Why in one case was he perfectly willing to give up all attempts at being exact in order to make his translation pleasing, whereas in the other case he did not hesitate to use awkward and even unintelligible expressions and constructions just for the sake of being literal? We are given the impression that in preparing a rendering for publication Morris felt that he was under a responsibility and considered it his duty to reproduce as closely as possible the meaning, style, and tone of his original, but that in writing out an illuminated manuscript, which was to be read by only a few close friends and which was to be a work of art and beauty, intended to yield pleasure to its possessor, he did not feel under any compulsion to be scrupulously literal but felt free to make the translation as graceful and beautiful as the form of the manuscript itself. The fact that he was inconsistent in his procedure when making illuminated manuscripts, - that he sometimes made numerous changes in the original draft and at other times copied it out very carefully, - was probably simply the result of the circumstances under which he produced these works. As I pointed out in an earlier chapter, Morris did most of his work on his illuminated manuscripts as recreation during his free moments, especially on Sunday mornings. It is quite likely that much of this work was entirely mechanical, especially when he was tired; at such times he probably simply copied the translation as it was in the holograph manuscript. At other times, when his mind was more active, it was natural that he should wish to remake the rendering, as he proceeded, according to his tastes and feelings.

at the moment.

However, whatever the reason may have been for the freedom with which Morris treated his original translation in many of his illuminated manuscripts or for the difference in procedure that we find in the various illuminated works, the fact that in preparing these books he made frequent alterations in his original draft merely for the purpose of giving his rendering smoothness and clarity indicates that Morris himself was not entirely satisfied with the form of the translations that he offered for publication, and that he realized that his renderings were often awkward, lacking in finish and force, and difficult to understand, just as his critics said. We have already seen in the case of his translation of the Sigurðar saga Jórsalafara, Eysteins ok Óláfs that in reading the finished rendering in the proofs, when he could look upon his work as a whole and not word for word or phrase by phrase, with one eye on Magnússon's draft and the other on the Old Norse text, he occasionally showed himself dissatisfied with the general effect, and here and there cancelled a stilted translation in favor of a more normal, modern expression. It is not at all unlikely that he often felt inclined to do in the proofreading just what he frequently did in the illuminated manuscripts, but restrained himself from making changes so freely because he considered it his duty to be literal. If such really was the case, then we should admire Morris all the more for insisting upon such absolute exactness in his published renderings.

1. See above, pages 504–508.
Part V: An Evaluation of Morris's Style of Translation

My examination and analysis of Morris's illuminated manuscripts brings to a close my study of representative passages in the manuscripts - holograph and illuminated - of Morris's saga-renderings for the purpose of determining his principles of translation. Before passing on to a discussion of the merits and defects of the style he evolved, I should like to summarize very briefly the main facts regarding his aims as a translator which the manuscripts dealt with have revealed.

The holograph manuscript of the Morris-Magnússon translation of the Sigurðar saga Jórsalafara, Eystedis ok Ǫlafs shows us that in his late work Morris was above all interested in making his rendering as nearly absolutely literal as possible. He was unbelievably painstaking in reproducing the meaning and substance of his original, carrying his zeal for exactness so far that he even insisted on the literal translation of minor parts of speech, such as articles, prepositions, demonstratives, and connectives. He likewise took pains to reproduce striking stylistic features of the Old Norse: he endeavored to give his own rendering the terseness and compactness of expression of the original by carefully avoiding the introduction of figures of speech, intensives, and explanatory words and phrases not in the Icelandic and by using one word in place of a phrase or weak circumlocution whenever possible; he was extremely careful to preserve the Old Norse word order in passages in which Snorri seems to have departed from the normal order for the purpose of giving force and vigor.
to the language by placing important words in emphatic positions; he very frequently tried to imitate the loose, incoherent sentence structure common in the sagas, and in so doing, he took special pains to avoid using absolute participial constructions; in a number of cases he endeavored to reproduce in his version the abrupt transitions between sentences and paragraphs characteristic of the Old Norse, omitting connectives when they were absent in his text and using vague connectives when such were found in the original; and he even considered it worth while to imitate such relatively unimportant features of the saga style as the inconsistency in the use of tenses and the careless use of personal pronouns without clear antecedents. Moreover, it was evidently because he wished to keep as close as possible to the Old Norse that he frequently used compound and derivative words in translating compounds and derivatives in the original and that he introduced English cognates of the Icelandic words whenever he could do so. In addition to making his rendering as exact as possible, Morris was vitally interested in giving it what he considered a suitable tone; in order to impart simplicity, vigor, directness, and color to his version and, probably, in order also to make it convey to his readers an impression of the age of the original, he used words of Germanic origin in place of Romance words or otherwise avoided a heavy, learned diction whenever it was possible to do so, and he freely introduced words, inflectional forms, and syntactical constructions that were archaic or poetic. Finally, although in his changes he often made the translation awkward and obscure by insisting too far on exactness and by using archaic or coined words,
he did show an interest in the quality of the English of the work, for he made a number of revisions in his collaborator's draft for the purpose of rendering the translation smoother and more pleasing.

We have also seen that the manuscripts of Morris's early saga-translations, such as the manuscripts of his rendering of the Eyrbyggia saga and of the Grettis saga, reveal that when he first began turning sagas into English, he was by no means so zealous in making his version exact and did not consider it so important to use archaisms and avoid Romance words as in his later work; as a result, his early translations, though less faithful, are as a rule clearer and less often awkward. Moreover, a comparison of the final manuscript form of a rendering with the version in the printed text shows that when Morris reread his translation as a whole in the course of the proofreading, he sometimes realized that he had carried his passion for exactness and his fondness for cognates and archaisms too far, for in a number of cases in the proofs he cancelled renderings which a close adherence to the text or the use of cognates or archaisms had made particularly awkward and introduced instead translations which were less exact and were lacking in an archaic tone but which were smooth and readily intelligible. That Morris was aware of the fact that his renderings were sometimes clumsy, obscure, and generally displeasing is further evidenced by the way in which he treated some of his translations when he produced illuminated manuscripts of them; when we compare the renderings in the illuminated works with the versions in the holograph manuscripts or in the printed texts, we find that in many cases Morris took great liberties with his orig-
inal in the illuminated books, freely sacrificing exactness of translation as well as atmosphere and color merely for the sake of making the work smooth, forceful, clear, and generally pleasing.

To what extent were the renderings produced according to the principles just discussed successful? How accurately do these works reproduce for modern English readers the substance, style, and spirit of the original Icelandic sagas? How far did Morris realize his aim as a translator? On these matters there is not, and never has been, any unanimity of opinion. Ever since Morris's first translations were published, critics have disagreed as to the value of his Icelandic renderings, some praising them lavishly, others holding them up to ridicule, and still others adopting a more discriminating attitude, seeing in them both defects and merits. In order to make clear the general reaction to his work and in order, at the same time, to call attention to the various excellences and shortcomings that have been pointed out in his translations, I shall make a brief survey of the criticisms of his renderings that have appeared in reviews or in other treatments of his work, before presenting my own discussion of his success as a translator.

The reviewers of Morris's first saga-translations seem on the whole to have been well pleased with his style. Concerning The Story of Grættir the Strong, the first saga-rendering Morris published, the Saturday Review said, "The translators' work has been admirably done; the English may fairly be called faultless, and it is no slight satisfaction to read a book in which everything is expressed in the fittest phrase, and in which we feel no
temptation to make any verbal changes." The London Quarterly Review, discussing Morris's translation of the Grettir saga and Dasent's rendering of the Gísla saga, said of the style of the two works, "In each case a great enthusiasm has been shown in the translation, in deed and in word: in care given to the labour of finding the fittest language, and in what the translators say of the original." More outspoken is the praise of Morris's method of translation which is found earlier in the same article in the London Quarterly Review in a discussion of his rendering of the Völsunga saga, which was published in 1870, a year later than The Story of Grettir the Strong: "In Mr. Morris's version of the Völsunga Saga, all that language can do, to put the mind of the reader back on the right level of archaism, has been done: the atmosphere of antique purity of tongue is homogeneous from end to end, and uninvaded by any element that would serve to remind one inconveniently of relationships with things modern..." The reviewer of the Völsunga translation in the Athenæum likewise praised Morris's style, but he did not give it his full approval; he wrote, "The English, although, we should say, too elaborately and obtrusively archaic, is, on the whole, noble and pure, - a marvel in these hasty days of novel and newspaper." The first definitely adverse criticism of Morris's style that I have found is contained in the Academy review of his rendering of the Völsunga saga. In this article G. A. Simcox, writing with the aid of Guðbrandr Vigfússon, expressed approval of Morris's use of an archaic style, but pointed

1. XXIX(1870), 157.
2. XXXVI(1871), 56.
3. Pages 46-47.
4. No. 2224(June 11, 1870), 764. In his article "William Morris and the Reviews. A Study in the Fame of the Poet" in Review of English Studies, XII(1936), 413-428, Karl Litzenberg points out that Morris's fondness for archaisms, together with his almost exclusive preoccupation with the poet and his "emptiness of matter," are the qualities
out that Morris's attempt to give an "archaic elegance" to his work sometimes led to a slight infidelity of translation:

The quaint archaic English of the translation with just the right outlandish flavour, does much to disguise the inequalities and incompletenesses of the original. No one can trace in the translation the difference of style between the equable prose of chapters 1-8, 10, 40-41, with part of 43(according to the division of the translators) where the compiler seems to have followed the lost Sigurd's Saga, quoted by old writers,—and the clumsy paraphrases of lays which make up the rest of the work, except chapter 22. which together with a few phrases elsewhere is taken, with some variation, from Wilkina Saga...

When a clumsy and unequal writer is to be brought up to an empirical standard of archaic excellence, it is easy to see how

Vala-ript (which means quite literally Welsh cloth or Welsh stuff) comes to be translated "cloth dyed red by the folk of the Gaels." The same tendency to prettiness invades the notes; we are actually told that Valkyrja means "Chooser of the Eldest," and Valhall "Hall of the Elected," instead of "Chooser of the Slain," and "Hall of the Slain." On the other hand, while "Battle-apele tree" of a warrior is paraphrased "Fair fruit of the byrnie's clash," other uncouth and difficult phrases like "Heimstaffe" for "warrior," or "Windhelm," i. e. "helmet of the wind," for "sky," or "sharp steel's root and stem," for "warrior," and the like, are left not only unadorned but unexplained, and where an explanation is given it is not always adequate. It is quite true that an outlaw was a wolf's head, but there is a difference between this and a wolf in holy places. This last condition surely answers rather to excommunication and to the profanation of the holy places than to outlawry. It would have been as well also to explain that the verse in Jolnis's song translated "Great is the trouble of foot ill tripping" refers to the omen of stumbling before going into a battle or beginning a war, which Harald Hardraeda vainly endeavoured to elude at Stamford Bridge. The last line of the same song is positively mistranslated, "And base to fall before fate grovelling," which has no connection with what goes before, and contradicts Norse sentiment into the bargain, for there "old age bends all knees, and fate and death lays all prostrate, rich and poor, weak and mighty." The real meaning is "it is ill to rush headlong before (a man's) luck," which coincides admirably with the precepts of cheerful prudence just before. The notion is, the headlong fool rushes into destruction, leaving his luck behind him; while the wise man is wary and gives good luck time to go before and prepare his way. In the same spirit we are told that a "fey"-man's fylgja or "fetch" follows behind, whereas the fylgja of a man in health and wealth walks before him and heralds his coming.

The greater part of this criticism is undoubtedly justified. However, the flaws pointed out are not serious ones. Simcox and Vigfusson are of course demanding a great deal from the translation

1. The Academy, I(1869-1870), 278-279.
when they criticize it for not revealing the change in tone found in certain chapters of the original. It should also be pointed out that the dogmatic manner in which they rejected the rendering

"And base to fall before fate grovelling"

for the Old Norse

"illt er fyr heill at hrapa"

is scarcely warranted; the meaning of the line is obscure, and it is impossible to determine with certainty how it should be interpreted.

This review of the Volsunga translation in the Academy was, so far as I know, the only one of the reviews that appeared in the 1870's in which Morris's method of translation was severely criticized. When his next saga-rendering, three Northern Love Stories, and other Tales, was published in 1875, the critics gave unqualified praise to his style. The reviewer of the book in the Spectator referred to the language as "exquisitely pure and perfect English." The Saturday Review held up this work and the two earlier renderings as specimens of perfect translation:

1. See, for example, the discussion of this line in Egilsson's Lexicon Poeticum (Copenhagen, 1931), page 237, s.v. "heill," No. 3. The remark at the beginning of the second paragraph quoted above concerning Morris's translation "cloth dyed red by the folk of the Gaulls" is likewise not entirely justified. Morris used this phrase, not as a rendering of "valaript" as the reviewers imply, but as a translation of "ravūu manablaði." In a note on the phrase Morris and Magnússon state, "The original has ravūu manna blöði, red dyed in the blood of men; the Sagaman's original error in dealing with the word Valaript in the corresponding passage of the Short Lay of Sigurd." (Collected Works, VII, 482) Evidently Morris and Magnússon's translation was intended as a kind of combination of the meanings of "ravūu mannablaði" and "Valaript." In rendering the phrase "Valaript vel fás" in the "Sigurðarkviða in skamma," the only case in which, so far as I know, "Valaript" occurs in the original of the material included in this translation, Morris and Magnússon used the words "Web by Gauls woven" (Collected Works, VII, 424).

