WILLIAM MORRIS AND SAGA-TRANSLATION:

'The Story of King Magnus, Son of Erling'

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I

VIKING INFLUENCE spread across continents: in the east, through Europe to Russia and Greece; in the west, to Britain, Ireland, Greenland, Iceland, and to the New World; all of these exploits have been addressed in greater or lesser detail elsewhere in this volume. But Viking influence also spread across time -- in fact, across a millennium. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, already primed by their study of Old English and recently discovered manuscripts, attacked Old Norse with a characteristic vigour, but the two audiences differed: Old English was for scholars and clerics; Old Norse, for the adventurer, the romantic -- for William Morris. The Victorians, too, fell to the Vikings.

This Viking conquest did not occur without a long period of preparation, however. The Spensarian imitators of the eighteenth century helped keep medieval ideals, at least as they saw them, fresh in the minds of the public. The Gothic novelists -- Horace Walpole, Mary Shelley, Matthew Lewis, Anne Radcliffe; the romantic poets -- Coleridge, Keats, Wordsworth; and the romantic novels of Sir Walter Scott sustained a popular interest in a sort of "medieval", though they often stretched the time limits and their interpretations to include whatever might imply darkness and intrigue.¹ In architecture, Strawberry Hill kept alive some notion of "medieval" until Ruskin and others took up the call much later. At the same time, many of the great manuscripts of medieval literature were being discovered,² and scholarship in most medieval matters was beginning to grow. In spite of all this activity, however, Old Norse scholarship was virtually non-existent. In fact, "Runick", as it was called, was often confused with Celtic, and considered very mysterious indeed. It was not until the great translators and editors of the nineteenth century presented Norse literature to the public that scholarship could begin to advance. Before the nineteenth century, the English literary world enjoyed no editions, no dictionaries, and no translations (unless one were to count the few north-inspired poems of Thomas Gray, who knew no Old Norse and got the material for his "translations" from the Latin of Bartholin and the French of Mallet's Introduction à l'histoire de Dannemarc.³)

Whereas the literary men of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries faced an almost impossible task when confronting Norse literature, by the mid-nineteenth century the situation had totally changed, thanks mostly to the great pioneer translators of the 1840s and 1850s. Although Amos Cottle attempted to translate some of the Elder Edda
in 1797, and William Herbert is generally considered to be the first English translator to have had a first-hand knowledge of Icelandic, as demonstrated by his Select Icelandic Poetry of 1804-1806, the beginning of serious scholarly attention to Old Norse literature is marked by George Webbe Dasent’s Younger Edda of 1842 and Samuel Laing’s Heimskringla of 1844. Dasent followed his Edda with his translation of Rask’s Grammar of the Icelandic or Old Norse Tongue in 1843, his translation of Njáls Saga (The Story of Burnt Njál) in 1861, and that of Gísla saga (The Story of Gísla the Outlaw) in 1866. In 1851 Benjamin Thorpe published his Northern Mythology, and in 1866 the Elder Edda.⁴

In 1869 that great translating team of the second half of the century, William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon, published their Story of Grettir the Strong, followed in 1870 by the Volsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs. Morris paraphrased the Laxdaela Saga in his “Lovers of Gudrun” in 1870 as well, and the two went on to compile The Saga Library, including the Heimskringla, my subject here, in the last decade of the century.⁵ The last three decades of the century saw the appearance of Edmund Gosse’s Eglíssaga (1879), another treatment by W. G. Green (1893), Cleasby and Vigfússon’s Dictionary (1874), Vigfússon and Powell’s Icelandic Prose Reader (1879), Henry Sweet’s Norse Primer and Reader (1886) and Vigfússon and Powell’s Corpus Poeticum Boreale (1883).⁶ So within a hundred years of Thomas Gray, most of the work had been done to present the great literature of the north to the general public. In Samuel Laing’s words, “The object [of this translation] has been to make it [the Heimskringla] . . . not merely a work for the antiquary, but for the ordinary reader of history,—for the common man.”⁷

II

Perhaps more than any other translator of the past century, William Morris has enjoyed his share of controversy. Doubtless, Morris’s almost fanatical medievalism has furnished the critics with abundant ammunition. From early on, Morris’s language was full of English criticized as “Wardour Street”,⁸ “the affectation of archaism”, “pseudo-Middle English”, and “specious nullity of false phrasing”.⁹ The Defence of Guenevere, according to one critic, is “the strangest collection of poetry not confessedly insane in the language”¹⁰. Though at first applied only to Morris’s poetry, these attacks were later directed toward all his works by popular critics, though not necessarily by skilled linguists. Such criticisms were levelled at Morris throughout most of his career, and continued into the twentieth century. In this century, his most noted detractors include D. M. Hoare, who said some years ago that Morris “cannot go deep enough”, and “the intrusion . . . of the chevalresque into the crisis [of Laxdaela Saga] is unpardonable”;¹¹ and Lee Hollander, who maintained that Morris’s translation, “because of the unfortunate misconception—not dead yet—that the sagas require an antiquarian language flavoured with English dialectics, is almost unreadable today”.¹²

Nevertheless, Morris’s supporters are many. The reviewers welcomed The Earthly Paradise, as did the public. Sigurd the Volsung was called “the one great epic of the nineteenth century”.¹³ Conrad Nordby, at the turn of the century, wrote of poetry “by the hand of the Master”.¹⁴ Several of the founding fathers of modern medieval scholarship were great admirers of Morris. For example, W. P. Ker referred to “The Lovers of Gudrun” as “the noble echo” of the original.¹⁵ Later in this century, E. V. Gordon, another philologist, declared, “The greatest literary interpreter of the north
that has been in England was William Morris. . . He was better able than any other poet had been to apply poetic gifts to Norse subjects, and the result, when he did, was magnificent." 16 E. R. Eddison, shortly thereafter, in "Some Principles of Translation", compares Morris's translation with Samuel Laing's and concludes Morris's is "the more perfect achievement, . . . by comparison, living human speech". He is able "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 . . .". 17 About the same time, in a letter to his brother, C. S. Lewis laments the fact that, after finishing The Wood Beyond the World, he has no more Morris prose-romances to read. 18 Five years later, in praising Morris, he says, "Morris invented for his poems and perfected in his prose-romances a language which has never at any period been spoken in England", 19 a language he later used in his translations. In the 'thirties and 'forties, Morris's most adamant supporter was Karl Litzenberg, of the University of Michigan, who wrote five articles on various aspects of Morris's northern inspiration. According to Litzenberg (like Ker, Gordon, and Lewis, a skilled philologist), "No other modern writer has re-created the temper of Old Norse literature so completely and so adequately". 20 In the 'sixties and 'seventies, though, critics seemed awkward, even embarrassed, in supporting Morris's work. 21 In most cases the trained philologists recognize the merit of Morris's artistry; only the somewhat short-lived, even "trendy", critics disparage it.

