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4. *Letters*, II, 503–04.
5. V, 45; II, 187.
6. XII, 397.
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8. *Letters*, I, 288 and 286.
9. V, 57.
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12. XIII, 370–71.
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14. *Letters*, XIII, 328.
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17. 'A Roundabout Journey', *Cornhill*, II (1860), 628.
18. *Letters*, V, 46.
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22. V, 56.
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25. VII, 559–60.
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William Morris and Translations of Iceland

ANDREW WAWN

On 7 September 1871, a middle-aged Englishman stood on the railway station in Edinburgh. He was short, fat, red-faced, bull-necked, bush-bearded and 'quite bewildered'.¹ He had been away from Britain for the whole summer; everything now looked very strange and he hardly knew where to buy a ticket for. He had been to Iceland and enjoyed it. The last words of his journal account of that visit leave us in no doubt about this: 'Iceland is a marvellous, beautiful and solemn place ... where I had been in fact very happy.' He was still happy enough when he arrived home to write out two short poems about Iceland which he had newly composed. He sent copies² to Jón Sigurðsson, one of the two Icelanders who had stood with him on the railway station, having sailed with him all the way from Iceland. Jón had long been a major philological figure amongst the Copenhagen-based Icelanders; and by this time he was known as *forseti* (president) as a mark of his hugely influential role over three decades as a parliamentarian, diplomat and lobbyist, as Iceland inched towards a restoration of the national independence which it had surrendered to the Norwegian king in the middle of the thirteenth century.³ The idea was for Jón to have the poems translated into Icelandic and published in *Ný Félagsrit*, the Icelandic literary journal of which he was editor.

Jón received and read both poems, and then wrote to Eiríkur Magnússon, the other Icelandic who had been with the portly Englishman in Edinburgh—and Iceland. Jón told Eiríkur that he did not much like the poems: the poet 'regards our mother Iceland as rather pale and haggard, dismal and sad'.⁴ He would

have much preferred heroic songs celebrating Iceland's saga-age glories, rather than gloomy lyrics by brooding Englishmen. Out of courtesy he chose to have just one of the poems translated, by Steingrímur Thorsteinsson, a major late nineteenth-century Icelandic poet also based in Copenhagen. This one poem was selected because it seemed marginally less lugubrious than the other, which was unceremoniously rejected.⁵

The bulky and bearded English poet was, of course, William Morris and the two poems which he sent to Jón Sigurðsson were eventually published in England twenty years later—one was called 'Iceland First Seen' and the other 'Gunnar's Howe above the House at Lithend'.⁶ 'Í landsýn við Ísland' was duly published in *Ný Félagsrit* in 1872,⁷ long before British readers set eyes on the English version, in Morris's 1891 collection *Poems by the Way*;⁸ but Icelandic readers never saw a translation of the allegedly pallid 'Gunnar's Howe'—that was the one which 'we won't bother with'.

'Gunnar's Howe' has bothered few Morris scholars since its first publication,⁹ despite the subtle evidence it offers of the celebrated Victorian saga translator's imaginative engagement with medieval Iceland in general, and the epic *Brennu-Njáls saga* in particular. This essay seeks to examine not only 'Gunnar's Howe', but also a forgotten tribute to Morris written at the time of his death by a leading late nineteenth-century Icelandic poet. I want to suggest that Jón Sigurðsson may have misjudged Morris's poem; far from being a melancholy response to Iceland, 'Gunnar's Howe' can be seen (for all its surface greyness) as a glowing tribute to the land of lava and lyme grass. Iceland had made William Morris 'very happy' at a time when the relationship between his wife Janey and Dante Gabriel Rossetti at Kelmscott Manor¹⁰ continued to offer him every reason to be gloomy, and this happiness shines through the poem. I then wish to comment on Matthías Jochumsson's poetic obituary of Morris. Though written in 1896, 'Vilhjálmur Morris' was not published until 1923; it has, to the best of my knowledge, never been commented on by Morris scholars. The poem voices Icelandic pride at the attention devoted to its medieval literary culture by one of Victorian Britain's greatest Icelandophiles. During his life,

Morris was a tireless translator of and enthusiast for Icelandic sagas and Eddic myth and legend;¹¹ in death he finds himself translated and mythologized, paraded and celebrated in Matthías's poem alongside the great figures of Edda and saga whom he did so much to promote within the English-speaking world, and with whose turbulent lives he so closely identified. Taken together, then, 'Gunnar's Howe' and 'Vilhjálmur Morris' allow us to reflect on what might be termed Morris's translation of Iceland, and Iceland's translation of Morris.

William Morris's priority when he arrived in Iceland was to visit the southern sagasteads associated with the greatest of all the Icelandic family sagas, *Brennu-Njáls saga*, or 'The Story of Burnt Njal', as it was known to Victorian readers of Sir George Dasent's pioneering and field-commanding 1861 English translation. Morris viewed the prospect with a pilgrim's excitement, and by his subsequent writings he signalled arrestingly that *Brennu-Njáls saga*, sites such as Gunnarshaugr (Gunnar's Howe), and Icelandic culture in general were worthy objects of serious philosophical reflection and artistic creativity for literate and sentient Victorians. His knowledge of *Brennu-Njáls saga*, derived as much from the Icelandic original as from Dasent's *Burnt Njal*, enabled him to animate every desolate location he visited; and led him to demand this same visionary capacity in others. Whilst still on the outward voyage, peering impatiently through the mist, Morris relates every feature of the emerging Icelandic coastline to the saga: he glimpses Svínafell 'under which Flosi the Burner lived', whilst the Vestmannaeyjar lie 'just opposite to Njal's house at Bergthorsknoll'.¹² Journeying on horseback to the actual sites, everyone 'at the height of ... excitement',¹³ it does not take long for Morris's teeming imagination to translate a mound by the house at Bergþórshváll into the site of Njáll's house;¹⁴ the next day (21 July) he finds the hollow where Flosi and the hundred burners hid before the final attack on Njáll and his family (there was now room for only a dozen men, notes Morris,¹⁵ but is assured by the local farmer that the river has eroded the space once available for the other seven dozen); the pond where Kári doused his burning clothes proves to be little more than a patch of marshy ground overgrown with rushes, but there were signs

that a brook had once flowed from there; more excitingly, the farmer tells the travellers that he had come across a bed of ashes when digging the foundations of a new parlour. Moving inland, Morris reaches Gunnar's homestead at Hlíðarendi¹⁶—the Lithe, as he, like Dasent, calls it. Time and (quite literally) tide have 'sadly wasted and diminished' meadows which had once been 'Gunnar's great wealth';¹⁷ but Morris is still able to observe the traditional site of Gunnar's hall, the hollow where Sámr the hound howled his last loyal message of warning, and 'Gunnar's Howe' itself, the subject of his poem.

