddr's saga is much less closely related to *Historia Norwegiae* and *Ágrip af*

Nóregskonunga sǫgum or their common source. Andersson suggests that points of divergence from Theodoricus are due to Oddr's own invention, interpolation from *Jómsvíkinga saga*, and oral tradition. A few episodes warrant detailed discussions of their own. The romantic interlude between Óláfr and Queen Geira is suggested as being based on the meeting between Aeneas and Dido in Virgil's *Aeneid*, for example, and Oddr is shown to have grappled—not quite successfully—with contradictory information about the battle of Svǫlðr. Overall, chapters 1–41 (covering Óláfr's life up to his return to Norway) seem to follow its source text(s) fairly closely. Chapters 42–61 add miscellaneous accounts of Óláfr's activities as king, and Chapters 62–78 form a concluding section about the motivations and preliminaries leading to his fall at Svǫlðr.

Although refuting some points of Baetke's interpretation of the saga, Andersson accepts his overall understanding of the narrative as a tale of treachery based on Judas's betrayal of Jesus. Andersson elaborates on this by associating a description of the traitor Sigvaldi's nose as downturned or hooked with the hooked nose that is one of Judas's usual attributes. Andersson also suggests that the reading of the saga be expanded to include secular perspectives on Óláfr's demise. Noting the mixed community of clerics and laymen for whom Oddr wrote, he concludes that the saga is a 'bipolar' (p. 25) composition whose split identity is reflected in its mixed style.

The translation proper (pp. 35–136) forms the core of the volume. As is always the case, a difficult balance had to be struck between fidelity to the original language and readability in the target language, and here Andersson's rendering of the original results in somewhat stilted phrasing. In a few cases, idiomatic English evaporates entirely. '[Olaf] . . . subjected the people' (p. 49); Gyða 'was very propertied' (p. 62); a Viking began to 'straiten [Sunnefa's] circumstances' (p. 78); no effeminate cowards or beggars were allowed to be on Olaf's warship, 'as can be exampled when we hear stories of King Olaf and his men' (p. 104); and at the battle of Svǫlðr, warships are 'wasted' (p. 124). The translation of the gist of the Old Norse is accurate, although it deviates from the wording of the original in a number of small points. For example, some pronouns are omitted or inserted to make the meaning clearer, and some verbs are modified to avoid the present tense for past action (e.g., 'began to hear' instead of 'hears' for ON *heyrir*). Andersson also favors circumlocutions that produce a smoother style, such as rendering *hugsar* ('[he] thinks') as 'began to to turn over in his mind'. A smoother style is also achieved by omitting some phrases that might seem repetitious, such as 'on the Long Serpent', which occurs frequently in the description of the battle of Svǫlðr.

It is perhaps unrealistic to expect perfection in the technical aspects of publications these days, but it was slightly disappointing to find more than a dozen minor errors (on pp. ix, 15, 26, 35 and elsewhere), as well as more than a few inconsistencies in translation and normalisation (Sigríðr's cognomen is given in Old Norse on p. 42, whereas it is given in English everywhere else; Hallr's name is followed by *á Síðu* on p. 90 but *af Síðu* on p. 91; the name of Óláfr's warship Ormr inn langi is given as 'the Long Serpent' everywhere but in the index, where it is 'the Great Serpent'; the name of another ship, Ormr inn skammi, is given as

'the Short Serpent' on p. 120 but as 'the Lesser Serpent' everywhere else; the name of the Swedish king Óláfr is normalised to 'Olaf' on p. 115 but is unnormalised everywhere else; and King Sveinn Haraldsson's own entry in the index gives his name in its Old Norse form, but the entries for his sons refer to him in Modern Danish, as Svend). The volume also follows some non-standard typographical conventions. The titles of poems and *þættir* are set off by quotation marks rather than the usual italics, and passages of direct speech more than three lines long appear in indented paragraphs in smaller type, as though they were quotations in academic prose. But these small quibbles should in no way detract from the overall evaluation of *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason* as a welcome work of scholarship that is useful in several ways. Andersson's re-examination of the general problems of the date and sources of Oddr's work is quite valuable, especially his clarification of which of the sources were written and which were oral. His analysis of the saga's construction reveals it to be the result of a process of compilation much more than of literary creativity, and taken with the early date of composition, this has interesting implications for larger topics such as the development of saga narrative, the saga-compilers' self-imposed limits on modifying their sources, and medieval standards for judging the quality of a saga. Simply by making this saga available in English through a distinguished press, Andersson renews scholarly attention to the literature of twelfth-century Iceland, which is often overshadowed by the more numerous and better-known sagas of the following century. Last but not least, in these days of disappearing university requirements for the study of the Old Norse language, a translation—especially one informed by an expert knowledge of the kings' sagas—has considerable scholarly value.

ELIZABETH ASHMAN ROWE

LANGUAGE AND HISTORY IN VIKING AGE ENGLAND. LINGUISTIC RELATIONS BETWEEN SPEAKERS OF OLD NORSE AND OLD ENGLISH. By MATTHEW TOWNEND. *Studies in the Early Middle Ages* 6. *Brepols*. Turnhout, 2002. xvi + 248 pp.

This book, based on a doctoral thesis, is a study of the meeting between Old English and Old Norse in Viking-Age England. More particularly it considers the question of mutual intelligibility in the light of contemporary evidence and the linguistic legacy of the Norse settlements.

There are six chapters, of which the first is introductory. As well as setting the scene, it lists and discusses 'situations of contact between users of English and users of Norse' (p. 3) and introduces the reader to the subject of intelligibility testing—chiefly employed in the developing world by those seeking to create literary standards on the basis of dialects with differing degrees of mutual intelligibility. Townend identifies four different methods by which levels of understanding are measured: (1) informants are tested to see how well they cope with neighbouring dialects; (2) their opinions are sought about degrees of intelligibility when they converse with neighbouring peoples; (3) linguistic comparisons are made; (4) social relations between speakers of different dialects are examined. These methods he identifies as empirical, anecdotal, philological and social respectively. He goes on

to argue that it is possible to use them (with some modification) to measure the extent to which the Norse incomers and the native English were able to understand each other, each speaking their own language. For the direct testing of informants Townend substitutes the Scandinavianisation of English place-names and the Anglicisation of Norse personal and place-names, contending that these processes provide 'empirical evidence of the ability to understand (and translate) heard speech in another dialect' (p. 17). In place of living speakers to whom questions about intelligibility can be put, the author offers anecdotal evidence found in Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse texts. Linguistic comparison of Old English and Old Norse is judged unproblematic: there is an abundance of evidence (notwithstanding 'much of our knowledge of Norse in the Viking Age must be projected back from later sources', p. 16), and the topic has been widely studied by earlier generations of scholars. Much the same applies to social interaction between the two peoples: substantial evidence is available from many fields, though it has been and remains subject to differing interpretations.

Chapters 2–5 represent the core of the study. They seek to test the mutual intelligibility of Old English and Old Norse by applying the methods just outlined to a variety of sources. Chapter 2, 'The languages: Viking Age Norse and English', examines the history and structure of the two tongues. The author concludes that even after several centuries of separation Old English and Old Norse remained phonologically and lexically similar, even though their inflexional systems had diverged considerably. 'The Scandinavianisation of Old English place-names' is the subject matter of Chapter 3. The incomers' ability to replace English phonological forms with Scandinavian equivalents, 'cognate substitution' (e.g. *gāt* > *geit*, *scīr* > *skírr*), is offered as evidence of the degree to which they were able to understand the indigenous language.

Chapter 4, 'Anglo-Norse contact in Anglo-Saxon sources', approaches the question from the other side. 'The Voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan', Æthelweard's *Chronicle* and the Ælfric/Wulfstan homily *De Falsis Diis* are examined in turn to see how Old English writers deal with Norse names. The conclusions here are varied. Ohthere, it is argued, addressed his listeners in Norse, and the extant text therefore represents 'an English record of a Norse exposition' (p. 94). Wulfstan's account, on the other hand, gives us an Englishman's interpretation of Norse place-names he heard while in Scandinavia. In both cases the results overall show 'the successful operation of a switching-code' (p. 109), by which lexically transparent names were given Old English forms (e.g. *Denemearce*) while those whose meaning was obscure often underwent cognate phonemic substitution, as in the first element of *Scōnēg*, ON *Skáney*. In Æthelweard's *Chronicle* there is little evidence of a switching-code: he exhibits a 'desire (and ability) to reproduce Norse forms as accurately as possible, rather than employing Anglicised forms' (p. 127). In this case, though, Anglicisation is taken as a manifestation of book-learning, while the accurate reproduction of Norse names reflects 'contemporary spoken contact'. Ælfric, too, preserves Norse forms, but only of the names of pagan gods. This is an obvious and deliberate strategy, according to Townend, to avoid any allusion to English paganism and to portray the Norsemen as a people of different customs and language from the English.

Chapter 5, 'Literary accounts and anecdotal evidence', examines first what sagas and other Scandinavian literary sources have to say about Norse–English communication. Collectively, it is concluded, they point to a high degree of mutual intelligibility during the Viking Age followed by a period of linguistic divergence. Old English and Anglo-Latin sources are then analysed and their mention of interpreters in various language contact situations contrasted with the apparently interpreter-free encounters between Englishmen and Norsemen. Chapter 6, 'Old Norse in England: towards a linguistic history', considers four important issues in the light of what has been determined so far. 'Societal bilingualism in Viking Age England' looks at the coexistence of English and Norse and touches briefly on the question of how long the latter survived. 'Old Norse literacy in England' argues that the settlers wrote their own language only in runes; when using the roman alphabet they turned to English, 'the vernacular language of writing' (p. 190). This means that English-language roman-alphabet inscriptions commissioned by patrons with Old Norse names cannot be taken as evidence of the demise of Old Norse in a particular area. 'Inflexional loss in Old English and Old Norse' reaffirms the long-held view that sustained contact between speakers of English and Norse was one of the principal factors leading to the decline of the Old English inflexional system. Linguistic accommodation on both sides involved the abandonment of almost all distinctive inflexions, a strategy facilitated by the largely non-functional nature of inflexions in Anglo-Norse communication. Finally, 'Norse loans in English and Old Norse language death' contrasts the phonology of Norse words adopted in Old English with that of later borrowings: the former tend where feasible to be Anglicised by cognate substitution (e.g. OE *stēoresmann* for ON *stýrismaðr*), the latter retain their Norse form (e.g. Norse-derived ME *skirte v.* English *shirte* 'garment'). This is taken to reflect the life and death of Norse in England. The Old English loans were 'heard from the lips of Norse speakers' (p. 203); those that first appear in Middle English represent either the remnants of Norse vocabulary in the language of people who had shifted to English or—in the case of pairs like *gayt / got* 'goat', *kirk / chirche* 'church' with both a Norse and an English form—are simply native vocabulary pronounced with a heavy Norse accent.