At the root of this controversy, of course, is Morris's medievalism, specifically his fascination with "the north". Although he expressed interest in medieval architecture while at the Marlborough School, 22 his dedication to Malory, Chaucer, whom he called his "Master", 23 and to the thirteenth century in general, did not begin until Morris was at Oxford (1853-1855), which according to Morris's primary biographer, J. W. Mackail, "still . . . breathed from its towers the last enchantments of the Middle Ages". 24 Though disillusioned with the academic life at Oxford, Morris was introduced to Thorpe's Northern Mythology by his friend, Edward Burne-Jones, though Burne-Jones himself would "never go further north than Hampstead", if he had his way. 25 Thorpe "opened to Morris a new world, which in later life became, perhaps, his deepest love", 26 "The literature of the north", as Morris called it, from that point on began to control Morris's literary production. In the course of his lifetime, he wrote over 50 pieces in some way related to northern influence. 27 Though Morris's early poetry, The Defence of Guenevere (1858), and The Life and Death of Jason (1867), shows a general inclination towards the medieval, his earliest prose shows definite signs of "Scandinavianizing". Gertha's Lovers, Svend and his Brethren, and The Hollow Land all have characters with northern names. Yet, as Litzenberg points out, the influence goes no further than this. More important Scandinavian traits appear in Morris's poetry of the second half of the 1860s—The Wanderers (1865-1868), and The Earthly Paradise (1868). 28 These poems reflect Morris's efforts, beginning about 1860, to read translations of various Icelandic writings. During this period, however, Morris could rely only on translations, often inaccurate (or in the case of Laing, based on a modern Norwegian translation of the original Old Norse). But in 1868 came a meeting that was to affect profoundly Morris's feelings toward northern literature and enable him to deal with the material first hand: he was introduced to Eiríkr Magnússon, a native Icelander, and began to take lessons in Old Norse, which got him closer to the north than ever before, 29
providing him with the substance for some of his best poetry ("The Lovers of Gudrun" and Sigurð the Völung), as well as training him for his later translations.

In the Icelander Eiríkr Magnússon, Morris met the ideal collaborator, and his equal — in enthusiasm, stature, temper, and quest for precision. May Morris describes him thus: "I remember him well at Cambridge, a short stocky man with a full face, light hair and bushy moustache. He spoke English with the exquisite precision I have noticed in other cultivated people of [Iceland]. He used to sing Northern folk song with a big voice that nearly blew the roof off their little sitting room in Cambridge. I remember he walked up and down the room, Icelandic fashion, as he sung. His enthusiasm over the literary matter of Iceland knew no bonds of space or time: only the other day I met someone who knew him in Cambridge who said, if one met him in the street, one had only to mention something about the literature of the North, and there Magnússon would stand talking, regardless of time or weather." Bertha Phillipps, student and long-time acquaintance of the Icelander, describing Magnússon's professional acumen, says, "This combination of scholarship with sympathetic insight together with his vigorous personality made Mr. Magnússon an unforgettable teacher.... Mistranslation or grammatical inaccuracy he regarded with much the same horror as actual untruthfulness.... A saga read with him remains in the memory as a living thing, and must always recall the enthusiasm for knowledge, the idealism, and the love of country which were characteristic of a unique personality." These descriptions suggest a man well equipped to deal with an Englishman who "clung to [the topic of Iceland] like ivy to the oak", as Stopford Brooke unsympathetically remarked, and about whom Magnússon himself was later to say, "From the very first day that I began work with William Morris on Icelandic literature the thing that struck me most was this, that he entered into the spirit of it not with the pre-occupied mind of a foreigner, but with the intuition of an uncommonly wide-awake native".

That "very first day" occurred in the autumn of 1868. A mutual friend arranged a meeting between the two men. At his Queen's Square house, Morris met Magnússon "with a manly shake of the hand", according to Magnússon, and "with a bound" he led Magnússon to his second-floor study where "a very animated conversation ensued on Icelandic matters". They arranged a schedule of reading Icelandic three times a week, beginning with Gunnlaug the Wormtongue, a work of about 50 pages, which they finished in two weeks.

After Gunnlaug the Wormtongue and Grettir the Strong, their first translation, Morris and Magnússon began work on The Story of the Volsungs, published in 1870 with 13 poems from the Edda, and Laxdæla Saga, never published but later used by Morris as the basis for his "Lovers of Gudrun" episode in The Earthly Paradise. These translations were followed five years later by Three Northern Love Stories, containing Gunnlaugs Saga Órmutungs (The Story of Gunnlaug the Wormtongue), Fríðþjófs Saga (The Story of Frithiof the Bold), and Viglundar saga væna (The Story of Viglund the Fair), with some additional short stories. About the same time, the pair was working on Þænshóris Saga (The Story of Hen Thorir), Bandamanna Saga (The Story of the Banded Men), and Hávarðar saga Isfíðingr (The Story of Howard the Halt), as well as on the Heimskringla, all of which were to appear, after a fifteen year hiatus in The Saga Library.

On 2 July 1890, Morris wrote to Bernard Quaritch that he would agree to do a Saga Library, and would begin work "at once on a prospectus". In a letter to Lady
Burne Jones six days later, Morris writes, "I have undertaken to get out some of the Sagas I have lying about. Quaritch is exceedingly anxious to get hold of me, and received with enthusiasm a proposal to publish a Saga Library: item he will give me money (or perhaps I ought to say old books)". The Saga Library, according to the prospectus, was to be 15 volumes. Only six appeared, the last a thorough collection of notes, indexes, genealogical tables, etc., compiled by Magnússon and published in 1905. Volume I included Howard the Halt, The Banded Men, and Hen Thorir (1891); Volume II, The Eredwellers and The Heath Slaings (1892); and Volumes III to V, the three parts of the Heimskringla. They completed this last volume at the end of April 1895, eighteen months before Morris's death, in a last burst of energy before Morris's final debilitating illness. Shortly after the completion of the volume, Burne-Jones lamented, "It is sad to see his enormous vitality diminishing".

In a study of this scope, limited to but one manuscript of the dozens Morris produced, I could not hope to present a final report of Morris's method of translation; instead, using his manuscript for the Heimskringla’s Story of King Magnus, Son of Erling, I offer only a beginning, a first step towards a long-needed analysis of this great man's translation process, of his unflagging conscientiousness, and of the method usually followed by one of our most prodigious, if not always our most appreciated, translators of saga literature. His enthusiasm, coupled with the skills of a native Icelander, produced a corpus of poetic translations unequalled in the field.

Magnússon describes their method of translation in these words: "The work on it was divided between Morris and myself in the following manner: Having read together the sagas contained in the first three volumes [of The Saga Library], Morris wrote out the translation and I collated his MS, with the original. For the last two volumes of the Heimskringla the process was reversed, I doing the translation, he the collation; the style, too, he emended throughout in accordance with his own ideal." The manuscripts of the first volumes, though somewhat indicative of Morris's views on translation, are not nearly as interesting as the last two, for which Morris and Magnússon reverted to their original method, when Morris implored Magnússon, "You be my grammar as we translate. I want the literature". Magnússon, in fact, realized the important role these last two volumes play in any estimation of Morris's artistry. "Among the literary remains of William Morris", he writes, "the MS on which the second and the third vols [sic] of Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla (being the fourth and fifth vols [sic] of the Saga Library) are based, forms a particularly safe, indeed an indispensable basis whereon the future criticism of the great man's relation to old northern literature is to be based. The MS, extending to 800 pages, comprises the ten sagas of the Kings of Norway which cover a period of 165 years, from the accession of Olaf the Holy to the reign of King Magnus Erlingsson".

Though much of this manuscript is lost, portions of it have reappeared over the past 50 years. Stefán Einarsson, in 1933, noted that Karl O. E. Anderson was working on pages, privately owned, containing The Story of Sigurd the Jerusalem-Farer, Eysteinn, and Olaf in Volume V of The Saga Library; however, that study has never been published. In 1961, J. N. Swannell, a critic whose lukewarm appreciation for Morris's translation-style exemplifies the usual reaction in the past decades, included a brief study of the Ólafs Saga manuscript, owned by the Brotherton Library of the University of Leeds, in his article on Morris as an interpreter of Old Norse, but that study leaves
the incorrect impression that Morris was an impatient translator, whose work was a game, or rather just an experiment. Although one must agree that Morris’s statement when he first began to study Icelandic, that he must have the story, suggests a student whose over-eagerness could lead to carelessness, an examination of the last saga of the final volume of The Saga Library — indeed, the last translation Morris was to do — demonstrates that Morris had fully outgrown the impatience indicated by his remark, “I must have the story. I mean to amuse myself.”

