

WILLIAM MORRIS AND SCANDINAVIAN  
LITERATURE: A BIBLIOGRAPH-  
ICAL ESSAY

I

William Morris's use of Scandinavian materials in *The Lovers of Gudrun* and *Sigurd the Volsung* is widely known. But what is not so often recognized is that in the canon of Morris's works there are over fifty poems and prose pieces which are in some way connected with the Scandinavian.<sup>1</sup> These documents range in nature from extremely short poems to full-length saga translations. This essay presents a list, in classified order, of the works of William Morris which are related to the Scandinavian North.

These works are so various that a line of demarcation between that which is *Scandinavian*<sup>2</sup> in general and that which is specifically *Old Icelandic* cannot always be exactly drawn. Morris's first exercises in the Scandinavian dealt with original plots or plots derived from several sources arranged against a background which he tried vaguely to "Scandinavianize." His later and more mature works dealt with Old Icelandic plots in a true Norse atmosphere. In Section II below, the Scandinavian works of Morris which are not exclusively Icelandic are classified according to their relation to the literature of the Northern peoples. In Section III are listed all works which are Old Icelandic in source or theme, or which are translations of Old Icelandic documents; or which are original English compositions dealing in some way with the Old Norse. Convenient subdivisions have been made in both sections. It will be observed that the materials in Section III are by far the more important; but those in Section II have too frequently been ignored in discussions of Morris's works.

<sup>1</sup> This number does not include the "Teutonic" Prose Romances.

<sup>2</sup> Morris used the term "Northern" as a synonym for *Scandinavian*.

## II

A. *Works Containing 'Northern' Material.*1. *Prose.*

The prose stories in this group, all of them published in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, in 1856, are three in number. It has already been stated by Conrad Hjalmar Nordby that where the tendency of his contemporaries, Tennyson and Rossetti, was to "mediaevalize" their poems, Morris invariably "Scandinavianized."<sup>3</sup> This characteristic of his composition first shows itself in *Gertha's Lovers*, *Svend and his Brethren*, and *The Hollow Land*.<sup>4</sup> But in these pieces Morris's "Scandinavianizing" is neither extensive nor important. It consists merely of feeble attempts to impart to the stories a Northern atmosphere by the use of Scandinavian proper names such as Gertha, Olaf, Sigurd—in *Gertha*; Svend, Valdemar, Eric, Harald—in *Svend*; Swanhilda and Arnald—in *The Hollow Land*. The settings of the stories are intentionally vague, and as far as the reader is concerned, may lie equally well to the North or to the South. The characters themselves do not impress us particularly as Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, or Icelanders. The knights in these tales are brave in deed; they fight with abandon and skill, and rescue heroines; but they betray none of the brutal strength or fierceness of the Norsemen. They do not slash stoutly with their swords, nor crush with their axes; they thrust and parry with the grace of the heroes of French and English romance.

Obviously the Scandinavian elements in Morris's early prose stories are few. But the author's tendency to "Scandinavianize," which may well have been a pose or an affectation in these unimpressive romances written at Oxford, in the course of time became the outstanding trait of his greatest work.

2. *Verse.*

In contrast to the vague Scandinavian adumbrations of

<sup>3</sup> *The Influence of Old Norse Literature upon English Literature*, Columbia University Germanic Studies, Vol. I, No. 3 (New York, 1901), p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> *The Collected Works of William Morris*, with Introductions by his daughter, May Morris (New York, 1910-1915): *Gertha*, I, 176-225; *Svend*, I, 226-244; *The Hollow Land*, I, 254-290.

Morris's early prose, we find, on the other hand, in the early poems—most of which were written at a period slightly later than that of the prose romances—a more specific and exact use of the Scandinavian element. The earliest of these poems, *The Wind*, written before 1858, concerns a Norse knight who speaks of "Olaf, King and Saint."<sup>5</sup> But the chief poems of this group are the two versions of *The Wanderers*, the first written between 1865 and 1868, the second published in Part I of *The Earthly Paradise*, in 1868.<sup>6</sup> *The Wanderers* is Morris's first attempt to compose a poem which concerns a group of more or less real Scandinavians. The story is quite well known to *Earthly Paradise* readers, for it forms the frame-work of that group of poems. It relates how "Certain Gentlemen and Mariners of Norway" set out to find the "Earthly Paradise," and how they came upon an island where dwelt the mediaeval descendants of an ancient Greek race. Morris tried to make his Norwegians real Norsemen, and by references to Norse mythology, history, and custom, he succeeded for the first time in giving us what may be called a poem with a Scandinavian background.

