

# Leeds Studies in English

**Article:**

Magnús Fjalldal, 'Anglo-Saxon History in Medieval Iceland: Actual and Legendary Sources', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 34 (2003), 77-108

**Permanent URL:**

[https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=123803&silo\\_library=GEN01](https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=123803&silo_library=GEN01)



*Leeds Studies in English*

School of English

University of Leeds

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

## **Anglo-Saxon History in Medieval Iceland: Actual and Legendary Sources**

Magnús Fjalldal

The history of Anglo-Saxon England, as preserved in English sources, is often a tale of frustrating omissions and silences. Where information is lacking in domestic sources, foreign chronicles and histories that document English affairs can seem potentially attractive supplementary materials, albeit problematic ones in view of their questionable reliability. From time to time Icelandic texts — both the family sagas and the thirteenth-century histories of Danish and Norwegian kings — have been examined by English historians who have generally regarded the information that they offer as unreliable.<sup>1</sup> Less sceptical scholars have sought to pose four 'what-if' questions: what if Icelandic saga literature does preserve some first-hand accounts of events that actually took place in Anglo-Saxon England? What if Icelandic historians could be shown to have known English sources such as the works of William of Malmesbury, Roger of Hoveden, Simeon of Durham, Henry of Huntingdon and Florence of Worcester — not to mention the possibility that they might have known such works in a fuller form than we have them today? What if they knew continental works about English history, which were not available to the English themselves or had been lost before English historians could make use of them? And, last but not least, what if they might have had access to English historical documents, which in the course of time were lost, leaving only the faintest traces on medieval English history writing? All these questions have been asked, and it goes without saying that if any of them are answered in the affirmative — which, indeed, they all have been — the credibility of Icelandic medieval historians as a source of information on Anglo-Saxon England would be at least partly salvaged.

In this essay, I shall briefly trace the undisputed sources about England to which Icelandic authors had access, and the various attempts that have been made

over the years to invest these sources with a greater authority than prevailing tradition has recognised. In my discussion, however, 'history' is to be understood in a relatively narrow sense. During the Middle Ages, the interest of Icelandic writers in Anglo-Saxon England was mostly focused on people and events relating to the English monarchy, and my discussion inevitably reflects these priorities. However, this is not to say that saga writers had no interest in other aspects of English society. They did indeed make observations about the geography of England, its wealth and commercial importance, and its language and customs. Such information is, of course, just as historical as any royal event, but its origins can very seldom be traced to any known sources and hence falls outside the scope of this paper. But let us now consider the sources available to Icelandic historians.

### Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies

Although their origin and format are unknown, Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies are known to have circulated in Iceland at least as early as the thirteenth century, and thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Icelandic writers were particularly well informed about the affairs of the West Saxon royal house. *Heimskringla* (I, *Hákonar saga góða*, ch. 4),<sup>2</sup> for instance, mentions the death of King Æthelstan and goes on to add that he ruled for fourteen winters, eight weeks and three days. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Æthelstan ruled for fourteen years and ten weeks, so Snorri Sturluson is only a week and a half off the mark. *Páttir af Ragnars sonum* correctly tells of the torture and death of Edmund, King of East Anglia, at the hands of the Danish Viking raiders Yngvarr and Hústo.<sup>3</sup> *Illuga saga Tagldarbana* rightly observes that Æthelred succeeded King Edward, who had been murdered, but is probably less well informed when it proceeds to add that, at this time, England had 'for the most part' adopted Christianity.<sup>4</sup> However, the sagas are also sometimes wrong about the monarchy of Anglo-Saxon England. In *Ragnars saga loðbrókar ok sona hans*, Ragnarr kills a king named Ella and then proceeds to conquer and rule over all of England.<sup>5</sup> The saga's tale of Ragnarr's invasion of Northumbria has no historical basis, and the famous story of him dying in the Northumbrian snake-pit is based on the legend of Gunnarr Gjúkason.<sup>6</sup> The author of *Jatvarðar saga* (ch. 1)<sup>7</sup> claims that Æthelred (978-1016), correctly identified as the son of Edgar, was the first Anglo-Saxon king to rule over all England. On the other hand, *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta*

makes Æthelred the son of his brother Edward.<sup>8</sup> In *Dunstanus Saga* (pp. 8-11), the author becomes so confused with the complex genealogy of tenth-century English kings that on one occasion he has a father succeed his son.<sup>9</sup>