The Morris—Magnússon manuscript of The Story of King Magnus, Son of Erling, now preserved in The Huntington Library, measures 1 2/4 by 8 1/2 inches (Figure 1). The leather-bound, ruled notebook has 38 leaves with the translation on the recto sides only, except for Morris’s verse translations of the three poems in the story and Morris’s several questions directed at Magnússon (e.g., referring to Jón Kútiza, “What is the English name — Curtis? Very common”), which appear in the opposite versos. The verso of the first, unnumbered, leaf bears the following legend, possibly inscribed by W. Heffer, for the 1908 sale of the manuscript: “Morris/ The Original Manuscript, on 37 leaves, in the Autograph of Eiríkr Magnússon [sic], filled with Alterations and Corrections in the handwriting of William Morris, also with 3 verses of Poetry in his hand”. The pages are numbered in Arabic numerals starting with the second leaf, the first page of translation, in the top centre (pp. 3, 4, and 10 also in the top right). Throughout are marginal notes in a fourth, rough hand, probably that of a foreman for the printer, dividing the text among typesetters and indicating the beginning of each four-folio gathering. On the rectos, the clear hand of Magnússon is crossed out, redirected, corrected, and emended in the bold hand of Morris. These alterations fall into four main categories:

1) corrections in translation (including corrections of Magnússon’s English)
2) emendation to create syntax similar to the Icelandic (for example, verb/verb, noun/noun, etc.)
3) emendation to create word order similar to the Icelandic
4) substitution to provide cognates (the most substantial group).

Corrections in translation make up the smallest group. Though Magnússon was a conscientious and skilled linguist, his Icelandic would occasionally interfere with his English. When he comes across the Icelandic friændr in Chapter II, he confuses it with its English cgnate and defines it incorrectly as “friends”; Morris corrects it to “kin”. In Chapter I, Morris changes Magnússon’s translation for mundu, “wood”, to the correct “wood”. Morris also corrects more serious errors by Magnússon; for example, Magnússon translates “might want” for pyrti, which in the context actually means “might need”. Likewise, Morris guards against loose translation: Magnússon translates ngkkurr as “some” and “several” (both correct) rather than Morris’s “certain”, as in “a certain haven”, giving it the force of an indefinite article, non-existent in Old Norse (Chapters III, XX); vǫkkdu as “kept watch” rather than the more literal “waked” (X); and haði as “took”, perfectly correct, rather than “had” (XII), the more literal translation. Morris also keeps the original tense, though it occasionally seems awkward, and alters Magnússon’s material to match the original: “falling” becomes “fell” (fellu), and “leaping” “leapt” (hjópu) (VII). Morris eliminates the pleonastic “do” — an uncommon element in English before the sixteenth century: “did not fasten” becomes “made not the boat fast” (festu þeir ekki bátinn) (VI). However, Morris allows more leeway in the
translation of names: he disallows Magnússon’s “Heinrik” for Heinrek, and substitutes “Henry”, surprising in light of his early works, in which he freely used northern names; on the other hand, he prefers “Roald Longtalk” to “Roald Longsermon” for Hróaldr langtala (III), but this revision may reflect Morris’s preference for cognates rather than his thoughts about name-translation.

In the second group, more extensive than the first, Morris is very conscientious about retaining the syntax of the Icelandic; thus, when Magnússon inadvertently switches prepositions, Morris reinserts the original: “for king” to “to king” (til konungs) (I), and “took for king Sigurd” to “took Sigurd to king” (tóku... Sigurd til konungs) (IX). Morris also seems anxious to retain adjectival constructions: Magnússon’s translation for ef hann var ráðinn, “if he had made up his mind”, Morris changes to “if he were of mind”. Verbs, though, seem to merit Morris’s closest attention. When Magnússon translates a verb as a noun, Morris changes it back to a verbal structure; for example, at gjalda, an infinitive structure, is “awarded a fine” for Magnússon, but “to pay” for Morris (XIX). In Chapter V, Magnússon translates færi í milli as a present participle, “passing between”, which Morris changes to “fared between”. Similarly, in the next chapter, the simple past lá is translated “was lying” by the Iceland; Morris prefers “lay”. A few lines later the same thing happens – Magnússon’s “were sitting” for sátu becomes “sat”. Morris also prefers to retain the active voice. þeir... áttu tal sitt, “the counsel was taken” for Magnússon, becomes “they took the rede together” (I). Intransitive verbs stay intransitive for Morris, as well: Ók leggjá þá hváritveggu til orrustu, rendered by Magnússon as “either side forthwith gave battle”, is changed to “and then either side thrust into battle” (VII). Morris avoids periphrasis and “took to flight” becomes “fled” for flýði (III). Even more careful, Morris goes back to the impersonal roots of the construction and renders bykki mér “methinketh” rather than Magnússon’s “I deem” (I). Adverbs, as well, receive careful treatment. Magnússon’s “since ye fare in such a wild manner” for er þit farið svá ákaftiga changes to “that ye fare so wildly” (VI). Morris’s keen eye is always on the lookout for unfaithful syntax. Always faithful to the original, he was prepared to sacrifice the popular notion of “English”, a fact appreciated by several of the great philologists, as mentioned above.

Morris’s use of word-order to create parallel constructions comprises the third group of alterations. Of the numerous examples in the manuscript, a few must suffice here. In Chapter I, Magnússon translates tóku margir vel undir þeita ráð “for this many gave good cheer”; Morris rearranges the sentence to match the original more closely: “Many took well to this rede”. In the same chapter, Magnússon translates Allir játtu því at gera þetta samband með fullum trúanáði “They all said yea to joining this fellowship in full good faith”; Morris again rearranges the sentence and changes the word order to match Snorri’s line: “All yeasaid it to make that fellowship with full troth”. Morris also holds to Germanic subject-verb inversion in his translation: þá þynntisk lidi á bryggjunum for Magnússon “then the host on the bridge thinned”, becomes for Morris “then thinned the host on the bridge” (III): so also, ok fell þar mjök mart manna af Hákunar lidi, “and there fell much folk of Hakon’s host”. When Magnússon reverses sunnan at eynni (VI) to “towards the island from the south”, Morris revises it to “from the south to the island”. Again, in Chapter XII, he changes Magnússon’s “the weather was cool with sleet falling” (Svalt var veðr ok vátadrífa) to “chill was the weather with drift of sleet”.
Throughout the manuscript, Morris follows this pattern—he always changes Magnússon's construction to parallel the original.

The final area of correction represents the most substantial and most controversial of Morris's techniques for translation. To list Morris's use of Icelandic/English cognates and archaisms in this story would require scores of pages. Only a few representative examples can be discussed here. Perhaps the most obvious example of his technique is the use of "fare" for the Icelandic fára; one never "goes" anywhere in Morris's saga—one always "fares". Likewise, in Chapter I, Morris uses "bidding" for boð (Magnússon: "word") and "flock" for flókkrinn, which Magnússon usually translates "band". A well known Morrismism that comes up frequently is "rede", Morris's translation for ráð (Magnússon's "counsel" or "advice"). Also, næst... bana mínun, "next to my very death" for Magnússon, becomes "next to my very bane" for Morris.