The overall conclusion, presented at the end of the final chapter, is that the evidence adduced supports a hypothesis of 'adequate mutual intelligibility' between speakers of English and Norse and undermines the idea that there was widespread bilingualism or use of interpreters.

Language and History in Viking Age England is a competent piece of work. It builds on detailed knowledge of the languages involved and of Anglo-Saxon history and culture. It is also timely, drawing together the widely scattered threads of recent debate about English–Norse intelligibility. It will, I am sure, prove extremely useful for anyone wishing to acquaint themselves in a more general way with the history of Norse in England, not least because of its full and clearly set-out bibliography. What the book does not do is provide a definitive answer to the question: Could the native English and the Norse settlers understand one another, each using their own language? For the 'adequate mutual intelligibility' Townend identifies can, as far as I can see, cover situations ranging from the slow enunciation of single words accompanied by urgent gesticulation to the use of basic forms

of language, perhaps not unreminiscent of the English uttered by native Americans in B-westerns. Doubtless the better educated could achieve somewhat higher degrees of mutual intelligibility, especially with practice. I find it hard to believe, however, that the levels of communication envisaged can ever have approached those which exist between, say, speakers of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish today—a situation nevertheless often judged no better than 'semi-communication'. Yet the three mainland Scandinavian languages have a shared linguistic history; morphologically they are very similar and syntactically almost identical; Danish and Norwegian *bokmål* enjoy a common vocabulary while Norwegian and Swedish have virtually the same phonological system. It is true, as Townend emphasises, that Old English and Old Norse both developed from the North-west Germanic dialect continuum and thus shared a basic vocabulary and certain phonological features, but the similarities are nothing like as plentiful and obvious as those between the present-day mainland Scandinavian languages. I found it instructive in this context to consider one of the pieces of Old English quoted in the book: 'Athelstan, Ælfric says, "wið Anlaf gefeaht 7 his firde ofsloh 7 aflimde hine sylfne, 7 he on sibbe wunude siþþan mid his leode"' (p. 129). This appears to be relatively straightforward prose, yet with over forty years experience of Old Norse and knowledge of all the modern Scandinavian languages I could make little sense of it without the help of a dictionary. And that is before phonological discrepancies are added into the equation. We must hope the term 'adequate mutual intelligibility' is understood by future scholars in the context of the various reservations Townend professes and is not taken as synonymous with 'widespread general intelligibility'.

Although the book argues a good case for some kind of mutual linguistic understanding between the Norse and English, much depends on the interpretation of individual pieces of evidence. The conviction that Ohthere spoke Norse when he related his travels at the court of King Alfred has to do with the occurrence and nature of Norse elements in the English text. Townend thinks some of these, at least, are best explained by assuming that a scribe took notes and then converted the account into English. The scribe was, however, 'at times influenced . . . by the Norwegian's language' (p. 98). By page 100 this assumption has already become established fact ('not even the keenest proponent of Anglo-Norse intelligibility would want to argue that we have Ohthere's unadulterated *ipsissima verba*—for they would be Old Norse, not Old English'), and so it is also presented at later points in the book. But I cannot see that any of the examples of Norse influence adduced by Townend presuppose that Ohthere spoke Norse without the aid of an interpreter. They are equally explicable on the assumption that he spoke imperfect English or that a Norwegian interpreter did, or that an English interpreter produced a less than perfect translation.

Silence on the subject of language difficulties is taken to mean that there were none (p. 152), but even if true, that does not guarantee mutual intelligibility. The absence of comment on language problems in Orkney and Shetland in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is hardly an indication that Norn and Scots were mutually intelligible. More plausibly it reflects widespread bilingualism among the Norn-speaking population.

The implication of the term *dǫnsk tunga*, according to Townend, is that the language spoken in Scandinavia throughout the Middle Ages 'was a unitary one' (p. 139). But it is possible it denotes nothing more than a line of demarcation between North and West Germanic. Or, as has recently been proposed, that Danish forms spread throughout Scandinavia during the later Viking Age together with the growth of Danish power and prestige.

Are the Scandinavian runic inscriptions from Cumbria, and that from Pennington in particular, really evidence of 'the vitality of Old Norse in England' (p. 193)? The fact that all the Cumbrian inscriptions appear to be twelfth-century has led some to wonder if they may not reflect a late introduction or a re-importation of runic script to that part of the country. The absence of earlier carvings could of course be due to chance, but there is certainly no evidence of a continuous and vital tradition of runic writing in the north-west. The belief that the Pennington inscription is written in 'perfectly acceptable Old Norse, albeit with weakened inflexions' (p. 194) relies heavily on the assumption that its fourth and seventh runes are **s** and **i**, giving the word *setti* 'placed', 'built'. Close examination of these characters, however, confirms them as **l** and **a**, which leaves us with the more troublesome **lïta**. While it is important for Townend's argument that Pennington be in 'acceptable Old Norse', it is equally critical that the roman text on the Skelton sundial is not (p. 192), for that would offer counter-evidence to his view that there was no tradition of Old Norse literacy in the roman alphabet in England. Yet it is far easier to expand Skelton's <LET>, <G*ERA>, <(O)C>, <COMA> into a Norse than an English text.

As often as not, Townend ignores runic evidence entirely. The picture he paints of Viking-Age Scandinavian seems to derive at least in part from Noreen and Seip, scholars active in the first half of the twentieth century who did not always pay due attention to the first-hand contemporary witness of runic inscriptions. This is an unfortunate lapse, for the runic testimony often points to different conclusions from those Townend draws. *U*-mutation, for example, can hardly be 'a post-Viking Age development' (p. 63), when it is attested on the greater Jelling stone in the form **tanmaurk** and in numerous other Viking-Age inscriptions. Indeed, one wonders how the statement: 'In Old Norse the name was *Danmark* (later *Danmǫrk*), as seen on the smaller Jelling stone' (p. 102) is to be understood. Apart from the fact that the smaller Jelling stone uses the genitive **tanmarkaʀ**, not subject to *u*-mutation, it is difficult to see how *Danmark* could become *Danmǫrk* in the absence of a final /-ᴜ/ to change /a/ to /ɔ/. Self-evidently the various vowel mutations that affected Scandinavian cannot have happened later than the loss of the conditioning vowels. It is also unlikely that the assimilation /ht/ > /t:/ only became general in Scandinavian after the middle of the tenth century (p. 92). There is no evidence for the preservation of /h/ in this position in Viking-Age inscriptions, and we find the form **sot** < **soht*- 'sought' as early as the seventh century on the older-*fuþark* Eggjum stone. Denasalisation in the Old Norse negative prefix—by which is meant loss of /-n/—does not appear to have occurred post-1000, as suggested by Townend (p. 96), but by the seventh century if not earlier, as witness Björketorp's **uþarabasbA** 'harmful prophecy' and all Viking-Age inscriptions that contain this prefix. Although there may be no indications in English sources that so-called palatal-ʀ was part of the phonemic inventory of the settlers (p. 38), the

Scandinavian runic evidence also needs to be taken into account. The St Albans I inscription makes a clear distinction between /r/ and /ʀ/, and /ʀ/ seems to occur on the Winchester fragment too. Runic attestations of the suffixed definite article are almost non-existent, so it is impossible to counter with direct evidence the author's view that this was not a feature of Scandinavian at the time of the Norse settlement. It does seem plausible, however, that the development of enclitics like the suffixed article and the *-sk* verb form took place during the syncope period (*c*. 550–700?) when unstressed words and syllables were subject to weakening and atrophy. It is also worth noting that not many Viking-Age inscriptions contain structures likely to require a definite article.

In other areas too the presentation would have benefited from a better appreciation of the issues involved. Although on occasion the author uses phonemic notation, he does not seem to have grasped its full implications. This is strikingly illustrated by the table on page 37 purporting to show 'the Germanic consonant system'. Here we find *b*, *d*, *g* as well as *v*(!), *ð*, *γ* (the last masquerading as a voiceless fricative), together with the note: 'It is uncertain whether the consonants here represented as *b*, *d*, and *g* should be regarded as voiced stops or voiced fricatives in the Germanic period'. Fortunately the value of this book lies not in its contribution to the understanding of Germanic or Viking-Age Norse but in the application of sociolinguistic methodology to a historical linguistic problem. The resulting thesis—my various reservations notwithstanding—seems to me cogently argued and full of useful and interesting insights. I am sure it will give rise to much debate in the future.

MICHAEL BARNES

HRAFNKELS SAGA ELLER FALLET MED DEN UNDFLYENDE TRADITIONEN. By TOMMY DANIELSSON. *Gidlunds förlag*. Hedemora, 2002. 330 pp.

SAGORNA OM NORGES KUNGAR: FRÅN MAGNÚS GÓÐI TILL MAGNÚS ERLINGSSON. By TOMMY DANIELSSON. *Gidlunds förlag*. Hedemora, 2002. 422 pp.