The two versions of *The Wanderers* differ mainly in form; the unpublished version is written in tetrameter stanzas, rhyming *abab*, the second, in pentameter couplets. Certain unimportant details are also quite different, but the Norse elements are virtually the same in both versions.

The poem, *Anthony*,<sup>7</sup> written 1865-1870, is to Morris's poetry what *Gertha's Lovers* was to his prose. It is made up of a mixture of Scandinavian and non-Scandinavian elements, and concerns a group of English mariners "on board ship off the coast of Norway." The setting is not emphasized enough to add materially to the Scandinavian locale of the poem, nor does the poem itself contribute much for us to consider in examining Morris's use of Northern materials.

<sup>5</sup> In *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*, in *Collected Works*, I, 107-110.

<sup>6</sup> The earlier, or unpublished *Wanderers* was first published by May Morris, *Collected Works*, XXIV, 87-170. The later version is found in *Collected Works*, III, 3-80.

<sup>7</sup> *Collected Works*, XXIV, 329-342.

*Love's Reward*<sup>8</sup> and *Love is Enough*,<sup>9</sup> both written in the early 1870's, refer only casually to the North. The former, in the lines "Knight of a Southern Land," and "I woke by the Northern Sea," contrasts the North with the South. In the latter, "Love," speaking of the tragic lovers of times past, calls to mind Sigurd and Brynhild, but assures his listeners that his song will not emulate the sad wail of "The Northern Fiddle-bow." One of the characters of *Love is Enough* is "A Northern Lord," but his nationality, as such, contributes nothing to the actual narrative nor to the spirit of the poem.

*The Mother under the Mould*, *The Raven and the King's Daughter*, and *The King of Denmark's Sons*<sup>10</sup> are ballads, probably written in imitation of the true Icelandic and Danish ballads which Morris translated about the same time—in the early 1870's.

The last poem to mention here is the fragmentary *In Arthur's House*,<sup>11</sup> composed contemporaneously with the *Earthly Paradise* poems, circa 1865 to 1870, and originally intended as a part of that work. Here Morris brings "Tyrfing," a famous Scandinavian sword, into the Arthurian story. In many ways the most interesting of all Morris's short poems touching upon Scandinavian matter, *In Arthur's House* is distinctly English in tone despite its 'Northern' elements.

#### B. Works Translated from Scandinavian Languages other than Old Icelandic.

In the early 1870's, Morris translated four ballads from the Danish, taking his originals from a collection made by Svend Grundtvig.<sup>12</sup> The titles of these are as follows: *Hafbur and Signy* (the manuscript of which is dated 1870, in Morris's hand), *Knight Aagen and the Maid Else*, *Agnes and the Hill Man*, and *Hildebrand and Hellelil*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 164-168.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, 3-89.

<sup>10</sup> *The Mother*, *Ibid.*, XXIV, 352-355; *The Raven*, *Ibid.*, IX, 127-131; *The King*, *Ibid.*, IX, 140-145.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV, 316-328.

<sup>12</sup> *Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser*, Kjöbenhavn, 1856, *et seq.*

<sup>13</sup> All published in *Collected Works*, IX: *Hafbur*, pp. 213-224; *Aagen*, pp.

C. *Works Adapted from Northern Sources.*

1. *Prose.*

Among Morris's early prose romances, there is one, *Lindenberg Pool*,<sup>14</sup> which is closer to the Scandinavian than any of the others, by virtue of its source. In the first volume of Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*,<sup>15</sup> Part III, "Danish Traditions," Morris found an English version of a Danish story which Thorpe called "The Sunken Mansion." The plot of this story is simple, and Thorpe devoted only twenty-nine lines of prose to its re-telling. The essential elements are a castle near an unfathomable lake; a drunken man who comes to the castle and is gulled by the servants who dress a swine up as a man; a priest; and the disappearance of the castle into the lake. Morris expanded Thorpe's twenty-nine lines into ten pages of prose. The elaboration of the plot does not improve the Scandinavian atmosphere, however; and even in Thorpe's abbreviated version this atmosphere counts for little.