So far, the examples of cognates have been fairly acceptable to the common reader. We move now to an aspect of Morris's translations that has evoked admiration in some, but has provoked fury in many. Morris frequently extends his use of cognates to include extremely archaic, sometimes dialectal, often obscure English words. For example, he translates týnt, "lost", as "tyned", choosing a northern dialectism originally borrowed from Old Norse. Harðráðr, for Magnússon "hard-counsellor", becomes even more obscure with Morris: "hard-ready". So "enemies", óvínir, is translated literally by Morris (the Icelandic prefix ó- is a negative element) as "unfriends"; also, ófrelsi ("tyranny") becomes "unfreedom"; and ófríðr ("war") "unpeace". Similarly, he translates mikit mannfall as "mickle man-fall"; Magnússon translates this phrase as "great fall of men" (VI). Heitufask, "vowed", Morris translates "beight" (VII); likewise, heittir, "called", becomes "hight", as in sem heittir á Stöngum, "where it hight Stongs", going back to its Teutonic roots. At the same time, Morris worked to keep out Latinisms: Magnússon's "avail" becomes "help", and "vessels" becomes "ships" (VI, VII). One of the most extreme examples of Morris's persistence in maintaining cognates is his revision of Magnússon's translation of kraþtr, as in með fjanda kraþtr, "the power of the fiend", to "the craft of the fiend"—in this case somewhat confusing the actual meaning. Nevertheless, though one might not always agree with Morris's predilection for adapting cognates, the point is that Morris clearly watched his Icelandic original closely.

Any discussion of Morris's translation techniques must concern itself, however briefly, with his treatment of skaldic poetry, of which three examples occur in this saga (see Appendix B of this paper for a side-by-side presentation of the Icelandic and the three versions of translation), though in such a short paper it is impossible to communicate the intricacies of tone and style, on one hand, and the rugged charm, on the other, of this extremely rigid, yet deliberately obscure, form of poetry.

Briefly stated, the rules of skaldic poetry are these: like the rest of Old Germanic poetry, skaldic poetry is alliterative; the difference is that skaldic poetry, unlike Old English poetry, for example, strictly counts syllables; it is also stanzaic. The predominant skaldic stanzaic pattern, to which the three examples in Magnússaga belong, called dróttkvætt, is comprised of two quatrains: each line (usually called a half-line, in opposition to the Germanic long line) must contain six syllables with three stresses, the last two syllables making up a trochaic foot (the other two feet are usually trochees, also). The first, stressed syllable of the even line springs back, as it were, and alliterates
with two stressed syllables in the preceding line. Thus the two lines resemble the Old English long line, though the number of unstressed syllables is strictly regulated.

In addition, dróttkvætt requires a demanding pattern of internal half- and full rhyme (occasionally, end rhyme also appears): the odd lines must display consonance (called skothending); the even, full rhyme (ðadalhending). Both rhymes must involve the penultimate syllable of each six-syllable line. Thus, in the following stanza, the second poem in Appendix B, alliteration occurs three times in every two lines, ruled by the first, stressed syllable of the even lines (griðar: Greitt: gumna; Túnsbergi: traudr: tenn, etc.); the penultimate syllables of the odd lines control skothending (dróttinn: Greitt: rjóða: traudr, etc.) and the same syllables of the even lines control internal full rhyme (vion: griðar; snúna: Túnsbergi):

Greitt fráð, gumna dróttinn,
griðar fáks, í víðu,
traudr esa ten at rjóða.
Túnsbergi þér snúna.
Hreiddusk bjartra brodda
býjarmenn við rennu.
Uggðu eld ok sveigðan
alm dynviðir malma.

As classical dróttkvætt, this stanza contains 48 syllables (in line three, esa would be shortened in delivery to fit the meter); 24 are metrically long53 and stressed, 12 bear alliteration,54 eight display skothending, and eight ðadalhending.

Morris’s translation also appears in an eight-line stanza, divided syntactically into two quatrains. Each line has three stresses, and usually ends with a trochee. Morris’s lines, however, have more than the limited three unstressed syllables of classical dróttkvætt; yet his excess unstressed syllables are primarily prepositions and articles — following the metrical liberty allowed the skald, Morris’s version, too, through resolution, could fit the six-syllable line of dróttkvæt. Morris’s use of alliteration, however, strays from the required pattern, though alliteration is still fundamental to his verse: most of Morris’s lines have two alliterative syllables (loath’st: Lord; teeth: troll-wife; lightly: luck; stems: steel-din; townsman: meet; Adrad: steel-din). Sometimes Morris’s alliteration connects two lines, though not by alliterating the proper dróttkvætt syllables, as in lines three and four: wide: went: with (Morris chose “wide” over Magnússon’s “broad”, presumably to achieve this link). In all three stanzas, the final couplets in Morris’s versions are alliteratively linked (in stanza two, however, st would not alliterate with sw in dróttkvætt). In the first poem, moreover, lines four and eight resemble the classical pattern by alliterating a stressed syllable (though the first syllable is not stressed) with stressed syllables of the previous line; the same occurs in line eight in the third poem. Another requisite of dróttkvætt, internal rhyme, either full or half-, is only incidental in Morris’s translation. Morris instead opts for simple assonance. In the first stanza, for example, “would” and “Onund” assonate, as do “Túll” and “Sigurd”, “folk” and “worthy”, and “hard” and “thenceward” (Morris’s word, probably chosen for this effect), and a visual rhyme appears, “should”: “house” (dróttkvætt, however, was primarily aural). The same situation occurs in the second stanza: “teeth” and “steed”, “flame” and “swayéd”.

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Seldom, though, do these rhymes follow the requisite pattern of the penultimate syllable rhyming with one in the first part of the line. Full rhyme, in dróttkvætt appearing in the even lines, plays little part in Morris's verse, except for “hard” and “thenceward” (again, visual rather than aural rhyme) in the first stanza, “teeth” and “steed” (if we equate the two dentals) in the second, and “there” and “fared” in the third. To summarize, Morris's translation of the second stanza, for example, displays a dependence on alliteration, though less rigidly than dróttkvætt, a meter similar to the original, but a much weaker relationship to the original rhyme, either skothending or adalhending:

Thou loath'st not, lord, to redd
The teeth of the steed of troll-wife;
I heard that in wide Tunsberg
Lightly good luck went with thee.
The townsfolk feared to meet there
The rushing of the bright points;
Adrad were the stems of steel-din
Of flame and swayéd elm-bow.

A few stylistic matters still remain to be discussed. Dróttkvætt was deliberately obscure, an effect achieved through various means. Its words, often exclusively poetic (known as heiti, a literary technique to which Morris adheres in both prose and poetry), added to this obscurity, and the Old Norse kenning, cousin to the much simpler Anglo-Saxon kenning, reached new depths of obscurity. Gunnlaug Saga Ormstungu, for example, presents the following kennings: runnr Gunnar (“tree of battle” [Gunnr is exclusively poetic] = “warrior”, in this case, þórsteinn); and bauga lands lýsi-Gunnr (“valkyrie of the light of the land of the rings” = “valkyrie of the light of the arm” = “valkyrie of gold” = “woman”).\textsuperscript{65} Magnússaga’s kennings are less extreme. In the first poem, Magnússaga’s skald refers to Hákon’s warriors as “hawks” (in this case, ironically — Magnús had just routed Hákon’s troops). In the second stanza, the poet refers to “reddening the teeth of the troll-wife’s steed”, that is, “reddening the teeth of the wolf” (by providing carnage). In both cases, Morris maintains the obscurity by maintaining the kennings. Of course, the encomiastic intent, so typical of skaldic poetry, is here represented as well, and the usual satirical elements are likewise transferred to Morris’s version.

