CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE OLD NORSE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
TO THE STYLE AND SUBSTANCE OF THE WRITINGS
OF
WILLIAM MORRIS
1858–1876

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A Dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Michigan
1933
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"For last autumn I was in Suffolk at the good town of
Dunwich, and thither came the keels from Iceland, and many
a tale they had on their tongues; and with these men I fore-
gathered, for I am in sooth a gatherer of tales, and this
which is now at my tongue's end is one of them."

--William Morris, A Dream of John Ball
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INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

The earliest known document written in English and containing materials from Old Norse tradition or history is Beowulf; the best-known is Shakespeare's Hamlet. Beowulf, as an English poem, is important in connection with the Old Norse because it contains the "oldest literary source of Scandinavian history"; Hamlet interests the student of the Old Icelandic literature for quite a different reason; its author has never been thought of as a Scandinavian scholar.

The literary relations of the Scandinavian North with England date from before the beginning of Old Norse as a written language. They continued through the Renaissance, the eighteenth century, and the Victorian Age. In the course of centuries these influences of Old Norse literature upon English literature become both more extensive and more important. The English scholars and literary men of the eighteenth century in particular, who attempted, in one way or another, to popularize the literature, the mythology, or the customs of the Norsemen were many; but for the most part such men as


2 For an excellent collection of the traditions upon which the Hamlet story is based, see Sir Israel Gollancz's Hamlet in Iceland, being the Icelandic Romantic Amablae Saga.... Northern Library, Vol. III, London, 1898. In addition to the texts of the Saga and the rimur connected with the Hamlet legend the book contains also Gollancz's introductory essay on the Hamlet genealogy.
Thomas Percy, Thomas Gray, Thomas Warton, and Amos Cottle, either knew but little of the Old Norse language, or employed Norse-Latin texts (which were quite numerous) to aid them in translating the Skaldic and Eddie poems, or in acquiring Norse materials for use in their original English literary pieces. But in the nineteenth century, from the time of Sir Walter Scott onward, actual knowledge of the Old Norse language was by no means uncommon among Englishmen. The most considerable and important developments in the study of Old Norse language and literature in England came, however, after 1850.

Two great Victorians, Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, were inspired by Old Norse history and myth to write English works based upon the Heimskringla and the Eddie Lays. Such were The Early Kings of Norway, and Balder Dead. But the authors of these works did not belong to what we may call the real 'Old Norse Movement.' After the arrival in London of the great Icelandic Scholar, Gudbrand Vigfusson, in 1864, however, we may safely say that a definite movement for the populariza-

3 The history of Old Norse-English literary relationship from its beginnings to 1814 has been accurately dealt with by Frank Edgar Farley, in his Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement, Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, Vol. IX, Boston, 1903. George Lyman Kittredge's essay on "Gray's Knowledge of Old Norse," one of the first studies in the field, and a classic of scholarly argument, is published in Selections from the Poetry and Prose of Thomas Gray, edited by William Lyon Phelps (Boston, 1904), Appendix, pp. xii-1.

tions of Old Norse literature among English readers had been initiated. The chief members of this group were Vigfússon and Eiríkr Magnússon, the Icelanders, and their respective English collaborators, Frederick York Powell, and William Morris; others were Benjamin Thorpe, Sir George Webbe Dasent, George Stephens, and Frederick Metcalfe. These men did not constitute an organized body, with common plans for the furtherance of Old Norse in England, but working singly, or in pairs, they produced those books which made it possible for the English reader to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of the Old Norse language, literature, customs, mythology, and history. Dasent translated Rask's Icelandic Grammar in 1843; with Vigfússon he completed Cleasby's Icelandic-English Dictionary, and by his translations of Popular Tales from the Norse, the Gísla Saga and the Njáls Saga, he contributed further to the Englishman's acquaintance with Old Norse. Thorpe's Northern Mythology and Yuletide Stories contained much material of interest to the prospective English


6 An Icelandic-English Dictionary, based on the MS. Collection of ... Cleasby ..., by Gudbrand Vigfússon ..., with Introduction ..., by George Webbe Dasent, Oxford, 1874.