2. *Verse.*

One of the poems in *The Earthly Paradise* may also be included in this Section—*East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. Since a part of its plot is taken from the *Völundar Saga* which Thorpe paraphrased in the first volume of *Northern Mythology*,<sup>16</sup> it has usually been referred to as one of the three tales in *The Earthly Paradise* which are based on Old Icelandic models.<sup>17</sup> Only about two pages of Thorpe's epitomê, however, are connected with incidents which Morris used; the other parts of Morris's poem are drawn from a tale called *The Beautiful Palace East of the Sun and North of the Earth*, in Thorpe's *Yuletide Stories*,<sup>18</sup> and from *East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon*, a story

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210-212; *Agnes*, pp. 208-209; *Hildebrand*, pp. 203-205.

<sup>14</sup> *Collected Works*, I, 245-253.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Thorpe, *Northern Mythology*, 3 vols., London, 1851.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 84-91.

<sup>17</sup> The other two are *The Fostering of Aslaug* and *The Lovers of Gudrun*.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin Thorpe, *Yuletide Stories* (revised edition, London, 1880), pp. 158-168.

in George Webbe Dasent's *Popular Tales from the Norse*.<sup>19</sup> The title of the latter is obviously closer to the name of Morris's poem, but their themes are far from identical. There are versions of the "East and West" tale in practically all literatures, moreover; and the tremendous list of analogues in the Scandinavian alone, as set forth by Tollef B. Thompson,<sup>20</sup> makes it impossible to assume—as some critics have done—that this story is exclusively of Old Icelandic inspiration. Morris's treatment of the story does not bring it any closer to the North. *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* contains a "dream within a dream," and in one portion "a dream within a dream within a dream"!—and the character, Gregory, is at once chief narrator, and listener. There is sufficient reason why we should commit considerable inaccuracy if we were to include this poem among Morris's genuine Old Norse poems.

### III

#### A. *Translations from the Old Icelandic.*

The translations from Old Icelandic *prose* which Morris made with Eiríkr Magnússon are as follows:<sup>21</sup>

*The Story of Gunnlaug the Wormtongue*, translated from *Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu*, a minor saga dealing with events of the west of Iceland and Norway.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> George Webbe Dasent, *Popular Tales from the Norse* (Second edition, enlarged, Edinburgh, 1859), pp. 25–40.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed source-study of this poem (with the conclusions of which the present author does not entirely agree), see Tollef B. Thompson, *Skandinavischer Einfluss auf William Morris in den ersten Stadien (The Earthly Paradise)* (Berlin, 1910), pp. 17–51.

<sup>21</sup> All of the translations were made in collaboration. For the relations of Morris and Magnússon see J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (London, 1899), *passim*; May Morris's Introductions, in *Collected Works*, *passim*; *The Saga Library* (London, 1891–1905), Prefaces and Introductions to Volumes I and VI; Stefán Einarsson, *Saga Eiríks Magnússonar*, Reykjavík, 1933, the authoritative and excellent biography of Morris's collaborator; and Stefán Einarsson, "Eiríkr Magnússon and his Saga Translations," *Scandinavian Studies and Notes*, XII, 2 (May, 1934), pp. 17–32.

<sup>22</sup> In *Collected Works*, X, 7–47. *Gunnlaug* was originally published in *The Fortnightly Review*, January, 1869, and was later included in *Three Northern Love Stories*. London. 1875.

*The Story of Grettir the Strong*, translated from *Grettis Saga en Sterke (Grettis Saga Ásmundarson)*, is, of course, one of the five major sagas of Iceland.<sup>23</sup>

*The Story of the Volsungs and the Fall of the Niblungs*, from the *Völsunga Saga*, is chief among the *fornaldar sögur*.<sup>24</sup>

*The Story of Frithiof the Bold*, from *Frithjofs Saga*, is more famous in the expanded version of Esais Tegnér.<sup>25</sup>

*The Story of Viglund the Fair*, from the *Víglundar Saga* is, according to Vigfússon, a spurious saga.<sup>26</sup>

*The Tale of Roy the Fool*, from *Hróar þáttur heimska*, a very short tale, is taken from the *Flateyjarbók*.<sup>27</sup>

*The tale of Thorsteinn the Staff-Smitten*, from *Þorstein stangarhögg*, is also a short tale, belonging to the *þættir*.<sup>28</sup>

*The Tale of Hogni and Hedinn*, from *Sörla þáttur*, is a short tale, also taken from the *Flateyjarbók*.<sup>29</sup>

*Hogni and Hedinn*<sup>30</sup> is from Snorri's *Edda, Skáldskaparmál*, XLIX.