Knowledge about individual kings, or about the English monarchy and its habits as a whole, appears to have been relatively limited in medieval Iceland. In *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta* an unsurprisingly unidentified late tenth-century English king by the name of Aðalbrikt successfully fights the Danes and wins back Danish territory in England.<sup>10</sup> In *Jatvarðar saga*, we learn that at the consecration of Harold II as king a crown is held above his head. This is entirely plausible, but when the saga adds that this is a custom peculiar to the English monarchy we may regard this claim as rather doubtful.<sup>11</sup> *Dunstanus Saga* places pre-conquest earls [*jarlar*] and post-conquest barons [*baronar*] side by side in its narrative.<sup>12</sup> Even more dubious is the claim made by *Illuga saga Tagldarbana*, that its hero, Illugi, visits King Æthelred at his court in York. Illugi's errand — to ask the king to accept himself and his men as retainers — is commonplace in the Icelandic sagas, but citing York as Æthelred's royal seat is improbable, to say the least.<sup>13</sup> In *Sigrgarðs saga ok Valbrands* we witness the son of an Anglo-Saxon king being given the somewhat improbable name of Sigrgarður, and we encounter another English king called Valldimar, who in addition to his Slavic name is said to have many subordinate kings in England.<sup>14</sup>

### **Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Histories of the Kings of Britain***

The first written source that deals at least in part with the history of Anglo-Saxon England and that found its way to Iceland is Geoffrey of Monmouth's pseudo-history of the kings of Britain. Geoffrey died in 1154, and soon afterwards his *Histories of the Kings of Britain* had begun to influence some European writers. In Iceland, his work was translated (by an unknown scholar) very early, perhaps around 1200, as *Breta sögur*. However, that which is customarily referred to as the Icelandic translation of Geoffrey's work should be approached with care, because the Icelandic version is in fact more of an adaptation. The translator shortens and summarises as he goes along, and as he nears the end he appears to become ever more impatient with his task. For instance, in the *Breta sögur* account of the coming of the Saxons — their numerous perfidies, eventual expulsion and return — the emphasis is so much on action, with no concern for questions of motive, that the overall effect is to distort the original. (A modern

critical edition of *Breta sögur* — which we still await — might help to identify more redeeming qualities than the present writer has been able to find.) It is quite clear that to thirteenth-century Icelandic writers this translation was of little use as a source for the history of Anglo-Saxon England. Geoffrey of Monmouth's approach to his subject matter may have influenced the way in which Snorri Sturluson chose to cast his *Heimskringla*, but *Breta sögur* is never mentioned nor quoted by any other medieval writer. That said, the work may obliquely have suggested some ideas that do find expression in the Icelandic literature of the period, as with the notion that a king does not deserve to govern his country, or that God does not wish him to rule there, as with Geoffrey's description of King Thedvallas. In reality, though, the greatest contribution of *Breta sögur* may well have been to acquaint Icelandic writers with the geography of England in a way previously unknown. Geoffrey's history may be unreliable, but there is nothing wrong with his knowledge of English geography.

### *Saga Ósvalds konúgs hins helga*

Another pseudo-history, *Saga Ósvalds konúgs hins helga* — which must be based on a work or works that purported to narrate Anglo-Saxon history — was composed in Iceland. It dates from the fifteenth century and tells of the life of St Oswald, king of Northumbria from 634 to 642.<sup>15</sup> The saga describes his reluctance to accept the crown, and the miracles surrounding his coronation. Similarly, the celibate Oswald receives divine direction to marry the daughter of a cruel Muslim king, Gaudon. The marriage is accomplished by the conversion to Christianity of his bride-to-be, her abduction and successful battles against her father. Gaudon relents eventually and is also converted, along with his subjects, as he is unable to resist King Oswald and his mighty God. Oswald honours his pledge of celibacy even in marriage and rules his kingdom to everyone's satisfaction until his heathen neighbours from the countries of Forheiðe, Brithaniam, and Mercien invade his kingdom. King Oswald is killed in battle but continues to work miracles of all kinds long after his death.