2. XLVIII2 (1875), 1069.
It is not given to every lover of old romance to master the ancient tongue in which these stories were composed, but he may now read them in English with the certainty that all has been done for them by the translators which a rare command of both languages can ensure. For all the versions of old Norse romances on which Mr. Magnússon and Mr. Morris have lavished such pains may serve as models for conscientious translators to keep in view.¹

The Athenæum, after deploring the wretchedness of most renderings, exclaimed,

Now and then, however, a most agreeable exception to the rule presents itself, and a version from some foreign tongue appears which is in itself a work of art, not only satisfying the just demands of the foreign original, but also gratifying the ear and taste of the native reader. Of such a nature are the versions from the Icelandic for which we are indebted to Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon and Mr. William Morris, the most recent of which is now before us. Of it, as of its predecessors, too high praise cannot be spoken, both as regards the grace and vigour of its own language and its fidelity to that which it interprets.²

Even Edmund Gosse, in his review of the translation in the Academy, bestowed praise on Morris's style, referring to the book as a work "in which Mr. Morris has enshrined the grand legends of our forefathers in the crystal of his pure, simple and idiomatic English."³

After Three Northern Love Stories, and other tales had appeared in 1875, Morris published no saga-renderings until 1891, when Bernard Quaritch began issuing The Saga Library. In the five volumes of this series that were produced before his death, Morris presented to the public his translation of six sagas, - the Håvarðar saga Ísfirðings, the Bandamanna saga, the Haensaa-bóris saga, the Eyrbøggja saga, the Haðarvíga saga, and the Heimskringla. When we examine the reviews of these renderings, we find that the critics at this time adopted a somewhat different attitude toward Morris's style from that of the reviewers of the 1870's. Now only a few

¹. XL(1875), 90.
². No. 2490(July 17, 1875), 75.
³. VIII(1875), 55.
praised the style, and they did so in a restrained and rather half-hearted manner; many expressed dissatisfaction with the style, but refrained from criticizing it at length because they felt that there was nothing new to be said about it and because they realized that further criticism would not cause Morris to change his method; and some attacked it vehemently as being entirely unsuitable for renderings of the sagas. The author of the review of the first volume of *The Saga Library* in the *[New York] Nation*, for example, simply said that "the translators have happily preserved enough of the original quaint phraseology to lend a peculiar charm to this English version."¹ The *Saturday Review*, dealing with the second volume, dismissed the question of style with the remark, "As for the style of translation, it is that which Messrs. Morris and Magnússon think the best representative of old Icelandic, and, though to others it may seem affected, it is perfectly intelligible."² In its discussion of the third volume - the one that contains the first third of the *Heimskringla* rendering -, the *Saturday Review* was even briefer in its comment on the style, saying, "As for the style, it is that which the translators have always used; we may or we may not think it ideally right."³ When the fourth volume appeared, the *Saturday Review* was a little more outspoken in its criticism of Morris's language, even introducing a touch of sarcasm in its remarks:

The style of the translation is that archaistic manner from which criticism cannot wean Mr. Morris. If he wishes to popularize the Sagas, his method has not been craftily chosen. However, the version is easier than the original Icelandic. We learn that Our Lord

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1. LIII (1891), 220.
2. LXXII (1891), 482.
3. LXXV (1893), 273.
"stied" to heaven on Ascension Day, and the context indicates that "stied" means "ascended." "Went up" is English, and is intelligible; however, "stied" be it.

The [New York] Nation, in its review of the first volume of the Heimskringla translation, mingled praise and criticism:

It [the book] shares...with its predecessors in the "Library," and with the earlier versions from the Icelandic by its two collaborators, the excellences and the faults that have become characteristic, only that the former have increased both in quantity and in quality. Leaving wholly aside the diction of the strophes, of which more anon, there is, however, in this last volume, just as there was in the first, the same use of a pseudo-archaic phraseology that has never had an existence outside of these pages. We have dwelt upon it here before, and it is still, although we have had abundant time to grow accustomed to it, a blemish and an irritation. This Morrisese, for it crops out more or less in all William Morris's writing and plainly belongs to him, finds its justification here, of course, in an attempt to render closely in Saxon equivalents the Teutonic words of the original. This, within limits, is not infrequently a distinct gain in picturesqueness. We have, to select instances at random, unwraithfully, theretrough, a-shipboard, a-night-tide, northaway, east-away, west-over-sea; but what about "in the end waxed King Harold so wood-wroth," or "Our swords are dull and all to-sharded"? Aside from the mere choice of diction there are some few instances of infelicitous translation. From its prominence, among other places on the title-page, the most glaring of them is the rendition of Heimskringla by "the Round World." Snorri's work, it will be remembered, owes its Icelandic name to the first two words of the Ms. Kríninghheimsins, from which a new compound has been formed. The words, however, mean "the circle of the earth," orbis terrarum, and refer to the supposed discoid form of the world. In a sense a disc is, of course, round, but "the round world" suggests nothing to us but the modern idea of the sphere. Conceived as a disc in the encircling sea, the description of the earth in Snorri's first chapter has an entirely different signification from that conveyed by the translation.

The reviewer then commented at great length on the involved language of the Icelandic verses and on the difficulty of translating these "visur" into English in a satisfactory manner, concluding with the following remarks:

On the whole, it cannot be conceded that the rendition of the strophes is a success here any more than elsewhere, and perhaps it is a physical impossibility to make it so. The least successful of them, nevertheless, are better than the meaningless jingles of

1. LXXVIII(1894), 238.
2. LVIII(1894), 471.
Laing's version. All are intelligible with a use of the notes. Inaccuracy is not their fault, nor the prevailing fault of any of these translations. They, and the prose as well, suffer as a whole from a too painstaking literalness which goes persistently forward, no matter what its material. Some passages of the present book owe their particular charm to their absolute fidelity of rendition; others, however, have been hopelessly marred by the self-same cause.

One of the most interesting of these criticisms of Morris's style is that of Dr. Valty Guðmundsson in a review of the first volume of *The Saga Library* in *Tímarit hins íslenskra bokmenntafélags*, for here we have the opinion of a man who was well acquainted with the sagas at first hand; he wrote,

Að því er sjálfu þyðinguna smértir, þá er hún að flestu leyti vel af hendri leyti, eins og líka mátti vænta af þyðingum. Þó er eitt, sem mjar finnst athugavert við þessar þyðingar, — eins og við fyrri þyðingar af sögunum á ensku, — og það er, hve fornlegþ mælið á þeim er. Það er breittastí misakiingur, að vera að tryvra upp lónu úraltar orðmyndir og fornyrði og strá þeim eins og kryddi innan um þyðingarnar. Það verður ekki krydd úr þlíku, þeirar almenningar að fara að lesa það. Það blytur að spilla fyrir út-breiðslu þyðinganna, að þær innihalda aragrúðu af orðum, sem almenningar annaðhvort ails ekki skilur eða að minnsta kosti lagtir alla í eyrum manna. Hve náttúrlegtd þetta mál í rauninni er, að þær einnitt það, að stundum verður náttúran náminu ríkari hja þyðingum, svo að samkvæmnir fer út um því her, og bruða þær þá nyjjar og fornir orðmyndir til skiptis(t. d. telleth og tells o. s. frv.).

This survey of the reviews of Morris's renderings shows that in general the critics of the 1870's differed from the reviewers of the 1890's on two points, — first, on the effect of Morris's principles of translation on the quality of the language of his renderings and, secondly, on the appropriateness of the use of an archaic style in English versions of the sagas. The reason for their disagreement on the first question is undoubtedly that the style Morris used in his early translations was somewhat different from that of his later renderings. As I have already pointed out,

1. LVIII(1894), 472.
2. XIII(1892), 75.
in producing his first versions of the sagas, Morris was far less insistent on close, literal translations and decidedly less interested in introducing compounds, derivatives, cognates, Germanic words, and archaisms than he was when he prepared saga-renderings in the 1890's; and the language of his early works is consequently definitely less archaic, less awkward, clearer, and generally more pleasing. In regard to the fact that the majority of the earlier critics found the archaic tone entirely satisfactory for saga translations whereas some of the later ones rejected it as definitely unsuitable, I should like to point out that the reason for this disagreement may be that as a rule the reviewers of Morris's first renderings knew little about the original Icelandic sagas. When Morris began publishing his translations around 1870, the average Englishman was but slightly, if at all, acquainted with early Scandinavian literature; the reviewers, not being familiar with the sagas, may well have imagined that because they were old they must be quaint and naïve, and may therefore have been led to assume that Morris's archaic style was admirably adapted for use in his English versions of the sagas. By 1891, when The Saga Library began to appear, early Icelandic literature had become better known in England; it was perhaps because the reviewers at this time were better acquainted with the form of the sagas that some of them now found Morris's archaic style inappropriate and so rejected it. It is significant that the two reviews which criticized Morris's language most severely - the review of the Völsunga saga rendering in the Academy and the review of the first volume
of The Saga Library in Tímarit hins Íslenska Bókmenntafélaga - were written by, or with the aid of, Icelanders.

Since Morris's death in 1896 the reaction toward his saga-translations has been much the same as it was during his life, some critics extolling them as perfect renderings and others pointing out serious deficiencies in their form, but it is not difficult to detect a growing tendency to regard them as generally unsatisfactory. Most of the favorable criticism, it should be noted, has come from those who were closely connected with Morris and who have therefore been somewhat prejudiced in his favor. Let us glance at some of these criticisms, both the favorable and the adverse, and see what these writers, who as a rule were much better qualified to pass judgment on the translations than the contemporary reviewers, have found to admire or condemn in these works. I shall first consider the favorable criticisms.

One of the staunchest supporters of Morris's saga style has been his daughter Miss May Morris. Resenting a remark made in the [London] Times Literary Supplement in a review of Monsen and Smith's translation of the Heimskringla to the effect that The Saga Library rendering of this work "suffers from the quaintly archaic vocabulary which Morris thought appropriate to Icelandic literature," Miss Morris wrote a letter to the Supplement the following week, stating,

I believe I am right in saying that the simple phrasing of Morris's rendering (so strange to ears accustomed to the elaboration of modern English) is enjoyable and interesting to all readers who are familiar with old Icelandic and who recognize the kinship of our language with Icelandic. The joint work of my father and Magnússon on the portion of "Heimskringla" that I have had under my hand is striking: Magnússon did a rendering in modern "journal-

1. No. 1583 (June 2, 1932), p. 401.
using about half of his colleague's words - the phrasing often following the original exactly, thus preserving much of the Icelandic atmosphere.

This is not "quaintly archaic"; it is a phraseology adapted to the Northern matter and admirably in keeping with it. To have produced a translation of this literary quality which is often so near the original that it might be used as a crib is an achievement which should be done justice to by a reviewer in the course of noticing a new translation.¹

A few years later, in her William Morris: Artist Writer Socialist, she again took up the cudgels in behalf of her father's archaic style in his saga-translations. After quoting two brief passages from the Haimskringla rendering, first as they appear in Magnússon's draft and then as they are found in Morris's revised version, she remarked,

To pursue the comparison between 'modern' and 'Wardour Street' English, I think no one can say that, 'and get good word for his speech' is not more readable than 'and good cheer was given to his harangue'; or again: 'and we were minded to think, say they, that beguiling will be'; for 'and we are minded to think, they say, that treachery is lurking'; or that 'somewhat wroth' is not more forceful than 'in a rather angry mood'...

...There is method in his handling; he felt the spirit of the original could in some measure be helped out in English by the choice (where there was a choice) of words and phrases akin to the Icelandic - good English, always, if perchance obsolete or provincial, or even built up and strange-sounding to us Southerners - though one would think scarcely ever strange to the ear of a Scot. Critics of style may or may not agree with his treatment, but they will admit that it is a definite choice and not an 'artistic' affection.²

Another great admirer of Morris's language was his collaborator, Eiríkr Magnússon, but Magnússon was more willing than Miss May Morris to see the reason for the criticism directed against it. In the account of his translation-work with Morris that Magnússon furnished in 1911 for Miss Morris's edition of the Collected Works of her father, he concluded his description of the style of Morris's renderings with the following remarks:

¹. No. 1584 (June 9, 1932), p. 427.
². I, 457-459.
It [the style] is not 'pseudo-Middle-English,' as some critics have thought. It is his own, the result of an endeavour by a scholar and a man of genius to bring about such harmony between the Teutonic element in English and the language of the Icelandic saga as the not very abundant means at his command would allow. The soundness of this principle is surely not in dispute, only the application of it. Custom found fault with its being carried so far as to create words such as 'by-men' (byjarmenn) = town's folk, 'shoe-swain' (skoðaveinn) = a page, 'cut-bidding' (útboð) = a levy of armed men; custom objected to 'obsolete' terms, such as 'stead' for homestead, 'cheapings' for port or trading station, etc.; it objected to the diction generally as strange and unfamiliar.1

In 1905, in his Preface to the last volume of The Saga Library, Magnússon had already defended Morris's use of archaic or coined terms, saying,

Anyone in a position to collate the Icelandic text with the translation will see at a glance that in the overwhelming majority of cases these terms are literal translations of the Iceland originals. ... It is a strange piece of impertinence to hint at 'pseudo-Middle-English' scholarship in a man who, in a sense, might be said to be a living edition of all that was best in M.-E. literature. The question is simply this: is it worth while to carry closeness of translation to this length, albeit that it is an interesting and amusing experiment? That is a matter of taste; therefore not of dispute. But when the terms complained of are indexed and explained as they now are the inconvenience to the reader, real or imaginary, is reduced to a minimum.2

Like Magnússon, E.R. Eddison, who in 1930 published an English version of the Egils saga, felt that Morris's use of Germanic words whenever possible in his translations and his adoption of an archaic style in general were fundamentally correct; but although he was an ardent admirer of Morris's saga-renderings as a whole, he, unlike Magnússon, openly confessed that he was of the opinion that Morris had carried his principles too far in certain cases. In the Preface to his translation of the Egils saga he praised The Saga Library for "containing Morris's magnificent (indeed, the only readable) translations of such important sagas as the Eyrbyggja (Ere-Dwellers),

2. Pages vii-viii.
and the Heimskringla,¹ but in his essay "Some Principles of Translation" at the end of the same work, he pointed out that Morris's joy in words and their rhythm and music, while it enables him to produce a translation which has the life and freshness of an original composition and which preserves on the whole the very tone and accent of the saga, leads him astray sometimes into too great a smoothness of style and sometimes into a curiosity of archaism that has a sophisticated and literary effect quite alien to the works he is translating.²

Especially interesting is Eddison's defense of the use of a simple, slightly archaic style in saga renderings:

Controversy has made itself heard from time to time on the question of diction, mainly in the form of attacks upon William Morris for using archaic words and phrases. Morris, as we have seen above, is open to the charge of employing sometimes a preciosity of expression that gives too literary a flavour to his versions; but the attack on the ground of his archaisms is misconceived. People who have never given much thought to the question are apt to take the view that old-fashioned language must be artificial and therefore devoid of life. They forget that the sagas themselves are written in what is, to us (and to Icelanders to-day, for that matter), old-fashioned language. The heroic age itself is old-fashioned to us to-day; it will seem not old-fashioned only but unreal and ridiculous if we attempt to galvanize it into a semblance of modernity by putting into its mouth the sophisticated parable of our own very different times. The truth seems to be, indeed, the exact converse of the contention of these thoughtless critics: an archaic simplicity of speech is necessary in translating a saga (or Homer, or the Bible, or the Arabian Nights) if we wish to retain its spontaneity and vitality unimpaired.