'That is how it was,' the Pope is supposed to have said after seeing the recent Mel Gibson film *The Passion of the Christ*. Much of what Tommy Danielsson has to say about *Hrafnkels saga* and the kings' sagas, in the first two volumes of a planned trilogy on the role of orality in the Icelandic sagas, amounts to the same thing. In the first volume he tackles *Hrafnkels saga* with commendable thoroughness, examining the sagas of the Icelanders in general and *Hrafnkels saga* in particular while reviewing the main questions and areas of dispute that scholarship has identified regarding its origins.

Hrafnkels saga has acted as a touchstone for a wide range of theorising in this area and so it is appropriate to use it as a test case in the present study. To what extent is the saga based on an oral story tradition relating to Hrafnkell and the settlement of Hrafnkelsdalur, and to what extent is it the creation of an author in the thirteenth century, an interpretation of contemporaneous events and / or the product of Christian ideology at the time of writing? The greatest merit of the book

is the time and care Danielsson has devoted to exposing the weak links in the argumentation of those who have tried to present the saga as some kind of authorial creation in the modern sense. He goes through these arguments item by item, and his analysis is such that scholars still inclined to treat the sagas of Icelanders as fictional novels with no roots in an oral tradition will have their work cut out to sustain their position.

There is a methodological problem, however. Rather than going on to discuss further the interplay between the written saga and the oral tradition that would have been current at the time when the saga was written, Danielsson turns instead to its connections with the actual events that might have impelled people in the east of Iceland to tell stories of this kind. In this he follows Eric Havelock (writing on the role of the Homeric epics), taking the view that stories about disputes fulfilled an important function in society by providing guidelines on how people should conduct themselves in public affairs. He also makes a serious attempt to draw up a picture of how disparate accounts and memories underwent change in oral tradition before becoming actual sagas in the form known to us. This analysis, however, appears to involve a degree of misunderstanding of Carol Clover's notion of 'immanent sagas' ('The Long Prose Form', *Arkiv för Nordisk filologi*, 101 (1986), 10–39) in Danielsson's comment on 'Clovers teori om muntliga, immanenta långa sagor' (p. 308). The central point of Clover's idea is precisely that what she calls 'immanent sagas' were not long stories but represented rather an awareness among audiences of a greater course of events which was, however, never followed through from beginning to end as a single account before the possibilities of writing emerged. A further general weakness of the book is that it remains somewhat trapped within the traditional debate whether the sagas did or did not have oral roots—taking for its own part an unequivocally positive position on this central point**.** But Danielsson never succeeds in taking the further step and discussing how the way we answer this question shapes the way we read the sagas. This is perhaps an issue to be taken up in the projected third volume.

The same thoroughness and broad perspective on the issues and main arguments characterises the second volume of the trilogy, which is devoted to the kings' sagas. As in the first volume, the reader is given sure guidance into the world under discussion. The issues are explained and argued from basic principles in such a way that readers who have not spent their lives immersed in the complexities of the textual relations of the extant kings' sagas can follow, and enjoy, the argument. Clear examples are taken for consideration, showing how stories about the kings of Norway grew and developed in the hands of those who put them into book form.

As is well known, most scholars who have set themselves the task of investigating the connections between the composite works that make up the kings' sagas have focused solely on the literary relations (*rittengsl*) between the versions that have come down to us. Danielsson cuts decisively through this discussion by posing the salient question: What if people were telling stories about the kings of Norway at the same time as the extant texts were being written*?* This unavoidable question needs to be kept firmly in mind. If oral and written versions were being created side by side, it may be possible to simplify significantly various complex

explanations previously advanced (see pp. 260, 271), such as Jonna Louis-Jensen's ideas about the relationships between *Þinga saga*, *Þinga þáttr*, *Hulda*, *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla*, which can be seen in a completely different light if we allow for the possibility that medieval Icelanders were in the habit of passing on stories by word of mouth.

As in his book on *Hrafnkels saga*, Danielsson takes the view that people told artful and well-structured stories of a kind similar to those we find in the written texts. He presents a precise and detailed account of how this might have happened and constructs a plausible illustrative model with exhaustive references to general scholarly ideas about the ways in which historical memories are preserved in oral communities. It comes as something of a surprise, however, to see someone as conversant with oral tradition as Tommy Danielsson falling into the traditional trap of taking it for granted that the ancient lawspeakers would have found it 'lättare då att läsa upp en fixerad text ur en handskrift, en text som en gång för alla blivit godkänd och accepterad' [easier to read a fixed text from a manuscript, a text which had become sanctioned and accepted once and for all] (p. 317), as opposed to adjudicating on points of law for themselves and adapting them according to circumstance, as oral tradition gave them both the opportunity and the power to do.

This volume, just like the one on *Hrafnkels saga*, will give 'fundamentalists' within the academic community cause to pause and think, to reassess the premises of their studies and to consider seriously the implications of a putative oral tradition behind the written texts. It is a considerable achievement on Tommy Danielsson's part to have presented compelling arguments for the necessity of assuming a background of this type. At the stage we have reached now it is no longer sustainable to continue ploughing the same furrow and taking the view that postulating an oral tradition behind written medieval texts is just another theory, to be accepted or rejected according to taste. This tradition is a reality, and the sooner people stop ignoring its existence and the clearer the picture we can build up of it, the likelier it is that we will be able to make some progress in our studies.

GÍSLI SIGURÐSSON
Translated by NICHOLAS JONES

ERZÄHLTES WISSEN: DIE ISLÄNDERSAGAS IN DER MÖÐRUVALLABÓK (AM 132 FOL.). By CLAUDIA MÜLLER. *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Germanistik und Skandinavistik* 47. *Peter Lang*. Frankfurt am Main, 2001. 248 pp.

This book is the published version of a doctoral dissertation finished at the University of Bonn in the winter of 1998–99. It proceeds along two related paths, offering, on one hand, a detailed overview of the mid-fourteenth-century Möðruvallabók; on the other, an analysis of the method of narration peculiar to each of the eleven sagas which make up the contents of the codex. The result is a theory which seeks to persuade us of two things. One, that Möðruvallabók was commissioned *c*.1350 by the family of Þorsteinn Eyjólfsson and his father-in-law Eiríkr Magnússon, from the Augustinian monastery of Möðruvellir in Hörgárdalur,

north of its namesake in Eyjafjörður which has traditionally been seen as the home of Möðruvallabók. The other, that the sagas in this compilation, initially minus *Njáls saga* (no. 1) and *Egils saga* (no. 2), which may have been prefixed later, were copied by, or on behalf of, one of these magnates in order to build up a storehouse of 'narrated knowledge' (p. 225), particularly as a means of commemorating a group of ancestors who had lived in the same parts of northern Iceland some three centuries earlier.

Dr Müller's book is itself a repository of knowledge, much of it quoted at length from a battalion of scholars. These include Sigurjón Páll Ísaksson (who suggested the location in Hörgárdalur, pp. 31–38), Theodore M. Andersson, Ursula Dronke and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen. In sifting their views prior to the statement of her own, Müller shows judgement and common sense. She draws her findings clearly together at the end, with family trees and finally a bullet-point résumé for each saga in turn. Altogether it is fair to say that saga studies outside the German-speaking world would benefit if her book were translated into English, preferably in a style less long-winded than Müller's German. The study of sagas always improves when they are understood in the context of the manuscripts in which they were copied; the method espoused here (pp. 14–20), namely to treat the term 'saga' as signifying both *historia* and *narratio res gestae* and thus to focus on the *Íslendingasögur* both as the derived substance and the narration of supposed Icelandic history, seems an excellent way of introducing the subject to beginners.

In this context Müller refrains from dating her sagas but allows that they have authors, pointing out that the chapters of *Njáls saga* are no plotless concatenation of events (p. 49). Müller then presents Hrútr's observation of Hallgerðr's 'thief's eyes' in Chapter 1, not as a clue towards our early anticipation of her theft of Otkell's cheese in Chapter 48, but rather as the author's opening reminder ('eine Art einleitender *Wiedererinnerung*', p. 50; author's italics) of this incident to an audience or readership that knew the story already. Njáll's and others' premonitions or dreams in this saga act likewise not only as signposts for later narrative, but also as *aides de mémoire* to the fully informed audience. This idea seems sensible enough as long as the author of *Njáls saga* is also acknowledged, but there is one famous place where Müller loses him. In his last stand, in Chapter 77, Gunnarr dies shortly after his wife Hallgerðr refuses to give him two strands of her hair for his bowstring. Although no other account of Gunnarr's death mentions Hallgerðr, Müller holds back from attributing this plot twist to the author of *Njáls saga*. Instead she takes two critical positions and caricatures them. One is to argue that Hallgerðr's terminator role is invented; for Müller this is to believe that the author must have taken an extreme dislike to her from the start. The other is to think that Hallgerðr really did refuse her plaits to Gunnarr; for Müller this is to believe that Hallgerðr was bad to start with and that the saga, by treating her well in places, misunderstood this (pp. 59–60). For her own part Müller suggests that the author makes Hallgerðr *blandin mjǫk* so as to turn her from an historical figure into a character, but without going so far as to rewrite the plot. In taking this view Müller is wise to avoid black and white moral judgements at the expense of Hallgerðr, but nonetheless, by overstating the tradition behind *Njáls saga* she

underrates its author. The author of *Egils saga*, in contrast a stirrer in search of confrontation, emerges in this study as more partial towards his tale. He tricks us by favouring mischief and other cunning in his characters and he sometimes recapitulates in order to revise our understanding of what has happened. This looks unlike anything in *Njáls saga*, as Müller well shows. Wherever possible the author of *Egils saga* stages a dispute between Egill or his family and a member of the royal house of Norway, be this Haraldr hárfagri or his sons Eiríkr and Hákon, in order to portray Icelanders as their equals. Yet Müller also claims that this author, unlike that of *Njáls saga*, fails to do justice to the complexity of the historical figures (p. 84). In this Müller overstates her case, by overlooking Egill's many contradictions, as well as the fact that it is Gunnhildr's magic, not Egill's intransigence, that brings him face to face with King Eiríkr in York (p. 82). On the other hand, in showing how intrusively this author treats his material Müller profiles him well. For this reason it is a pity to see her evade the question of the saga-man's identity, given that many other scholars take him to have been the historian Snorri Sturluson (see p. 91, n. 23).