There is little to be said about historical value of *Saga Ósvalds konúgs hins helga*. The author seems totally ignorant of life during the seventh century, as the glass windows of Gaudon's castle and the crusade outfits of King Oswald's men remind us. The same can be said of the saga's description of English history, geography and customs. The closest that the author comes to historical veracity is

to have Oswald killed in a battle against the Mercians, as indeed he was in 642. Various versions of King Oswald's life — both English and continental — exist, but the saga author does not appear to have used any of them. He refers to his sources from time to time in the saga but never identifies them.

### *Dunstanus saga*

During the fourteenth century, interest in another early English saint — Dunstan (ca. 909-88) — inspired the composition of another Icelandic work that concerned itself with Anglo-Saxon England. With *Dunstanus saga* we can identify both the name of the author — Árni Laurentiusson, a monk at the monastery of Þingeyrar — and his main sources, which were Adelard's *Vita Dunstani*, *Passio Sancti Eadwardi*, and some version of Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale*. His work shows traces of other sources, mostly Icelandic sagas about religious figures but also Latin saints' lives.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately for our purposes, Árni seems to have been neither particularly knowledgeable about nor interested in English history of the tenth century, or in Dunstan's career as a statesman. It is the melodramatic material in his sources that always attracts his attention.

*Dunstanus saga* is mostly a collection of visions and miracles, and hence there is not much historical meat on its narrative bones, despite the author having access to several foreign sources. In what little history there is, however, we find many errors. Though some of these can be blamed on Árni's sources, his own ignorance of tenth-century England, notably royal affairs, does little to lend authority to his saga. Though the main outline of Dunstan's career within the church is correct, little else is. We find only the briefest mention of Dunstan's career as a statesman, and none at all of his fame as a craftsman. Árni's ignorance of tenth-century English royalty leaves him unable to set Dunstan's life into any sort of historical perspective. Thus Æthelstan is succeeded by his father, Edward the Elder, who in Árni's account is credited with the deeds of Edmund, Edgar, and even Edgar's children. There is no reference to Eadred and Eadwig in Árni's book. Half way through his saga (p. 15) Árni does recognise the existence of Edgar as the monarch who appointed Dunstan bishop of Worcester and London, but at this point he is too confused to attempt any historical contextualisation.

As for lesser mistakes we may note that Árni (p. 8) refers to King Æthelstan as an *einuallz konungr*, 'absolute ruler', over all of England. In reality,

Æthelstan ruled over England as far as the Humber and was overlord of the Northumbrians, the Welsh and the Scots. The absolute rule that Árne has in mind was not achieved until the reign of Edgar (959-75). Of other inaccuracies, Árne has King Edward murdered by his stepmother (p. 11); in fact it was the queen who in all likelihood plotted his murder, with the actual deed probably carried out by one of her accomplices. Edward is then said to have been buried in a mysterious place called Uisturina, whereas he was in fact buried at Wareham. The long and bitter dispute between Thomas à Becket (murdered in 1170) and King Henry II, which forms one of Árne's digressions (p. 12), did not specifically involve royal control of ecclesiastical appointments as he insists; it had its origin in the issue of taxation. Moreover, Árne is completely wrong when he suggests that Thomas wrested the right to make episcopal appointments from the monarchy. The English church never won that right, and episcopal appointments are still a royal prerogative. In describing Dunstan's appointment as a bishop (p. 14), Árne incorrectly refers to his predecessor, Ælfheah [Elfegus] as an archbishop. In the saga, the proper punishment for coiners of false money becomes an issue as Dunstan grows frustrated over delays in carrying out the assigned sentence. On that occasion, Árne explains that under English law the customary punishment for counterfeiting money was the loss of both hands and both feet, yet, half a page later, he has the counterfeiters beheaded. In Anglo-Saxon England, however, the normal sentence was loss of the right hand. Here Árne's account may, however, have been influenced by knowledge of more severe punishments introduced into England during the twelfth-century.<sup>17</sup> In describing Dunstan's exile (p. 20), Árne has him driven from his bishopric, whereas in fact Dunstan was exiled before his consecration. Lastly, Árne is quite mistaken in his account of Archbishop Lanfranc (pp. 25-30), as when he seems to assume that the archbishop was Dunstan's immediate successor, whereas no less than eight archbishops served at Canterbury after Dunstan and before Lanfranc's appointment in 1070.