7 George Webbe Dasent, Popular Tales from the Norse (translated from the collection by Asbjörnsen and Moë), Edinburgh, 1859; The Story of Gísla the Outlaw, Edinburgh, 1866; The Story of Burnt Njal, Edinburgh, 1861.

student of Old Norse, a fact which William Morris was among the first to realize. The work of both Frederick Metcalfe and George Stephens was scholarly in nature; Metcalfe's [The Englishman and the Scandinavian] deals with the likenesses and differences of the people and literatures of the two nationalities concerned, while Stephens' Old Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England, is a large work intended for use by English antiquarians. Vigfusson and Powell published three important sets of books, in which they probably contributed more than any Old Norse scholars toward making that literature available in English. The Prolegomena to their edition of the Sturlunga Saga contains a brief history of Old Norse literature which has never been surpassed in English. The contributions which Eiríkr Magnússon and William Morris made to English letters through their use of Old Norse materials is the general consideration of this dissertation.

It may be readily seen from the authors and works mentioned above that at the time when Morris and Magnússon commenced their

9 Published in London, 1880.

10 Published in London, 1866-1864.

11 These are: Sturlunga Saga, Oxford, 1878; Corpus Poeticum Boreale, Oxford, 1883; Origines Islandiae, Oxford, 1905.

work on Old Norse in 1868, the project which they undertook, to increase the Englishman's knowledge and appreciation of Old Norse literature, was in no sense new or original. In the translations by Daseat, Powell and Vigfússon, and Morris and Magnusson, we discover the best of Old Norse literary materials in English versions; but in the original poetry of one man,—William Morris,—we find the rich heritage of a past age, the saga-stories and myths of Old Iceland brought to the English reader through the alembic of English poetry. The compilers of Beowulf stand at one end of the Old Norse-English literary relations; William Morris stands at the other. There is probably no poem in English after Beowulf which has faithfully and completely conveyed the heroic temper of the Scandinavian people to the Englishman, excepting Sigurd the Volsung. There is The Waking of Angantyr; there are The Descent of Odin, and Balder Dead; but these represent or portray the Englishman's idea of the spirit of the Old Norse, unsupported by intimate knowledge of the original literature. Sigurd the Volsung, on the contrary, written after Morris had saturated himself with Old Norse literature, might almost be said to be an Old Norse poem written in English.

To discuss the processes by which the Old Norse literary knowledge came into Victorian England, through grammars, dictionaries, saga- and Edda-translations, and critical works, is not within the scope of this dissertation. Nor is it the present writer's task to deal with the many travelers who visited Iceland in the nineteenth century, and who came back to England to
tell their fellows tales of the un laid ghosts of the saga-
heroes, tales which they heard among the steeds of Grettir,
Njál, Kiartan, and Thord Yeller. It is only the works of
William Morris which we have before us; but we shall find
in them sufficient evidence that there was a tremendous ex-
pansion of interest in, and a genuine appreciation of, the
Old Norse literature in England during the reign of Victoria.

13 Among works on the English interest in Old Norse litera-
ture other than those of Kittredge, Farley, Gollancz, and
Lieder, already referred to, one might mention three short
essays: (1) Jon Steffanson, "Oldnordisk Indvirkning på Engelsk
Literatur i det Attende og Nittende Árhundrede" [based, accord-
ing to Farley, on Southey's review of Sayer's Poetical Works,
Quarterly Review, January, 1827], in Nordisk Tidsskrift für
Vetenskap, Konst, och Industri, 1891 [this reference from
Farley]; (2) Georg Herzdeld, "Bemerkungen über die Nordischen
Stoffe in der Engelschen Poesie des vorigen Jahrhunderts," an
Appendix to Herzdeld's William Taylor von Norwich, Eine
Studie über den Einfluss der neuen Deutschen Literatur in
England, Halle, 1897; (3) C. R. Herford, "Norse Myth in English
Nos. 1 and 2, Manchester, August, 1918-March, 1919. [Also in
reprint, London, 1919]; and an unfinished dissertation by
Conrad Hjalmar Nordby, The Influence of Old Norse Literature
upon English Literature, Columbia University Germanic Studies,
PART I
THE MATERIALS FOR STUDY
CHAPTER I

CLASSIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS
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CLASSIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS

There are fifty-two poems and prose stories in the works of William Morris which are in some way connected with the Scandinavian. They range from extremely short poems to full-length saga-translations, and include a wide variety of subjects. The scope of this dissertation does not take in those works which are merely Scandinavian; its chief concern is with all the poetry and prose which Morris wrote up to, and including, Sigurd the Volsung, 1876, in which the Old Icelandic literature, specifically, is of manifest significance. But since the line of demarcation between that which is 'Scandinavian' in general, and that which is particularly Old Icelandic, cannot always be exactly drawn, these documents of a general Scandinavian nature must not be cast entirely out of our considerations. Indeed, before Morris acquired a technique for the treatment of Old Icelandic themes in poetry, he had experimented at length with materials which belonged to all parts of the Scandinavian North. His first exercises in the Scandinavian dealt with original or composite-source plots in a background which he 'Scandinavianized'; 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 the first group
are placed all pieces which contain even the slightest mention of anything Scandinavian; in the second are those which are translated from any Scandinavian language other than the Old Icelandic; in the third group, those which are adapted from Scandinavian sources. Sub-divisions into prose and poetry are made, for convenience, within these chief divisions. In Section III are listed all works which are Old Icelandic in source, or theme, or which are original compositions dealing in some way with the Old Norse. It is with these works almost exclusively, that the present dissertation is concerned.

II

A. Works containing 'Northern' material.

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 'medievalize' their materials, Morris invariably 'Scandinavianized.' This characteristic of composition first shows itself

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1 For 'Scandinavian' it would be possible to substitute 'Northern,' using the term in the same general way as did Morris himself when he apostrophized the '...Muse that swayest the sad Northern song.' All things Scandinavian were 'Northern' to William Morris. He speaks often of the 'Northern Muse,' the 'Northern Sagas,' 'Northern literature,' 'Northern countries.'

in Gertha's Lovers, Svend and His Brethren, and The Hollow Land. But Morris's 'Scandinavianizing' here is not in itself exceedingly important; it consists merely of attempts to impart to the material a Northern atmosphere by the use of Scandinavian proper names, such as Gertha, Olaf, Sigurd, in Gertha, Svend, Valdemar, Eric, Harald, in Svend, and Swanilda and Arnald, in The Hollow Land. But the mixture with these of names not Scandinavian: Leuchmar, Borracce, Hugh, Cissela, Robert, Florian, indicates that Morris was not yet well enough acquainted with the materials of the North to realize that his Scandinavian element became strange and confusing when it was inconsistent. Calling Olaf "Lord Olaf," for instance, does not enhance his Scandinavian character, nor is the reader caused to feel that he is in the company of Norse heroes by reason of the fact that a countryman of Robert is named Eric. 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. In Gertha, for example, we are told that "Long ago there was a land, never mind where or when"; in Svend, that "A King in olden time ruled over a mighty nation"; while the poet, in The Hollow Land, asks us point-blank: "Do you know where it is, the Hollow land...?" Moreover, occasional reference to the rugged nature of the land, or to the coldness of

the climate; does not assure the reader that his story is
enacted on the Scandinavian peninsula. Nor do the charac-
ters themselves impress us particularly as Norwegians, Swedes,
or Danes. The knights of these stories are brave in deed, but
their bravery smacks more of the French or English romance
than of the saga; they fight with abandon and skill, rescue
heroines,—in short, they do not possess the brute strength,
the 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 romance.

Obviously the Scandinavian elements in these prose stories
are not many. But the relation of such a tale as Gertha’s
Lovers to Morris’s ultimate realization of the real qualities
of Scandinavian literature cannot be overlooked. A tendency
on Morris’s part to 'Scandinavianize,’ which may well have been
a pose or an affectation in these unimpressive romances writ-
ten at Oxford, became, in the course of time, the outstanding
trait of his greatest works.