The most difficult problem in dealing with skaldic verse is the poet’s unlimited syntactic freedom. In many cases, the full meaning of the stanza could not be ascertained until the last word, even the last syllable, was spoken — which often struck like a thunderbolt. Also, simply by position, the first and last syllables of each quatrain played especially important roles; these two quatrains, or half-stanzas, complemented and counterbalanced each other. Morris’s versions transfer this balance and emphasis. In all three stanzas, the quatrains begin and end with important elements, and each quatrain is syntactically independent. In addition, within each quatrain, dróttkvætt often makes use of parenthetical statements to separate the sentence into two parts. Although Magnússaga’s three poems provide few examples of this usually pervasive feature, the one parenthetic clause, mein fekk margr af Kænu maðr, in poem three, Morris prefers to attach to the following phrase, rather than treating it as an interruption of the
sentence beginning that quatrain (the prose context suggests that hann refers to Erling, the subject of the first clause.

A final word about skaldic poetry in general, and about dróttkvætt in particular: more than anything else, it is a challenge to the translator. An inflected language, Old Norse lent itself to endless intricacies of position and separation of words. In the second poem, for example, gríðar fáks goes with tenn at rjóða, and í vîðu with Tûnsbergi, creating a chiasmic effect. To deal with this problem, Magnússon and Morris followed the usual procedure of students of Old Norse ("to be deplored", according to Gordon, and "pernicious", says Frank[56]), rearranging the words into prose order before attempting translation. So Magnússon would turn the Icelandic poetry into prose, then into English, which Morris would finally "metrify". Limited by the strict word-order requirements of modern English, Morris could offer only subject-verb inversion and occasional periodic constructions to produce a similar effect. As a final product, Morris's dróttkvætt bears only limited resemblance to the original in poetic technique; yet the translation is certainly accurate, and much of the original spirit shines through.

Morris's attention to the manuscript does not end once his translation is in the hands of the printer. A comparison of the Morris–Magnússon manuscript with the final published form re-emphasizes Morris's devotion to accuracy. First, Morris watches for superficial errors that sneakied past him in his first revision. For example, in Chapter VII Morris revises a sentence by Magnússon but omits the necessary negative; in the printed version the "not" reappears. In the same chapter, Magnússon's "grapnelled" becomes Morris's "grappelled"; Morris, though, catches the misspelling and changes it to "grappelled" for the final version. Similarly, in a chapter dealing mostly with the Danes, the Norwegians in the chapter also become Danes—the reflex of a common medieval confusion about the peoples of early Scandinavia; Morris, however, catches the mistake and returns to the Norwegians their nationality in the final version (XXX). So also, in Chapter XXXI, Ormr becomes "Olaf" in a chapter about Olaf's beginnings, but Morris later changes it. At the same time, Morris keeps an eye out for style, and several times revamps his translation to read better. In Chapter X, for instance, Magnússon translates, "The chief cause of which was their fondness", but Morris changes it to read "for the cause most of their friendship"; still dissatisfied, though, Morris finally settles on "mostly for the cause of their friendship". Two chapters later, "by that so doing" becomes "furtherance" and finally "goings on". When a geographical problem arises, Morris tries several versions: "beyond the land", "off the land", "round the land". Morris was, indeed, quite a stickler for perfection.

Beyond this, Morris continued to strive for syntactically parallel constructions. Aiming to maintain the same word order, Morris prefers "go not up" to "not go up" (gangum ekki upp). Even when perfect parallelism is not altogether possible, Morris gets as close as he can: "It was over with all other flocks", his first revision, gives way to "scattered were all other flocks" for þá var eytt flokkum allum òdrum. He pays the same close attention to retaining the reflexive: "Against him" becomes "against himself" (á sik) (XXXIII); again, four chapters later, "him" must be changed to "himself" for hann . . . sik. Carefully following the original, Morris inserts "upon" finally in "come nigh upon them" to preserve at. The conditional must also remain, so Morris changes "the odds were great" to "the odds would be great" to accommodate mundi vera (XIII). Obviously, Morris considered syntax an important element not to be lost from the Icelandic.
Cognates, of course, were a major preoccupation for Morris; he refused to give up until the translation was in print. "Said" becomes "quoth" to match *kveð* (VI), "years" yields to "winters" for *vetr* (I), and "scow" finally represents *skúta*. Morris follows this course even to the point of consonants: "clad themselves" becomes "clothe themselves" to retain the aspiration of *klæðask* (XXXII); the same holds true for "thee" rather than "you" for *ýr*, though Morris here is aiming for the polite form, as well. Once again, Morris seems to be watching closely: not satisfied with "the banner fared at heel of the earl", he changes it to "the banner of the earl fared a-heel", reflecting *á hæl* in the original (XIV). In addition, Morris inserts his old favourite, "let", in "let blow [the trumpets]", *látu blasa*. At the same time, though, Morris is able to hold his impulses in check. Magnússon's "Michael's mass" becomes "Micklemass", but then Morris relents and settles on "Michaelmass" (XVIII).

By far the most important result of this final revision is the elimination of several errors in translation and inadvertent additions or deletions. Magnússon, probably trying to retain a cognate, or perhaps confused by the cognate, translates *mjúkliga* as "meekly", but Morris changes it to "tenderly", though it slipped past him in the first revision (XXI). "Do shamefully" more accurately becomes "do dastarily" (Á *engum mannni niðumulk ek.*), and "peace-speaking" "peace-making" (sættargöð) (XXIX). In Chapter XXXV, as well, Morris adds "same" to "mother" for *sammæðri*. Þýrja, "anoint", is mistranslated by Magnússon "swearing", but Morris changes it to "smearing", perhaps obscuring the religious connotation of the word but retaining the literal sense and the cognate (XXI). (This correction occurs where the manuscript escaped, for one page, Morris's first revision, which suggests that Morris did not have their manuscript translation before him when checking the printer's proofs—or he would have made more extensive revisions when he noted the little attention this section received.). Magnússon also added certain words, probably hoping to make a particular sentence clearer. Morris, however, prefers to follow the original and finally deletes some of Magnússon's additions, such as "together" (XXVI), and "at that time" (VI). Most important, though, is Morris's addition of translation for lines left out of their manuscript. In Chapter XLII, ...báru inn í stofuna. Bad konungr menn þa til ganga ok líkit, through a minor slip by the translators, remains untranslated until the final version. Though Morris still omits the first four words, he adds, "and the king bade men step up and ken the body". This final version, as it turns out, is more important than it first seems.

The point of the foregoing study ought to be clear by now—Morris's translation is amazingly accurate, and faithful to its source. Morris must have followed the Icelandic closely, even though Magnússon offered him an English translation. He was a much more conscientious translator than many have implied. He constantly sought words close to the Icelandic, often emending sentence structures to achieve similar syntax and word order. Even his controversial use of cognates is founded on the principle that the fullest possible representation of every aspect of the Icelandic text is of primary importance. Whether all Morris's translations are this accurate lies beyond the scope of this study, but it is unlikely that the attention Morris paid to his other translations would be any less than to this, his last translation—when he was debilitated by illness and near death.
V

Unfortunately, the controversy does not end here. Morris's theory of translation, in fact his theory of language, will always spur discussion. Often his translations were attacked the way the Ossianic Fragments and Chatterton's work were in the previous century, although Morris, at least, did not pretend his works were rediscovered antiquities. Instead Morris's critics claimed he wrote in a language that never existed. But Morris did not invent language, he imitated it, as Karl Litzenberg pointed out some years ago.67

Morris's language, of course, belongs to a long tradition of archaism, but of a very specialized school going back to Sir John Cheke in the sixteenth century and to Sir Thomas Smith and the somewhat fanatical Johannes Goropius Becanus. Like them, Morris saw the importance of the Saxon elements in the language. More specifically, Morris believed the dignity of style inherent in Iceland literature "cannot be reached by the Romance element in English. If it is to be reached at all—and then only approximately—it must be by means of the Teutonic element in our speech—the nearest akin to Icelandic."68 This sentiment is indeed reminiscent of Cheke's, as stated in a letter to his friend, Thomas Hoby, in 1561: "I am of this opinion that our own tung should be written clean and pure, unmixt and unmangeled with borrowing of other tunges, wherein if we take not heed bi tiim, ever borrowing and never payeng, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt."69 Cheke practised this theory in his well known translation of St Matthew's Gospel, which includes "crossed" for the usual "crucified", and "hundreder" for "centurion".