Müller hereafter discusses the nine other sagas in Möðruvallabók with the same emphasis on narrative structure. Given the length and varied complexity of these works, she writes a coherent account of them. In her synthesis of what has been said, however, she might have made better use of Heather O'Donoghue's study (*The Genesis of a Saga Narrative* (Oxford, 1991)) of the prosimetrum of *Kormáks saga* (no. 5; see pp. 126–27). She is right to observe the causality of the incidents in *Víga-Glúms saga*, but wrong to neglect the jarring effect of the interpolations which make up Chapters 13–16. To say, as Müller does, that the saga's basic narrative structure remains unbroken by these chapters (p. 143, n. 11) is to forget the interesting way Már Glúmsson appears full-grown in Chapter 13 before his birth-notice in Chapter 17. *Laxdœla saga* (no. 10) is successfully portrayed as the polished presentation of a story which was already well known, but once again there are details Müller overlooks. By claiming (p. 207) that it is only Kjartan's fierce individuality that decides the events leading to his death, not an inexorable fate, she omits to mention the ill omen attached to Hjarðarholt, Kjartan's birth-place, in Chapters 18 and 24, together with one curse laid on the family's best man in Chapter 30 and another on its best son in Chapter 31, and then Gestr's tearful premonition about Bolli and Kjartan in Chapter 33. Nonetheless, these omissions are of little consequence given the cohesion with which Müller describes the relation of each of these eleven sagas to the traditions which underpin it, and given her singling out of the names of important personages in whose memory the codex was compiled.

In all, therefore, Müller's case for the genesis of Möðruvallabók is persuasive. Other caveats are relatively minor, to do with format, presentation and emphasis. That this book still reads like a thesis is clear from its shorthand 'bzw.'-style ('i.e.'), tireless reiteration of points, and the quotation rather than distillation of other critical views. The presentation suffers from missing and redundant accents in personal names; their spelling is sometimes Old Icelandic, sometimes Modern, occasionally non-Icelandic in form. References are not always consistent and, for what it is worth, besides the frequent typographical errors in Old Icelandic

quotations, quotations from Danish and Norwegian texts are sometimes influenced by Swedish. In its emphasis this book is fully aligned with the aims of Möðruvallabók's compiler, of whose savage redaction Müller is somewhat uncritical. His putative cuts from the originals rate no mention until the section on *Egils saga*, where Müller defends this style of work as one which did not change the plot (p. 79). Nonetheless, it is from the older fragments of *Egils saga* that the case for Snorri's authorship has been made. Leaving this question aside, we might still wonder how much the author meant by the *kærleikar miklir* between Gunnhildr and Þórólfr, Egill's brother (ch. 37): friendship or affair? Perhaps the unshortened version could have told us. The treatment of *Víga-Glúms saga* was more drastic; and yet to read Müller on the other fragments one might never know that anything had been lost (p. 140). We might, for example, compare the text in AM 445 c, 4to (Pseudo-Vatnshyrna) with its counterpart in Möðruvallabók, in a scene from Chapter 7 in which Ástríðr, Glúmr's mother, shames her son into driving out her neighbour's encroaching cattle. In the fragment she makes a rousing speech of some nine lines; in Möðruvallabók we get a line of indirect speech followed by 'en ek hefi eigi fráleik til at reka í brott, en verkmenn at vinnu'. The plot is unchanged, as Müller would say. And yet so much else is cut out**,** even the verb from the second clause, that we might ask why the fourteenth-century abridger bothered to copy *Víga-Glúms saga* in the first place. 'To preserve local history' must be the answer, an antiquarian motive for the codex which Müller has now made fully plausible. A touch of regret, however, for the levelling effect of this redaction would have made hers a more literary study of the sagas in Möðruvallabók.

RICHARD NORTH

STURLA ÞÓRÐARSONS *HÁKONAR SAGA HÁKONARSONAR*. By ULRIKE SPRENGER. *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Germanistik und Skandinavistik* 46. *Peter Lang*. Frankfurt am Main, 2000. 143 pp.

Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, Sturla Þórðarson's history of King Hákon IV of Norway (1217–64), has often enough been looked down upon as a poor relation among kings' sagas, not least because it contains stretches of narrative that are undeniably dry. The saga nevertheless has a good deal to offer those willing to read it with patient care; and in any case it demands our attention because of its subject-matter, which is the king who did more than anyone else to turn Norway into a European-style monarchy with Iceland as part of its empire. For these reasons Sprenger's concise and mostly explanatory book, which keeps literary-critical attention focused on the saga itself and clarifies its big issues while insisting on its strengths, is to be welcomed despite the reservations outlined below.

The brevity of the book is a plus in that it gets the reader quickly to the heart of a saga that can seem diffuse; but naturally it brings with it certain limitations. Perhaps I should immediately state, therefore, what lies outside the remit of the book as Sprenger conceives it. First, there is no description of the manuscripts or the versions of the saga that they contain; Sprenger registers the existence of the

different versions (p. 8), but she does not investigate the relationships between them. Secondly, no room is found for discussion of the anecdotes that give much-needed touches of colour to the narrative. Sturla has an eye for such things, but Sprenger ignores them; she goes instead for what she takes to be essential, as is right in such limited space, but by doing so she misses an aspect of Sturla's talent that helps make the saga what it is. Thirdly, although Sprenger's final chapter (pp. 126–35) is entitled 'Sturla Þórðarson', there is no summary of Sturla's life or reviėw of his literary output as a whole; nor is *Hákonar saga* seen against the background of that output even though some attention is paid (pp. 128–34) to the small surviving fragment of Sturla's *Magnúss saga*, and short chapters are devoted to the possible relevance of *Sverris saga* (pp. 72–76) and the *Heimskringla* account of Óláfr helgi (pp. 67–71). Last, Sprenger discusses Sturla's willingness to suppress inconvenient facts (pp. 80–83) and thus to accommodate the presumed views of King Magnús, Hákon's son, who was acting as a sort of censor; but she does not consider the many places where Sturla may be suspected of irony at the expense of his royal master.

The first half of the book (pp. 9–66) is devoted to the explication of major issues associated with the portrayals of Hákon and his great adversary, Skúli, with the bulk allocated to the former and arranged around the key events of his career (pp. 9–54). Sprenger's great merit here is her power of clarification, whilst her main service is that she leaves the general reader with an awareness of Sturla's most significant political messages and of the literary strategies he uses to put them across. Her method is best seen in her account of the great debate worked up by Sturla, in which one man after another declares for Hákon as the best claimant to the kingship: she summarises the sequence of speeches, correctly foregrounding the idea that Hákon was a lawful king in accordance with the code of Óláfr helgi, and that his descent from earlier kings by an unbroken male line was of paramount importance (pp. 18–23); but she does not, of course, find space to analyse the speeches from a purely literary point of view, even though the debate constitutes a large rhetorical set-piece and is clearly meant, on one level, to be appreciated as such. The lack of abundant textual detail here does not compromise the case that Sprenger sets out to make, but elsewhere it can damage her discussion of the issues that are actually focused on: it is surely to be regretted, for example, that her treatment of Hákon as a military leader (pp. 50–53) gives no account of his actual tactics; in particular, an extensive analysis of Hákon's lack of foresight and poor grip on discipline during his final campaign, which make for uncomfortable reading in Sturla's prose account, would have been highly relevant to Sprenger's later discussion of Sturla the skald (pp. 84–94), obliged by the conventions of his art, and by King Magnús, to praise Hákon as a great warrior (p. 92).

The routine omission of details, as in the contexts just mentioned, perhaps indicates a desire to evade the problems of there being not one text but several redactions; but if so it must be noted that from time to time throughout her book, and contrary to her general tendency, Sprenger seizes on certain particulars and makes more of them than is perhaps justified. The second half of the work, which deals less with historical and more with purely literary-critical topics, such as the use of direct and indirect speech (pp. 94–103) or of the pronouns *þú* and *þér* (pp.

110–13), yields several instances of what I take to be over-interpretation. For example, in her section on Sturla's use of symbolism, she develops an almost allegorical reading of the passage in which Hákon, bearing a bloodied sword and mounted on a black horse that he has just found, pursues his enemies after defeating them in Oslo (p. 105): Sprenger relates the sword to the Old Testament image of the Day of Vengeance in Isaiah 34:6–8; further, she states that black is the colour of evil and of the devil (citing a black horse in *Þiðreks saga*) but notes that since it cannot signify evil in this passage it must represent 'something terrifying'. The first problem is that the passage contains nothing that prompts the interpretation except the details that Sprenger has picked out; nor are black horses always terrifying. If the apocalyptic imagery is insisted on, however, it must surely be agreed that an audience able to recognise an allusion to Isaiah would also remember the fulfilment of the Day of Vengeance topos in Revelation 19:11–16, where Christ is portrayed, like Hákon, as a rider bearing a sword; but in this scripture the horse is white, which makes the colour of Hákon's mount even more problematical. It is therefore better, I think, to abandon the proposed interpretation and to accept that Hákon simply found a black horse and was carrying a bloodied sword because he had just participated actively in battle.

Apart from such moments of questionable commentary on details, much of the second half of the book tends, like the first, to play safe by dealing in abstractions. Hence the chapter on the 'form' of the saga (pp. 114–25), by which Sprenger really means the principles of its structuring, finds that the work is organised on three levels: first, in accordance with chronology; secondly, around the most significant events of Hákon's life; and thirdly, through the distribution of the skaldic verses. This does not take us very deep into Sturla's craft; nevertheless it is in such safe conclusions about Sturla's technique, as well as in those about his broad political messages, that the book's chief merits lie. People who have read *Hákonar saga* hurriedly and found it bemusing will have their thinking clarified and their respect for Sturla increased; those who have yet to approach the saga can be confident that this brief analysis will set them on the right lines while leaving them room for their own explorations. For this Sprenger is to be applauded.