*The Story of Howard the Halt*, from *Hávarðar Saga*, was the first of the *Saga Library* translations, and may have been begun during the early association of Morris and Magnússon, circa 1873.<sup>31</sup>

*The Story of the Banded Men*, from the *Bandamanna Saga*.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Collected Works*, VII, 1–227. First published, 1869.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, 291–396. First published, 1870.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 48–80; also one of the *Three Northern Love Stories*. For a recent discussion of the Tegnér matter in English, see Oscar Nordell, "Concerning English Translations from the Swedish Poem *Frithiof's Saga*: a Critique," *Scandinavian Studies and Notes*, XIII, 4 (Nov., 1934), pp. 53–66.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 81–126. See Gudbrand Vigfússon and F. York Powell, *Sturlunga Saga* (Oxford, 1878), I, *Prolegomena*, p. lxiii.

<sup>27</sup> *Collected Works*, X, 140–150; appended to *Three Northern Love Stories*. See Gudbrand Vigfússon and C. K. Unger, *Flateyjarbók* (Christiania, 1860), II, 73–80.

<sup>28</sup> *Collected Works*, X, 151–158; appended to *Three Northern Love Stories*.

<sup>29</sup> *Collected Works*, X, 127–139; appended to *Three Northern Love Stories*. See *Flateyjarbók*, I, 273–282.

<sup>30</sup> *Collected Works*, X, 159–160. This version of *Hogni and Hedinn*, or the "short" *Hogni*, was added by Morris and Magnússon as a note to the longer story. It was also appended to *Three Northern Love Stories*.

<sup>31</sup> *Saga Library*, 1–69.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 73–121.

*The Story of Hen Thorir*, from *Hænsa-þóris Saga*.<sup>33</sup>  
*The Story of The Ere-dwellers*, from the *Eyrbyggja Saga*.<sup>34</sup>  
*The Story of the Heath-Slayings*, from *Heiðarvíga Saga*.<sup>35</sup>  
*The Heimskringla*.<sup>36</sup>

It is rather difficult to determine which texts Morris and Magnússon used in translating these sagas. Morris's library<sup>37</sup> contained no separate texts of the *Grettis Saga* or the *Víglundar Saga*. But Morris did own editions of the others, or collections in which they were to be found. The *Völsunga Saga* was published in Volume I, and the *Friðjófs Saga* in Volume II, of Rafn's *Fornaldar Sögur*,<sup>38</sup> which Morris possessed. He also had copies of Jón Sigurðsson's *Gunnlaugs Saga*,<sup>39</sup> Vígfússon and Unger's *Flateyjarbók*, containing the *Sörla þáttur* (*Hogni and Hedinn*), and *Hróar þáttur heimiska*; and he likewise owned Gunnlaug Þórdarson's edition of the *Vapnfirðinga Saga*,<sup>40</sup> including the *Thorsteinn* story. The lesser *Hogni* tale (along with *Grettla* and *Víglunda*) must have been taken from texts lent to Morris by Magnússon, for there were no copies of the *Prose Edda* (from which *Hogni* was translated), in Morris's library, except those of Th. Jónsson and Ernst Wilken, both published after Morris's "Short" *Hogni* was completed.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 125-163.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 3-186. It is interesting to note that of the five great sagas, *Njála*, *Egla*, *Grettla*, the *Laxdæla* and the *Eyrbyggja*, Morris made English versions of all or parts of each except the *Njála*. He paraphrased the *Laxdæla* in *The Lovers of Gudrun*; he translated *Grettla* and the *Eyrbyggja*; and he started to translate *Egla* in the early 1870's, completing (according to information kindly sent to the present writer by Miss May Morris) only a few pages.

<sup>35</sup> *Saga Library*, II, 191-259.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, vols. III, IV, V [and Index: VI]. These volumes are also numbered *Heimskringla* I, II, III, IV. Of no small importance, in connection with Morris's relations with the Old Norse, are the introductions, prefaces, notes, etc. The comprehensive index to the *Heimskringla* was made by Magnússon alone.