The reason for this is not far to seek. Much of our present-day language is literary, in the sense that it is a language no humane person speaks except in formal business, nor reads except because he cannot help it (e.g. in official documents or the newspapers). It is a written language, full of redundancies and pomposities and full of all manner of clichés and jargons. It is moreover highly abstract. And these ingredients and characteristics themselves carry associations foreign to the background of daily life under the old, simple, unmechanized civilizations.

If we agree that a saga-translation should give modern English readers the impression of age and unsophistication that the original

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² Ibid., p. 233.
³ Ibid., pp. 239-240.
saga gives modern Icelanders, Edison's arguments in support of an archaic style seem irrefutable. But is the use of archaisms justifiable when, as the direct result of the introduction of obsolete forms and constructions, the rendering fails to reproduce certain very important elements in the style of the sagas? And is it not possible that one cannot through the use of Middle English diction and syntax convey to modern English readers the tone that the medieval sagas have for Icelanders today? And if so, is it not perhaps preferable to use a simple, modern English, from which all the literary, learned, abstract, or otherwise undesirable words that savor of modern civilization have been rigidly excluded and in which it is consequently possible to reproduce the essential charm of the sagas without making the language artificial, awkward, and unclear? Such is the contention of Miss Bertha M. Philpotts, who acutely analyzes the difference between medieval English and medieval Icelandic prose as follows:

The Sagas are not in the language of the tenth century, but in the language of the thirteenth, when they were written down. They have certain stereotyped phrases, like all other oral literature. But there is nothing archaic about their speech. This is one of the great difficulties about translating them. Many people feel that the use of any but words of Anglo-Saxon origin is out of place in an English translation, and accordingly have recourse to an archaic diction. But medieval English prose had not had the schooling and shaping of Icelandic prose. It had not long been promoted to be the speech of the educated classes. Compared to the prose of the Icelandic Saga it is unwieldy and slow, awkward in the deft delineation of character, lacking suppleness in repartee and quick retort. Even in the hands of William Morris, to whom Old Northern Literature in England owes an incalculable debt, the archaic language blurs the sharply-etched outlines of the Saga speech and fails to reproduce the atmosphere of vivid modernity which the Sagas sometimes so startlingly convey. Those who wish to realize the flavour of Saga speech should read the translations of short excerpts from the historical Sagas by the late Professor Ker. Perhaps it may be added that the original language is not very difficult to acquire.

Professor Ker's translations, it should be pointed out, keep extremely...
close to the original, but their language is entirely modern. Ker made no attempt to reproduce Icelandic idioms or syntactical constructions in his renderings when such forms were foreign to English, and he showed no preference for cognates of the Old Norse words or for Germanic diction; but he did in the whole restrict himself to the simple, concrete words in modern English, and in this way succeeded both in giving his translations something of the directness and vigor of the original sagas and in keeping them free from too modern a tone.

Finally, as a specimen of an entirely adverse criticism of Morris's saga style, I should like to quote the following paragraph from Miss Dorothy Hoare's recent study, The Works of Morris and Yeats in Relation to Early Saga Literature:

It is evident that Morris did not grasp the nature of the style and the matter with which he was dealing, or the result would not have been so entirely different from the effect which is obtained on reading Icelandic for oneself. His faults in manner - of reducing the speed, economy, plainness and vividness of the original to diffuseness, false rhetoric, obscurity, unfamiliarity, by making too literal a translation where the idiom needs to be translated by a corresponding English idiom, or by using phrases and syntax not in modern usage, and thus giving a kind of remote, medieval flavour to what is fresh and modern in spirit - may ultimately be reduced to the same first cause, the idea that the life dealt with was heroic in the ideal sense, a kind of earthly paradise where men were simple and free and noble, and untroubled by the misfortunes and oppressions of the modern world. This pre-misconception is what makes his style pitched up, and hollowly dignified. Because of this, the spirit of the Norse matter is altered.

The excerpts that I have presented in the foregoing pages from contemporary reviews of Morris's saga-translations and from later criticisms of his renderings make clear the general merits and defects of these productions. However, although I admit, as it seems to me any unprejudiced reader who is well acquainted with

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2. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1937), pp. 54-55. Miss Hoare's discussion of Morris in this work consists mainly in an elaboration of the thesis stated in the paragraph quoted, and added
the original sagas must admit, that Morris's English versions do fail in certain important respects to reproduce the tone and spirit of the Icelandic works. I feel both that the adverse critics have overlooked certain excellences in Morris's translations and that those who have praised his work have failed to do full justice to the merits of his renderings. It seems to me that our study of the revisions Morris made in the manuscripts we have examined enables us to give a somewhat fairer evaluation of his work as a translator than he has hitherto received.

Our analysis of the changes that Morris made in revising Magnússon's draft translation of the Sigurðar saga Jórsalafara, Eyþrsteins ok Ólafs revealed that one of Morris's principal aims as a translator was to reproduce as literally as possible the meaning and substance of the original. Exactness and dependability are of course extremely admirable qualities in a rendering. Very few of Morris's reviewers or critics, as we have seen, have found any inaccuracies to criticize, and the great majority of those mistakes that have been pointed out are of a distinctly minor nature or occur in the translation of passages that in the original are obscure and open to several interpretations. Unfortunately, Morris sometimes let his zeal for closeness of translation lead him to introduce peculiarly Icelandic idioms and constructions, which, as I have already shown, not only frequently made the rendering awkward and unclear, but - what was really worse - often gave it a stilted character which he seems not to have realized was entirely out of keeping with the simple, almost colloquial, style of the original.

Furthermore, in the manuscript pages we have examined we have
found that Morris was exceedingly painstaking in reproducing outstanding stylistic qualities of the sagas. In the excerpt that I just quoted from Miss Hoare's book on Morris and Yeats, she stated that Morris's manner "of reducing the speed, economy, plainness and vividness of the original to diffuseness, false rhetoric, obscurity, unfamiliarity" shows clearly that "Morris did not grasp the nature of the style and the matter with which he was dealing." As I have already pointed out in Part II of this chapter, Morris may have made the numerous alterations which reproduce stylistic features of the Old Norse not because he was consciously trying to imitate the style of the sagas but simply because he wanted to keep as close as possible to the substance of the original, but that such was the case seems to me extremely unlikely. In fact, as we examine these changes and see how effective many of them are in giving the translation the same tone as the saga has, it seems preposterous to doubt that Morris was deliberately imitating the style of the Old Norse. The fact that Morris's renderings do not for us reproduce in all respects the spirit of their originals seems to me to be due, not so much to his failure to "grasp the nature of the style and the matter with which he was dealing," as to his preconceived notions about style and diction in general. This matter I shall discuss more fully later when I treat his preference for archaisms; I should now like to call attention to some of the more important ways in which he did imitate the saga style.

I should first like to point out that Morris did take steps to reproduce the plainness, terseness, directness, and vigor which is so marked in the sagas and which Miss Hoare finds lacking in

1. See above, page 570.
Morris's English versions. As I described in detail in my discussion earlier in this chapter of Morris's revisions in the first half of Magnússon's translation of the *Sigurðar saga Jórsalafar*, Eysteins ok Ólafs, Morris carefully excluded figures of speech and intensives which Magnússon had introduced to render the language more colorful or more vivid; he struck out words or phrases which Magnússon had added to make the rhythm of the sentence smoother or the thought sequence clearer; and he often replaced phrases or weak circumlocutions with one simple, direct word. Furthermore, he often endeavored to give his translation added vigor and force by imitating cases of emphatic word order in his text. Moreover, he again and again made changes in which he seems to have aimed at reproducing characteristic features of the structure of the Old Norse prose, features which in the main are the result of the origin of the sagas as oral literature: he took pains to imitate the extremely loose sentence structure of his original, seldom tolerating compact, well-built sentences, especially if they contained an absolute participial construction; he occasionally followed his text in omitting connectives that Magnússon had introduced, thus reproducing the abruptness of sentence transition common in early Icelandic prose; and in several cases he altered tenses of verbs in Magnússon's draft, presumably for the purpose of imitating the careless mixture of tenses often found in the sagas. All of these changes are of course of the utmost importance, and for making these revisions Morris deserves the highest praise, for it was mainly these alterations that gave the translation something of the spirit and atmosphere of the original. That Morris's rendering does at times reproduce in a striking manner the terseness and compactness of expression and the
peculiar simplicity and looseness of construction common in the
Old Norse cannot be denied, it seems to me, if we compare such
passages as the three following ones with the original text:

After that King Sigurd held his host to Lisbon; that is a
mickle town of Spain, one half Christian, the other half heathen;
there sunder Spain christened, and Spain heathen, all the country-
sides are heathen which lie to west hence. There had King Sigurd
the third battle with heathen men and had the victory; gat he
there mickle wealth.¹

Ætír þat hét Sigurðr konungr líðinu Lizibónar, þat er borg
mikil á Spáni, ok hálfr kristin en hálfr heiðin; þar skilr Spánr kristna
ok Spánr heiðna, eru þau heróð heiðin díl, er vestr liggja þaðan. Þar
átti Sigurðr konungr hína þriðju orrostu við heiðna menn ok hafði
sigr; fékk hann þar fé mikit.²

King Sigurd fared sitthence to his ships in Acre-burg. Then
King Baldwin was arraying his host to go to Syria-land to the town
hight Sidon, that burg was heathen. On that journey King Sigurd
betook himself with him. And when the kings had a little while
set before the town, the heathen men gave themselves up, and the
kings gat the town but their folk other booty. King Sigurd gave
to King Baldwin all the town.³

Sigurðr konungr fór síðan til skipa sinna í Akreborg; þá bjö
ok Baldvin konungur her sinn at fara til Sýrlands til borgar þeirar,
er Sætt heitir; sú borg var heiðin. Til þeirar ferðar rézt Sigurðr
konungr með honum. Þó þá er þeir konungarnir höfðu lítil hríð seti
um borgina, gáfust heiðnir menn upp, ok eignuðust konungarnir
borgina, en líðsenn annat herfang. Sigurðr konungr gaf Baldvina
konungi alla borgina.⁴

Fared King Sigurd thus back to his realm, and had good welcome.
And that was the talk of men, that never had there been a more wor-
shipful faring out of Norway, than that was, and he was then twenty
years of age, he had been three winters on this faring. King Olaf
his brother was then twelve winters old.⁵

fór þá Sigurðr konungr heim í ríki sitt, ok var honum vel
fagnat. Ók var þat mála manna, at eigi hafi verit farin meiri
viriðingarfór or Noregi, en þessi var, ok var hann þá tvítoagr at
áldri; hans hafði 3 vetr verit í þessari ferð. Ólafr konungr
bróðir hans var þá 12 vetra gamall.⁶

1. See below, pages 636 and 638.
5. See below, page 670.
The extent to which Morris's revisions were responsible for giving the translation the tone of the Old Norse can easily be determined by comparing the three passages just quoted with Magnússon's original renderings:

After that King Sigurd took his host on to Lisbon; that is a great town of Spain, one half of it being Christian, the other half heathen; there Spain Christian and Spain heathen part, all the countries lying thence to the westward being heathen. There King Sigurd waged the third battle with heathen men and had the victory, and came in for great wealth.¹

After that King Sigurd went to his ships in Acre-burg, and there King Baldwin arrayed his host to go to Syria and to the town called Sidon, a town that was heathen. To that journey King Sigurd betook himself with him. And when the kings had besieged the town for a little while, the heathen men gave themselves up, and the kings became the owners of the town and their armies of the rest of the booty. King Sigurd gave to King Baldwin the whole of the town.²

And thus King Sigurd fared back to his realm, and had good welcome (of his people). The talk of men was that never had there been a more glorious journey out of Norway, than this was, and then he was twenty years of age, having been three years on this faring. At that time King Olaf his brother was twelve winters old.³

Unfortunately, just as in his craving for absolute fidelity to the sense of the original, so in his desire to reproduce as exactly as possible certain stylistic features of the Old Norse, Morris went to extremes, and used occasionally unidiomatic expressions and constructions that made his version awkward or obscure and gave it an unnatural and forced tone.

Morris made two other types of changes in Magnusson's draft for the apparent purpose of bringing his translation closer to its original, but unlike the two groups of revisions just discussed, these alterations, it must be admitted, had little or no salutary effect upon the rendering, being instead to a great extent responsible for

¹. See below, pages 635 and 637.
². See below, page 657.
³. See below, page 669.
that tone of "archaic elegance" for which Morris's translations have been so harshly and so justly criticized. The changes to which I refer are those in which Morris sought to imitate the compound and derivative words common in the Old Norse and those in which he introduced cognates of the words used in the Icelandic. Some of the compounds, derivatives, and cognates inserted were, to be sure, in no way objectionable; in fact, a number of these words, as I have previously pointed out, improved the rendering, making it slightly more literal, giving it vigor and directness, or imparting to it a tone of compactness. Most of the compounds, derivatives, and cognates, however, were archaic or coined words. In a discussion of their effect upon the translation as a whole, it is therefore best to consider these words together with the Germanic words Morris introduced, many of which were obsolete, and together with the fairly large number of archaic words, inflectional forms, and constructions he inserted simply because they were obsolete.