As a final point I must note that there does not seem to be a consistent policy with regard to quotations from the saga, some of which are give in Old Norse only, some in German translation only, and some in both languages. This is a pity since giving all quotations in Old Norse and German would have added only a very few pages to the book.

DAVID ASHURST

CHAOS AND LOVE. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ICELANDIC FAMILY SAGAS. By THOMAS BREDSDORFF. Translated by JOHN TUCKER. *Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen.* Copenhagen, 2001. 156 pp.

Chaos and Love is a translation of Thomas Bredsdorff's *Kaos og Kærlighed. En studie i islændingesagaens livsbillede*, which was published in 1971, and widely reviewed at the time (by, for example, Lars Lönnroth in *Saga-Book* XVIII:4

(1973), 393–96). Bredsdorff's book is easy—even fun—to read, but hard to summarise. On the basis that Family Sagas are fictional creations, he introduces an idea he calls 'the second pattern' (Chapter 1) of the sagas: that 'erotic behaviour that runs counter to the social norm' (p. 78) causes chaos in saga society when it interacts with the more widely recognised first pattern, described by Bredsdorff as the 'urge to power' (p. 22). He first illustrates the second pattern by means of a detailed backwards reading of *Egils saga*, tracing the downfall of Egill's uncle Þórólfr, slandered by the sons of Hildiríðr, to an 'unlawful erotic act' (p. 21) by their father, who became infatuated with their mother, and rushed into an 'asocial wedding' (as Bredsdorff sagely notes, 'When old wood catches fire, it flares up quickly').

Bredsdorff goes on to trace the seeds of such behaviour more widely throughout *Egils saga*. In *Laxdœla saga* too, 'kaos kommer af kærlighed', as Bredsdorff originally put it, and the social consequences of this chaos contribute to the formation of what he calls 'the Icelandic myth' (Chapter 4): the metaphorical creation, fall and redemption of saga society, figured by saga authors as, respectively, a settlement golden age, the aforementioned chaos, and the establishing of Christianity. The Icelandic myth is present in its full form in *Gísla saga* and *Njáls saga* also. But in *Kormaks saga*, *Bjarnar saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*, the mythic cycle is not completed; according to Bredsdorff no social consequences ensue from the erotically generated chaos, and so these sagas are designated as 'pre-classical' (p. 51). *Hrafnkels saga* does not demonstrate the second pattern at all; its author is interested in 'neither the glorification of the past nor a utopian treatment of the future' (p. 94). It is therefore 'post-classical' (Chapter 5)—like *Grettis saga*, in which 'social norms are not upset . . . they are treated as givens' (p. 101). Thus emerges a saga chronology: the classical Family Sagas are a response to the upheaval of the Sturlung age; they represent an anxious analysis of the period of decline between two high points, the society of law, and the society of mercy. Earlier sagas do not attempt to connect the desires for power and sex (first and second patterns) to social decline, while in later ones there is no attempt to analyse society at all; it is either static, or less interesting than—as in *Grettis saga*—its outlandish margins.

This brief survey of a complex and impressionistic thesis does little justice to Bredsdorff's often dazzling and always stimulating insights into saga literature. In *Njáls saga* the law is failing; Njáll's legal interventions are a disaster. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, of the killing of Stýrr's Swedish berserks, Bredsdorff concludes 'a foreign body has intruded into the social organism and been pushed out again' (p. 58)—yes, indeed, but not only in relation to this story thread: the pattern is repeated throughout the saga. Bredsdorff rightly maintains that sagas 'constantly attend to the role of the individual in the struggle between order and chaos in society' (p. 124); his best writing illustrates this relationship. Everything Bredsdorff writes about the sagas under consideration is worth our attention. His critical method is also very engaging: he is resolutely commonsensical about character and situation, shrewdly tracing the complex threads of saga narrative back through time to reveal parallels and contrasts which may enable us as readers to judge the morality or otherwise of actions which saga authors refrain from explicit comment

on. His style is relaxed and colloquial. Saga narratives come vividly alive, peopled with characters whose alterity, either literary or historical, is minimised. Our sympathetic engagement with the texts is assured.

Kaos og Kærlighed was reviewed rather critically when it first appeared. There were objections to Bredsdorff's informal, 'unscholarly' style, and his résumés of saga narrative are occasionally inaccurate. Some reviewers felt that the bold assertion that 'the year "1000" in the sagas is a symbol for "1262" in the real world' (p. 124) made an overly facile connection between saga and society. The most common criticism, however, was that forbidden love is neither sufficiently specific, nor sufficiently prominent in all but a handful of sagas, to be elevated to the status of a major moving force in the narrative (this was noted especially with regard to *Egils saga*, in which the relationship between Egill and the notorious Queen Gunnhildr is 'sexed up' by Bredsdorff). What was not mentioned by any reviewer (to my knowledge), or, more surprisingly, by Bredsdorff himself, is that *Chaos and Love* is a highly sophisticated application of chaos theory to a literary text.

Chaos theory was just coming into vogue in the early seventies. It was popularly peddled via the image of the butterfly in the Far East whose single wing beat eventually generates a hurricane in North America. In more scholarly terms, chaos theory shows, amongst other things, that a tiny disturbance to a regular system (a pendulum swing, say, or the flow of water in a river) causes unpredictable effects wholly out of proportion to the size of the original disturbance. Its value for systems analysts in academic subjects such as fluid dynamics or economics has long been recognised; its worth in relation to literary texts less so. But it must surely lie behind Bredsdorff's reading of how saga literature represents saga society: those 'little, nameless, unremembered, acts' of illicit love are disproportionately disruptive. It is no criticism to complain that such acts do not figure large in the narrative: that's precisely the point.

To apply chaos theory to a set of narratives which represent a complex social system is a brilliant and highly original idea. It alone would justify the re-presentation of Bredsdorff's work to a new generation of saga readers. But this translation throws up a few problems. There are some disconcerting typographical errors: sewing/sowing, breech/breach, and some impenetrable phrases: literary sources are said to be 'laid under contribution', for instance. Bredsdorff's stylistic informality presents its own challenges, and without recourse to the original Danish, it's hard to know whether the description of Bersi, in *Kormaks saga*, as 'a rowdy old widower' (p. 52) is a fair representation of Bredsdorff's assessment of him. And did Finnur Jónsson really 'come close to saying "so's your mother"' (p. 133) in his response to a book about *Egils saga* he disagreed with? The translated quotations from the sagas come from *The Complete Sagas of the Icelanders* (Reykjavík, 1997); I personally find the matching anglicisations of proper names in Bredsdorff's text (*Bjorn's saga*; Ljot, Sam, and so on) an irritating distraction. In his preface to this translation (there is also an illuminating afterword), Bredsdorff explains that he himself jibbed at *The Saga of the People of Laxardal* and has preferred *Laxdœla saga* in his text.

Finally, feminist criticism has made Bredsdorff's comments on forbidden love seem a little dated. That women are dangerous beings unless they are grandmothers

or nuns is cheerfully taken for granted; more mature female readers may be relieved (or disappointed?) to learn from Bredsdorff that grandmothers are at a stage in life when 'disruptive erotic urges only seldom intervene and create disorder' (pp. 46–47). Bredsdorff's underlying conviction is that one of the functions of literature is to give form to a conceptual universe. But although much of *Chaos and Love* is an attempt to relate Family Sagas to the time in which they were composed, ironically Bredsdorff's own natural inclination is to a kind of transcendental ahistoricism which is now unfashionable: an appreciation of 'the universal human understanding embodied in the sagas, their insight into the truths of people's spiritual and communal life in all ages' (p. 106). When the new Old Historicism falls from favour, Bredsdorff's remarkable work will be due a second renaissance.

HEATHER O'DONOGHUE

LJÓÐMÁL. FORNIR ÞJÓÐLÍFSÞÆTTIR. By JÓN SAMSONARSON. Edited by EINAR G. PÉTURSSON, GUÐRÚN ÁSA GRÍMSDÓTTIR and VÉSTEINN ÓLASON. *Rit* 55. *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi*. Reykjavík, 2002. xii + 265 pp.

This is a Festschrift in honour of Jón Samsonarson, who recently retired from his post as *fræðimaður* at Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi. In addition to a lengthy *tabula gratulatoria*, which bears witness to Jón's popularity at home and abroad, the volume consists of a collection of the recipient's own articles, together with a short editorial foreword and a bibliography of Jón's works, an index of titles and first lines of poems and verses which are dealt with in the text, and a list of manuscripts used.

While a number of the articles have appeared in print before, the present Festschrift is unusual in that the bulk of the book, the first four articles—occupying about three quarters of the total—is previously unpublished material. A couple of the earlier printed articles, too, have until now been hidden away in publications difficult of access and known only to specialists. It is therefore very satisfying to have them assembled under one cover, particularly as, taken together, the articles represent a coherent body of work on the matters close to the author's heart. The book is aptly entitled *Ljóðmál*: all the articles deal with lore and literature in metrical form, in most cases with the minor genres of traditional folk poetry, such as prayers and charms, children's rhymes and impromptu verses of various kinds.

The introductory article, 'Söfnun þjóðkvæða á nítjándu öld', provides a history of the collection of metrical folk traditions in nineteenth-century Iceland, along with a discussion of other related folklore genres. Among the interesting documents to which attention is drawn is an anonymous article—probably, as Jón Samsonarson suggests, written by Konráð Gíslason—in *Fjölnir* 1835, in which we clearly see how the patriotic, aesthetic and scholarly incentives for collecting interact, as they also did in the mind of Jón Árnason later in the nineteenth century. Jón Samsonarson also makes judicious use of Jón Árnason's correspondence, which is a veritable gold-mine of information about how his formidable folklore

collection came into being and how his ideas changed and developed over the years. One might, however, have wished to hear more about Ólafur Davíðsson's activities, especially in view of the central role he played in the collecting and editing of the traditional materials on which the remainder of Jón Samsonarson's book focuses.