In contrast to the vague Scandinavian characteristics of
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 the prose romances, a more specific and exact use of the
4 Scandinavian. The earliest of these, The Wind, written before

4 All the references and Old Norse allusions in the poems of
this group are discussed in detail in Part II, Chapter II,
below.
1858, concerns a Norse knight, who speaks of "Olaf, King and Saint." The chief poems of this group, however, 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. *The Wanderers* is Morris's first attempt to compose an original poem which concerns a group of real Scandinavians. The story, since it explains the framework of *The Earthly Paradise*, is well known. 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 people of an ancient Greek race. Consistent with the telling of the story of the wanderers, Morris tries to make his Norwegians real Horsemen, and by references to Norse mythology, custom, and history, he succeeds for the first time in giving us what may be called a poem with a Scandinavian background. The two versions differ mainly in verse form: the unpublished *Wanderers* is written in tetrameter stanzas, rhyming abab, the second, in pentameter couplets. Certain unimportant details are also quite different, but the Norse elements in both are virtually the same.

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6 The earlier or unpublished *Wanderers* was first printed by May Morris, *Collected Works*, XXIV, 87-170. The later version is found in *Collected Works*, III, 7-80.
The poem, *Anthony*, written 1865-70, is to Morris's poetry what *Gertha's Lovers* is to his prose. It is made up of a mixture of Scandinavian and non-Scandinavian elements, and concerns a group of English mariners off the coast of Norway. The setting is not emphasized enough to add materially to the poem, nor does the poem itself contribute much for us to consider in examining Morris's use of Northern materials.

*Love's Reward* and *Love is Enough*, 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,' in speaking of the great and tragic lovers of times past, calls to mind Sigurd and Brynhild, but assures the reader 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 neither 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, are ballads, prob-

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7 Collected Works, XXIV, 329-342.
8 Ibid., IX, 164-168.
9 Ibid., IX, 3-39.
10 The Mother, Ibid., XXIV, 352-355; The Raven, Ibid., IX, 127-131; The King, Ibid., IX, 140-145.
ably 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 for consideration here is the fragmentary

11 In Arthur's House, composed at the same time as the Earthly Paradise poems, circa 1865-70, and originally intended as a part of that work. Here Morris brings Tyrfling, a famous Scandinavian sword, into the Arthurian story. In many ways the most interesting of all Morris's short poems touching upon the 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

12 Svend Grundtvig. 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.

11 Ibid., XXIV, 316-328.
12 Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser, Kjøbenhavn, 1856.
13 All published in Collected Works, IX: Hafbur, pp. 213-224; Aagen, pp. 210-212; Agnes, pp. 208-209; Hildebrand, pp. 203-205.
C. Works adapted from Northern sources.

Among Morris's early prose romances there is one, *Lindenborg Pool*, which is closer to the Scandinavian than the others, by virtue of its source. In the first volume of Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, Part III, "Danish Traditions," Morris found an English version of a Danish story, called, by Thorpe, "The Sunken Mansion." The plot of this story is simple, and Thorpe devoted only twenty-nine lines of prose to its retelling. The essential elements are a castle near the unfathomable Lindenborg lake, a drunken man who comes to the castle and is gullied by the servants who dress a swine up as a man, a priest, and the disappearance of the castle in the lake. Morris expanded Thorpe's twenty-nine lines into ten pages of prose. But his elaboration of the plot does not enhance the Scandinavian atmosphere; for he dwelt at length upon the details of the castle, and the mystery surrounding its disappearance in the pool, matters not necessarily nor specifically Northern. Even though this story is related to Northern literature by reason of its source, its atmosphere is no more Scandinavian than is that of *Gertha's Lovers*, or *Svend and His Brethren*. Since Thorpe's story is a mere plot outline, and has virtually nothing except its inclusion among


"Danish Traditions" to establish its Northern origin, and since when Morris wrote his version, in 1898, his knowledge of Scandinavian atmosphere and custom was confined to his reading of Thorpe; we cannot expect that he should try to improve the story with regard to those characteristics about which he knew as yet very little.