<sup>37</sup> The statements regarding Morris's library are made on the basis of the book titles which appeared in Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge's sale catalogue, announcing the auction of Morris's books, Dec. 5, 1898.

<sup>38</sup> *Fornaldar Sögur Norðrland*, edited by C. C. Rafn, Kjöbenhavn, 1829-30.

<sup>39</sup> *Sagan af Gunnlaugi Ormstungu ok Skalld Rafni*, edited by Jón Sigurðsson, Hafnæ, 1775 [with Latin text, etc.].

<sup>40</sup> *Vapnfirðinga Saga, þáttur af Þórsteini Stangarhögg*, edited by Gunnlaug Þórdarson, Kjöbenhavn, 1848 [with Danish version, etc.].



The Old Icelandic *poetry* which Morris and Magnússon translated is mainly from the lays of the Heroes in the *Elder Edda*. In addition to the heroic lays, however, they also made versions of two pieces from the lays of the Gods, and translated two Icelandic popular ballads. The first Eddic translations are fragments of lays which they incorporated into the *Völsunga Saga*, adding them to the verses already present, or interpolating them between two prose passages which they thought were incomplete. The four chief instances of this practice are as follows:

1. Stanzas 19 to 25 of *Reginismál* are translated on pages 325–326 of the *Saga (The Story of the Volsungs)*.<sup>41</sup>
2. Stanzas 40 to 44 of *Fafnismál* are translated on pages 333–334.
3. Stanzas 1 to 4 of *Sigrdrifumál* are translated on page 335.
4. Virtually all of *Guðrúnarkviða I* is translated on pages 366–373.

The two lays from the cycle of the Gods are:

*Baldur's Dream*, from *Baldurs Draumar*,<sup>42</sup> and *The Lay of Thrym*, from *Þrymskviða*.<sup>43</sup>

The Eddic songs which Morris and Magnússon translated from the heroic cycle are ten in number:

1. *The Second Lay of Helgi-Hunding's-bane* [*Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*].
2. *The Lay of Sigrdrifa* [*Sigrdrifumál*].
3. *The Short Lay of Sigurd* [*Sigurðarkviða hin skamma*].
4. *The Hell-ride of Brynhild* [*Helreið Brynhildar*].
5. *The Lay of Brynhild* [*Brót af Sigurðarkviðu*].
6. *The Ancient Lay of Gudrun* [*Guðrúnarkviða hinn forna*].
7. *The Song of Atli* [*Atlakviða*].
8. *The Whetting of Gudrun* [*Guðrúnarhvöt*].
9. *The Lay of Hamdir* [*Hamðismál*].
10. *The Lament of Oddrun* [*Oddrunargráttir*].<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Collected Works*, VII.

<sup>42</sup> First published by May Morris, *Ibid.*, VII, Introduction, pp. xxi–xxiv.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. xxiv–xxxii.

<sup>44</sup> The lays from the Heroic Cycle are in *Collected Works*, VII, 397–480. The present writer observes that he and Professor Stefán Einarsson do not

In Morris's library there were three texts of the *Elder Edda* in Old Norse: Svend Grundtvig's, Sophus Bugge's and a third in Icelandic and Latin, known as the *Edda Rhythmica*.<sup>46</sup> These texts vary somewhat in stanza and line arrangement, in emendation, etc. Collation of all three with the lays which Morris and Magnússon translated indicates that for the most part the Grundtvig and Bugge texts were followed in the translations produced by these collaborators. From the evidence yielded by collation, the following seems true: for *Baldur*, *Hell-ride*, and *Oddrun*, either Grundtvig or Bugge was used; for *Gudrun*, *Whetting*, and *Alli*, either Bugge or *Edda Rhythmica*; for *Thrym*, *Helgi*, and *Short Sigurd*, Grundtvig only; for *Sigrdrifa*, *Brynhilda*, and *Hamdir*, Bugge only. The possible use of other available texts must also be considered, although it may be permissible to assume that the presence of three *Edda* texts in Morris's library indicates that they were purchased for purposes of translation.<sup>46</sup>

The two Icelandic ballads, *The Lay of Christine* and *The Son's Sorrow*,<sup>47</sup> were translated from Grundtvig's *Íslensk Fornkvæði*.<sup>48</sup>

#### B. Adaptations from the Old Icelandic.

All the works which Morris re-created directly from Icelandic sources are in poetic form, and include the two greatest

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exactly agree on the details of the Eddic poems translated for the *Völsunga Saga*. We are at variance on a very minor matter, however. See Stefán Einarsson *op. cit.* [*Magnússon's Translations*], p. 25.