The argument, in both cases, takes on political overtones. Goropius argued that German was the original language, and the perfect language for the exchange of ideas. Less fanatical, Sir Thomas Smith often traced English words to their Saxon origins. In the next century, pride in the Germanic origins of the English nation grew. John Hare frequently refers to the Germanic kingship of the English, and calls the English "children of Germany".60 The Norman invasion, of course, was an unfortunate occurrence the effects of which were played down.

These feelings were certainly not alien to William Morris, three hundred years later. Speaking of the Norman Conquest, Morris laments, the "Teutonic elements" in the language are the few reminders of England before that day in 1066 that rendered "Harald the Hapless the last King of the English". He maintains, "What had happened was serious enough: England had fallen into the hands of a Romanized landlord and from henceforth was a part of the great European Feudal System: its development as a pure branch of the Teutonic family was stopped forever; because the countries to whom it was now to be bound were, whatever their blood was, developed from Roman provincials, and had not even a language of their own, but were compelled to speak a dialect of Latin".61 But the language was not the only area to suffer, contends Morris; though "there is no room for regret" concerning the development of architecture, "literature also became Frenchified and here to its great misfortune as I think". Morris proceeds to state his case even further: "The great works of the English poets since Chaucer's time have had to be written in what is little more than a dialect of French and I cannot help looking on that as a mishap. If we could only have preserved our language as the Germans have
theirs, I think we with our mingled blood would have made the world richer than it is now...

Naturally, when Morris approached the task of translating the Icelandic sagas for his Saga Library, he attempted to point out to his English audience the common Germanic roots of Icelandic and English.

Morris, of course, would look scornfully upon this whole discussion. Of critics, he said, “To think of a beggar making a living by-selling his opinion about other people!... and fancy any one paying him for it!” Perhaps Magnússon’s words to the critics would be more helpful: Morris’s style, he says, “is a matter of taste; therefore, not of dispute”. Still, though, we face the problem of what saga-translations we are to recommend or, in fact, read ourselves. Laing’s translations, of course, are accurate enough, though not translated directly from the Icelandic; but they often lack spark. The same might be said of many other translations. One might argue that the sagas are, after all, straightforward and written in simple language, but the saga-writer’s audiences enjoyed a cultural connection we cannot. Morris’s translations, in their strangeness, in their vitality, point out this different age, this different spirit — and the difference in Morris’s language makes all the difference. One might still say of Morris, as Ben Jonson did of Spenser, “In affecting the ancients, he writ no language”, at the same time, though, one would have to continue Jonson’s comment and suggest that Morris, too, should be read “for his matter”.

NOTES

1 Walpole’s Castle of Otranto (1764) was inspired, supposedly, by a dream Walpole had in his “little Gothic castle”, Strawberry Hill. Lewis’s The Monk (1797) develops the most macabre elements in the Gothic Revival. Mrs. Radcliffe’s Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) actually takes place in the sixteenth century and depends on Gothic architecture, as did Otranto, for its air of darkness and the supernatural. The same might be said for the poets of the period, as shown for example by Keats’s “Eve of St Agnes” (1819), Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” (1798), and Coleridge’s “Christabel” (c. 1800) and “Kubla Khan” (1816). For Shelley, the darkness of Gothic existed in the moral depravity of some of his characters, such as the Count in The Cenci (1819), Shelley’s unsuccessful attempt at writing for the stage, which Shelley in his Preface says takes place in “a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture”. His skills of Gothic description reach their height with the horrific decay in “The Sensitive Plant” (1820). See Clark 1950; Chandler 1970; Seaton 1995; Mjöberg 1980, 207-238.

2 For example, the great library of Robert Cotton, which included the manuscripts of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Beowulf, as well as The Lindisfarne Gospels, was first placed in the British Museum in 1753, though Cotton collected many of the manuscripts in the late sixteenth century. Beowulf was first transcribed, by an Icelander, Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin, in 1787.

3 Kittredge 1902, xli-l; Bartholin 1689; Mallet 1755, translated by Percy 1770. See also Mallet 1756 and Percy 1763, which included translations and the Icelandic originals of Hervararkvöða, Krákumál, Höfdilausn Egils, Hákonarmál Eyvindar, and Visir Haralds harðróa.

4 Cottle 1797; Herbert 1804-1806; Dasent 1842; Laing 1844; Dasent 1843; Dasent 1861; Dasent 1866; Thorpe 1851-1852.

5 Morris and Magnússon 1870; Morris and Magnússon 1868-1870; Morris and Magnússon 1891-1905.

6 Green 1899; Goss 1879, 21-39 (a discussion and plot summary rather than a true translation); Cleasby and Vigfússon 1874; Vigfússon and Powell 1879; Sweet 1886; Vigfússon and Powell 1883.

7 Laing 1844, p. v.
8 W. E. Henley, according to M. Morris 1936, I, 455.
9 Vigfússon and Powell 1883, I, cxv.
12 Hollander 1959, xx.
13 Litzenberg 1936a, 419, n. 4.
14 Nordby 1901.
15 Ker 1957, 205.
16 Gordon 1957, lxvi.
17 Eddison 1930, 233, 235.
19 C. S. Lewis 1959, 38. Swannell seems to misinterpret Lewis’s remark and implies that Lewis is criticizing Morris: see Swannell 1961a, 375.
20 Litzenberg 1947, 1-27, see p. 2. Though I cannot claim to have read all the scholarship in this field, Litzenberg seems to be the only twentieth-century scholar to support wholeheartedly Morris’ work. See further Litzenberg 1933, 1936b and 1936c.
21 Examples include Swannell and Ellison (see notes 11 and 19 above), and Maxwell 1961, 383-393. Swannell, in fact, claims “his translations ... are a hindrance rather than a help, to the modern reader who tries to use them as a substitute for the originals” (Swannell 1961b, 20).
22 Henderson 1950, 4-5.
23 In his Envoy to The Earthly Paradise.
24 Macall 1899, I, 31. Macall here was paralleling — or perhaps even paraphrasing — Matthew Arnold: “And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Ages, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us near to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection...” (Preface to Essays in Criticism [London and Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1865], p. xviii). The standard modern biography is Thompson 1977.
25 Burne-Jones 1904, II, 45.
26 Macall 1899, I, 39.
27 According to Litzenberg’s reckoning in Litzenberg 1955, 93. The number varies, of course, depending on how one interprets “Northern influence”.
28 Ellison 1972, 152.
29 This closeness is geographical as well as literary: Morris travelled to Iceland twice, first in 1871, and again in 1873. See M. Morris 1911, VIII. Victorian Poetry, Vol. 13, Nos. 3 and 4 (Autumn-Winter 1975) includes a number of articles that discuss Morris’s literary activity, one of which, Harris 1975, 119-130, is particularly relevant to this study.
30 In a letter to Stefán Einarsson, 3 November 1925, quoted in Einarsson 1934, 11-32.
31 Quoted in Einarsson 1934, 32; originally printed in The Cambridge Review, 30 January 1913. Einarsson also wrote a biography of Magnússó: Einarsson 1933.
32 Brooke 1964, 281; quoted in McDowell 1923, 152, and in Swannell 1961b, 4.
33 Morris and Magnússó 1891-1905, VI, xv; also in M. Morris 1911, I, 469.
34 M. Morris 1911, VII, xv-xvii.
35 Morris was not the first Englishman with whom Magnússó had worked, though. The son of a minister in eastern Iceland, Magnússó sailed to England in 1862 to supervise the printing of an Icelandic New Testament by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Aboard the same ship was G. E. J. Powell, a wealthy young Welshman returning from a tour of Iceland, so popular among English in the mid-nineteenth century. (Einarsson 1934, 18; lists other prominent Englishmen who visited Iceland about that time and wrote about it including S. Baring-Gould, Lord Dufferin, F. Metcalfe, and C. S. Forbes.) Though their friendship continued, and the two corresponded years later, their association was short-lived; nevertheless, it produced a well received, if unprofitable, edition of Icelandic Legends: Powell and Magnússó 1864-1866; and they attempted an Icelandic-English dictionary that never progressed beyond the manuscript stage. In 1863, and again in 1868, Magnússó sent Powell
translations to polish off the Saga of Haukrar Ísfirðingr and Egils Saga but neither ever appeared. Powell, frustrated, resolved "to renounce literature for evermore" (in a letter dated 9 July 1869, quoted in Einarsson 1934, 22), and Magnússon went on to do his independent and well regarded translations of Lilja and Thómass Saga Erkibiskups (Agrimsson, 1870; Magnússon, 1875–1883). He then met Morris, and the two of them began an 18-year collaboration that was to produce a voluminous stream of Icelandic translations.