The article 'Særingar og forneskjubænir' surveys magic formulae, incantations and prayers from old inscriptions, such as those from Ribe and Bergen, and their counterparts in eddic poetry as well as in similar material preserved in pre-Reformation literary sources and in later folk tradition. Much of what is dealt with here is of considerable interest not just in Icelandic and Scandinavian contexts but also in a wider European perspective. Those familiar with Irish folk tradition, for instance, will be delighted to meet with *sunnudagsherra* (see the prayer on p. 47) so familiar to them from Gaelic prayers as Rí an Domhnaigh ('the King of Sunday'). They will also recognise the use of the Latin text of the beginning of St John's Gospel (*In principio erat verbum*) from the so-called Leabhar Eóin, which until a few decades ago was still written out and used as a protection from disease and drowning in parts of Ireland. English readers will of course also recall instances from Middle English poetry, such as Chaucer's use of this formula in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. The charmingly naive prayer to be recited when sheep are let out to pasture (p. 58), containing the lines

> Guð gefi því gras í maga,
> mjólk í spena,
> fisk í júgur,
> hold á bein,

especially touches the present reviewer, as it recalls another reflection of 'papist superstitions' in a verse his mother used to recite on St Stephen's Day, expressing the wish *kött på bena å märg i reva, länge leve å väl må.* Of equal charm are the lullabies and other rhymes for children dealt with in the lengthy article entitled 'Barnagælur' and the short note 'Að láta sem ég sofi á sautjándu öld'. The close parallels between some of the Icelandic rhymes of this type and rhymes found in the Faroes and Shetland, to which Jón Samsonarson draws attention, underline the importance of the comparative element in West-Nordic studies, as does the mention of Magnús Eyjajarl in a lullaby, a version of which runs

> Guð svæfi þig
> og guðs móðir,
> tíu englar
> og tólf postular,
> Tómas hinn trausti,
> tveir aðrir
> Marteinn og Markús
> og Magnús Eyjajarl

where St Magnús of Orkney is placed on a par with an evangelist and two of the most popular saints in Europe (assuming that 'Tómas' refers to Thomas Becket and 'Marteinn' to St Martin of Tours). Some of the longer lullabies, especially the one beginning

Sofi, sofi sonur minn,
sofur selur a sjá . . . (pp. 113–14)

in which many of the stanzas are followed by the burden *sof þú, eg unni þér* ('sleep, I love you'), are of a serene beauty to which it would be difficult to find anything comparable other than the Middle Irish poem 'Diarmait's Sleep' (see for example Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics*, No. 55). It is curious, too, that one of the stanzas in the Icelandic poem *Skurðhagur við skip* . . . seems to have been inspired by the Orcadian Earl Rögnvaldr's verse *Tafl emk ǫrr at efla* . . . . This might have been pointed out by Jón, but he may have considered it unnecessary to those versed in skaldic poetry.

The article 'Alþýðukveðskapur' (pp. 150–91) ought to be compulsory reading—in conjunction with Sigfús Blöndal's *Islandske Epigramme* (1930), William Craigie's 'Skáldskaparíþróttin á Íslandi' (lecture delivered 1937), and Jón Helgason's 'Að yrkja á íslenzku' (in *Ritgerðakorn and ræðustúfar* (1959))—as an introduction to the history and technique of the extempore composition of popular verse. As Jón rightly stresses, the popular quatrains and other *lausavísur* express the whole spectrum of human joy and sorrow and include *allt sem hefur lifað* 'everything in the living world', to recall a phrase from a famous epigram of the poet Stephan G. Stephansson. In this article Jón Samsonarson adduces many interesting examples of how motifs met with in Old Icelandic improvisations recur in Modern Icelandic folk poetry. Especially illustrative are a number of verses of a satirical and obscene nature, on themes of the same kinds as those which figure prominently in the Old Icelandic novella *Sneglu-Halla þáttr*. Jón also draws attention to modern examples of the motif, found in this *þáttr* and elsewhere in Old Icelandic literature, of imposing on a poet a task such as improvising a stanza within an extremely short time or composing a stanza containing a specified word or phrase in each line. Here, too, I would point out that both old Irish and modern Irish folk tradition offer interesting parallels that call for investigation. The verse

Grísaldur þrír vetur,
þrír grísaldrar í hundsaldri

A pig's life is three years,
there are three pigs' lives in a dog's life

referred to on p. 162, which Jón Samsonarson believes might be an anonymous traditional migratory verse, can actually be proved to be so, thanks to verses such as the Irish *Trí shaol capaill, saol duine* . . . ('Three lives of a horse equals a man's life'), which probably have correspondences in other languages as well.

The remaining articles in the volume can only be touched upon in passing. They include 'Tóuvers Klemusar Bjarnasonar', an in-depth study of an incantation used to kill foxes, and of the late seventeenth-century court case in which one of its users was involved, and 'Hestavísan íslenska', which is a survey of Icelandic epigrams about horses. This article gains much both from the author's intimate familiarity with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets such as Jón Arason, Stefán Oláfsson and Bjarni Gissurarson, and his unsurpassed knowledge of latter-day quatrains on the theme by anonymous or less well-known

poets. Jón Samsonarson subscribes, no doubt with good reason, to Stefán Einarsson's theory that the roots of this seemingly thoroughly Icelandic genre are, at least to some extent, to be sought in Virgil's *Georgics*. The final article 'Baksvið skálds á sautjándi öld' differs from the others in that it is devoted exclusively to the background of one of the greatest seventeenth-century poets, Hallgrímur Pétursson, the author of *Passíusálmar*, the renowned cycle of poems on the Passion of Christ. It is not out of place in *Ljóðmál*, however, because to an almost unbelievable extent these poems became the property of the whole Icelandic people, for whom the author has become a legendary figure—a so-called *kraftaskáld*, a poet whose verses were believed to achieve supernatural effects.

Ljóðmál has the same attractive typographical form and binding as other volumes in the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi *Rit* series and, unsurprisingly, is virtually devoid of misprints. No fault can be found with the photographs, which are all the work of Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir, and include as frontispiece a portrait of the benign and smiling author in a characteristic pose. The bibliography of Jón Samsonarson's printed works, compiled by Einar G. Pétursson, is also—as one would have expected—carefully and expertly executed.

An index of prose works and authors referred to in the text would have been a welcome addition. The main cause of regret, however, is that the book has no summary to indicate the nature of its content to those not familiar with the modern Icelandic language. Though of special interest to Icelandic readers, Jón Samsonarson's writings are also, as I have sought to suggest, of great importance to an international readership, not least of course all those interested in Old Icelandic literature.

Thanks to *Ljóðmál* important aspects of Old Norse studies can be seen in a new and fresh perspective, as they are viewed in the light of developments and survivals in latter-day folk tradition, including much that was alive until recently—and to some extent still is. Admirably, Jón Samsonarson has presented new material which highlights the continuity of folk culture in Iceland, and its roots in both the native folk tradition of the Nordic countries and continental learned tradition. In spite of long-term illness, Jón has achieved this through unquenchable enthusiasm for his subject and admirable perseverance in his research. These qualities, combined with palaeographical skill, wide acquaintance with manuscripts from all periods, and extensive engagement over many years in the field collection of folklore material, lend a unique quality to Jón Samsonarson's scholarship. Jón richly deserves the honour that the present volume bestows on him.

BO ALMQVIST

MYTHIC IMAGES AND SHAMANISM: A PERSPECTIVE ON KALEVALA POETRY. By ANNA-LEENA SIIKALA. *FF Communications* 280. *Academia Scientiarum Fennica*. Helsinki, 2003. 423 pp.

This volume is a welcome translation into English of *Suomalainen shamanismi* (1992). The author is the leading Finnish specialist in shamanism. A considerable amount of work on Finnish shamanism has been undertaken, but a great deal has

remained inaccessible to non-Finnish readers, and this volume is above all useful in making a synthesis of this work available for an international readership.

The interest for Norse specialists is likely to be twofold. The Finns were neighbours of the (East) Norse and in constant contact with Norsemen, both along the coasts of Finland and along the trade route to Ladoga; the spiritual beliefs and practices of a neighbouring people are bound to be of interest. The other point is that the author makes frequent use of Norse sources as comparative material.

The book is essentially about the activities of the *tietäjä*, lit. 'knower', who acted as healer and procurer of knowledge by supernatural means. *Tietäjät* existed up until the twentieth century, but they have their roots in the older *noita* or shaman. One of the features which distinguishes the *tietäjä* is the widespread use of incantations, and hence a focus of the volume is the explication of these and other Kalevala-metre poems relating the activities of the *tietäjä*. We are also, however, given a good many observations by writers from the sixteenth century and later. Overall, the book presents a very full picture of what activities were engaged in, how *tietäjät* varied from district to district, and how they resembled or differed from the classic shamans of Siberia. An outline historical development is also proposed, from the true shaman of the hunting society to the *tietäjä* of more fixed, agricultural times, whose practices are more akin to those found in Scandinavia. Finland in fact emerges as the site of an overlap between the shamanic cultures of Siberia and the more European ones of Scandinavia, and the historical development has been towards the latter.

There is copious citation of source material (in both Finnish and Norse), and the original texts have usually (but, frustratingly, not always) been given. The presentation of the poetry in the original with parallel translation is a real boon; it makes the volume considerably more useful than the Finnish original, in fact, since the traditional verse is difficult even for native speakers, so that the translations have the added benefit of being interpretations too. It is irritating that we often find a given formulaic phrase translated in different ways within a few lines (e.g. *hako* as both 'log' and 'undergrowth'), and there are occasional inaccuracies (*nimenomaan* in a prose passage translated as 'namely' when it means 'particularly', for example). On the whole, though, a good job has been made of this very difficult task.

We are given many interesting nuggets, such as the citation of the letter of Archbishop Makariy indicting the Votes for their pagan practices in the sixteenth century, or the first account of the trance technique of the *tietäjä* given by Maxenius in 1733. Such passages will scarcely be accessible to non-specialists outside works such as this, and it enriches the book considerably to have them presented. I would have welcomed even more such accounts.