The saga events which underpin the poem are simple enough: Gunnar Hámundarson, the great but luckless farmer-chieftain, is murdered by vengeful foes who surround his farmhouse at the end of a long narrative sequence spanning the first half of the saga, during which he and his friend Njáll Þorgeirsson find it ever harder to contain the social disruptions generated by a witches' brew of rank misfortune, motiveless malignity, and interfamilial strife. Gunnar defends himself heroically before dying in front of his hard-hearted wife and loyal mother; he is buried in a cairn on the hillside. There are soon tales that the dead Gunnar can be heard singing cheerfully in his grave. We can follow the moment in Dasent's translation:

Now this token happened at Lithend, that the neat-herd and the serving-maid were driving cattle by Gunnar's cairn. They thought that he was merry, and that he was singing inside the cairn. They went home and told Rannveig, Gunnar's mother, of this token ... Now those two, Skarphedinn and Hogni, were out of doors one evening by Gunnar's cairn on the south side. The moon and stars were shining clear and bright, but every now and then the clouds drove over them. Then all at once they thought they saw the cairn standing open, and lo! Gunnar had turned himself in the cairn and looked at the moon. They thought they saw four lights burning in the cairn, and none of them threw a shadow. They saw that Gunnar was merry, and he wore a joyful face. He sang a song, and so loud, that it might have been heard though they had been further off.

'He that lavished rings in largesse,
When the fights' red rain-drops fell,
Bright of face, with heart-strings hardy,
Hogni's father met his fate;
Then his brow with helmet shrouding,
Bearing battle-shield, he spake,
"I will die the prop of battle,
Sooner die than yield an inch,
Yes, sooner die than yield an inch".'

After that the cairn was shut up again.

'Wouldst thou believe these tokens if Njal or I told them to thee?' says Skarphedinn.

'I would believe them,' he says, 'if Njal told them, for it is said that he never lies.'

'Such tokens as these mean much,' says Skarphedinn, 'when he shows himself to us, he who would sooner die than yield to his foes; and see how he has taught us what we ought to do.'

'I shall be able to bring nothing to pass,' says Hogni, 'unless thou wilt stand by me.'

'Now,' says Skarphedinn, 'will I bear in mind how Gunnar behaved after the slaying of your kinsman Sigmund; now I will yield you such help as I may. My father gave his word to Gunnar to do that whenever thou or thy mother had need of it.'

After that they go home to Lithend.¹⁸

Dasent's better informed readers, of whom William Morris was certainly one, would have known that any old northern hero smiling in the face of death, before or after it occurred, was guaranteed entry into Valhöll (Valhalla). Thomas Bartholinus's *Antiquitatum Danicarum de Causis Contemptæ a Danis adhuc Gentilibus Mortis* (1689) is a compendium of instances of the phenomenon, and found a fascinated eighteenth-century European readership; and Gunnar's last stand and afterlife found an honoured place in the volume.¹⁹ His was the ultimate invincible spirit—the distillation of clear-sighted heroic valour in life; coolly defiant at the point of death; good humoured in his grave

thereafter. It was a medieval subject, anthologized by a humanist, and just waiting for a romantic poet to do it justice.

William Morris was not, in fact, the first English writer to sense the scene's poetic potential. Richard Hole's 'The Tomb of Gunnar', published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1789, announces itself as 'a free translation, or rather imitation [from] ... an old Gothic romance', with Bartholinus's volume as the direct source.²⁰ Hole had neither read the saga nor visited the region. There was no readily accessible edition of the saga for a late eighteenth-century British reader; Hole could not have read the Icelandic of the 1772 first edition;²¹ and no Latin translation of *Njála* appeared until Jón Jónsson's Copenhagen version of 1809.²² As for visiting the *Njála* sagasteads, this was out of the question—no-one visited sagasteads in 1789. There had, in fact, been a British expedition to Iceland that very year, led by John Thomas Stanley, a young Edinburgh-educated scientist. Yet for all the young Stanley's own lifelong fascination with old northern myth and legend,²³ during his Iceland travels he had eyes only for the unfathomable mechanics of the hot springs at Geysir—then regarded as one of the wonders of the natural world. The *Njála* country was within comfortable riding distance for Stanley and his young colleagues—but it would never have occurred to them to seek out the haunts of a saga about which they knew little or nothing. Thus Hole's necessarily armchair engagement with the old north finds him taking the narrative skeleton of the *Njáls saga* scene from Bartholinus, deriving the mood music from Thomas Percy's canonical *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* (1763), and from Thomas Gray's hugely influential 'The Descent of Odin' and 'The Fatal Sisters' (1768), and adding the familiar poetic paraphernalia of the late eighteenth-century British sanguinary sublime—the gloom of night, the spectral presences, the banquet for the beasts and birds of battle. The sylvan shepherd and his Augustan sheep soon retreat in horror from the scene:

'What mean those awful sounds that rise
From the tomb where Gunnar lies?'
Exclaims the shepherd in affright;
As by the moon's uncertain light,

Athwart the solitary plain,
He homeward drives his fleecy train.

Sarhedine and Hogner (the nearest that the poet comes to the unfamiliar saga names of Skarpheðinn and Högni) are made of sterner stuff, however. With Hole now into his stride, the glutinous noun phrases flow like lava, and a crisp and cloudy late summer evening in Iceland re-emerges as a dank and vaporous British autumnal night—the intrepid heroes head for the tomb 'While darkly-rolling vapours hide/ In their dun veil night's glittering pride.' The 'fearless' pair are suddenly confronted with the ghostly Gunnar, clad in his battle-gear and in high good humour. Picked out by the moonlight and with a smile playing across his 'aweful brows', the hero speaks in suitably Bartholinian tones:

'Unmanly flight the brave despise;
Conquest of death's the warrior's prize;
The strife of spears disdain to shun,
Nor blast the fame by Gunnar won!'