One of the poems in The Earthly Paradise also may be included in this Section; this is East of the Sun and West of the Moon. Since a part of its plot is taken from the Volunga Saga, which Thorpe paraphrased in the first volume of Northern Mythology, it has usually been referred to as one of the three tales in The Earthly Paradise which are based upon Old Icelandic models. Only about two pages of Thorpe's epitome, 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, and from East o' the Sun, and West o' the Moon, a story in George Webbe Dasent's Popular Tales from the Norse. The title of the

16 See below, Part I, Chapter II.


18 The other two are The Fostering of Aslaug, and The Lovers of Gudrun, for discussions of which see below, Section III, and also Part III.


20 George Webbe Dasent, Popular Tales from the Norse (second edition, enlarged, Edinburgh, 1859), pp. 25-40.
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 virtually all literatures, moreover, and the tremendous list of analogues in the Scandinavian alone, as set forth by Tollef Thompson, makes it impossible to assume that this story is exclusively of Old Icelandic inspiration. And as for Morris's treatment of the story, his rather original "dream within a dream" (and in one portion "a dream within a dream within a dream"), and the various uses he makes of Gregory the Star-gazer as the narrator, listener, and chief character of the tale (matters foreign to Old Icelandic narratives), further add to the impossibility of our including East of the Sun and West of the Moon among the genuine Old Icelandic group of his poems.

III

The Old Icelandic translations, adaptations, and original poems which employ the Icelandic literature or scene, are the works of Morris with which this dissertation is primarily to deal. It is here necessary only to list these writings by title, for in the chapters which follow, each receives detailed treatment in the proper place.

21 For a detailed source study of this poem, see Tollef B. Thompson, Skandinavischer Einfluss auf William Morris in den ersten Studien (The Earthly Paradise) (Berlin, 1910), Chapter I, "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," pp. 17-51.
A. Translations from the Old Icelandic.

The translations from Old Icelandic prose, which Morris made with Eiríkr Magnússon, are as follows:

23 The Story of Gunlnaung Worm-Tongue, translated from Gunlnaung Saga Ormatungan, is one of the few Icelandic sagas which is purely a love story. It is a minor saga, dealing with events of the west of Iceland, and Norway.

24 The Story of Grettir the Strong, translated from Grettis Saga enn Sterke (Grettis Saga Asmundarson), is one of the five major sagas of Iceland.

25 The Story of the Volsungs and the Fall of the Niblungs, from the Volsunga Saga, may be called the most important of all mythical sagas [fornaldar sogur].

26 The Story of Frithiof the Bold, Frisjofs Saga, also a mythical saga, is more famous in the expanded version which Bishop Esaias Tegner made from the Old Norse original.

22 The chronology of these translations, as well as the method by which they were produced, is a problem discussed in Part I, Chapter II. The specialized diction which Morris used in rendering them into English is analyzed in Part II, Chapter I.

23 In Collected Works, I, 7-47; it was first published in The Fortnightly Review, and later in Three Northern Love Stories, London, 1876.


25 Ibid., VII, 291-396.

26 Ibid., I, 48-80. One of the Three Northern Love Stories.
The Story of Viglund the Fair, from the Viglundar Saga, is spurious.

The Tale of Rei the Fool, from Hrœar þattr Heimska, a very short tale, is taken from the Flateyjarbók.

The Tale of Thorsteinn Staff-Smitten, from Thorstein Stanger-högga, is also a short tale, belonging to the bættir ("tid-bit") group.

The Tale of Hogni and Hedinn, from Sorla þattr, is a short tale, also taken from the Flateyjarbók.

Hogni and Hedinn, is from Snorri's Edda, Skáldskaparmál, Chapter XLIX.

It is rather difficult to determine which texts Morris and Magnusson followed in translating these sagas. Morris's library contained no separate texts of the Grettis Saga, or

27 Ibid., I, 81-126. Also in Three Northern Love Stories. See Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell's Sturlunga Saga (Oxford, 1878), I, Prolegomena, p. lxiii, where Vigfusson says of the Viglunda that it is probably an imitation, by an Icelander, of such sagas as Gunnlauga and Friðþjófs.