My only criticism of the presentation of the Finnish material would be its tendency sometimes to leap about. For example, in the midst of the discussion of the Finnish banishment places for disease agents, we are told of the otherworld initiation of shamans by being boiled up and then reforged; but it is not made clear that this is from remote Siberian areas, and nothing like it occurs in Finnish.

Readers with a critical approach to Norse materials will invariably find the use of Norse sources unsatisfactory—at least, I did. Some of the comparisons

do offer interesting points for consideration, e.g. the Lyfjaberg of *Grógaldr* compared to the cosmic mountain whither illnesses are banished. But when we encounter statements such as 'Loki flies in the form of a hawk to Jötunheim, finds *Iðunn* alone at home, and changes him into a net which he carries in his claws as he flies on his way', we know we have problems. There is a general tendency to be satisfied with imprecision, as when it is stated that *Vǫluspá* has a fence woven with snakes around the world of the dead. The author in fact seems to prefer these vaguer comparisons to potentially more precise examples; we are invited to compare the image of evil residing in a rock as a snake quaffing beer to Óðinn gaining the mead of poetry, regardless of the fact that the snake's head is then ripped off and rivers flow from it. The comparison here may just be worth making (with more qualification than Siikala affords, however), but we are then told of another variant of the world mountain (a form of which may indeed be discerned in the Óðinn myth) where the means of passage is a hole drilled by an auger—but Siikala misses this precise point of similarity. Similarly, no comparison with Óðinn is made when we are presented with the *tietäjä*'s practice of putting in his cap three ravens' brains, which represent the helping spirits who inform him of what is happening in the world.

The underlying problem with the Norse material is that it is not treated with much discernment. *Egils saga*, with its reference to Finnish peoples, is mentioned in a way that implies it could really be presenting a situation pertaining in the ninth century, which we (and Siikala too, in fact) know very well is impossible. We have Snorri's *Ynglinga saga* followed by *Hávamál* followed by *Grógaldr*, as if they are all equal in value; there is little awareness of the critical work which has been done on all these major texts, and no attempt to discuss their value as source material. In the case of *Grógaldr* in particular, which is given a prominence rather astonishing to a Norse specialist, it is regrettable that the only sources used are Åke Ohlmarks's edition of 1948, coupled with the awful translation of Lee Hollander—Peter Robinson's critical edition of it finds no mention. Moreover, the Scandinavian material is used as if it were a coherent mass of information about the beliefs and narrative modes of the Viking Age, and used as an anchor to date the supposedly similar Finnish poems. As an example of this, it is frustrating to find the rather vague themes of raids and wooing ascribed as narrative elements to the Viking Age, and then to see an old idea of Matti Kuusi, that the theft of the Sampo is to be linked with (or derived from) *Bósa saga*, repeated and supported here; it is an argument lacking in both precision and likelihood, as indeed I have sought to demonstrate (*Saga-Book* XXIV:2 (1995), 63–82). In short, Norse texts are read imprecisely, their place in Norse culture and their connections with Christian and European traditions are not recognised fully enough, and the scholarship used to interpret them is at times hugely outdated. Any conclusions about Finnish poems based on Norse materials, therefore, are built on sand. I feel that the book would in fact have been of more value with less Norse material, and more detailed discussion of the Finnish poems on their own terms.

I would like now to pick up on some general weaknesses of the book, many of which could have been avoided by more careful editing. The English has been checked only sporadically, and clearly not by a professional. There is a mixture of

American and English spellings, many basic grammatical errors, inconsistencies, and occasionally nonsense. Norse names are not spelled consistently, and there is an annoying idiosyncracy of (apparently) randomly italicising names. Carelessness is sometimes manifest, as when the 'original' of a section of *Grógaldr* is given in Swedish. There are also mistakes in the references; they are a great improvement on those of the Finnish original, but I still wasted a good deal of time chasing up one of the unpublished archive items in Turku, because a wrong date had been given. Sometimes statements of flabbergasting inaccuracy are encountered, as when the Immaculate Conception is presented as pertaining to Christ's conception rather than Mary's. The style of writing is usually fairly clear, apart from occasional phrasing such as 'The verbal statements of people are highly indexical', the meaning of which totally eludes me.

One of the main weaknesses structurally is the bittiness of presentation. Time and time again a topic is raised, left, then picked up again. For example, the *tietäjä* himself, the main topic of the book, appears in discussions for many pages before anything like a definition is given. There is a feeling of collage, as if the book has been put together out of many previous shorter works, without being fully integrated. It can make the thread unclear, and puts an extra burden on the reader.

Despite its problems, the book is a must for anyone wishing to know about the tradition of semi-shamanic spiritual practice in Finland. The Finnish material is very good, and usually well presented; readers of *Saga-Book* will be able to approach the Norse material, and the conclusions based on it, with the caution they deserve.

CLIVE TOLLEY

THE SCANDINAVIANS FROM THE VENDEL PERIOD TO THE TENTH CENTURY. AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE. Edited by JUDITH JESCH. *Studies in Historical Archaeoethnography* 5. *The Boydell Press*. Woodbridge, 2002. 374 pp.

'Studies in Historical Archaeoethnography' are the proceedings of symposia organised in the Republic of San Marino by Dr Giorgio Ausenda. The idiosyncracies of this now well-established series of publications will be more familiar to scholars concerned with the cultural history of the earliest centuries of the post-Roman era than to specialists in the Viking Period. *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century* is the fifth volume of six published so far, five of which are case-studies of specific populations: the present volume, and volumes on the Anglo-Saxons, the Franks and Alamanni, the Visigoths, and the Continental Saxons. For many readers, the dramatised structure of the volumes—containing revised, pre-circulated papers followed by edited transcripts of the discussion at the symposium—is illuminating and revealing; for at least an equal number, however, it is rambling and irritating. Yet, as several distinguished scholars who have voluntarily associated themselves with the furtherance of the project will testify, the bringing together of a small group of complementary specialists for sustained dialogue is the key to the character and effect of the series, and can be very positive. Feelings of discomfort often have as much to do with the innovative

requirement to cross disciplinary boundaries and confront bold, over-arching perspectives as with any real incoherence or lack of framework.

The Scandinavians nonetheless represents a new and ambitious departure for the series in several respects. The chronological focus is somewhat later; it deals with a much larger and geographically more diverse area; and the population is less clearly defined as a recognised group in contemporary sources, internal or external, than are the others listed above. The result is that this volume is less satisfactorily unified than the others, and gives less of a sense of the potential for a growing, integrated understanding of the people and their culture. It still offers much valuable material, however, and constitutes a staple reference point for students of Scandinavian society and life shortly before and during the earlier Viking Period, some of it introductory, some very specialised and advanced. All but one of the archaeological contributions deal with settlement and economy, both urban and rural. Archaeological work on early Scandinavian towns is continuing to produce much new and thought-provoking information. Lena Holmquist Olausson reviews recent work at Birka, and uses this as the basis for an analytical synthesis of the dynamics of development at this site, while Svend Nielsen nicely combines a strong theoretical perspective with a realistic discussion of the practicalities of urbanism in the context of Scandinavia at this date. On rural settlement and economy, Lise Bender Jørgensen and Bente Magnus's contributions serve more as broad-ranging introductions to the data, with sensible discussions of the directions of past research and the potential for the present and future.

It has been asserted in the past that no archaeologist could dig up a kinship system, but Birgit Arrhennius challenges this with a brief report on the results of recent ancient DNA analyses at the Archaeological Research Laboratory of Stockholm University. While it is of the utmost importance that this work is brought to the attention of a wide community of historians, it is also the case that the methods, problems and controversies of historical genetic research need much more extensive explication and discussion. It is not clear what the dramatic claim that one man buried in the boat-grave cemetery of Tuna i Alsike in the Mälaren had a Saami father really means—however obvious that ought to be. Presumably there is a distinctively Saami signature down to and including the last mutation on the Y-chromosome. But in what sense would that man's father be a Saami? What can this tell us about his cultural behaviour and socially recognised identity? Would this man's son necessarily appear any different in this respect? The presence of the genetic line in this cultural context is apparently highly important in representing a process of contact and assimilation, but how far back may that have gone, and at what pace was it proceeding?

In a further study of social history, Elisabeth Vestergaard also discusses kinship structures and family dynamics, comparing abstract models with dramatic relationships in heroic literary tradition. Stefan Brink's paper on law and legal customs in Viking-Age Scandinavia is an outstanding comparative study of diverse forms of evidence that allow him to posit, in a cautious and reasonable manner, the existence and character of early legal and social institutions. These appear to have had associations with religious cults, and to have important implications for the definition of both group-territories and more individual land-rights.

The final four papers are those which least obviously form productive clusters with any others, although there are potential links. It is unfortunate that Judith Jesch's discussion of the beasts of battle imagery in Norse poetry was not able to benefit from more recent work on animal iconography and totemism in the decoration of military equipment of the Vendel Period. A brief discussion of onomastics associated with this paper seems to be heading in this direction but peters out. Dennis Green discusses the Old High German *Ludwigslied*, celebrating a Frankish king's victory over a Viking army, but this does not attract much response from wider perspectives. David Dumville similarly focuses on Vikings outside Scandinavia in a study of the historical sources for Viking activity throughout the British Isles—in fact a useful and constructive comparative review, showing how a comprehensive perspective on this zone of Viking activity can give historians more confidence where, locally, sources seem inadequate. But there is no reference back to Scandinavia itself. This paper's Scandinavian counterpart is Niels Lund's wry discussion of the problems of the historical sources for the end of the Viking Period and beginning of the Christian Middle Ages in Denmark in 'Harald Bluetooth—A Saint Very Nearly Made by Adam of Bremen'.