The saga goes on to reflect on whether the vision is to be believed; Högni's self-doubt is voiced, as is Skarpheðinn's loyal support. No such thoughts find a place in Hole's robust reimagining of the scene—Gunnar's call to arms and vengeance is immediate:

'Grasp the sword, and gird the mail!
Scorning alike to yield or fly,
Resolve to conquer, or to die!
A banquet for the wolf prepare,
And glut the ravenous birds of air!'

By such means a late eighteenth-century poet translates the (as yet) unfamiliar world of the Icelandic family saga into the (then) fashionable sensibility of Eddic poetry.²⁴

Morris's response to this same saga scene in 'Gunnar's Howe' could hardly be more different. There was much Augustan grime to remove from the canvas, but every encouragement to do so in mid-Victorian Britain.²⁵ George Dasent's translation was one of

the great books to emerge from the Victorian rediscovery of the European middle ages;²⁶ and steamship technology and the consequent development of what passed for a north Atlantic tourist industry now made the prospect of travel to Iceland a good deal less daunting. Morris devoured Dasent's translation; he also read the saga in Icelandic with his faithful grammatical guide Eiríkur Magnússon; and then he journeyed to Iceland, and visited the site traditionally thought to be Gunnar's tomb. The high priority he attached to this visit is hardly surprising: 'I don't know anything more consoling or grander in all literature (to use a beastly French word) than Gunnar's singing in his house under the moon and the drifting clouds.'²⁷ Morris's 1871 Iceland journal records his first visit:

we come at last on a big mound rising up from the hollow, and this is Gunnar's Howe: it is most dramatically situated to remind one of the beautiful passage in the *Njála* where Gunnar sings in his tomb: the sweet grassy flowery valley with a few big grey stones about it has a steep bank above, which hides the higher hilltop; but down the hill the slope is shallow, and about midways of it is the howe; from the top of which you can see looking to the right and left along the Lithe, and up into the valley of Thorsmark.²⁸

It was to that 'terrible' valley that they were to journey the following morning. But for now they lay around Gunnar's howe, climbed further up the slope, and then not long before midnight they returned to gaze again at the mound, with the moon no more than a 'little thin crescent', incapable of casting any light on the saga hero, should he have obligingly reappeared to greet his guests.

In seeking to give poetic expression to his own responses to this site of saga pilgrimage, Morris would have needed no reminding that literary tastes and philological tastes had changed since Hole's day. Firstly, night thoughts no longer quickened sensitive pulses, though adjectival gothicism—the 'aw(e)ful', the 'terrible', the 'hideous', the 'dreadful'—finds a surprisingly vigorous new lease of life in Morris's journals.²⁹ Secondly, an invigorating philological awareness was now abroad—thus

'literature' was now 'a beastly French word'. In the manuscript copy which Morris sent to Jón Sigurðsson the poem's title is simply 'Gunnar's Howe'—neither poet nor recipient needed any titular indication of the scene's location. By the time of its 1891 first publication, the title ('Gunnar's Howe above the House at Lithend') has been adjusted to nod in the direction of Dasent's translation (in which *Hlíðarendi* became 'Lithend'); but Dasent's fondness for the Gaelic-derived 'cairn' was not shared by Morris—he much preferred 'Howe' (from *OI haugr*), thereby signalling and celebrating the closeness of the English and Icelandic languages. Morris may have known—his great admirer W. G. Collingwood (who painted the site during his 1897 saga-steads tour)³⁰ certainly did—that amongst the many *-howe* place names in the English Lake District was 'Gunner's Howe'.³¹

In Morris's private annotation to his Icelandic journals (which were originally prepared for Lady Georgiana Burne-Jones,³² and not published until 1911) he shows just how important such attention to philological detail could be. His account of Gunnar's howe prompts him to add a translation of the relevant lines from the saga. Though he frequently refers to Dasent's translation in his Icelandic journals, for actual quotation Morris prefers to trust himself:

Skarphedin and Hogni were abroad one evening by Gunnar's howe, on the south side thereof: the moonshine was bright but whiles the clouds drew over: them seemed the howe opened and Gunnar turned in the howe, and lay meeting the moon; and they thought they saw four lights burning in the howe, and no shadow cast from any: they saw that Gunnar was merry, and exceeding glad of countenance: and he sang a song so high that they had heard of it even had they been farther off.³³

A glance at Dasent's version of the same passage (quoted above) reveals the extent to which Morris is very much his own philological man. He is sometimes more accurate,³⁴ rarely gilding the Icelandic lily for the sake of lyricism or immediacy. He allows himself no Dasentian liberties—the Icelandic text has no 'stars'; nothing was shining 'clear'; the repose of 'drew' for *dró fyrir*

seems more appropriate—and more accurate—than the busyness of ‘drove’, and the drama of Dasent’s ‘all at once’ has no textual authority. On the other hand, Morris’s eagerness to swim against the tide of colloquial expectation, his insistence on the closely cognate nature of the two languages, could lead to unwonted eccentricity—Dasent’s pragmatic ‘every now and then’ for *stundum* re-emerges as the aggressively archaistic ‘whiles’; the impersonal Icelandic *peim syndisk* might be better served by Dasent’s ‘they thought they saw’ than by Morris’s ‘them seemed’, more a transliteration than a translation; and what is a reader who knows no Icelandic to make of Morris’s ‘[Gunnar] lay meeting the moon’? With other elements the contest is more even: ‘exceeding glad of countenance’ sounds distractingly biblical as a rendering of *með gleðimóti miklu*, yet Morris would have had little patience with Dasent’s ‘wore a joyful face’, with its ‘beastly’ French loan word and its failure to signal the intensifying *miklu*. It may be fair to conclude that at every point Dasent, a pragmatic proselytizing Icelandicist, has a discernible readership in mind;³⁵ for Morris translation was more a private philological reverie. Certainly Dasent’s translation was still winning new readers for the saga as an Everyman paperback in the 1970s, whereas the Morris/Eiríkur Magnússon translations, which preached opaquely to the converted, have long been unavailable.³⁶

The first person narrator of Morris’s ‘Gunnar’s Howe’ is thus addressing a very different audience from Richard Hole’s omniscient third person figure—and a markedly different tone is soon established:

Ye who have come o’er the sea to behold this grey minster
of lands,
Whose floor is the tomb of time past, and whose walls by
the toil of dead hands
Show pictures amidst of the ruin of deeds that have over-
past death,
Stay by this tomb in a tomb to ask of who lieth beneath.³⁷

The language is carefully archaized—‘Ye’, ‘o’er’, ‘behold’, ‘lieth’—but the present tense suggests immediacy and even

urgency. We may take it that Morris is addressing modern travellers, with the plurality suggested by ‘ye’ rather than ‘thou’. The tone suggests a solemnity in tune with the respect and awe that such travellers ought to be feeling as they move through the sagasteads. The imagery in the first verse is, we may assume, exactly that which Jón Sigurðsson had found unsympathetic. Iceland is a ‘tomb’ (three instances), it is linked with ‘death’ and ‘dead hands’ and ‘ruin’, and, recalling ‘gráleit’, it is ‘grey’. Jón seems to have misunderstood Morris’s sense of that adjective, for it was his favourite when describing Iceland. It occurs four times in this poem, twice in ‘Iceland First Seen’, it is ever present in ‘The Lovers of Gudrun’ in *The Earthly Paradise*, and in *Sigurd the Volsung*, and it can be found over a hundred times in his Iceland journals, in describing lava, moss, streams, clouds, cliffs, plain, sky, seas, and slopes. But ‘grey’ was not a dull colour for Morris. It was important for his view of Iceland and, at much the same time, it was important for his work with fabric design. In 1875, whilst hard at work on *Sigurd the Volsung*, Morris wrote to Thomas Wardle his Staffordshire-based colour technologist, and it is clear that achieving the ‘required shade’ in ‘the battle about the “Grey”’ was causing them a good deal of trouble, and that Morris would not be satisfied until a solution was found.³⁸ It was, after all, only against a correctly dyed dark grey background that the rich foreground colours of curtain or carpet could show up properly. So it is in the Iceland journals. We find no ‘monotony of grey’ there,³⁹ but rather ‘grey’, ‘dark grey’, ‘not very dark grey’, ‘dark ... and dreadful grey’, ‘lightish grey’, ‘dark ashen grey’, ‘light green and grey’, ‘greyer than grey’, ‘light grey-blue’, ‘yellowish grey’, ‘ragged grey’, ‘inky grey’, ‘woeful grey’, ‘spotted grey’, ‘dark grey bordered with white’, ‘heavy grey’, ‘cold-grey’, light grey becoming ‘greyer and greyer’, and many other shades. When he returns home to England, it is on a ‘soft warm grey morning’, sailing on a ‘calm and grey sea’, that he spots the ‘long grey line of Scottish coast’. Awaiting him back in Oxfordshire was the light grey stone of his old college and of the newly rented Kelmscott Manor. Writing to Georgiana Burne-Jones from Verona in 1878 we find Morris confessing to feelings of boredom with the local buildings: ‘even in these magnificent

and wonderful towns I long rather for the heap of grey stones with a grey roof that we call a house north-away'.⁴⁰ Grey, then, was a fundamental colour for William Morris—solemn, dramatic, everchanging; and in the Iceland journals it is the essential background against which the stunning primary colours of Iceland flicker across page after page like northern lights. Small wonder, when Morris can find so much colour amidst the greys of a modern Icelandic landscape, that he has no trouble in finding the appropriate shade of grey for his old northern sagasteads, for their interior decorations, and even for the eyes of the heroes and heroines in his narrative poems.

Morris's 'Gunnar's Howe' landscape is not just 'grey'—it is a 'grey minster of lands'. Morris knew all about grey minsters from his familiarity with Oxford college chapels, London abbeys, European cathedrals and, not least, the many churches all over England for which his firm had supplied stained glass windows and other fittings during the prosperous 1860s.⁴¹ The dedicated Victorian travellers and tourists whom Morris addresses in the poem—those whose over-familiarity with the sultry south of Europe⁴² tempted them to turn to the 'costes colde' of the north—expected to visit minsters. If Iceland's ecclesiastical architecture fell short in this respect, the silk purse of a cathedral could be created out of the sow's ear of a rural church by deft pencil and brush work (as the *Illustrated London News* artist showed in Reykjavík in the summer of 1874),⁴³ or cathedrals could simply be imagined. Morris's Iceland journals sometimes view rockscapes with the eye of an ecclesiastical architect: 'ruined minster looking rocks';⁴⁴ one mountain 'like a huge church with a transept',⁴⁵ and another 'just the shape of Castle St Angelo in Rome'.⁴⁶ In the poem the travellers are invited to view the lava-strewn ground of Iceland as a minster floor; its pictured walls can be imagined, thanks to the 'toil of dead hands' (saga writers) who tell of (ruined) deeds whose fame lived on for Victorian enthusiasts through saga translations. Morris's copy of the poem sent to Jón Sigurðsson shows that he is thinking of sagas—for 'deeds' in the 1891 printed text, the manuscript reads 'great tales'. Gunnar's 'Howe' is, thus, a small tomb within the great minster of the Icelandic land and landscape. It is a tomb within a tomb; a place

of awe and mystery and history and romance and beauty and solemnity; it is not at all 'haggard, dismal and sad'.

At the heart of the poem is Morris's fascination with the idea of the spirit of Iceland's heroic past living on in the straitened circumstances of Iceland's nineteenth-century present. It was a past which Morris rarely sought to recall with scholarly objectivity; his demands on it were insistent and revealingly personal. He wanted to 'have a part/ In that great sorrow of thy children dead';⁴⁷ he wanted the great outlaw Grettir as a 'friend to me life's void to fill';⁴⁸ and, ever the unfulfilled lover, he wanted Iceland, as mother, sister and lover 'all in one', to 'wrap me in the grief of long ago'.⁴⁹ He was eager for his fellow English travellers, whether on horseback in Iceland, or in library armchair back in Britain, to 'have a part' in the tale of Gunnar and Njáll. The heroes of the sagas were long dead; as were the sagamen who recorded their heroics so memorably; so, too, were the generations of scribes who copied the saga manuscripts. Dead, too, were those Eddic heroes whose deeds begat the tales told at banquets and woven into the tapestries at Hjardaholt ('The Lovers of Gudrun'), and Lymdale⁵⁰ (*Sigurd the Volsung*). Yet, through the 'toil' of forgotten hands, whether those of minstrel on harp, weaver on loom, scribe on vellum, or (in Morris's own lifetime, as never before) translator and poet on paper, the past could be substantially repossessed by the present. In 'Iceland First Seen', the continuity and survival of that lonely volcanic outcrop is celebrated 'amid waning of realms and of riches and death of things worshipped and sure'.⁵¹ The personified Iceland voices the explanation—'I abide here the spouse of a God, and I made and I make and endure'. If 'making', in either the medieval sense of poetic creativity, or in its later less specialized meanings, could help to fill the silences of 'life's void', then the workaholic Morris, 'the Thor of the Library' (in Eiríkur Magnússon's phrase) had nothing to fear. He could ensure the survival and transmission of old northern literary culture single-handedly.