Concerning the unhappy results of Morris's predilection for archaic language in his renderings enough has been said in the criticisms quoted above to preclude the necessity for further comment here. However, although it cannot be denied that Morris's archaic diction and constructions gave his translations an elegance, artificiality, quaintness, and softness of tone that was entirely absent in the Old Norse and made them sometimes obscure and even misleading, it seems to me that there are certain facts relating to his use of archaisms that should be considered before we condemn Morris on this basis for having failed to understand completely the spirit of the sagas.

1. See above, pages 436, 437, and 439.
In the first place it should be remembered that all the archaic words and constructions in Morris's renderings may not have been in fact, very likely were not - introduced primarily for the purpose of giving the work an archaic tone. As I pointed out in my discussion of the changes Morris made in Magnússon's draft translation of the Þígurðar saga Jórsalafara, Ey steins ok Ólafs, a number of the archaisms which Morris inserted in the course of his revision seem to have been introduced chiefly for the sake of rendering the sense or substance of the original more exactly, of imitating the compound and derivative words in the Old Norse, of using cognates of the Icelandic words, or of replacing Romance words with words of Germanic origin. In fact, only about 10 per cent of Morris's 1582 alterations seem to have been made solely for the purpose of giving the rendering an archaic coloring.

Moreover, it should be noted that Morris did not use an archaic diction in his saga-translations alone. With the exception of the lectures and essays he wrote on art and socialism, he employed an archaic style in practically all the works - original and translated - that he composed, even most of the poetry and prose he produced before he began turning sagas into English having a certain archaic tinge. The reason for his fondness for reviving early English words and constructions in his writings was that he considered modern English entirely unfit for use in a work of art. In his opinion, as I have explained earlier in this chapter, the French and Latin influences to which the English language had been subjected after the Norman Conquest had destroyed its original simplicity, clarity, and beauty; he felt, however, that by introducing early English words

1. See above, page 454.
and constructions into his writings and, especially by using Germanic words in place of Romance words whenever it was possible to do so, he could recapture in his works the freshness, directness, concreteness, vigor, and color of Old or early Middle English, and could avoid the sophistication and artificial elegance of nineteenth century English with its numerous clichés and colorless abstract terms. This archaic style that he evolved was to Morris the only possible method of expression that could be used in any work of art, and he accordingly employed it in all his creative writings as well as in his translations of sagas, Scandinavian ballads, early English epics, French romances, and Greek and Latin classics.

We have already seen that the chief reason for the critics' disapproval of the archaic language Morris introduced in his saga-renderings was that it gave the English versions a diffuseness, weightiness, archaic elegance, and obscurity which was entirely absent in the originals, and we have found that some critics have consequently accused Morris of not being aware of the true nature of the sagas. However, it was the very qualities they found in the sagas - directness, freshness, vigor, and simplicity - that Morris was aiming to impart to all his writing through the use of an archaic style and which he thought could be obtained only through this type of language. Morris may have misunderstood the spirit of the sagas in other respects, but these qualities there can be no doubt that he perceived and admired. For example, he may not have realized that the "remote, medieval flavour" which his archaic style gave the sagas or the tone of dignity and nobility imparted.

1. See, for example, Collected Works, IX, 201-224; X, 175-274; XI, 1-386.
by his "semi-biblical language" was inappropriate, because he incorrectly believed, as Miss Hoare maintains, that in the sagas "the life dealt with was heroic in the ideal sense, a kind of earthly paradise where men were simple and free and noble, and untroubled by the misfortunes and oppressions of the modern world." Moreover, it is not at all unlikely that he failed to notice, in the words of Miss Phillpotts, "the atmosphere of vivid modernity which the Sagas sometimes so startlingly convey." or that he did not perceive the beauty of "the sharply-etched outlines of the Saga speech," and that he consequently did not realize that his archaic language was not a suitable medium for the reproduction of all the qualities of the sagas. But the concreteness, simplicity, freshness, and vitality of the sagas he certainly esteemed and conscientiously endeavored to imitate.

If such was the case, how are we to explain the fact that to modern critics these translations seem vague, artificial, ornate, and diffuse? The reason for this difference of opinion in regard to the tone of the renderings is evidently to be found in the difference between Morris's and the critics' familiarity with Middle English. Morris had read very widely in the literature produced in England from the time of the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, Magnússon once even remarking of Morris that he "might be said to be a living edition of all that was best in M.-E. literature," and the words and constructions in use during the Middle English period were unquestionably just as readily intelligible to him as the lan-

1. See above, page 570.
2. See above, page 569.
3. See above, page 567.
guage of his own day. In fact, many of these Middle English words and constructions gradually became, as a result of his repeated use of them in his own writings, a part of his own vocabulary; as Oliver Elton once said of Morris and his archaic language, "Morris, by writing reams of it, made it natural to himself, it cost him no more trouble than breathing..." Consequently there could not have been anything strange, artificial, affected, decorated, or literary in the tone of his saga-translations to Morris himself; to him they were evidently much truer to the spirit of the sagas than they can possibly be to the average reader with little or no acquaintance with the English language in its early stages.

Finally, in view of the fact that many of the critics, as we have seen, have found fault with Morris's renderings because the use of archaisms and the closeness of the translation often made the English versions awkward and obscure, it seems to me important that we remember that, as I have already pointed out and discussed, several of the revisions Morris made in preparing his renderings indicate that he himself was not unaware that his translations were sometimes stilted and unclear. We have seen, for example, that in the proofreading of his renderings he rejected a number of literal translations, compounds, cognates, Germanic words, and archaisms for no other apparent purpose than to make the translation smoother and clearer. Moreover, in preparing illuminated manuscripts of his renderings, he seems also to have frequently found his translation awkward and obscure, for in copying his holograph manuscript versions in his illuminated books, he often replaced unidiomatic expressions or constructions, rare archaisms, or coined words with modern forms.

and occasionally he remade his original version almost entirely for the sake of making it more readable and more readily intelligible. That Morris removed some but not all the stilted or unclear passages in his translations in the course of the proofreading or in copying them in his illuminated manuscripts is probably due partly to the fact that words and constructions that seem unusual to us were quite familiar to him and partly to the fact that he considered closeness of translation and the use of archaisms more important than mere smoothness.

If, then, we attempt, as I have tried to do in the foregoing discussion, to form a fair and accurate estimate of Morris's work as a translator, examining the revisions he made in the manuscripts of his renderings in order that we may determine his principles and carefully comparing the final translation with the original text in order to ascertain how successful he was in reproducing the substance and style of the Old Norse work, we must admit, it seems to me, that Morris's aims were on the whole highly commendable but that his results were not entirely satisfactory. He labored hard to make his English versions of the sagas accurate and to give them the tone of their originals, and his renderings offer as a result remarkably close and dependable translations of the substance of the Old Norse and imitate important stylistic features. However, he carried his eagerness for the exact reproduction of the meaning and style of the sagas too far, and his renderings are consequently to the average reader often stilted and at times not readily intelligible. Moreover, the means he adopted to imitate the simplicity, directness, and vigor of the originals give his
translations exactly the opposite tone, for the Middle English words and constructions he introduced for this purpose are to the majority of his readers strange, artificial, and vague. As a result of these mistakes and because, also, of his apparent misunderstanding of the spirit of the sagas and his subsequent attempt to give an heroic and noble tone to his versions, his saga-renderings, while accurate and true in many respects to the style of their originals, cannot be said to present to modern readers an entirely faithful reproduction of the sagas.

Part VI: The Influence of Morris's Saga-translating on the Diction of his Original Works

One question relating to Morris's translations from the Old Norse remains to be discussed, and that is the question of the nature and extent of the influence of his work as a translator on the diction of his original compositions. I have already touched briefly upon some aspects of this matter, but the problem is important enough to deserve more careful consideration than I have hitherto given it.

I have already pointed out that even before he began studying Icelandic, Morris used a slightly archaic language in his original poetry, but that his diction became definitely more archaic after he had begun to turn sagas into English and that from that time until his death the language of his literary works grew gradually more and more archaic; I have also called attention to the fact that this change in the nature of his diction was almost certainly in the main the result of his translation-work, his repeated use
of archaisms in his renderings making more and more of them a part of his regular vocabulary and his desire for greater and greater fidelity to the Old Norse in his translations leading him to revive more and more obsolete Old or Middle English words and constructions. That there was a close connection between his saga-rendering and the archaic element in his vocabulary there can be little doubt: if we analyze the diction in representative works from various periods of his life, we find not only that he used about five times as many archaic or otherwise rare words in his last as in his first published work, but also that instead of developing steadily, his fondness for such language was greatest when he was actively engaged in translating sagas. Thus, in the eight works listed below, the number of archaic, obsolete, poetic, dialectal, or otherwise unusual words, forms, or constructions found in the first thousand words varied as follows:

"The Defence of Guenevere" (1858) 24
The Life and Death of Jason (1867) 59
"Prologue" to The Earthly Paradise (1868) 42
"The Lovers of Gudrun" from The Earthly Paradise (1870) 71
"Bellerophon at Argos" from The Earthly Paradise (1870) 76
The Story of Sigurd the Volsung (1876) 104
A Tale of the House of the Wolfings (1888) 55
The Sundering Flood (1897) 100

1. See above, pages 448-449.

2. This statement is based on a comparison of the situation in "The Defence of Guenevere" with that in The Sundering Flood as revealed in the table presented in the text above. "The Defence of Guenevere" was not really, of course, Morris's first published work, although it is often so considered; he had already published some short pieces in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine and a short fourteen-page poem called Sir Galahad, but The Defence of Guenevere, and other Poems was, as Buxton Forman calls it in his Books of William Morris (page 35), "Morris's first substantive volume," and it
These figures cannot of course be taken as an indication of the exact percentage of unusual words in these works as a whole, but they do show the general development of Morris's passion for such diction in the course of his literary activity. They reveal, for example, that the archaic or poetic element in his vocabulary was far from inconsiderable even before he began studying Icelandic, the average percentage of such words in the first three works listed above, all of which were produced before the fall of 1868, being 4.16. Moreover, it is clear that although his fondness for unusual words increased to a marked degree soon after he began translating sagas, it was not until he had been engaged in such work for several years that his style became extremely archaic; in his Scandinavian poem "The Lovers of Gudrun" and in the non-Norse tale "Bellerophon at Argos," both of which were composed in the year and a half immediately following his meeting with Magnússon, 7.1 per cent and 7.5 per cent respectively of the first thousand words are rare, - a fairly slight increase over the 5.9 per cent in The Life and Death of Jason -, but in The Story of Sigurd the Volsung, written at the end of his most intensively Scandinavian period, 10.5 per cent of the first thousand words are unusual. In the third place, the figures in the table given above indicate that when Morris returned to literature in 1888 after limiting his writing for twelve years almost exclusively to the production of lectures and essays on politics, art, and socialism in a modern prose style, he

(continuation of note 3 on page 583 ) first thousand words in the tale, but the first thousand words in the second chapter. My reason for departing from my usual procedure in the case of this work was that the language of the first chapter did not seem typical of the language of the work as a whole, the first chapter being mainly devoted to an account of the setting of the story.

For a detailed statement of the principles followed and the passages analyzed and for a complete list of the unusual words in these works, see below, pages 993-996.
had forgotten much of his usual stock of archaisms, for in *A Tale of the House of the Wolfings*, the first original work he produced after his return to literature proper, only 55 of the first thousand words are rare - almost exactly the same proportion as in his second book, *The Life and Death of Jason*, even though he was here, in *The House of the Wolfings*, clearly striving for an archaic style. Finally, the table indicates that after this decrease in the size of the archaic element in his language, his vocabulary soon became just as archaic as it was at the height of his interest in, and preoccupation with, Scandinavian literature; in his last work, *The Sundering Flood*, which was produced in 1896, the archaic and poetic element in his vocabulary had increased to 10 per cent of the total, - almost exactly the same point it had reached in *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung*. The most likely reason for this rise between 1888 and 1896 is the extensive translation work from the Icelandic that he carried on in the early 1890's.

It should also be noted that the lists of words on which the table presented above is based indicate that not only did the archaic, poetic, or otherwise rare words in Morris's vocabulary increase in number after he took up the study of Icelandic, but they also changed in nature. In the first three works in the table, most of the unusual words introduced are common archaisms or well-known poetic terms such as "wot," "yee," "ere," "verily," "doth," "waxed," "morrow," "sire," "quoth," "saith," "spake," "mid," "nigh,"

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1. His work with A. J. Wyatt on a translation of *Beowulf* in 1893 and 1894 may of course also have been responsible for the increase in his use of archaisms during the years 1888 to 1896; however, the rewriting of the *Eyrbyggja saga* rendering and the finishing of his English version of the last two-thirds of the *Heimskringla* must have had a far more important effect on his vocabulary than the translation of the 3182 lines of *Beowulf* could have had.

2. For a complete list of these words, see below, pages 994-996.
or "unto"; in the later compositions, however, we frequently find such rare forms as "door-wards," "wrights," "Midworld's," "Mark" (in the sense of "territory"), "weird," "drearyhead," "acres" (in the sense of "tilled land"), "liever," "Land-wights," "had to name," "kenspeckle," "Motes," "carle," "for the more part," and "carline."

As I have already stated, many of these unusual archaisms that Morris introduced in his original works after 1868 were almost certainly first suggested to him by Old Norse words and constructions that he encountered and tried to reproduce exactly in his sagas and renderings.