Contrary to the aims of the series, in these instances the parts of the book work rather better than the whole. But even that may lead to a useful reflection on why the format has been less successful with seventh- to tenth-century Scandinavia even though cross- and interdisciplinary approaches here have been more familiar and less controversial than in other contexts. What might have focused the symposium better from the outset would have been a discussion of the question of ethnic and cultural unity in Scandinavia at this period *per se*: the symposium seems never really to have evaluated its own premise, and this may be a vital omission. There are lessons to be learnt, then, but they hardly make the book a failure. Along with the rest of the series this is a welcome addition to the library shelf, and a book to which reference will regularly be made.

JOHN HINES

ANTOLOGÍA DE LA LITERATURA NÓRDICA ANTIGUA (EDICIÓN BILINGÜE). Edited by M. PILAR FERNÁNDEZ ÁLVAREZ and TEODORO MANRIQUE ANTÓN. *Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca.* Salamanca, 2002. 409 pp.

In Spain, the study of Old English began in the 1950s, and received a major impetus in the 1970s. Combining with an older, independent tradition of Indo-European studies, it led to an interest in Old Norse, with the first Spanish translations from this language appearing in the mid-1980s**.** Eddic translations include Emilio Bernárdez's *Textos mitológicos de las Eddas* (Madrid, 1987), Jorge Luis Borges and María Kodama's *La alucinación de Gylfi* (Madrid, 1984), Luis Lerate's *Edda Menor* (Madrid, 1984), *Edda Mayor* (Madrid, 1986), and *Poesía antigua nórdica: antología (siglos IX–XII)* (Madrid, 1993). The following saga translations have appeared: *Saga de Nial* (Madrid 1986) and *Saga de Egil Skallagrimsson* (Madrid, 1988), both by Bernárdez; *La saga de los Groenlandeses y la saga de Eirik el Rojo* (trans. A.-P. Casariego, Madrid, 1986); *Saga de los Volsungos* (Madrid, 1998) and

Saga de las Islas Orcadas (Barcelona, 1999), both by J. E. Díaz Vera; *La saga de Kormak* (trans. A. Dimas, Barcelona, 1985); *Saga de Gisli Sursson* (trans. J. A. Fernández Romero, Valencia, 2001); *Saga de los habitantes de Eyr* (trans. M. Pilar Fernández Álvarez and T. Manrique Antón, Valencia, 2000); *La saga de los Ynglingos* (Valencia, 1997) and *La saga de Ragnar Calzas Peludas* (Madrid, 1998), both by Santiago Ibáñez Lluch, who was also the translator of Saxo (*Historia danesa de Saxo Gramático, Libros I–IX*, 2 vols, Valencia, 1999). The present volume (*ALNA*) is, to the best of this reviewer's knowledge, the first bilingual anthology addressed to a Spanish audience, but it complements an earlier volume by M. Pilar Fernández Álvarez (*Antiguo Islandés: historia y lengua (AIHL)*, 1999, the first history and grammar of Old Icelandic in Spanish).

ALNA contains a 25-page Introduction by Else Mundal covering oral tradition, history, literature, and the specifically Icelandic genres. A (regrettably brief) Authors' Note states that the book seeks to address the largest possible number of readers interested in Old Norse culture; translations have been selected from a variety of sources for the purpose of comparison with versions to be produced by teacher and students in the classroom; in their own translations the authors have sought literal rather than literary quality; and the Glossary of cultural terms 'explains terms with which the beginner will be unfamiliar' (p. 39). All of which seems sensible enough, but the authors' ambition of addressing 'the largest possible number of readers . . .' is not consistently achieved; it is not clear whether the book is intended for the general reader, beginners in Old Norse studies, or students with some level of expertise.

Section 1 offers excerpts from skaldic, eddic and saga texts with facing Spanish translations: *Hákonarmál*, *Hávamál*, *Helgaqvida Hundingsbana önnor*, *Brot af Sígurdarqvido, Atlaqvida in grœnlenzca*; *Grágás*; *Landnámabók*; *Kristni saga*; *Sverris saga*; *Óláfs saga helga*; *Jómsvíkinga saga*; *Gylfaginning*; *Konungs skuggsjá*; and from *Egils*, *Gísla*, *Eyrbyggja*, *Njáls, Sturlunga* and *Völsunga sögur*. (The use of the symbols d and ð, ö and ǫ, and the retention or omission of the nominative -r ending, is inconsistent throughout the book.) It thus judiciously tries to balance verse and prose, as well as different narrative modes and genres**.** It is also of interest that the authors have had recourse to existing Spanish translations as well as including their own for about half of the texts. This provides a welcome sense of continuity**.** Each text is preceded by a one-page introduction and accompanied by brief but useful footnotes. The volume also includes an index of proper names, appendices containing grammatical paradigms and irregular forms, an Old Icelandic–Old Norse–Spanish 'Dictionary' (i.e. glossary), a glossary of cultural terms and an extensive bibliography.

The book is of much interest, not least because it is the first of its kind in Spain. Very few Spanish universities offer Old Norse studies, but it is sometimes sufficient for serviceable pedagogical resources to be available in published form for the discipline to gather new impetus. If so, the authors have made an important contribution to the subject area. Inevitably, the volume's pioneering quality will have exposed it to error more easily than would be the case with a book written within an established tradition. *ALNA*'s major flaw is inconsistency. Although nothing is said, it is clearly intended as a companion to the earlier *AIHL*, knowledge

of which is largely presupposed. This belies the reference to 'the beginner' in the Authors' Note. There is also inconsistency between the translations and some glossary entries. For example, *þrítugr* is rendered as '30 handbreadths high' in *Völsunga saga* (p. 284); the glossary gives *hamarr var þrítugr* as 'the boulder was 30 metres high' (p. 333); while *þrítugr* itself is translated as '30 years old' (p. 359). Leaving aside the handbreadths / metres inconsistency**,** the different senses may be valid in their own contexts, but students should be told. The information in the Index of Proper Names frequently does not tally with material found in the texts themselves (e.g., it gives *Ásgard*, *Snæland*, *Reykjaholt*, but not *Svíþjóð*, *Miklagarðr*, *Orkneyjar*, all three found on p. 128). There is nowhere a comment on the difference between Old Norse and Old Icelandic, which will make the three-language glossary perplexing to the learner. As for the information included in the glossary, it is all too terse. Nouns (and adjectives) appear only in their nominative singular (masculine) forms**.** Only infinitives are given (though a separate glossary lists irregular forms). Spellings often do not coincide with those found in the excerpts. Word-entries contain no list of the forms, senses and uses encountered in the texts (as is standard practice in both Old English and Old Norse study books). Furthermore, no discernible criterion governs these omissions. Many of these problems, we may note, are carried over from the earlier *AIHL* volume, which abounds in haphazard or unintegrated information.

A good handbook cannot simply contain information; it must have clear goals, a certain type of reader in mind, a system for presenting data, and solid criteria governing this. *ALNA* relies on an well-tried method of presentation but neglects three key issues: goals are not identified clearly, criteria are erratic, and the volume's sense of the implied reader is incoherent. All in all, it will demand the constant presence of a teacher explaining, emending, improving, which can but foster insecurity, dependence and frustration in the student. It is, however, fair to point out that English Old Norse handbooks have had eighty years in which to iron out many of these difficulties; though *ALNA* has not sufficiently profited from that experience, it is, on the whole, a commendable first attempt which we may hope will lead to better things.

MANUEL AGUIRRE

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1. Saga-Book is published annually in the autumn. Submissions are welcomed from scholars, whether members of the Viking Society or not, on topics related to the history, literature, language and archaeology of Scandinavia in the Middle Ages. Articles offered will be assessed by all four editors, and where appropriate submitted to referees of international standing external to the Society. Contributions that are accepted will normally be printed within two years.

2. Contributions should be submitted in two copies printed on one side only of A4 paper with double spacing and ample margins, and also, preferably, on computer disk. They should be prepared in accordance with the *MHRA Style Book* (sixth edition, 2002) with the exceptions noted below.

3. Footnotes should be kept to a minimum. Whenever possible the material should be incorporated in the text instead, if necessary in parentheses. Footnotes should be on separate sheets, also with double spacing, and arranged in one continuous numbered sequence indicated by superior arabic numerals.

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7. Foreign words or phrases cited in the paper should be italicised and any gloss enclosed in single quotation marks, e.g. *Sýrdœlir* 'men from Surnadal'. Longer quotations should be enclosed in single quotation marks, with quotations within quotations enclosed in double quotation marks. Quotations of more than three lines, quotations in prose of more than one paragraph, whatever their length (two lines of dialogue, for example), and all verse quotations, should be indented. Such quotations should not be enclosed in quotation marks, and they should not be italicised.

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EDITIONS

Ágrip af Nóregskonungasǫgum: A Twelfth-Century Synoptic History of the Kings of Norway. Edited and translated by M. J. Driscoll. Text Series X. 1995. ISBN 0 903521 27 X. £6/£12 [1.00/1.55].

Bandamanna saga. Edited by H. Magerøy. 1981. (Published jointly with Dreyers forlag, Oslo.) ISBN 0 903521 15 6. £3/£6 [1.10/1.75].

Egils saga. Edited by Bjarni Einarsson. With notes and glossary. 2003. ISBN 0 903521 60 1 (bound) £12/£24 [1.75/3.00]; ISBN 0 903521 54 7 (card) £7/£14 [1.50/2.30].

Fourteenth-Century Icelandic Verse on the Virgin Mary. Drápa af Maríugrát. Vitnisvísur af Maríu. Maríuvísur I–III. Edited and translated by K. Wrightson. Text Series XIV. 2001. ISBN 0 903521 46 6. £5/£10 [1.00/1.55].

Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu. With introduction, notes and glossary by P. G. Foote and R. Quirk. Text Series I. 1953, repr. 1974. ISBN 0 903521 31 8. Students £1. Others £3 [0.70/1.10].

Guta saga: The History of the Gotlanders. Edited and translated by C. Peel. Text Series XII. 1999. ISBN 0 903521 44 X. £4/£8 [1.00/1.55].

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