As the poem develops, Morris's anxiety (insistence even) that all should share his own fervent engagement with that saga-age culture is soon emphasized:

Ah! the world changeth too soon, that ye stand there with
 unbated breath,
 As I name him that Gunnar of old, who erst in the
 haymaking tide
 Felt all the land fragrant and fresh, as amidst of the edges
 he died.
 Too swiftly fame fadeth away, if ye tremble not lest once
 again
 The grey mound should open and show him glad-eyed
 without grudging or pain.
 Little labour methinks to behold him but the tale-teller
 laboured in vain.

For all its gothic filigree Richard Hole's poem had followed the saga's narrative line doggedly; whereas with his reference to Gunnar falling 'in the haymaking tide', Morris here touches the events of the saga for the only time. The tone seems feverish and impatient. What happens if someone comes to Iceland and fails to feel the spell of Gunnar when visiting Hlíðarendi. It could happen. By the 1870s people visited Iceland for many reasons—sport fishing, commercial fishing, geology, buying Icelandic horses to work down the coal mines in Britain, buying Icelandic sheep, investigating the possibility of producing and exporting sulphur for gunpowder—and some went simply because by the 1870s Iceland became, for the nineteenth-century trendy traveller, what the lower slopes of the Himalayan mountains have become a century later for the mobile-phoned merchant banker.⁵²

Morris went to Iceland at a time when the northbound traveller had never had it so good. Creature comforts abounded. Travel book advertisements confirm that, amongst the quayside merchants ministering to the Iceland traveller at Leith, it was the age of ladies' inflatable baths, specially prepared food hampers, and odour-free leggings and overalls 'specially adapted for Travellers in Iceland'; the steamship service (£8 return, first class) boasted 'superior accommodation' in well-ventilated staterooms; and, awaiting the weary traveller in Reykjavík, was its oldest established hotel, 'thoroughly renovated and enlarged', with 'new commodious dining room', and (even better news) a 'billiard and smoking room have just been added'.⁵³

Morris's poetically expressed fear of the insensate traveller, obsessed with odour-free leggings, and deaf to the sound of sagas, was well founded: witness the leaden-souled response of Anthony Trollope's fellow travellers to the elegiac lyricism of Gunnar's famous description of his Hlíðarendi homestead with its 'bleikir akrar og slegin tún' (in Dasent's translation, 'the corn-fields are white to harvest, and the home mead is mown').⁵⁴ This scene, which has moistened the eyes of Icelandophiles for a hundred years and more, is cited solely as proof of the existence of corn in medieval Iceland.⁵⁵ Such breezy heedlessness could lead to cultural oblivion, as Morris reminds us in a memorable passage in *Sigurd the Volsung* in which Regin tells the youthful Sigurd how he had taught mankind to reap, sow, sail, sing and weave—only to find, within a generation, that these gifts were now attributed to the gods Frey, Thor, Bragi and Freyja.⁵⁶

In 'Gunnar's Howe' it seems unthinkable, or at least intolerable, to Morris that the ancient 'tale-teller laboured in vain'; yet he was himself to discover just how fragile could be the 'thin thread of insight and imagination'⁵⁷ which linked saga past to Victorian present. Sometimes restoring the thread required much labour. In 1873 he visited the 'Howe' again; the bright evening of 1871 had given way to a wet and 'melancholy' morning two years later. He himself seems to have found it 'some labour' to achieve the longed-for sense of bated breath: 'it was not until I got back from the howe and wandered by myself about the said site of Gunnar's hall and looked out thence over the great grey plain that I could answer to the echoes of the beautiful story—but then at all events I did not fail.'⁵⁸ In 'Gunnar's Howe' the 'thin thread' is still strong and taut, with strong philological support. In the second stanza *tide*, *edges* and *methinks* echo Old Icelandic forms: the conscientious Victorian reader would have discovered that *tíð* is glossed in the 1874 Richard Cleasby-Guðbrandur Vigfússon *Icelandic-English Dictionary* (the ultimate scholarly resource for the Victorian translator of Iceland) as 'tide, time', and *egg* as 'an edge'; and, unlike many other Victorian visitors to Hlíðarendi, Morris knew well that 'methinks' lay comfortably along the grain of the Icelandic impersonal form *þykkir mér*.

By the poem's third stanza, talk of tombs has given way to a

celebration of the defeat of death by the power of Gunnar's song, recorded in a saga by a 'man unremembered', and passed down the ages so as to bridge 'all the days that have been', or at least nine hundred years' worth of them:

Little labour for ears that may hearken to hear his death-
conquering song,

Till the heart swells to think of the gladness undying that
overcame wrong.

O young is the world yet, meseemeth, and the hope of it
flourishing green,

When the words of a man unremembered so bridge all the
days that have been.

As we look round about on the land that these nine
hundred years he hath seen.

Here is just the life-affirming optimism that Jón Sigurðsson missed, but which Morris seemed always to be able to find in Iceland. His Hlíðarendi experience was about life, about 'gladness undying', about 'youth', about 'hope', about Gunnar *singing* after his death, and about the noble saga of Gunnar and Njáll, told in the words of a long-forgotten sagaman, yet still alive in the minds of true travellers and pilgrims nine hundred years later. If the sagaman's fragile witness could sound so loud generations later, after damp, decay, fire, loss, theft, and relocation had wrought their random havoc on written records, then the world was indeed still young, and hope still green (the only other colour to be found in the poem), and the human heart could properly 'swell' with pleasure. So it is that the last verse returns from broad humanitarian musings to the dusk of the summer evening of 21 July 1871 which, Morris recalls in the poem, never quite grows dark and which finds nature bustling with activity:

Dusk is abroad on the grass of this valley amidst of the hill:
Dusk that shall never be dark till the dawn hard on
midnight shall fill

The trench under Eyiafell's snow, and the grey plain the sea
meeteth grey.