28 Collected Works, X, 140-150. Appended to Three Northern Love Stories.


31 Ibid., I, 127-139. Appended to Three Northern Love Stories.

32 Flateyjarbók, I, 273-282.

33 Collected Works, X, 159-160. This version of Hogni and Hedinn, or the 'Short' Hogni, is added by Morris and Magnusson as a note to the longer story. It also was appended to Three Northern Love Stories.
the Víglundar Saga, but he did own editions of the others, or collections in which they were contained. The Völsunga Saga was published in Volume I, and the Fribjófs Saga in Volume II, of Rafn's Fornaldar Sögur, which Morris possessed. He also had copies of Jón Sigurðsson's Gunnlaugs Saga, Vigfusson and Unger's Flatjárþarðr, containing the Sórla þáttir (Hogni and Hedin) and Hróar þáttir Heimska, and Gunnlaug Jórdarson's edition of the Vamfítinga Saga, including the Thorstein story. The lesser Hogni tale (along with Grettla and Víglunda) must have been taken from texts lent to Morris by Eiríkr Magnússon, for there were no copies of the Prose Edda, from which it was translated, in Morris's library, except those of Th. Jónsson and Ernst Wilken, both published after Morris's 'Short' Hogni was completed.

The largest body of Old Icelandic poetry which Morris and Magnusson translated is from the Heroic cycle of the Elder Edda. In addition to these lays, however, they also made English versions of two from the so-called God cycle,

34 See Appendix A, for all references to Morris's private library.


36 Sagan af Gunnlaugi Ormstungu ok Skalld Rafni, edited by Jón Sigurðsson, Rønning, 1775 (with Latin text....).

37 Vamfítinga Saga, þáttir af bórsteiní Stangarhögg, edited by Gunnlaug Jórdarson, Kjöbenhavn, 1848 (with Danish version....).
and translated, in addition, two Icelandic popular ballads. The first Eddic translations are fragments of lays which they incorporated into the Volsunga 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 Reginsmál are translated on pages 325-326 of The Story of the Volsungs.

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.


The two lays translated from the God cycle are:

Baldur’s Dream [Balds Draumar], and The Lay of Thrym [þrymskviða].

The Eddic Songs which Morris and Magnússon translated from the Hero cycle are ten in number:

1. The Second Lay of Helgi-Runding’s bane [Helgakviða Rundingsbana II].

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36 Collected Works, VII.


2. The Lay of Sigdrifa [Sigdrifumál].
3. The Short Lay of Sigurd [Sigurðarkviða hin skamma].
4. The Hell-ride of Brynhild [Helreit Brynhildar].
5. The Lay of Brynhild [Brot af Sigurðarkviðu].
6. The Ancient Lay of Gudrun [Guðrúnarkviða Hinn Forna].
7. The Song of Atli [Atlakviða].
8. The Whetting of Gudrun [Guðrúnarhvét].
9. The Lay of Hamdir [Hamþismál].
10. The Lament of Oddrun [Oddrunargrætr].

In Morris's library there were three texts of the Elder Edda in Old Norse: Svend Grundtvig’s and Sophus Bugge’s editions, and a third in Icelandic and Latin. These texts vary somewhat in stanza and line arrangement, in emendation, etc. Collation of all three with the twelve lays from both the God and Hero cycles indicates that for the most part, the Grundtvig and Bugge texts were followed in the Morris-Magnusson translations. Collative evidence yields the following information: for Baldur, Hell-ride, and Oddrun, either Grundtvig or Bugge was used; for Gudrun, Whetting, Atli: either Bugge or Edda Rhythmica; for Thrym, Helgi, and Short Sigurd: Grundtvig

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41 The Hero lay translations are in Collected Works, VII, 397-480.

42 Sæmundar Edda Hins Fróða—Den AElдре Edda, kritisk udgave ved Svend Grundtvig, København, 1868; Sæmundar Edda Hins Fróða, udgiven af Sophus Bugge (Norvæn Fornkrøn), Christiania, 1867; Edda Sæmundar Hins Fróða, Edda Rhythmica seu Antiquior, vulgo Sæmundina Diæta, pars I, Hafnia, 1787; pars II, 1816; pars III, 1828 (In both Icelandic and Latin....).
only; for Sigdrifa, Brynhildr, and Hamdir: Bugge only.