36 Morris considered his "Lovers of Gudrun" to be "the best thing I have done", in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton dated 21 December 1869 (Henderson 1950, 32).

37 Morris and Magnússon 1875; W. Morris 1869 and M. Morris 1911, X; Grettir appeared in 1869, but was republished in M. Morris 1911, VII; Vígulund appeared in M. Morris 1911, X. W. Morris confirms this chronology in a letter to H. Buxton Forman, the editor of Keats and Shelley, dated 8 December 1873 (Henderson 1950, 61).

38 See also Littenberg 1936b.

39 Henderson 1950, 324.

40 Mackail 1899, II, 247. Morris's association with Quaritch as a bookseller went back some years. Morris was an inveterate collector of old books and manuscripts; he would at times barter for months to obtain an especially desired book. Even near death, he sent his secretary, Sydney Cockerell, to Stuttgart to negotiate the purchase of a twelfth-century English bestiary (Mackail 1899, II, 339). For a description of just how enthusiastically Morris acquired medieval books, see Mackail 1899, II, 323–324.

41 Mackail 1899, II, 316–317. Magnússon translated others, but Morris was never able to revise them for publication. According to an advertisement in The Athenaeum, June 1892, The Saga Library was also to include the Eddas, the Völsunga Saga, The Orkney Saga, The Sagas of Eric the Red and Thorfinn Karlsfæna, The Story of Grettir the Strong, Gunnlaug's Saga, Frithjof's Saga, The Saga of Vígulund the Fair, Egil's Saga, Njal's Saga, The Saga of the Laxdælaers, "and several others".

42 Morris and Magnússon 1891–1905, VI, vii.

43 Morris and Magnússon 1891–1905, VI, xiii; also in The Cambridge Review (26 November 1896), and restated in M. Morris 1911, VII, xvii. Of the first volumes, I have seen manuscripts of Howard the Halt (Huntington Manuscript 6426) and Olaf Tryggvsson (Huntington Manuscript 6437); I am working on a comparative study of the two methods.

44 Einarsson 1934, 27. The entire Morris–Magnússon manuscript is listed in Catalogue 36, 1908, of W. Heffer and Sons, Cambridge, as having 678 pages. The catalogue echoes Magnússon in saying, "Any serious attempt at a sound criticism on William Morris' position towards old Icelandic literature must be based exclusively on the evidence of this unique document".

45 Anderson incorporated his study into his 1942 Ph.D. dissertation for Harvard University, Scandinavian Elements in the Works of William Morris. Professor Anderson has written to me that he intends to publish articles based on his dissertation, but declined to discuss his work.

46 Swannell 1961a.

47 Morris and Magnússon 1891–1905, VI, xiii.

48 The Story of King Magnus, Son of Erling, Huntington Manuscript 6463. Permission to quote granted by The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

49 Einarsson 1934.

50 I have used the Icelandic of Ásbjarnarson 1951, III, 372–417.

51 One is reminded of C. S. Lewis's "un-man" in Perelandra; Lewis acknowledged that Morris exerted a strong influence on his work: see Henderson 1950, 205.

52 I would refer the reader to Hellander 1968, and to Frank's indispensable, and eminently readable, guide to dróttkvott: see Frank 1978.

53 A short vowel followed by two or more consonants; and long vowels, diagraphs, or diphthongs followed by at least one consonant.

54 All consonants alliterate with themselves, as do the consonant-clusters sp, sk and st; all vowels alliterate with each other and with j.

55 Nordal and Jóhnsson 1938, 96.

56 Gordon 1957, xlii; Frank 1978, 11.


58 M. Morris 1911, VII, xviii.
59 Jones 1966, 102.
60 Jones 1966, 222.
61 Lemire 1969, 176, 178.
62 Lemire 1969, 177.
63 Mackail 1899, I, 134.
64 Morris and Magnússon 1891–1905, VI, viii.
66 I am grateful to several people for their kind advice in the preparation of this article, including Robert Farrell, Dorothy Mermin, and Vilhjálmur Bjarnar of Cornell University, and Karen Kossuth of Pomona College, who first brought this manuscript to my attention. I would also like to thank The Huntington Library for permission to use this manuscript, and for prompt response to any questions I posed about it over the past five years.
APPENDIX A

Morris’s revisions in Magnússaga, Chapter I

Snorri

Síðan
varð þess viss

hver ráðagarð
bóð
þeim er hann vissi
at trúnaðarvinnir höfðu verit
handgengnum

Grégórii
þeim
áttu tal sitt
halda
flokkinum
fastmælum
míllí
Síðan töluðu þeir
til konungs taka
leitaði
ef þat væri ráð hofdingja
eða annarra lenda máanna
döttursnor
Jón Hallkelsson
flókkinn
Skjalvararson
at þat
ræð
að konungs
af konungaætt
að ráða fyrir flókkinn
vits
mundu betra verða til líðs

Árna konungsmág
ef hann vildi láta taka til konungs
nókkurn sona sinna
bezt ættborinn
harðráðr
landráðamæðr göðr

Magnússon

From the time that
knew what

were brewing
word
who he knew
had been close friends
household
farther
Gregories
with all these
the counsel was taken
keep
band
vows
between
Then they had a parley as to
were to make king
searched
if it was the plan of captains
and other mighty men
who was a daughter’s son
Jon son of Hallkell
band
son of Skialdvor
that it
counsel
for king
of kingly race
for captain over the band
wisdom
wood speed the gather of
a host
Arni King’s brother in law
if he wished any of his sons
to be declared king
Best born as to race
hard-counsellor
(i.e., bold and firm)
a good hand at public affairs