White, high aloft hangs the moon that no dark night shall
brighten ere day,

For here day and night toileth the summer lest deedless his
time pass away.

The three stages of an Icelandic summer circle of the sun are here linked by alliteration. Dusk dissolves first into dawn and then day, which eventually drifts into dusk. Night is banished before dark has a real chance to take hold; no intervention of the moon is required. Just as there are no sharp divisions between day and night, so the demarcation line between land and sea is unclear from a distance. The one runs into the other which runs into the one again. All the time the sense is of process and continuity, and the final line highlights the energy, progress, vitality, activity—the making and enduring—of a summer season not wishing to leave without having *done* something. The poem began with ancient 'deeds' preserved through the words of a saga; in July 1871 new deeds were being done in Iceland, and two new poems were forming in the mind of a sagastead pilgrim. Gunnar sang of doing brave deeds irrespective of death—and, for Morris, those brave deeds still spoke their message through the subsequent good desktop heroism of saga writer, scribe, editor, and a great English translator. In writing 'Gunnar's Howe' Morris, like those before him, was 'making' in order that the saga and its heroic vision might 'endure'.

Indeed, though Morris was not to know it, his own death was to bring him an heroic new life, linked to the noble Gunnar of Hlíðarendi. Gunnar, together with Njáll and many another worthy of Edda and saga, can be found paying tribute to Morris, the English 'skald', in a remarkable but neglected poetic obituary. Morris's celebrity in Iceland as a champion of their old literature led to several generous tributes being published in Iceland at the time of his death. Matthías Jochumsson's poem 'Vilhjálmur Morris' represents an additional laudatory voice, uncommented upon by Morris scholars, and an almost forgotten work even in Iceland.⁵⁹ Matthías Jochumsson knew Morris long before his death. Visiting London in 1874 he asks Eiríkur Magnússon to 'greet on my behalf the great troll, the living, lion-strong, Welsh Volsung'.⁶⁰ By 1876 Morris could lay even stronger claim to the soubriquet 'Welsh Volsung', for he had followed up his 1869 translation (in collaboration with Eiríkur Magnússon) of

Völsunga saga with his vast poetic paraphrase *Sigurd the Volsung*. It seems entirely fitting, therefore, that Matthías should have portrayed Morris as the mighty dragon-slaying Sigurðr, with his victim Fáfnir presented as a monstrous personification of the inequalities of wealth which held London in thrall at the time of the poet's death. The 1996 Morris centenary may have concentrated on Morris's domestic griefs, and the ambiguities—for some the glaring hypocrisies—underpinning Morris's distinctive blend of private capitalism and public socialism. For Matthías Jochumsson in 1896 the picture was much less complicated: Morris was a hero, an *Íslandsvinur* (friend of Iceland), and a doughty champion of the poor in Britain. If his death was a source of grief, his life was cause for celebration, and the creation of new myth.

Written in traditional *fornyrðislag* metre, and drawing heavily on a richly allusive reservoir of Eddic vocabulary, 'Vilhjálmur Morris' begins by reminding the reader that Morris fell in love with the idea of the north from an early age—he drank from the sacred vessels of Icelandic poetry when still a 'mjólkurbarn' (literally, a milk child); and claims that Iceland ('Snælands dóttir') never set eyes on a greater poetic genius ('snjallari snilling'). A parade of revered medieval Icelandic historians and saga heroes, each of whose words and works was known well to Morris, then express their tributes. Ari Þorgilsson⁶¹ rejoices that Icelandic history now has an authoritative voice in England; Egill Skallagrímsson⁶² says that his old adversary King Aðalsteinn of England⁶³ valued no warrior more than Iceland treasures William Morris; Snorri Sturluson⁶⁴ and Sæmundr fróði⁶⁵ salute the English hero; and, lastly, a group of saga worthies appears, each from a work (*Laxdæla saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* and *Brennu-Njáls saga*) which Morris had either promoted in Britain by translation or paraphrase, or for which he had a special fondness:

Mæltu orðheill	Good report they gave
ítrum gesti	the glorious guest—
einn ok sérhverr	each and all
afreksmanna:	of the action men:
Gunnar ok Gestr,	Gunnar and Gestur,

Gizur ok Hjalti,
Einar ok Kjartan,
Ormstunga, Njáll.⁶⁶

Gizur and Hjalti,
Einar and Kjartan,
Wormtongue and Njáll.⁶⁷

Morris's doctor claimed that Morris died 'of simply being William Morris, and having done more work than most ten men'.⁶⁸ Matthías Jochumsson mythologizes the moment, by drawing parallels with Morris's Sigurd. He thus enables Morris to participate in the *Völsung* legends which he had devoured as a young reader, and which he had served so loyally as translator and poet. There were, indeed, parallels between the way the workers left the 'plough alone in the furrow' to watch Sigurd's triumphant return to the Niblung court⁶⁹ and the similar levels of curiosity exhibited by nineteenth-century Icelanders at the progress of the English skald around their country. Yet Matthías prefers to equate Morris's tireless work amidst the wearisome world of metropolitan revolutionary socialism, with Sigurd's attack on Fáfnir:

Liggr linni
um Lundúnaborg;
þá vitum meinvætt
mesta í heimi,
eys hrælogum
á hremmdar dróttir
gandr þúsundrað
granabyrða.

Lies the serpent
round London;
know we that fearsome creature,
foulest in the world,
sprays with destructive fire
the fettered folk,
the monster of a billion
burdens of Grani.⁷⁰

Morris's path lay not to the greyness of Gnítaheidi but rather to the drafty and dispiriting committee rooms of Farringdon Road—but, unlike Sigurd, his all-conquering hero, he did not live to ride home in triumph with the hoard of gold:

róð svá Vafurlogann
vann á Jörmungandi:⁷¹
Dundi vítt í veröld
vorri. þar féll Morris.—

[he] rushed thus into the flames
flayed the mighty monster:
Resounded wide in the world
Of us all. *There fell Morris.*

But the Englishman's own brand of heroic sacrifice will, Matthías hopes, earn him lasting fame in modern Iceland:

Hátt í lofi lifi	May high in praise live
listfagr ástvin Braga, ⁷²	Bragi's art-rich hero,
—maðr kenni þat manni!—	—may man teach this to man—
Morris á foldu Snorra!	Morris in Snorri's land.