*Breta sögur*, *Saga Ósvalds konungs hins helga* and *Dunstanus saga*—along with a life of St Edward the Confessor [*Jatvarðar saga*], which I shall discuss later — are the only known Icelandic accounts that both focus on aspects of Anglo-Saxon history, and can be shown to be based on foreign sources, and it seems clear that they contain little information that could have benefited any medieval Icelandic reader with an interest in early English history. This conclusion — which was a product of nineteenth-century scholarship — was not challenged until the 1920s, when it was argued that there were indeed other

English sources that had been known and used by Icelandic saga writers. The earliest suggestion to this effect arose from an attempt to make sense of a mysterious place name in *Knyttlinga saga*.<sup>18</sup> On two occasions (chs 18 and 21), the saga refers to an English city called Morstr in such a way as to suggest that the author believed it to be a major settlement. In 1928, Eilert Ekwall proposed that Morstr was a misreading of OE *mynster*, 'a monastery', by a writer who was using an English source for the history of Cnut and his sons. This is indeed a very audacious theory, since it involves linguistic acrobatics of a high order to make Morstr and *mynster* fall into line. Ekwall realised that his suggestion required early Icelandic historians to have had access to and made use of English written sources, a possibility that earlier researchers such as Gustav Storm and Finnur Jónsson had always categorically rejected.<sup>19</sup> Undeterred by these objections, Ekwall then went on to propose the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the works of Henry of Huntingdon, Florence of Worcester and William of Malmesbury as possible sources used by the Icelandic authors of the kings' sagas. Ekwall provides little evidence to support his claim,<sup>20</sup> but his ideas seem to have provided inspiration for subsequent hunters of English sources and parallels in both the family sagas and the kings' sagas.

### *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*

Among the Icelandic family sagas, the most ambitious efforts to postulate English historical sources concern the Vínheiðr episode (the Battle of Brunanburh) of *Egils saga*. I have discussed this episode of the saga (chs 50-55) at some length elsewhere,<sup>21</sup> but it may be useful briefly to restate the relevant parts of my earlier discussion.

The author of *Egils saga* offers, as an introduction to the great battle, two short chapters (50 and 51) on Anglo-Saxon history from the time of Alfred to the reign of Æthelstan. As Bjarni Einarsson has noted,<sup>22</sup> the account of Æthelstan's lineage agrees with the brief genealogy of English kings which serves as an appendix to *Breta sögur*, but it is by no means certain whether the author actually used that work. *Egils saga* also gives accurate information on the respective geographical size of Northumbria, Scotland and England, also drawn from an unidentified source. The rest of the introduction is at variance with historical documents, however, with the exception of the saga's reference to the Scots and the Welsh as being among Æthelstan's enemies. King Alfred is said to have



gained control over England in much the same manner as Haraldr Fair-hair conquered Norway — by stripping local kings of their power, and Æthelstan, who in the saga has just succeeded to the throne, is perceived as a weaker monarch than his ancestors. Consequently, he faces an uprising from the various rulers whom his grandfather had dethroned, and their rebellious alliance is said to include the Irish (not the Norsemen in Ireland). With the exception of one name, Óláfr (the Red), who dies in the battle according to the saga and is wrongly identified as the king of the Scots, nothing in the saga's description of events that lead up to the Battle of Brunanburh can be confirmed by other sources. The same applies to the saga's description of the main battle which, not surprisingly, is won largely through the heroic efforts of the two brothers Egill and Þórólfr.