The extensive use of archaisms is not the only peculiarity of Morris's diction in his later compositions which can be attributed to his work as a translator from the Old Norse; his wide reading in the sagas was likewise undoubtedly responsible to a very great extent for his fondness for compound nouns, adjectives, and verbs. In his early works Morris employed only an average number of compounds, but after he had taken up the study of Icelandic and had devoted several years to saga-translating, he began introducing compound nouns, adjectives, and verbs into his writings with great profusion, using not only common words but many rare compounds and what is more important - many compounds that he had coined. In the eight works listed below, for example, the number of compound nouns, adjectives, and verbs in the first thousand words in each composition varied as follows:

1. See above, pages 448-449.

2. In this analysis of Morris's use of compounds I have not included the compound pronouns, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions that occur in his works, because, in the first place, the great majority of these words, such as "everything," "whatever," "away," "above," "afar," "indeed," "upon," "within," "around," and "unless," are common native words which form an integral part of any man's vocabulary, and because, in the second place, the few unusual words of this type that Morris used, such as "thereon," "therewithal,"
The Defence of Guenevere (1858) 6
The Life and Death of Jason (1867) 13
Prologue to The Earthly Paradise (1868) 11
The Lovers of Gudrun from The Earthly Paradise (1870) 15
Bellerophon at Argoe from The Earthly Paradise (1870) 10
The Story of Sigurd the Volsung (1876) 32
A Tale of the House of the Wolfings (1883) 24
The Sundering Flood (1897) 27

This table indicates that Morris's fondness for compounds

(continuation of note 2 on page 586) are in most cases revivals of Middle English forms which he simply introduced to give his language an archaic tone, and are in no way the result of Norse influence. Moreover, in my list of compound nouns, adjectives, and verbs I have of course not included such words as "lord," "lady," "island," "fellow," "ought," "nought," "alone," "another," "none," "satisfy," and "Christmas," which, although they actually are compounds in origin, have completely, or almost completely, lost the appearance of compounds, and are not generally recognized as such, and which were consequently obviously not used by Morris because of the fact that they are etymologically compounds.

I should also like to make clear that I have carefully distinguished between compound and derivative words, considering as compounds only those words which are made up of two distinct words, not those which were formed through the union of one word with a prefix or suffix. In determining whether or not a certain word is a compound, I have in all cases accepted the etymology given in the New English Dictionary. In regard to derivative words it should be pointed out that Morris did use and coin such words fairly often, evidently in imitation of the frequent use of words of this type in the Old Norse, just as he frequently introduced and coined compounds in apparent imitation of the Old Norse usage; but he employed and coined derivative words less frequently than he used compounds, and the words of this nature that he did introduce had a much less marked effect upon the tone and character of the diction than his compounds did, and so I have not made a detailed study of his use of these words. In the passages studied for his use of compounds, for example, there occurs only one coined derivative word - "undark," in the Collected Works, XII, 3, 1. 25 - as compared with forty coined compounds in the same selections (see table below on page 588). For a brief discussion of Morris's use of derivative words in his prose romances, see Biber's Studien zu William Morris' Prose-Romances, pp. 96-97.

Finally, I should like to call attention to the fact that, with the exception of those that were original with Morris, I have not included compound place names, personal names, or epithets in this study, the other names and epithets being simply taken from his sources and their use dictated by the demands of the story.
developed in much the same way as we have just seen that his pre-
dilection for archaisms grew. Moreover, just as he tended to in-
troduce not only more but also rarer archaisms in his later works
than in his early compositions, so, as I stated a few lines above,
he was inclined to use not only more but also less common compounds
in his later writings, in many cases even coining compound words;
in the passages analyzed, the number of compound nouns, adjectives,
and verbs in each work that are not listed in the New English Dic-
tionary or that are listed as being used only by Morris varied as
follows:

"The Defence of Guenevere" (1858) 1
The Life and Death of Jason (1867) 2
"Prologue" to The Earthly Paradise (1868) 2
"The Lovers of Gudrun" from The Earthly Paradise (1870) 3
"Bellerophon at Argos" from The Earthly Paradise (1870) 1
The Story of Sigurd the Volsung (1875) 14
A Tale of the House of the Wolfings (1888) 10
The Sundering Flood (1897) 7

Many of the compounds found in the later works, such as "wall-hung,"

1. For a complete list of these compounds see below, page 998.
Of course, the mere fact that a word is not listed in the New English
Dictionary or is listed there but is illustrated only by an example
from Morris does not prove conclusively that Morris coined the form,
but this test does indicate which of Morris's words were definitely
unusual. I should also like to point out that in the list presented
below on page 998, I have not differentiated between compounds which
are listed in the New English Dictionary and which occur in citations
earlier than the particular work of Morris under consideration and
those compounds which are recorded in the New English Dictionary but
which are used only in examples later than Morris's composition, for
although it is possible that compounds of the second type were em-
ployed by others in imitation of Morris's use of the words, it is
extremely unlikely that such was the case. Most of these compounds
are not in any way unusual.
“battle-world’s,” “battle-reaping,” “youth-days,” “summer-hidden,” “God-fashioned,” “swellings-up,” “downward-reaching,” “scantly-manned,” “acre-ground,” “goose-herding,” and “bound-breaking,”
give his writing a peculiar, foreign tone. The most likely cause
of Morris’s predilection for compounds is his close study of Ice-
landic literature. In Old Norse, as in Old English, compound words
were much more numerous than they are in modern English, and the
language formed new compounds with much greater facility than mod-
ern English does. There can be little doubt that Morris noticed
this peculiarity of the language in the course of his translating;
in fact, as I have already pointed out in my discussion of his
rendering of the Sigurðar saga Jórsalafara, Óysteins ok Ólafs,
there are a number of instances in that work in which he seems to
be deliberately striving to imitate compounds in his text. Evi-
dently this quality of the Icelandic appealed to him, and he there-
fore decided to imitate it in his own writing; he may also have
felt that the use of numerous and unusual compounds gave his work
a medieval tone.  

Finally, there is a third peculiarity in the diction of Morris’s
mature original compositions which can be traced to his work as a
translator from the Old Norse, and that is the fairly extensive use
of metaphors of the type called “kennings.” In rendering the he-
roic lays in the Æda Ógumundar and the skaldic verse in the *sagas


2. Morris’s work on his English version of Beowulf may have in-
fluenced his use of compounds in his last work, just as it may have
been responsible for his extensive use of archaisms at this time(see
above, page 585, note 1). It should be noted, however, that it is
extremely unlikely that this or any other Old English work was the
cause of his earlier fondness for compounds, for J. W. Mackail says
that before 1893 Morris had admired even this famous Old English
composition only from a distance(in The Life of William Morris, II,
284).
that he turned into English, Morris showed a great deal of interest in the kennings that appeared in these works, and insisted on rendering these elaborate but extremely common figures of speech literally; according to Magnusson, "Morris was so taken with the workmanship of the 'kenning' that once - we were doing the verses of the Eredwellsers' saga - he said it was a task we must address ourselves to to bring together a corpus of the kennings with a commentary on their poetical, mythical, legendary, and antiquarian significance, when we should find leisure for it." In view of his interest in these figures in the Old Norse, it is not surprising that he introduced a number of them in his original works, and that he occasionally coined metaphors of this type in imitation of the Icelandic kennings.

Evidently the use of a descriptive phrase in place of the name of the thing referred to had appealed to Morris even before he took up the study of Old Norse, for already in works produced before the fall of 1868 we occasionally find such metaphors; in The Life and Death of Jason, for example, he used for the sea such expressions as "the unsteady plain," "the dim gleaming flood," "the green and shifting plain," and "Nereus' pasture." These figures, however, owe nothing to the Old Norse kennings; they were apparently inspired by, or directly borrowed from, the Neo-Classical stock of conventional

3. Ibid., II, 102, 1:35.
5. Ibid., II, 192, 1:18.
poetical periphrases. The first metaphors used by Morris which show an unmistakable Norse influence seem to be the expressions "the ruddy kin of Niblung's curse" and "the gift of Odin's ground" in the poetical fragment "In Arthur's House"; as I have already pointed out in my discussion of this work in Chapter I, these two figures of speech do not appear to have actually occurred in Old Norse poetry, but both of them are very similar in form and character to the Icelandic kennings, and they were clearly formed in direct imitation of these figures. As I have also already made clear in my earlier reference to this poem, the exact date of the composition of this work is unknown, but there is good reason to believe that it was produced in 1870 or shortly thereafter, - in other words, about two years after Morris had taken up the study of Icelandic. It was not until 1876, however, when he wrote his Sigurd the Volsung, that Morris began introducing kennings of the Old Norse type frequently in his original works; in that poem and in the prose romances that he wrote between 1888 and 1896, the number of metaphors that were either directly borrowed from the Icelandic or coined in imitation of Old Norse kennings is truly extensive. In his Studien zu William Morris' Prose-Romances, Arthur Biber devotes several pages to a discussion and classification of the kennings Morris used in his prose tales, and although Biber makes no attempt to be complete, his list includes over two hundred such metaphors. Some of these figures, as I just stated, are actual Icelandic kennings and others are simply imitations thereof. Thus, the expressions

1. See above, pages 141-143.

2. Pages 61-74.
"the sister of the moon" for "the sun," "war-flame's" for "sword's," "stems of fight" for "warriors," "the Flame of the Waters" for "gold," and "this sun of the ocean" for "gold" in Sigurd the Volsung, "the tempest of the spear" for "battle" in The House of the Volsungs, and "the steeds of the main" for "ships" in The Glittering Plain are all genuine Old Norse kennings; but the expressions
"sword-rampart" for "hauberk," "wine of war" for "blood," and

2. Ibid., XII, 37, 1.7.
3. Ibid., XII, 61, 1.27.
4. Ibid., XII, 80, 1.27.
5. Ibid., XII, 84, 1.7.
6. Ibid., XIV, 110, 1.7.
7. Ibid., XIV, 241, 1.10.
10. Ibid., XIV, 16, 1.12.
"wheatfield of the spears" for "battle-field" in *The House of the Wolfings*, although they were clearly formed on Icelandic models, do not appear in Old Norse poetry.

This analysis of Morris's vocabulary in his original compositions leaves no doubt, it seems to me, that his work as a translator of Old Norse had a decided influence upon the diction of his own writings. In the periods in which he was most active in turning sagas into English, as I have pointed out above, we find that 10 per cent or more of his words were archaic, poetic, dialectal, or otherwise rare, that as much as 3 per cent of his vocabulary consisted of compounds, many of these compounds having been coined by him, and that he introduced into his works numerous kennings, some of them borrowed directly from the Old Norse and others obviously formed in imitation of the Icelandic figures; and, as I have also shown above, the most likely - in fact, the only apparent - explanation of these features of his diction is that they were the result of his very careful rendering of a large number of sagas. Thus, it is clear that Morris's Icelandic studies had a profound influence not only upon the subject matter of his original productions, as I have tried to show in Chapters I to III of this study, but also upon the medium of expression that he chose for his creative writing.

1. *Collected works*, XIV, 68, l. 25.
Chapter IV

Conclusion: Morris's Position in the History of Norse Studies in English

The foregoing study has made it clear, I believe, that the literature of early Scandinavia had an extremely far-reaching effect upon William Morris. As I have already pointed out, the nature and extent of this influence varied considerably in the different periods of his life; but after the fall of 1868, when he made his first direct acquaintance with the Old Norse sagas, he produced scarcely a single creative work that was not affected in some way - in subject matter, style, or diction - by his Scandinavian studies, and some of the very best of his works owed their immediate inspiration to Norse compositions. There can be no doubt whatsoever that, as Sir Oliver Elton states in the passage I quoted in my Preface, "the spell of Iceland, along with that of Chaucer, was the most potent that Morris ever felt."

But the influence of Morris's Scandinavian studies did not end with their effect on his own works, for the translations and original treatments of Norse material that he produced were of immeasurable service in spreading information about early Scandinavia among English and American readers and in leading others to study the literature of the North. In fact, few if any critics will deny, I believe, that by his original works on Scandinavian themes Morris did more than anyone else before or after his own time to awaken an interest in Old Norse among English-speaking people. There is neither time nor necessity to

1. A Survey of English Literature, IV, 42.
present here a complete account of Norse studies in England and
America, for the subject is a large one and has already been inves-
tigated in detail; but before concluding this discussion of Morris,
I should like to compare briefly Morris's original Scandinavian pro-
ductions with those of other prominent English and American literary
figures who have been interested in the early North, in order to
show to what an extent Morris excelled others in this field both in
the quantity and in the quality of his work.

The first original treatments in English of Norse material which
possess any literary value of their own and which, having been pro-
duced by an author of an established reputation, reached a fairly
wide audience, were Thomas Gray's two short pieces "The Fatal Sisters"
and "The Descent of Odin." Before 1768, when Gray published these
poems, the existence of Old Norse literature was practically unknown
to the general English reader, for with the exception of a few learned
treatises, mostly in Latin, on the history and mythology of early
Scandinavia, a handful of unimportant translations of minor Icelandic
works, and an occasional reference to the North in non-Norse composi-
tions, nothing had appeared in England relating to the early Scandi-
navians. It was as an antiquarian that Gray became acquainted with

1. See, for example, Sir William Craigie, The Northern Element in
English Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1933); E. V.
Gordon, "Norse Studies in England," in An Introduction to Old Norse
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), pp. 1xx-1xxix; Conrad H. Nordby, The
Influence of Old Norse Literature upon English Literature (New York,
1901); Farley, Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement;
Lieder, "Scott and Scandinavian Literature"; Paul R. Lieder, Scandinavia
Influences on English Literature (Unpublished Harvard doctoral disserta-
tion); and Islandica, I(1908), 122-126 and ibid., XXIV(1935), 98-100.