The possible use of the other available texts must, of

43 course, also be considered, although it is probably correct
to assume that the presence of three texts in Morris’s lib-

44 rary indicates their having been purchased for purposes of

transformation.

The two Icelandic ballads, The Lay of Christine and

The Son’s Sorrow, were translated from Grundtvig’s Islenski

Fornkvæði.

B. Adaptations from the Old Icelandic.

All the works which Morris created directly from Old

Icelandic sources or indirectly through English mediums, are

in poetic form, and include the two greatest poems of his

44 long career: The Lovers of Gudrun, in The Earthly Paradise,

and Sigurd the Volsung, a tremendous narrative poem, the

writing of which completed the poetry which grew out of his

43 There were seven other editions of the Edda before 1870.
These are: F. H. Von der Hagen’s, 1812; Grimm Brothers’, 1815;
E. C. Raek’s, 1818; F. G. Bergmann’s, 1830; P. A. Munck’s,
1847; Hermann Lüning’s, 1859; Theodor Möbius’s, 1860. For
full bibliographical details, see Haldor Hermansen, Bib-
45 liography of the Eddas, in Íslandica, XIII (1920), 1-5.

44 Collected Works, IX: pp. 201-202; and pp. 206-207, res-

pectively.

45 Íslenzk Fornkvæði, edited by Svend Grundtvig and Jón
Sigurðsson, Nordiske Oldskrifter, Vol. IX (Kjøbenhavn, 1854),
pp. 144-146 and pp. 154-156 respectively.
relations with the Old Norse.

Two short poems in this group, *The Fostering of Aslæg*, 47
from *The Earthly Paradise*, and *The Wooing of Swanbild*, an
unfinished work, deal with incidents from the *Völsunga Saga*
(and related material), the originals for which Morris ac-
quired from the summary in English published by Thorpe in
his *Northern Mythology*, Volume I. *Sigurd the Volsung*,
however, is not fragmentary, but 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* is a direct adaptation, almost a verse
translation, of the most important parts of the *Laxdela Saga*
among the five major sagas of Iceland.

The last poem in this group, *The Wooing of Hallbiorn*
the Strong, is based upon the history of Hallbjorn and Hallgard.

46 Morris's treatment of Old Icelandic themes in his original
poetry is the subject of Part III.


48 From the unfinished and unused *Earthly Paradise Poems*,
first published by May Morris, in *Collected Works*, XXIV, 281-
315.

49 *Sigurd* occupies all of Volume XII, in the *Collected Works*.

50 In *Earthly Paradise*, Part III, *Collected Works*, V, 251-
395.

51 In *Collected Works*, IX, 95-102.
as related by Ári Thórgilsson.

C. Original poems concerning Old Icelandic literature or the Icelandic scene.

Morris wrote six poems which are neither translations nor adaptations, but which are nevertheless within the limits of this discussion because they bear upon various phases of the Icelandic. Four of them were written in England: the two Sonnets inspired by the Grettis Saga, The "Prologue in Verse" to the Volsunga Saga, and The Muse of the North; the remaining two were written in Iceland: Iceland First Seen, and Gunnar’s Howe. A detailed discussion of the occasion and substance of these poems will be found below, in Part I, Chapters III, and Part II, Chapter II.

IV

That Morris wrote all these Icelandic translations, adaptations, and original poems between 1868 and 1875,

52 Ari Þorgilsso, Íslensk Landnámabók. (The Book of the Land-settling of Iceland). See Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, Origines Islandicae (Oxford, 1905), I, 112-114, for both the original Icelandic, and the English text of this story.

is a fact well worthy of our attention. Before 1868, he knew comparatively little about the literature of the North, yet in 1871 he was speaking Icelandic to the natives of Reykjavik. The devotion with which he studied the literature of the Icelanders, his relations with his teacher Eiríkr Magnússon, and the amount of Old Norse literature he actually read,—all of which equipped him for the composition of the works just listed,—are the aspects of Morris's biography recorded in the next Chapter. Having availed ourselves of fairly exact information as to what he learned about that literature, we may then turn, in the remaining chapters, to analyses of these writings which are so closely connected with the Old Norse.