I find it hard to believe that *Egils saga* relates any genuine historical information concerning the Battle of Brunanburh, including the presence of Egill and Þórólfr in that battle. In the first place, in its description of Egill's exploits in England the saga follows a pattern which occurs in a number of other sagas: the hero arrives in England, is well received by the king, responds to a great task at hand, is handsomely rewarded and asked not to leave. In addition, the *Vínheiðr* episode is particularly characterised by unmistakable literary devices such as neat contrasts, people and events presented in pairs — sometimes with exact symmetry — all of which serve to heighten narrative effects. In short, the saga narrative seems far too smooth and seamless to agree with what little is actually known about the great battle, and the only purpose of the episode seems to be to promote the fame of the two brothers rather than to relate English history.

Others have disagreed. Sigurður Nordal, who published what is still the standard edition of the saga in 1933, maintained that *Egils saga's* account must be seen a mixture of fact and fiction. Discrepancies were to be expected as the narrative was based on information derived not from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* but from oral traditions that went back to Egill and his followers, who had participated in the battle without fully understanding all the events in which they were involved.<sup>23</sup> In other words, there was no reason to doubt that the details of the *Vínheiðr* episode were true, although the historical context into which the saga had put them was garbled. As we shall see, this line of reasoning continues to be popular.

Nordal's theory is not convincing. Even if we accept his initial premise, it seems odd that incidental details should be more likely to survive centuries of oral transmission than the main outline of the story to which they belong. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Egill and his followers would have failed to understand the

nature of the conflict or the parties involved, had they taken part in the battle. Of course the saga writer could be misinformed when he has Egill and Þórólfr devise — or at least participate in formulating — the delaying tactics that allow King Æthelstan to gather more troops, but in his praise poem to the king (stanza 22) Egill is again made to pose as a strategist advising him that now the time is right for an invasion of Scotland.<sup>24</sup> Despite these apparent flaws in his argument, Nordal's defence of the historical value of the episode continues to be accepted in Icelandic and non-Icelandic scholarship to date.<sup>25</sup> But in recent decades no-one has followed in his footsteps in claiming that the episode is based on first-hand accounts surviving in oral tradition. Critics who believe that the episode contains historical elements now tend to regard their presence in the saga as a reflection of the author's complex and highly selective use of written sources brought to Iceland from England.

Two of Nordal's points of defence, the resemblance between Simeon of Durham's Weondune and Vínheiðr as place names, and the identification of Adam of Bremen's Hringr with the saga's Hringr, have been resurrected by A. L. Binns, but without any new evidence to remove the linguistic and historical obstacles that Alistair Campbell noted decades ago in his edition of *The Battle of Brunanburh*.<sup>26</sup> Binns' four stage hypothesis seeks to explain how the saga author might have come by this information:

- (1) Old Norse texts such as *Egils saga* have an historically inaccurate 'top dressing', but 'their central part retains something of the genuine historical tradition of the York kingdom'.<sup>27</sup>
- (2) It has been suggested that a contemporary chronicle of Viking York was written by Anglo-Saxon chroniclers there and that this document — although there is no direct reference to its existence — was a common source for later monastic writers such as Simeon of Durham, Roger of Hoveden, William of Malmesbury and others.<sup>28</sup>
- (3) During the early eleventh century Bjarnharðr bókvísi [Beornheard the book-learned] and other English missionaries brought with them to Iceland 'a good library of ecclesiastical historiography including a chronicle of Viking York'.<sup>29</sup>
- (4) Icelandic thirteenth-century writers had access to these historical materials and used them in their works.<sup>30</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the evidence on which this hypothetical chronicle of Viking York rests, but it is highly unlikely that if such a document ever existed, it would have reached Iceland at the time and in the way that Binns suggests. The main objection must be that there is no clear reason why