Matthías's wish has certainly been granted, even if (ironically) his own poem has played little part in the process. Morris's life and works certainly excited much interest in 'Snorri's land' during the 1996 Morris centenary celebrations. We may claim at least this for Matthías's neglected tribute—it is there that the great translator of Iceland finally finds himself translated by Iceland; it is there that the myth-maker is mythologized; and there that the loyal skald becomes a skaldic kenning. How Morris would have relished the completion of this fine philological circle.

NOTES

In this essay I adopt Icelandic spelling for Icelandic names and texts, for example, Njáll. Morris, like Dasent before him, modernized and Anglicized these spellings, for example, 'The Saga of Burnt-Njal'.

1. William Morris, *Icelandic Journals* (Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur, 1969), p. 185. The volume is a facsimile of the first edition of the *Journals* in *The Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. May Morris, 24 vols (London: Longmans and Green, 1910–15), VIII.

2. MS Lbs. [Landsbókasafn Íslands] JS 143.

3. See Páll Eggert Ólason, *Jón Sigurðsson*, 5 vols (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska þjóðvinafélag, 1929–33), passim.

4. 'þykir móðir vor heldur gráleit og gelgjuleg, dauf og döpur': quoted in Finnboði Guðmundsson, 'Um þjóðlegan metnað Jóns Sigurssonar', *Andvari* (1971), 134–35.

5. 'I think that poem about Gunnarshólmi is even more [gloomy] in nature, and I think we won't bother with it' (kvæðið um Gunnarshólma er þó enn meira í þá stefnu, og ég held við reynum ekki við það).

6. The title of the poem in the holograph manuscript copy (see note 2) sent to Jón Sigurðsson is simply 'Gunnar's Howe'.

7. *Ný Felagsrit* 29 (1872), 187–89.

8. 'Iceland First Seen' in *Poems by the Way* (London: F. S. Ellis, 1891): see *Collected Works*, IX, 125.

9. The most knowledgeable discussion of Morris's Iceland-related poetry remains Ruth C. Ellison, "The Undying Glory of Dreams": William Morris and "The Northland of Old", in *Victorian Poetry*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, Stratford upon Avon Studies, 15 (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), pp. 139–75.

10. Most recently discussed in Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris* (London: Faber, 1994), pp. 251–59, 319–23 and passim.

11. The fruits of his joint labours with Eiríkur Magnússon are to be found in the six volumes of translations published in the Saga Library (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1891–1905), and in *Three Northern Love Stories* (London: Ellis and White, 1875). An insightful recent discussion of Morris the saga translator can be found in Gary Aho's introduction to the William Morris Library series reprint of *Three Northern Love Stories*, Second Series, 11 (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1996).

12. Morris, *Icelandic Journals*, p. 21. Early in his voyage, when sailing near the Shetland Isles, Morris seeks to identify the place where Kári Solmundarson undertakes the saga's final act of vengeful violence (p. 10).

13. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 40.

14. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 43.

15. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 45.

16. The name means 'slope or mountain end'. *OED* lith sb.2 reminds us of the parallel Old English form, and its presence in post-medieval English place-names and dialect.

17. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 47.

18. George Webbe Dasent, *The Story of Burnt Njal, or Life in Iceland at the End of the Tenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1861), vol. 1, pp. 249–51; *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit XII (1954), ch. 78.

19. Thomas Bartholinus, *De Antiquitatibus Danicarum* (Copenhagen: J. P. Bockenhoffer, 1689), pp. 279–81 (ii.2).

20. *Gentleman's Magazine* 59/4 (1789), 937.

21. Ólafur Olavíus [Ólafsson], ed., *Sagan af Niáli Þorgeirssyni og sonum hans* (Copenhagen: J. R. Thiele, 1772).

22. *Nials-saga. Historia Niali et filiorum, Latina reddita, cum adjecta chronologia, variis textus Islandici lectionibus, earumque crisi, nec non glossario et indice rerum ac locarum.*

23. On Stanley and Iceland, see Andrew Wawn, 'John Thomas Stanley and Iceland: the Sense and Sensibility of an Eighteenth-Century Explorer', *Scandinavian Studies*, 53 (1981), 52–76.

24. More generally, see Margaret Omberg, *Scandinavian Themes in English Poetry 1760–1800*, *Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia*, 29 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1976).

25. On Victorian cultivation of the old north, see Andrew Wawn, 'The

Cult of "Stalwart Frith-thjof" in Victorian Britain', in Wawn, ed., *Northern Antiquity: The Post-Medieval Reception of Edda and Saga* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, 1994), pp. 211–54; and 'George Stephens, Cheapinghaven, and Old Northern Antiquity', *Studies in Medievalism*, 7 (1995), 63–104.

26. Andrew Wawn, 'The assistance of Icelanders to George Webbe Dasent', *Landsbókasafn Íslands, Árbók 1989*, nýr flokkur, 14 (1991), 73–92.

27. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. Norman Kelvin, 4 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984–96), I, 344.

28. *Icelandic Journals*, pp. 48–49; for his second visit, see p. 207.

29. See, for example, the country looked 'strange and awful' (*Iceland Journals*, p. 28) and the mountains 'very awful and mysterious' (p. 154), the 'terrible gorges' (p. 41) and 'this terrible though beautiful valley' (p. 150), and the 'dreadful lonely place' (p. 113), the 'dreadful upper valley' (p. 114) and the 'dreadful looking rift' (p. 170).

30. W. G. Collingwood and Jón Stefánsson, *A Pilgrimage to the Saga-Steads of Iceland* (Ulverston: W. Holmes, 1899), p. 29. The haunting pictorial record created by Collingwood's numerous water colours has been made available in *Fegurð Íslands og fornir sögustaðir*, eds Haraldur Hannesson et al. (Reykjavík: Örn og Örlygur, 1991).

31. Thomas Ellwood, *The Landnama Book of Iceland as it illustrates the Dialect, Place Names, Folk Lore, and Antiquities of Cumberland, Westmorland, and North Lancashire* (Kendal: T. Wilson, 1894), p. 58.