Morris

Sithence
was ware of this
Add: what was the rede
making of
Delete
bidding
of whom he wolted that
they had been trusty friends
liegemen
Delete
of Gregory
Delete
they took the rede together
hold
flock
oaths
betwixt
Sithence they talked hereof
should take to king
sought
if it were the rede of lords
and other rich men
the daughter’s son
John Hallkellson
flock
Skialdvorson
that that
rede
to king
of kingly kin
for ruling the flock
wits
would be better for
the hosting
Arni King’s Stepfather
if he would let take to
king any of his sons
best born of kin
hard-redy
Delete
land-redy man
Final: a man good at ruling
in the land
Snorri

eigi skorta til þessa ráðs framkvæmd
Tóku margir vel undir þetta ráð
Svá heyrisk mér til sem
er þessa máls er leitað við
heldr þærisk undan
jafnvist
þótt
at tígnin fæsk þeim
er fyrr færisk flokknum
sem áðr hefur nú mjók mjörgum-farit
þeim er slík stórræði hafa upp tekít

Magnisson

not be short of means to
further this counsel
For this many gave good cheer
From what I hear it seems that
sounded on this matter
want rather to go back
quite as certain
if in any case
the honour comes to him
who taketh the lead of the band
as it has gone with many now
who have taken such great
affairs upon themselves
lost
yea their own life to boot
And he who undertakes this,
will have to set up stout stays
against being thwarted by and
coming in for enmity from
those who now are bonded in
this fellowship in full good
faith

Morris

lack for furtherance
of this rede
Many took well to this rede
So hear I herein as if
have been sought to on
this matter
had rather excuse them
even as sure
though
the honour shall be fast to
him
who ruleth the flock
as it hath now fared
with mickle many
who have taken up
such big matters
tyned
and life withal
And he will need this, who
goes into this trouble,
to set strong stays that
he sit not the withstanding
and enmity of them who now
are bound to this rede.

Allir játu því at gera þetta samband
með fullum trúnaði
Þat er frá mér at segja
næst . . . bána mínun
mér þykki
háskasamlingsta

flokksins
ráð ok lýsi
Allir játu því
til konungs
síðan
til handa
handgengnir . . . Inga konungi
haði hvern þeira sílkar nafnbætr

þótt
at tígnin fæsk þeim
er fyrr færisk flokknum
sem áðr hefur nú mjók mjörgum-farit
þeim er slík stórræði hafa upp tekít

Yea all said it to make that
fellowship with full troth
that is to say of me
next to my bane
methinketh
Most perilous
yet I will rather risk
it to let you to look
to it

band
the will and wish
They all said yea thereto
for king
thereupon
into his service
in King Ingil’s service
each one had the same title
formerly

flock
the rede and desire
They all yeasaid it
to king
sithence
under his hand
King Ingil’s liegemen
they had each one the same
nameboot
erst
APPENDIX B: TRANSLATIONS

Icelandic

Chapter III

Onundr kvazk eigi mundu
við orrostu kosta,
fyrir en sunnan siglidi
Sigurðr jarl með húskarla.
Mjók fara Magnúss rekkar
matir upp of stræti,
en Hökonar haukar
hart skunduðu undan.

Onund said he would not strive
in battle until earl Sigurd
sailed from the south with his
house-carles. Very worthy warriors
of Magnus fare up into the streets;
= leading warriors
but the hawks of Hakon hied them
hard away.

Chapter III

Greitt frá, gumna dróttinn,
gríðar fáks, í víðu,
trauðr esa tenn at rjóða,
Túnsbergi þér snúna.
Hræðdusk bjartra brodda
býjarment við rennu.
Uggðu eld ok sveigðan
alm dynvðir malma.

Lord (thou) art not loath to reddan
the teeth of troll-queen’s steed;
I heard that the men in broad Tunsberg
were easily turned away from thee. The
townsmen feared in face of rush of
bright points; stems of metals’ din
bow
took fright at fire and swayed elm

Chapter XX

Urð dró ausstan fjardar
Erlingr at vikingum,
mein fekk margr af Kænu
maðr, es hann fór þáðra.
Færðr vas fleinn meðal herða
Fírêks. Ófar nekkvi
skolldi, óhárfr öldum,
iligjarn við trú Bjarni.

Erling drew Urd (fate, doom) at the
vikings east-side of the firth; many
man got hurt from Cock-boat, as he
fared thither. A fluke was brought
between the shoulders of Frírecks.
Evil yearning Biarni, unprofitable to
men, dangled somewhat higher against
the tree.
Of skaldic verse

Quoth Onund never would he strive in the brunt of battle Till from the South Earl Sigurd Should sail with all his house carles Much folk of worthy warriors Of Magnus up the street fare But hard away from thenceward The Hawks of Hakon hied them.

Quoth Onund never would he Strive in the brunt of battle Till from the south Earl Sigurd Should sail with all his house-carles. Much folk of worthy warriors Of Magnus up the street fare, But hard away from thenceward The Hawks of Hakon hied them.

Thou loath’st not, Lord Lord thou art loath in nowise to redder The teeth of the steed of troll-wife I heard that in wide Tunsberg Lightly were men turned from thee The townsmen feared to meet there The rushing of the bright points Akrad were the stems of steel-din Of the flame and the swayéd elm-bow.

Thou loath'st not, lord, to redder The teeth of the steed of troll-wife; I heard that in wide Tunsberg Lightly good luck went with thee. The townsmen feared to meet there. The rushing of the bright points; Akrad were the stems of steel-din Of flame and swayéd elm-bow.

Erling drew on the Vikings Fate on the Eastward forths there Was many a man, of Cock-boat Gat hurt as he fared thither. Fared was a fluke twixt shoulders of Frírek; but the ill-willed Biarni, to men unhelpful 'Gainst tree hung somewhat higher.

Erling drew on the Vikings Fate on the Wick-firth's eastside; Was many a man of Cock-boat Gat hurt, as there he fared on. Fared was a fluke twixt shoulders Of Frírek; but the ill-willed Biarni, to men unhelpful, 'Gainst tree hung somewhat higher.
[Hann lét bera kaðla tvá á byrðinginn ok tengja við] skútur tvær, lét ráð svá, eptir sem byrðinginn rak fyrir. En er eldrinn var mjók kominn inn at býnum, þá heldu þeir koðlum, er á skútunum váru, svá at eigi mátti býrinn brenna. Reyk lagði, svá þykkt í býinn, at ekki sá af bryggjunum, þar sem fylking konungs stóð. Siðan lagði Erlingr òllu líðinu útan eptir á veðrit eldinum ok skutu upp á þá. En er þýjarmenn sá, at eldrinn nálgaðisk hús þeirra, ok margir urðu sárir af skotum, þá gerðu þeir ráð sitt ok sendu Hróald prest langtölju út á fund Erlings at taka sér grið ok býnum af Erlingi ok rufu fylking konungs, þá er Hróaldr sagði þeim, at griðin váru tekin, En er þýjarmannalið var brot farit, þá þynnisk ið á bryggjunum. Eggjúðu þá sumir Hákonar menn, at við skyldi taka, en Ónundr Símunarson sagði svá, er þá hasði mest ráð fyrir líðinu: „Eigi mun ek berjask til ríkis Sigrurði jarli, en hann sé hvergi nær.” Siðan flyði Ónundr ok þá allt líð með konungi ok fóru upp á land, ok fell þar mjók mart manna af Hákonar líði. Svá var þá kvéðit:

Ónundr kvaðk eigi mundu
við orrostu kostu,
fyr en sunnan sigldi
Sigurðr jarl með húskarla.
Mjók fara Magnúss rekkar
mætur upp of strepti,
en Hókonar haukar
hart skunduðu undan.

Þorbjörn Skakaskáld segir svá:

Greitt frák, gumna dróttinn,
griðar fáks, í viðu,
trauðr esa tenn at rjóða,
Túnsbergi þér snúna.
Hræddusk bjarta brodda
þýjarmenn við rennu.
Uggðu eld ok sveigðan
alm dynviðir malma.
William Morris and Saga-Translation

Huntington Manuscript 6463, 3v-4r

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