<sup>46</sup> *Sæmundar Edda Hins Fróða—Den Ældre Edda*, kritisk udgave ved Svend Grundtvig, København, 1868; *Sæmundar Edda Hins Fróða*, udgiven af Sophus Bugge (*Norræn Fornkvæði*), Christiania, 1867; *Edda Sæmundar Hins Fróða*, *Edda Rhythmica se Antiquior*, vulgo *Sæmundina Dicta*. pars. I, Hafniæ, 1787; pars II, 1818; pars III, 1828.

<sup>46</sup> There were seven other editions of the *Edda* before 1870. These were: F. H. Von der Hagen's, 1812; Grimm Brothers', 1815; E. C. Rask's, 1818; F. G. Bergmann's, 1838; P. A. Munch's, 1847; Hermann Lünig's, 1859; Theodor Möbius's, 1860. For full bibliographical details, see Haldor Hermánsson, "Bibliography of the Eddas," in *Islandica*, XIII (1920), 1-5.

<sup>47</sup> *Collected Works*, IX, pp. 201-202 and pp. 206-207 respectively.

<sup>48</sup> *Íslensk Fornkvæði*, edited by Svend Grundtvig and Jón Sigurðsson, *Nordiske Oldskrifter*, Vol. XIX (Kjøbenhavn, 1854), pp. 144-146, and pp. 154-156 respectively.

poems of his career: *The Lovers of Gudrun*, in *The Earthly Paradise*, and *Sigurd the Volsung*, the last-named being the tremendous narrative poem with which he concluded his impressive group of poems based on Old Norse documents. Two shorter poems in this group: *The Fostering of Aslaug*,<sup>49</sup> from *The Earthly Paradise*, and *The Wooing of Swanhild*,<sup>50</sup> an unfinished poem, deal with incidents from the *Völsunga Saga* and related material; and Morris acquired the stories for these two poems from the summary in English of the Volsung legends published by Thorpe in *Northern Mythology*, Volume I. *Sigurd the Volsung*,<sup>51</sup> 1876, is by no means fragmentary, however, and makes use of everything Morris knew about the Volsungs and Niblungs. It was written after he had translated the *Völsunga Saga*, the Eddic lays, and had composed the two shorter poems previously mentioned. *The Lovers of Gudrun*<sup>52</sup> is a direct adaptation, almost a verse translation, of the most important parts of the *Laxdæla Saga*. The last poem in this group, *The Wooing of Hallbiorn the Strong* is based upon the history of Hallbiorn and Hallgerd as related by Ari Þórgilsson.<sup>53</sup>

C. *Original Poems Concerning Old Icelandic Literature or the Icelandic Scene.*

Morris wrote six poems which are neither translations nor

<sup>49</sup> In *The Earthly Paradise*, Part IV, *Collected Works*, VI, 21-64. The poem was written circa 1868.

<sup>50</sup> From the unfinished and unused *Earthly Paradise Poems*, first published by Miss Morris in *Collected Works*, XXIV, 281-315. *Swanhild* was probably written between 1865 and 1868.

<sup>51</sup> *Sigurd* occupies all of *Collected Works*, XII. There are two studies of Morris's *Sigurd* which should be mentioned here: Heinrich Bartels, *William Morris; The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs, Eine Studie Über Das Verhältnis Des Epos Zu Den Quellen*, Münster, MDCCCXVI; and George Tremaine McDowell, "The Treatment of the Volsunga Saga by William Morris," *Scandinavian Studies and Notes*, VII, 6 (Feb., 1923), pp. 151-168. See also Nordby, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>52</sup> *Collected Works*, V, 251-395. See also Nordby, *op. cit.*, *passim*; and Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-52. *Gudrun* was published in 1870.