2. See Selections from the Poetry and Prose of Thomas Gray, ed.
William L. Phelps (Boston, 1894), pp. 44-50.
this material, and it was clearly the growing interest of the early Romanticists in the strange and distant past that led him to write the two poems just mentioned. As is well known, "The Fatal Sisters" is a very free rendering or adaptation of the "Darraðarljóð," which is found almost at the very end of the Njála saga, and "The Descent of Odin" is an equally free translation of "Baldrs draumar" or, as it is sometimes called, the "Végamaskviða," included in the Poetic Edda. Both pieces are extremely spirited and vigorous, and ever since they were published, they have been among Gray's most popular poems. However, as Professor G. L. Kittredge has shown, Gray based both works, not on the originals, but on the Latin translations of Torfæus and Bartholin, and there is no evidence whatever that he had any exact knowledge of the Icelandic itself; and as E. V. Gordon states in his sketch of Norse studies in England in An Introduction to Old Norse, Gray's "imaginative grasp of the subjects was much weaker than that of the Norse poets: The Descent of Othin has little of the force and grandeur of Voluspá, and The Fatal Sisters is a mere travesty of Darraðarljóð." Moreover, the picture of the early Norseman that is here presented is entirely false and inadequate, for it is only the wild, savage, and inhuman side of Norse life that is here stressed.

This conception of the early Scandinavian as a farcious, blood-

1. See Njála (Copenhagen, 1875), pp. 363-366.
thirsty, death-defying savage was carried much further by the next important English writer influenced by the North—Sir Walter Scott. Scott is the English author who, next to Morris, showed the most extensive interest in Old Norse, but his Scandinavian work is far inferior to that of Morris. As Professor P. R. Lieder points out in his article "Scott and Scandinavian Literature," there are scattered allusions to the customs, beliefs, and institutions of the early Norsemen in the majority of Scott's productions; and in two of his original works— the long poem Harold the Dauntless (1817), the hero of which is a young Viking, and the novel The Pirate (1821), the scene of which is the Shetland Islands, where many early Scandinavian traditions were still alive in the eighteenth century among the descendants of the Vikings—he introduced a considerable amount of Norse material. He also prepared a detailed synopsis of the Eyrbyggja saga for the Illustrations of Northern Antiquities that Henry Weber, Robert Jamieson, and he issued in 1814. However, as Professor Lieder shows, Scott, like Gray, did not possess a reading knowledge of Old Norse but drew on Latin histories and translations of the sagas for his information concerning the North, Bartholin, Olaus Magnus, and Torfæus being his chief sources. Moreover, although his acquaintance with the early Scandinavians was extensive, it was solely the romantic features of the life of these men, such as their indomitable courage and insatiable love of fighting, their uncontrolable fury when roused to anger, their mystical rites, and their belief in magic objects, seeresses, werewolves, dragons, and runic spells,
that appealed to him, and it was only this side of the early Norsemen that he stressed in his works. Misleading and inadequate indeed is the picture presented in the following stanza from Harold the Dauntless of the young Viking:

Count Witikind came of a regal strain,  
And roved with his Norsemen the land and the main.  
Woe to the realms which he coasted! for there  
Was shedding of blood, and rending of hair,  
Rape of maiden, and slaughter of priest,  
Gathering of ravens and wolves to the feast:  
When he hoisted his standard black,  
Before him was battle, behind him wrack,  
And he burn'd the churches, that heathen Dane,  
To light his band to their barks again.¹

Equally un-Scandinavian in tone is the following stanza from "The Song of the Tempest" sung by Norna, a seeress in The Pirate who had been given the name "Norna" because of her close resemblance to the three fatal sisters of Norse mythology:

Stern eagle of the far north-west,  
Thou that bearest in thy grasp the thunderbolt,  
Thou whose rushing pinions stir ocean to madness,  
Thou the destroyer of herds, thou the scatterer of navies,  
Amidst the scream of thy rage,  
Amidst the rushing of thy onward wings,  
Though thy scream be loud as the cry of a perishing nation,  
Though the rushing of thy wings be like the roar of ten thousand waves,  
Yet hear, in thine ire and thy haste,  
Hear thou the voice of the Reim-Kennar.²

Finally, it should be noted that Harold the Dauntless and The Pirate, the original works in which Scott introduced the most Scandinavian material, are among his least successful and least popular poems and tales, and that his abstract of the Eyrbyggja saga had also a very limited appeal.

¹ The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott (Boston, 1857), VIII, 132.  
² The Pirate (Edinburgh, 1822), I, 130-131.  
³ Craigie, in The Northern Element in English Literature (page 117), points out that "Scott's Harold the Dauntless is usually omitted without explanation or apology from editions of his poetical works..."
Very similar in nature is the Norse work of two other Romanticists – James Motherwell and Alan Cunningham –, for in Motherwell’s “The Battle-Flag of Sigurd” (1832), “The Wooing Song of Jarl Egill Skallagrim” (1828), “The Sword Chant of Thorstein Raudi” (1828), and the “Song of the Danish Sea-king” (1832) and in Cunningham’s “The Sea-King’s Death Song” (1828) we find the same emphasis on the terrible and the wild that we noted in the works of Gray and Scott. As Professor Lieder points out in his discussion of these writers in his unpublished Harvard doctoral dissertation Scandinavian Influences on English Literature: 1815-1850, Motherwell and Cunningham were almost certainly unable to read Old Norse, and seem to have obtained the very meagre information about early Scandinavia that they reveal in the poems just mentioned from reading the works of Scott and the Icelandic translations of George Borrow. However, although there is very little that is genuinely Norse in these pieces, they seem to have satisfied the tastes of the readers of the day, for the reviews quoted by Professor Lieder show that they were very favorably received by contemporary critics. Much of this praise, it should be noted, was undoubtedly due to the erroneous conception of early Scandinavian life and literature that Scott and Gray and their imitators had spread through their Norse compositions.

Very different in tone, but nevertheless entirely unsatisfactory,


2. See the Paisley Magazine, I (1828), 548-549.

3. Pages 251, 265-266.
is the next original work in English on a Scandinavian theme -
Walter Savage Landor's "Gunlaug" (1846). In this poem of 554 lines
in octosyllabic couplets, Landor retells the story of the Gunlaugs
saga ormatungu. Unlike his predecessors he does not commit the error
of portraying the young Norseman as a rude savage, but he goes too
far in the opposite direction and pictures Gunlaug as a noble, kind-
hearted, unsuspecting young man, who is given to frequent outbursts
of tears. The terseness, restraint, and vigor of the original saga
are entirely absent, for the story is related in the stilted, affected,
elegant style of the Neo-Classicists. The plot of the Icelandic tale
is followed in the main, but many alterations and omissions are made,
almost always to the detriment of the story; even the very effective
scene at the close of the saga in which Helga is represented as dying
at the knees of her second husband while fondling the cloak Gunlaug
had given her is omitted by Landor. Typical of the poem as a whole
are the following lines describing the hero's sudden departure from
the home of Thorstein when he has finally been given an opportunity
to go abroad to fight his "country's foe":

Away the towering warrior flew,
Nor bade his Helga once adieu.
He felt the manly sorrows rise,
And open'd wide his gushing eyes;
He stopt a moment in the hall,
Still the too powerful tears would fall.
He would have thought his fate accurst
To meet her as he met her first,
So, madly swung the sounding door,
And reached, and reaching left, the shore.

Far closer to its Norse original and of far greater literary
value is Matthew Arnold's "Balder Dead" (1855), a long poem of 1218

   VIII, 26-38.
2. Ibid., VIII, 30.
lines in which he retells, in a considerably expanded form, the story given in the Prose Edda of the slaying of Balder, Hermod's unsuccessful journey to Hel to bring Balder back to the land of the living, and the promise of a new world of peace and beauty after the woes of Ragnarök. Arnold describes the tragic events surrounding Balder's death with a great deal of sympathy, reproducing faithfully the main points of the Eddic account, and giving the tale a tone of quiet dignity that is very pleasing. But the metre used is blank verse, the diction is often obtrusively Latinate, and the work is completely Homeric in style and substance, so that, as Professor Gordon remarks, the poem "cannot be read with much pleasure by those who are familiar with the work of Snorri." Moreover, as Professor W. L. Jones in his article on Arnold in the Cambridge History of English Literature points out, although Arnold thought that "Balder Dead" would "'consolidate the peculiar sort of reputation he got by Sohrab and Rustum,'" the subject of this work "fails, somehow, to grip the reader as powerfully as does that of the earlier poem."

About the middle of the century two American poets - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and James Russell Lowell - were likewise writing poems on Norse subjects. Of the two, Longfellow was the better acquainted with early Scandinavia and produced the more important work in this field. His interest in Old Norse, which seems to have been

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2. Introduction to Old Norse, p. lxxvii.
3. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1922), XIII, 94-95. Jones adds in a footnote, "It is significant that the author, while including Sohrab and Rustum, left this poem out of his own Golden Treasury selection of his poems published in 1876."
an outgrowth of the studies in Swedish and Danish that he carried on in his capacity of Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard, was no mere passing whim but extended throughout the greater part of his literary career, for "The Skeleton in Armor," a short poem of twenty stanzas in which the ghost of a viking is represented as relating how he carried off a beautiful maiden, killed her father when he pursued them, and threw himself on a sword many years later when his young wife died, was written in 1840, "Tegnér's Drapa," an even shorter piece in which Longfellow retells very briefly the story of Salder's death, stressing the victory of the "law of love" over the "law of force," was composed in 1847, the year after Tegnér's death, and "The Saga of King Olaf," a collection of twenty-two short poems describing various episodes in the life of Olaf Tryggvason, was produced in 1860. The last work is by far the most important. Here, evidently in imitation of Tegnér's method of treating his original in his Frithiof's Saga, as scholars have pointed out, Longfellow has broken up the Olaf's saga tryggvasonar into short, loosely-connected scenes, and has used a different verse form for each section. His selection of scenes is skillful, and his treatment of the various incidents is effective; moreover, the frequent changes in the metre give a pleasing variety to the form of the work. It should also be noted that in his use of unrhymed, dimiter lines in the first and last sections he imitated roughly one of the common


2. See Poetical Works, pp. 133-134 and Life of Longfellow, II, 95.

3. See Poetical Works, pp. 240-263 and Life of Longfellow, II, 358-359. Part of this poem was written later; see ibid., II, 358, note 1.
Old Norse metres. The poem, both because of its own merits and because of its being a part of the Tales of a Wayside Inn, one of Longfellow's best-known works, has always been popular, and it has undoubtedly given many readers their first acquaintance with one of the most colorful heroes of early Norse history. However, it must be pointed out that the poem as a whole reproduces but little of the directness, terseness, freshness, and spontaneity of the Heimskringla account, for over the whole story Longfellow throws a romantic haze. Moreover, in this work and even more so in "The Skeleton in Armor," there is a certain glorification of the Norseman as a reckless fighter, and the picture of the viking that is given us here is not very different from that presented by Gray, Scott, Motherwell, and Cunningham.

Much less fruitful was Lowell's interest in early Scandinavia, for only one poem on a Norse subject - "The Voyage to Vinland" - has come down to us from his pen. This work is very different in nature from Longfellow's "The Saga of King Olaf," for with the exception of the figures Biörn Hervulfson and Gudrida it has no historical basis. Lowell represents Biörn as having gone in search of a new land as a result of visions urging him to deeds of daring and fame, but the kirks saga rauða, the one which ascribes the discovery to Biörn, states that he came upon the North American mainland entirely by chance. Moreover, according to Lowell, Gudrida was a seeress, and as Biörn and his party approached the new country she chanted a song

1. The Complete Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell (Boston and New York, [1911]), pp. 311-315. The poem was finished and first printed in 1868, but it was begun much earlier; see Horace E. Scudder, James R. Lowell. A Biography (Boston and New York, 1901), I, 301 and 302 and II, 120-121.

prophesying the future greatness of the new continent; in the
Porfinns saga Karlsefnis Gudrid is represented on one occasion
as having a slight acquaintance with magic, but in neither the
Eiriks saga rauda nor the Porfinns saga Karlsefnis is she de-
scribed as being present on the voyage of discovery or as having
ever sung a song foretelling the future of America. Hence the
poem adds little or nothing to the knowledge of the average reader
concerning the visits of the Vikings to North America. The metrical
form of the piece varies: the first half is in blank verse and is
entirely un-Scandinavian in tone; the greater part of "Gudrida's
Prophecy," however, is in stanzaic form, each stanza being made up
of five, two-stress, unrhymed lines, and the force and vigor of
these verses, together with the frequent alliteration used, recall
distinctly the poetry of the early Scandinavian scalds.

One of the most prominent of all the English and American men
of letters who carried on studies in Old Norse was Thomas Carlyle.
The literature of early Scandinavia seems to have appealed to Carlyle,
not because it was at times terrible and wild and not because he con-
sidered it old, quaint, and romantic, but because he found glorified
there the very qualities that he most admired - simplicity, strength,
and sincerity. In 1840, when he prepared his lectures on Heroes and
Hero Worship, Carlyle selected Odin as his example of the "Hero as
Divinity." After sketching very briefly the story told in the Nghi-
ingatal of Odin's advent to Scandinavia and his gradual acceptance
as a god, he describes a few of the concepts of Old Norse mythology,

1. See Origines Islandicae, II, 613.
and retells two or three of the tales in the Prose Edda. Throughout the lecture he stresses the sincerity he found in the mythology of the North. "To me," he says, "there is in the Norse System something very genuine, very great and manlike. A broad simplicity, rusticity, so very different from the light gracefulness of the old Greek Paganism, distinguishes this Scandinavian System." With Gray's conception of this mythology he had no sympathy:

Gray's fragments of Norse Lore, at any rate, will give one no notion of it; - any more than Pope will of Homer. It is no square-built gloomy palace of black ashlar marble, shrouded in awe and horror, as Gray gives it us: no; rough as the North rocks, as the Iceland deserts, it is; with a heartiness, homeliness, even a tint of good humour and robust mirth in the middle of these fearful things. The strong old Norse heart did not go upon theatrical sublimities; they had not time to tremble. I like much their robust simplicity; their veracity, directness of conception.  