32. MacCarthy, *William Morris*, p. 281.

33. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 49. The equivalent Icelandic text is in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Íslenzk Fornrit, XII, pp. 192–93.

34. Only sometimes—*óþinn* is an adjective, and not the past participle which Morris appears to take it as.

35. I have learnt much about Dasent's approach to translation in discussions with Professor Robert Cook of the University of Iceland.

36. Though see above, note 11.

37. I quote from *Collected Works*, IX, 179.

38. Kelvin, *Letters*, I, 267–68.

39. MacCarthy, *William Morris*, p. 283.

40. Kelvin, *Letters*, I, 487.

41. See Charles Harvey and Jon Press, *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), a revelatory study of Morris the vigorous capitalist.

42. See John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

43. *Illustrated London News*, 29 August 1874; front page, and p. 206; 5 September 1874, p. 216; 12 September 1874, pp. 253, 256–57, 274; 19 September 1874, p. 271. The occasion for this extensive coverage was the visit to Iceland of the Danish King, to commemorate the thousandth anniversary of the arrival of the first settler.

44. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 151.

45. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 37.

46. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 131.

47. 'To the Muse of the North' in *Collected Works*, IX, 116.

48. *Collected Works*, VII, xxxvi. Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon had translated *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* as *The Saga of Grettir the Outlaw* (London: F. S. Ellis, 1869).

49. 'To the Muse of the North' in *Collected Works*, IX, 116.

50. *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs* (London: Ellis and White, 1877), p. 173; the wall hangings of the Niblung hall (p. 217) have images of Viking vessels, the Valkyrie, Mimir's fountain, and Miðgarðsormr.

51. *Collected Works*, IX, 126.

52. See Gary Aho, "'Með Ísland á heilanum": Íslandsbækur breskra ferðalanga 1772 til 1897", *Skírnir* 167 (1993), 205–58. Much less well informed, but infinitely more politically correct is Pamela Bracken Wiens, 'Fire and Ice: Clashing visions of Iceland in the Travel Narratives of Morris and Burton', *Journal of the William Morris Society* 11/4 (1996), 12–18.

53. Detail from the advertisements in W. G. Lock, *Guide to Iceland; A Useful Handbook for Travellers and Sportsmen* (Charlton: W. G. Lock, 1882).

54. Íslenzk Fornrit, xii, 182; Dasent, *Burnt Njal*, p. 236.

55. Anthony Trollope, 'Iceland', *Fortnightly Review*, ns, 30 (1878), 175–90.

56. *Sigurd the Volsung*, p. 111.

57. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 168.

58. *Icelandic Journals*, p. 207.

59. Written in 1896, the poem was first published in *Eimreiðin* 29 (1923), 257–61, together with a prose tribute by Matthías. The text had been discovered by the poet's son. The text cited in the present article derives from *Matthías Jochumsson: Ljóðmæli*, ed. Árni Kristjánsson, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Ósafoldarprentsmiðja, 1956–58), I, 557–71.

60. 'heilsaðu þeim mikla jötni, þeim lifanda, ljóneflda, welska Völsungi'; quoted in *Bréf Matthíasar Jochumssonar*, ed. Steingrímur Matthíasson (Akureyri: Menningarjóður, 1935), p. 126.

61. Ari Þorgilsson (1067–1148), Icelandic historian.

62. Egill Skallagrímsson, eponymous hero of *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*.

63. Aðalsteinn reigned 924–39; his many dealings with Egill are described in *Egils saga*.

64. Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241), author of *Heimskringla* which Morris and Eiríkur Magnússon translated.

65. Sæmundr Sigfússon (1056–1133), historian.

66. Gestr Oddleifsson and Kjartan Ólafsson from *Laxdæla saga* and hence 'The Lovers of Gudrun' (1869); Gunnlaugr 'Worm-tongue' from

Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu (one of the *Three Northern Love Stories*, 1875), and from *Burnt Njal* Gizurr, Hjalti Skeggjason and Einar Eyjólfsson (prominent figures in the judicial processes of the saga) and, of course, Gunnar of Hlíðarendi and Njáll Þorgeirsson.

67. My translations from the poem are relatively free; I attempt, wherever sense allows, to signal something of the spikily alliterative nature of the original. I am much indebted to Hallfreður Órn Eiríksson and Gísli Sigurðsson of the *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi* for guiding my reading of Matthías Jochumsson's poem.

68. MacCarthy, *William Morris*, p. vii.

69. *Sigurd the Volsung*, p. 226.

70. A characteristic Icelandic kenning, meaning 'gold'; in Icelandic sources, Grani was Sigurðr's horse; its 'burdens' refers to the gold which it carried home after Fáfnir's defeat.

71. An Eddic compound (see *Völuspá* v. 50) used for the *midgarðsormr* (World serpent), here used for Fáfnir.

72. Bragi was the Old Norse god of poetry.

Aestheticism in Translation: Henry James, Walter Pater, and Theodor Adorno

RICHARD SALMON

Truth still lives in fiction, and from the copy the original
will be restored

Friedrich Schiller (tr. Thomas Carlyle)

Schiller's celebrated defence of the redemptive social value of art as autonomous aesthetic illusion (*Täuschung*, translated as 'fiction' by Carlyle)¹ offers a suggestive proleptic commentary on the close relationship between late nineteenth-century aestheticism and a certain logic of translatability. Whilst this defence alludes to a familiar mimetic conception of the relationship between art and life—between the 'copy' and its 'original'—it also enacts a striking defamiliarization of this paradigm by claiming for aesthetic illusion a truth which is lacking from its ostensibly reflected source. Art, Schiller would seem to say, offers a truth which is lacking from truth; only within the translated form of the copy is the language of the original preserved. Aesthetic illusion thus acquires autonomy from objects in reality not so as to abandon mimesis (not for art to become wholly separate from life), but, rather, in order to redeem it. The value of art for social critique resides precisely in its function as a repository for those hypothetically mimetic truth-claims (however 'illusory', in a negative sense, their embodiment) which can no longer be located within existing socio-historical conditions.

In aestheticist writings of the late nineteenth century, similar questions concerning the translation and/or transposition of 'art' and 'life', 'original' and 'copy', and 'truth' and 'illusion' are raised