<sup>53</sup> In *Collected Works*, IX, 95-102. The story is from Ari's *Landnámabók*. For texts of the English and Icelandic versions, see Gudbrand Vigfússon and F. York Powell, *Origines Islandicæ* (Oxford, 1905), I, 112-114.

adaptations, but which are nevertheless within the scope of this discussion because they bear upon various phases of the Icelandic. Four of these were written in England: the two sonnets inspired by the *Grettis-Saga*, the "Prologue in Verse" to the *Völsunga Saga*, and *The Muse of the North*; the remaining two were written in Iceland: *Iceland First Seen*, and *Gunnar's Howe*.<sup>54</sup>

## IV

That Morris wrote all the pieces mentioned in this essay between 1856 and 1876<sup>55</sup>—the great majority of them between 1869 and 1876—is a fact well worthy of our attention. Before 1868 he knew comparatively little about the literature of the North; in 1871—as a result of his amiable and fruitful association with Magnúson—he was speaking Icelandic to the natives of Reykjavík. The devotion with which he studied the literature of the Icelanders, his relations with his teacher, and other similar matters, have already been thoroughly discussed by J. W. Mackail, Miss May Morris, Stefán Einarsson, and others.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Sonnet I, in *Collected Works*, VII, Introduction, p. xxxvi; Sonnet II, *Ibid.*, p. xix; "Prologue," VII, 289-290; *The Muse of the North*, IX, 116; *Iceland First Seen*, IX, 125-126; *Gunnar's Howe*, IX, 179. Morris's later Prose Romances have not been included here because only one of them, *The House of the Wolfings*, has anything like a real relationship with the Scandinavian.

<sup>55</sup> Except, of course, the *Saga Library* translations.

<sup>56</sup> It might be well here to give a selected bibliography of books and articles which discuss Morris's relation to the Old Norse literature. See Mackail, *op. cit.*, [cf. Note 21, above]; May Morris, *op. cit.* [Note 4]; Magnússon, *op. cit.* [Note 21]; Einarsson, *op. cit.* [Note 21]; Sotheby's Catalogue [Note 37]; Nordby, *op. cit.* [Note 3]; Thompson, *op. cit.* [Note 20]; Bartels, *op. cit.* [Note 51]; McDowell, *op. cit.* [Note 51]. In addition to the studies already cited there are a few others which should be named: C. H. Herford, "Norse Myth in English Poetry," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. V, Nos. 1 and 2, Manchester, Aug., 1918-Mar., 1919 [also in Reprint, London, 1919]; Arthur Biber, *Studien zu William Morris's Prose-Romances*, Greifswald, 1907; E. R. Eddison, *Egil's Saga Done into English out of the Icelandic, with an Introduction and an Essay on Some Principles of Translations*, Cambridge [Eng.], 1930; E. V. Gordon, *Introduction to Old Norse* [with Preface, Notes, etc.], Oxford, 1927; Henry G. Hewlett, "Sigurd and the Nibelungenlied," *Fraser's Magazine*, CVI (July, 1877), 96-112; Karl Litzenberg, "The Social Philosophy of William Morris and the Doom of the Gods," *Michigan Studies in English and Comparative Literature*, X. (Ann Arbor, 1933), pp. 183-203.

Let it suffice for us to point out in conclusion that the Scandinavian writings of William Morris fall into three chronological groups: those which are vaguely and feebly "Northern," such as *Gertha's Lovers* [1856]; those which are based on English versions of Scandinavian stories such as Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, an example of which is *The Wooing of Swanhild* [circa 1865-1868]; and those which are taken directly from their Old Norse originals, such as *The Lovers of Gudrun* [1870], and *Sigurd the Volsung* [1876].<sup>57</sup> *Sigurd the Volsung* not only crowned Morris's noble career as a poet; it also climaxed a comprehensive and serious study of Scandinavian literature which no English poet before or since 1876 has equalled. The evidence of this study has been presented above.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Morris and Magnússon made a prose translation of the *Laxdala Saga* before Morris wrote *The Lovers of Gudrun*. See Einarsson, *op. cit.* [Magnússon's Translations], pp. 24-25. Their translations of the *Völsunga Saga* and Eddic lays were completed six years before *Sigurd*.

<sup>58</sup> The present author will have further material on Morris's Old Norse writings to present at a later date. He expects shortly to publish source studies of the Swanhild and Hallbiorn stories; an essay on Norse allusions in Morris's non-Norse poems; an essay on Morris as a critic of Old Norse literature; and (in due time) a small book on Morris's treatment of the Old Norse love theme.