More than thirty years later - in 1875 - Carlyle's enthusiasm for early Scandinavia led him to write what is really a one-hundred page abstract of the Heimskringla. In this book, which is called The Early Kings of Norway, he retells Snorri's stories with great gusto in the characteristic Carlyle style, commenting as he goes along on the graphic qualities of Snorri's narrative, the heroism of the Vikings, and the close connection between early English and Scandinavian history. The work, however, being based, not on the Norse original, but on Laing's translation, has none of the flavor of Snorri's account, and although it must have led many readers to dip into the Heimskringla itself, it has never been one of Carlyle's

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2. Ibid., XII, 40.
3. In this book he does not cover exactly the material found in the Heimskringla, for at the beginning he omits the stories told in the Ynglinga saga, and at the end, in Chapters XIV, XV, and XVI, he carries the history a little beyond the reign of King Magnus Erlingsson, with which the Heimskringla concludes.
popular productions, so that it is doubtful whether it did much to spread a knowledge of medieval Scandinavia among English and American readers. The lecture on Odin, on the other hand, became well known because it formed a part of Heroes and Hero Worship, but although its portrayal of the Vikings is sympathetic, its account of Old Norse mythology is sketchy and it failed to stimulate much interest in the early North.

A little less than a year after the appearance of Carlyle's Early Kings of Norway, the first drama on a medieval Scandinavian theme was published in England. This was Edmund Gosse's five-act tragedy King Erik. Gosse, like Longfellow, was primarily interested in the modern Scandinavian literatures, but carried on studies in Old Norse also; the most important result of these researches was this play dealing with the events leading to the tragic death of King Erik, son of Knud, in 1103 - his slaying of the skald Grimur because of the latter's love for the queen, his journey to Jerusalem as penance, and his death at the hands of a foster-brother of Grimur in Cyprus. The play is well written, with many passages of rare beauty and keen insight both in the blank verse of the speeches and in the rhymed stanzas of the interspersed lyrics, and it is also dramatically effective. Moreover, Gosse's knowledge of early Scandinavia was thorough enough to enable him to build up a completely Norse background for the main events, free from any anachronisms. However, the spirit and tone of the work as a whole is not entirely Norse, for the long speeches, the soliloquies, the emphasis on love and jealousy, the scenes in moonlit gardens fragrant with roses, and

1. London, 1876.
the soft piety of the King are alien to the sagas. More successful in this respect is Gosse's "The Death of Arnkel" (1885), for in this short poem describing how the priest Snorrí and a group of his followers, out of mere envy, slew the chief Arnkel one night when he was fetching home his hay in the moonlight, the saga story is retold rapidly and directly, with a minimum of reflection and comment.

Since 1885 a host of original works on early Scandinavian subjects have appeared in England and America, but none of them have been very important or have attracted much attention. The only prominent writers during these years that have utilized Norrèan material in their work are Robert Louis Stevenson, whose short story "The Waif Woman," first published in 1914, is a retelling of the tale of Thorgunna found in the Eyrbyggja saga, and John Masefield, whose one-act play "The Locked Chest" (1909) is a free adaptation of the account given early in the Laxdæla saga of Ingíald Sauðeyjargoði's unsuccessful attempt to get revenge from Thorolf for the slaying of his brother Hall. Stevenson follows the main outlines of the saga tale, but the method of narration he uses is not that of the saga but that of the modern short story. Masefield in his play reproduces neither the subject matter nor the style of his original very closely. Much more of the real spirit of the North is found in Beatrice Helen Barmby's

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4. See The Poems and Plays of John Masefield (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918), II, 61-118. The play was written in 1906 (see ibid, II, v); it seems to have been first printed in 1909.
5. Chapters XIV-XVI.
drama Gíslí Súrsson and in her short poems on Scandinavian subjects, all of which were published posthumously in 1900. In these works Miss Barmby shows a very extensive knowledge of the Old Norse sagas and a keen understanding of the ideals and motives of the early Scandinavians. Also outstanding is Gordon Bottomley's one-act drama "The Riding to Lithend" (1909), which describes the slaying of Gunnar of the Njáls saga. "In this play," as Professor Gordon points out, "there is true understanding of the saga characters, though the speeches ascribed to them are sometimes unnaturally complex and analytical." Neither Miss Barmby's nor Mr. Bottomley's Norse work, however, has won much popularity.

When we compare the Scandinavian works of these students of Old Norse with the Icelandic productions of William Morris, it is not difficult to perceive why Morris has been called the "greatest literary interpreter of the north that has been in England...."

In the first place most of Morris's predecessors and successors in this field, as we have seen, knew little or nothing about the language of the sagas and the Eddas, and had a very incomplete knowledge of the substance of Old Norse literature; but the present study has shown beyond a doubt not only that Morris could read Old Icelandic fluently and accurately but also that his familiarity with the literature of early Scandinavia was extremely extensive. The

4. An Introduction to Old Norse, p. lxxvii.
5. Loc. cit.
evidence collected above reveals that Morris prepared written translations of the whole or of part of at least twenty-one sagas or "páttir" - the Gunnlaugs saga, the Grettis saga, the Eyvbyeigja saga, the Laxdaela saga, the Völsunga saga, the Friðþórs saga, the Kormáks saga, the Víglundar saga, the Heðins saga ok Högna, the Haensa-dóris saga, the Bandamanna saga, the Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings, the Vápnfirðinga saga, the Ókils saga, the Heiðarvíga saga, the Heimekringla, the Hróa báttir heimska, the Þorsteins báttir stangarbógg, the Halldórs báttir Snorrasonar, the Norma-Gest's báttir, and the Ódds báttir Ófeigssonar -; and allusions in his other works point to his acquaintance with at least six other Old Norse tales - the Ragnar's saga loðbrókar, the Vatnshaela saga, the Finnboga saga ramma, the Níils saga, the Gísla saga, and the Víga-Glums saga. We have also found that he turned into English a number of the poems included in the Poetic Edda, and that he was very thoroughly familiar with the Prose Edda. It should also be noted that Morris was the only one of the authors just discussed who visited Iceland and who consequently knew the scenes of the sagas at first hand.

In the second place, with the exception of Scott and Miss Barmby, the other writers who were attracted to the Scandinavian North wrote only two or three original works on Norse subjects, their interest in early Scandinavia being entirely of a secondary nature and being in most cases a mere passing whim; if the Norse compositions of these writers had never been produced, the literary standing of these men would scarcely differ in the slightest degree from that which they
enjoy to-day. Quite otherwise is the situation in the case of Morris. Four of his longest poems - *Sigurd the Volsung*, "The Lovers of Gudrun," "The Fostering of Aslaug," and "The Wooing of Swanhild" - are based on saga stories; thirteen of his shorter poems - "Anthony," the sonnet on the *Grettis saga*, the "Prologue in Verse" to the *Volsunga saga* translation, "To the Muse of the North," "Of the Wooing of Hallbiorn the Strong," "Iceland First Seen," "The Raven and the King's Daughter," "The King of Denmark's Sons," "Gunnar's Howes above the House at Lithend," "State-Aided Emigration in 889," and the three Norse fragments printed for the first time in 1936 by Miss Morris - were inspired by his study of the sagas or by his visits to Iceland; his other poems and his lectures are sprinkled with references to early Scandinavia; and almost all of the long prose romances he wrote during the last eight years of his life, although not Norse as a whole, are to a very great extent colored by his reading of the prose and poetry of the early Northmen. Moreover, as I pointed out in a preceding chapter, Morris's whole style of narration underwent a change as a result of his Scandinavian work, there being a definite movement from the style of the romance to that of the epic in the poems produced during the period 1868 to 1877. Finally, it must be noted that in almost all the creative writing he did after 1870 - Norse or non-Norse - his diction was affected by his study of the sagas.

In my brief survey of Scandinavian studies in England I also called attention to the fact that most of the other writers on Norse themes either entirely misunderstood the spirit of Icelandic literature.

or, if they did perceive its real nature, failed to reproduce any of its features in their own work. Scott and the other early poets saw only the savage and wild side of the medieval Scandinavians and their literature; Landor adopted the polished style of the Neo-Classicists for his "Gunlaug"; Arnold retold the story of Balder in the Homeric manner; Carlyle, although he realized that Gray's conception of the early Norsemen was unjust, found "only a 'rude nobleness'" in their prose and poetry; and men like Gosse and Bottomley, in spite of the fact that they were well acquainted with the real character of Icelandic literature, did not always carry over its spirit and form in their own Scandinavian works. Morris, on the other hand, was an extremely keen student of the history, literature, and general culture of the early Norsemen, and although he did not at all times reproduce faithfully the tone of his originals in his compositions on Northern themes, he seems in his best productions to have definitely striven to do so. There can be no doubt that he understood and sincerely admired the art of the sagas. In the Preface to his translation of the Völsunga saga he asks the reader to note in this tale the "startling realism," the subtlety, and the "close sympathy with all the passions" that move men to-day; in one of his lectures he refers to the sagas as "pieces of local history told in a terse and amazingly realistic and dramatic style..."; and of the last scene between Sigurd and Brynhild in the Völsunga saga

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1. As Professor Gordon points out in his Introduction to Old Norse, p. lxxvii.

2. See Collected works, VII, 286.

3. See ibid., XVIII, xvi.
he wrote in a letter that it
touches me more than anything I have ever met with in literature; there is nothing wanting in it, nothing forgotten, nothing repeated, nothing overstrained; all tenderness is shown without the use of a tender word, all misery and despair without a word of raving, complete beauty without an ornament, and all this in two pages of moderate print. In short it is to the full meaning of the word inspired....

Moreover, instead of conceiving of the early Norsemen as blood-thirsty savages, he marvelled at their high ideals and at the fortitude, courage, and nobility they showed, even in the face of adversity; in one passage he speaks of the Icelanders as

folk beloved,
learning for love, striving 'gainst change and hate,
Strong, uncomplaining, yet compassionate.

He was too well read in the sagas, however, to be unaware of the faults of the early Scandinavians or to believe that they were all men like Njáll and Gunnar of the Njáls saga, Kiartan Olafsson, Ólafur Súrsson, and Ingimund of the Vatnsdæla saga; in one of his lectures he points out that the 'Northmen were not above using the weapons of deceit...', and he notes that they were frequently "hard and grasping" in money matters. Nevertheless, although Morris revealed an extraordinarily close knowledge of early Scandinavia in his lectures, prefaces, and letters, he did not always in his Norse works reproduce the tone and style of the sagas and Óðdic verse with complete fidelity. In "The Lovers of Gudrun," for example, and also, but to a less

1. May Morris, William Morris, I, 472.
2. Collected Works, V, 250.
extent, in "The Rosetting of Aslaug" and "The Wooing of Swanbiold,"
there is far too much sentiment and too much psychological analysis
and the style is in general too diffuse for a saga story. It must
be remembered, however, that Morris produced these works only a
short time after he had begun his study of Old Norse; moreover, he
may very likely have deliberately refrained from trying to give
these tales a true saga atmosphere, partly because they were to form
a portion of the earthly Paradise and as such were to be ascribed to
certain shipwrecked mariners of the late fourteenth century, and
partly because he wanted to make the stories more acceptable to,
and more easily understood by, his readers. Furthermore, it must be
admitted that the picture of early Scandinavia presented here is far
more satisfactory than that found in the works of the early Romanti-
cists. Closer to the spirit of their originals are Morris's later
Norse compositions, for in such poems and tales as Sigurd the Volsung,
"Of the Wooing of Hallbiorn the strong," "The King of Denmark's Sons,
"Anthony," and The House of the Wolfings there is a more heroic tone,
a sterner atmosphere, and at times a note of terseness and restraint.
To be sure, as I have pointed out above, Sigurd the Volsung has some-
times been criticized for its sentiment and its over-elaboration of
detail, but it is far freer from these faults than "The Lovers of
Gudrun"; moreover, as we have already seen, in the revisions he made
in composing this poem, Morris seems definitely to have striven to
give the story a tone of dignity, grandeur, and majesty and to avoid
a personal or subjective note. Furthermore, by introducing in this work a great amount of alliteration and a number of kennings, he reproduced to a certain extent the character of Old Norse verse; in some of the poetical passages in The House of the Wolfings, the first of the prose romances and the one which is most like the sagas in tone, he imitated even more closely the verse of the early Scandinavians, for in addition to the alliteration and the kennings he used here two-stress lines. It should also be noted that in all his works on Northern subjects he avoided a heavy, Latinate diction, and tried to reproduce the directness and concreteness of the sagas by using simple, Germanic words; his frequent introduction of compound words, especially in his later Scandinavian compositions, likewise adds to the Norse tone of these productions. Finally, I should like to point out that in the various short poems in which he expresses his admiration for the abiding courage, fortitude, and nobility of the Northern heroes - pieces like "Iceland first seen," "Gunnar's Howe above the House at Lithend," "To the Muse of the North," and the sonnet to Grettir -, he reveals a deep and sympathetic understanding of the true spirit of the old sagas and the Eddic verse.

Even more important, however, than his superior knowledge of the Old Norse language, the greater extent of his Scandinavian work, and his keener understanding and closer reproduction of the real character of early Icelandic literature, is the fact that Morris's poems and tales on Northern themes possess far higher literary value.
than the Scandinavian compositions of any of his predecessors and successors in this field, and have therefore attracted more attention and have reached a wider audience. Of the other Norse productions discussed above, the only ones which have won fame because of their own merits are Gray's "The Fatal Sisters" and "The Descent of Odin"; but these poems, as we have already seen, are distinctly minor works, and, moreover, do not by any means reflect the real spirit of Icelandic literature. The poems and plays of Gosse, Bottomley, and Miss Harmby, on the other hand, which present far more satisfactory pictures of early Scandinavia, have never been popular, and have done little to spread a knowledge of Old Norse among English and American readers. Morris's Northern works, however, not only reproduce a good deal of the character of his originals, but many of them possess also real literary value. The best of his Scandinavian productions was undoubtedly Sigurd the Volsung, which Professor Gordon describes as "incomparably the greatest poem - perhaps the only great poem - in English which has been inspired by Norse literature," but "The Lovers of Gudrun" was almost certainly the most popular one. The success of the latter was immediate: as I have shown above in chapter I, the poem met with almost unqualified approval in the reviews of the time, most of the contemporary critics considering it the best of The Earthly Paradise tales. One American publisher even thought it had enough popular appeal to warrant issuing it as a separate volume one year after it was first printed. Moreover, its

1. Introduction to Old Norse, p. lxxviii.
2. Boston, 1870.
popularity was by no means ephemeral, for Aymer Vallance in 1897 in his William Morris quoted with approval the opinion of Rossetti and Watts-Dunton that "The Lovers of Gudrun" was Morris's finest poem and he himself called it "a masterpiece 'in the extreme sense of the word,'" the Cambridge History of English Literature in 1916 ranked it first among The Earthly Paradise tales, and Legouis and Cazamian in 1924 in their Histoire de la Litterature Anglaise described it as "l'épisode le plus vivant de The Earthly Paradise."

Sigurd the Volsung, which Morris himself considered his best work, met with a less enthusiastic reception from the reviewers when it appeared in 1877, this poem being a little too close in subject matter and spirit to its Old Norse originals to be easily understood; but it was without doubt fairly widely read at this time, and since then it has generally been accepted by literary historians as Morris's finest production. Some critics have even considered it the greatest English poem written in the nineteenth century. Moreover, it should be noted that the only other long poem on a Norse subject that Morris completed and published - "The Fostering of Aslaug" - was warmly praised in the reviews of Part IV of The Earthly Paradise and

1. Pages 167 and 169.
2. XIII, 125.
4. It is interesting to note that Bliss Perry, in his And Gladly Teach (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), pp. 59-50, states that in the late 1870's, when he was a student at Williams College, he and Fred Bart, a classmate, "used to wander over the hills spouting Swinburne and The Earthly Paradise and Sigurd the Volsung to each other, and when Fred reported that his barber in New York (or it may have been a barkeeper) could declaim more pages of Sigurd the Volsung than either of us, our cup of delight was full."
6. See comments, just cited, by Clutton-Brock, Drinkwater, and Elton.
was undoubtedly popular with the readers of the time, although it was not so enthusiastically received as "The Lovers of Gudrun." Similarly, the eight prose romances Morris wrote during the last years of his life won, and still enjoy, a fair degree of popularity, and although they are not essentially Scandinavian in subject matter or form, they have served to acquaint their readers with a number of Norse institutions, customs, and beliefs; and the minor Northern works that Morris produced - poems like "The King of Denmark's Sons," "Of the Wooing of Hallbiorn the Strong," and "Gunnar's Howe above the House at Lithend" - in spite of the fact that they are not of outstanding literary merit, have attracted attention because of the fame of their author and the success of his other Icelandic work, and have so helped to spread information about medieval Scandinavia. In short, it cannot be denied that Morris's original Norse productions have played an extremely significant part in awakening an interest in early Scandinavia in English and American readers and in acquainting them with the unusually rich literature found in the sagas and the Poetic Edda. To be sure, as I have already pointed out, in some of these compositions Morris does not reproduce faithfully the spirit and form of his originals; but there can be little question that it was better for the general reader to be made aware of the existence of Old Norse literature, even though the conception given him of this material was not absolutely accurate, than to be left in complete ignorance of this matter, and we must also remember that if Morris had not adapted his material to a certain extent to the prevailing tastes
of his readers, his works would most likely never have achieved any popularity and would not have served to introduce the general reading public to the glories of the North. In fact, it seems to me that this was a case in which half the truth was distinctly preferable to no truth - perhaps more to be desired than even the whole truth!

Finally, before concluding my comparison of Morris's Scandinavian work with that of other English and American students of Old Norse, I should like to point out that Morris occupies a position of the first importance not only as a producer of original poems and tales on Northern themes but also as a translator of Icelandic compositions. So far I have limited myself to a consideration of his original productions, for these are the works which possess the highest literary value and have reached the widest audience, but the importance of his translations must not be overlooked, for they have been of great service in helping more serious readers to gain an exact knowledge of Old Norse literature. Before Morris began turning sagas into English, comparatively few renderings of Icelandic compositions had appeared in England, and with a very few exceptions only mythological works and so-called "Runic pieces" had been translated. Moreover, most of these renderings were not only extremely free but were actually frequently inaccurate; except in a few cases the authors knew nothing about Old Norse, but based their translations on Latin and French versions of the Icelandic originals. Not until 1839, when George Stephens printed a rendering of the Ærðbiófs saga
in the same volume as his English version of Tegnér's poem on this story, was an entire Old Norse saga published in an English form; and from that time until 1868, when Morris began preparing his translations from the Scandinavian, only four more saga-renderings — Leing's *Heimskringla*, Dasent's *Story of Burnt Njal* and *Gisli the Outlaw*, and Head's *Story of Víga-Glúm* — were printed in English. Morris, however, soon increased the number of sagas available in an English form, as we have seen above. During the years 1868 to 1875 he presented for the first time to his country-men the *Gunnlaugs saga*, the *Grettis saga*, the *Völsunga saga*, the *Víglundar saga*, the *Heðins saga ok Högna*, the *Hróða báttr heimska*, and the *Þórsteins báttr stangarhógg*; and in the 1890's, when he resumed his translating, he published the first English version of the *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, the *Hagsa-Dórís saga*, the *Odda báttr Ófeissasonar*, the *Eybyggja saga*, and the *Heiðarvíga saga*. He also produced the first English rendering of the *Heimskringla* that was based directly on the Icelandic original, Laing's translation having been made from Aal's Danish version, and he turned into English the *Friðþófs saga* and the *Bandamanna saga*. Moreover, only his untimely death in 1896 kept him from publishing still other renderings which he had already prepared. It should also be noted that unlike the translations of many of his predecessors, Morris's renderings were extremely faithful and highly reliable. As we have seen, his fondness for archaisms and his close reproduction of the substance and form of the original sometimes give his translations an awkward and arti-

1. Laing made use of other translations also, according to his own statement; see his *Heimskringla*, I, iv-v.
ficial character that is entirely foreign to the sagas, but it is also true that in many passages he succeeded in imitating in a very satisfactory manner the terseness, directness, and concreteness of the Old Norse. Moreover, whatever faults his renderings have are on the whole simply the result of his insistence on the utmost fidelity to his texts. Finally I should like to point out that since Morris began issuing saga-translations and began producing original works on Scandinavian themes, a great number of renderings from the Icelandic have been published, so that now practically all the important sagas are available in an English form; this increase in the number of translations from the Old Norse, while by no means entirely the result of Morris's Northern work, is undoubtedly to a great extent to be attributed to the interest in early Scandinavia that was awakened by the appearance of Morris's "The Lovers of Gudrun," Sigurd the Volsung, and "The Fostering of Aslaug." The translations that have been printed since 1875 have on the whole been of a very high order, and have formed a very valuable addition to the library of Norse books in English. However, in spite of this marked increase in the number of Icelandic renderings published, none of the later translators, with the possible exception of Vigfusson and Powell, have surpassed Morris in the number of Old Norse works issued in an English form; this fact is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that Morris's Scandinavian work was only one of a host of interests that occupied his attention during his life.

All in all, the extent of Morris's contribution to Norse studies
in English - in view of the quantity and quality of his translations from the Icelandic, the literary value and popularity of his original works on Scandinavian themes, and the interest in the North that he awakened in others - cannot be overestimated. Great, indeed, would have been our loss if Morris had never met Eiríkr Magnússon and learned to read Icelandic in the original!
SCANDINAVIAN ELEMENTS IN THE WORKS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

by

Karl O. E. Anderson

A thesis submitted to the Division of Modern Languages, Harvard University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abbreviations used in Appendixes

M. : Morris

Ma. : Magnússon

MS. : Manuscript

MSS. : Manuscripts

NED : New English Dictionary

ON. : Old Norse
Appendix I

Part A

In the following pages I have reproduced, side by side, Ma.'s and M.'s translations of the first half of the Sigurðar saga Jórsalafara, Eybléins ok Ólafs as they are found in Professor P. R. Lieder's manuscript; I have placed Ma.'s original on the left-hand page and M.'s revised form on the right-hand page. All obvious mistakes, such as misspellings and careless omissions and repetitions of words, especially in M.'s changes, have been corrected, but in each case the MS. reading has been noted in the footnotes. Mistakes in punctuation, being far too numerous to correct and record, have been left unchanged, except in those cases in which the punctuation in the MS. makes the translation obscure or extremely awkward; here also every variation from the MS. has been recorded at the foot of the page.

A few matters in regard to spelling need special comment. Ma. and M. followed no set rule in regard to the capitalization of titles; they seem to have capitalized or to have used small initial letters entirely at random. In order that there might be some uniformity, I have followed the procedure of the printed version, and have capitalized titles when they appear with a proper noun, but have not capitalized them when they are used alone. Such changes in the MS. spelling of all titles except "king" have been pointed out in the footnotes. The term "king" is used with great frequency throughout the saga. It is obvious that neither M. nor Ma. was concerned about distinguishing between the spellings "King" and "king." M. in his alterations and in the verse used almost always a large bold printed character for the "k," which appears to be a capital but which he used even medially. Ma. clearly indicated a capital in a few words, but in the great majority of the occurrences of the word "king," although he used characters varying in size and form, it is impossible to determine definitely when he intended his "k's" to be capitals and when small letters, for he, like M., sometimes used in medial positions what appears to be a capital. Inasmuch as the matter is very unimportant, I have adopted the spelling of the printed text in this particular word without any comment. In the case of the title "kaiser," however, Ma. almost always clearly used a capital, and so I have called attention to any departures from the MS. spelling of this word in my reproduction of his translation. M. only rarely had occasion to rewrite this word in his changes; in such cases I have interpreted his initial letter as a capital.

Another matter of spelling that calls for special comment is the question of the use of a hyphen in compound words. Ma. and M. were very careless about this matter, inserting or omitting a hyphen without any regard to modern usage and even without any attempt to be consistent. In the case of compound proper nouns or of compound words that Ma. or M. coined, I have reproduced in

1. See above, pages 397 ff.

2. I should like to point out that for the sign "&," which occurs occasionally in M.'s rendering, I have used the word "and" without calling attention to the MS. form.
the text the form found in the MS.; in the case of other compound
words I have used the normal spelling in the text and have given
Ma.'s or M.'s form, if different, in the footnotes.

In the spelling of personal and place names, there is likewise a great deal of inconsistency in the MS. Sometimes Ma. and
M. used the regular modern forms for ON. names, sometimes they
translated them, and in still other cases they kept the ON. forms. 
Even the same name is frequently spelled in several ways in the
same saga. Since in some cases it is impossible to determine
definitely which form they actually preferred, I have made no
attempt to be consistent in the spelling of proper nouns, but
have reproduced in the text the forms found in the MS., unless it is clear that the form is simply a misspelling.

I should also like to point out here that, with a few exceptions, I have called attention in the footnotes to all the revi-
sions that both Ma. and M. made in their own work in the course
of writing out the translations. Changes, however, which consist
merely in the correction of slips that they had made I have not
recorded. Moreover, alterations in which a new form
was written over another word and the first form was thus rendered illegible I have likewise not pointed out. All insertions of words
or phrases into the translation, however, I have noted, although
in a few cases the words or phrases inserted may have originally
been omitted by mistake; it is sometimes difficult to determine
whether Ma.'s and M.'s insertions were merely corrections of slips
or whether they were the result of a definite change on the part
of the translator as to how a passage should be rendered, and I
have therefore considered it best to record them all.

In translating the "visur," Ma. first wrote out the Icelandic
in prose order and then placed the English rendering underneath the
ON., following the original word for word; in revising, M. crossed
out Ma.'s "visur" completely, and wrote a verse translation on the
opposite page. As I have already stated, Ma. did not always repro-
duce the ON. exactly as it is found in Unger's edition when he copied
the "visur" in prose order, for he sometimes omitted or added accent
marks, occasionally slipped into modern spellings, at times intro-
duced forms found in other editions, and now and then added a word
to make the ON. clearer. All of these changes I have discussed in
detail below in Part D of Appendix I. I should like to point out
here, however, that in reproducing Ma.'s rendering in the following
pages, I have given the forms used by Ma. except when they are ap-
parently mere slips; in such cases I have presented the correct spell-
ing, noting Ma.'s form in the footnotes. When Ma. has otherwise de-
parted from Unger's text, I have used Ma.'s forms, indicating Unger's
readings at the bottom of the page.

1. For a statement regarding the procedure I have followed in
dealing with insertions in Part D of Appendix I, see below, page 832.
2. See below, pages 878-884.
The Story of Sigurd the Jerusalemfarer, Eystein, and Olaf.

Ch. I

The beginnings of the sons of Magnus.

After the fall of King Magnus Bareleg his sons, Eystein, Sigurd, Olaf, took up the kingdom after him in Norway, Eystein having the northernmost part of the land Sigurd the southernmost part of the land. King Olaf was then four or five winters old, but that third part of the land which was his share they both had ward over. Sigurd was taken for king when he was thirteen or fourteen winters old but Eystein was a year older. King Sigurd left behind west beyond sea the daughter of the Irish king. At the time when the sons of King Magnus had been appointed kings, the men who had gone out with Skopti son of Ogmund came back, some from the home of Jerusalem some from Micklegarth; and they were exceedingly renowned, and knew how to tell of many sorts of tidings. And from the newness of the matter many folk in Norway grew wistful of such a journey; for it was said that in Micklegarth the Northmen had any wealth to bless themselves with, those of them who were willing to take war-service there. They prayed the kings that one of them or the other, Eystein or Sigurd, should fare and be captain of what company should betake itself to the journey. And the kings said yea thereto and arrayed the journey at the joint cost of both. To this journey betook themselves many men of might and power, both landed men and mighty bonders. And when the journey was arrayed it was settled that

1. Originally "took up kingdom."

2. MS. tiding.