an English missionary should think that a chronicle of Viking York ought to form a part of his luggage to Iceland. No historical contact point, other than the Battle of Brunanburh, has ever been proposed between Iceland and Northumbria or England in the tenth century. Are we then to assume that this hypothetical chronicle celebrated the role of Egill and Þórólfr in the great battle and drew attention to their nationality as Icelanders? The former assumption is dubious, given the evidence of other English sources, and the latter historically impossible. Bjarnharðr's role in Icelandic literature may also have been less striking than Binns would have us think. Foreign missionaries do not appear to have commanded much respect or status in eleventh-century Iceland, and Bjarnharðr's nickname may even be derogatory. Books certainly reached the country through missionary activity, but even if we accept that a chronicle of Viking York might have found its way to Iceland, it seems very strange that it should only leave its mark on a few chapters of one saga.<sup>31</sup> Still, at least one recent commentator (in search of the battle site) treats Binns' chronicle hypothesis as an established fact, and it is unlikely that he will be the last to do so.<sup>32</sup>

Of recent studies, the most extensive discussion of *Egils saga's* use of sources is Bjarni Einarsson's *Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga* [*The Literary Sources of Egils saga*] and his ideas concerning the author's use of English materials in the Vinheiðr episode resemble to some extent those of Binns. Bjarni finds two layers of narrative in the episode and then goes on to argue that certain pieces of information and discrepancies in the saga become easier to understand in the light of English sources that could have been available to the author.<sup>33</sup> The saga writer used some of this historical information directly<sup>34</sup> but recast parts of it for his own special purpose<sup>35</sup> which was chiefly to produce an entertaining story.<sup>36</sup> Specifically, the following points in the Vinheiðr episode are supposed to show contact with English sources:

(1) The most reliable English sources explain that Æthelstan fought against troops from Ireland, identified in the *Chronicle* poem as 'Norðmenn'. This would explain why the saga author includes the Irish among Æthelstan's enemies.<sup>37</sup>

(2) Similarly, the saga's mention of the treacherous Welsh earls (*Bretar*) agrees with Simeon of Durham's statement that the king of the Cumbrians took part in the battle against Æthelstan.<sup>38</sup>

(3) The author of *Egils saga* would have realised that William of Malmesbury's Anlafus (son of King Sihtric of Northumbria) had to be descended from Ragnarr loðbrók and hence identified him with the legendary forefathers of Ari inn fróði: Óláfr the White, King of Dublin, and his son Þorsteinn the Red, King of

Scotland. From these elements the author of the saga fashioned Anlafus and Constantinus into a single person, Óláfr the Red, and then proceeded to follow William's account of the invasion into England — that is, the version that has Anlafus invade across the border without the aid of Norse troops.<sup>39</sup>

4) Bjarni maintains that William's description of the events leading up to the battle has a parallel in the saga:

Et Ethelstano ex consulto cedente, ut gloriosus jam  
insultantem vinceret, multum in Angliam processerat juvenis  
audacissimus et illicita spirans animo, cui tandem magnis  
artibus ducum, magnis viribus militum, apud Brunefeld  
occursum.

Bjarni does not translate this quotation, but he refers to it in a way that makes it clear that he interprets the key phrase 'ex consulto cedente' to mean that Æthelstan withdrew (to gather more troops) after a council: 'in order that he might more gloriously defeat the now attacking foe, this most audacious youth, intent on lawless deeds, [who] had proceeded far into England, and was at length opposed at Brunefeld'.<sup>40</sup> The text in *Egils saga* (ch. 52) that supposedly reflects this information in William's history is as follows:

En er Aðalsteinn spurði þetta allt, þá átti hann stefnu  
við höfðingja sína ok ráðamenn, leitaði þá eptir, hvat  
tiltökilegast væri, sagði þá allri alþýðu greiniliga þat, er hann  
hafði frétt um athöfn Skotakonungs ok fjölmenni hans...en sú  
ráðagørð staðfestisk, at Aðalsteinn konungr skyldi fara aptr  
ok fara á sunnanvert England ok hafa þá fyrir sér liðsafnað  
norðr eptir landi öllu, því at þeir sá elligar myndi seint  
safnask fjölmennit, svá mikit sem þyrfti, ef eigi drœgi  
konungr sjálf at liðit.

[When Æthelstan heard of all this he held a meeting with his  
leaders and statesmen to work out what would be the most  
expedient thing to do, explaining clearly to the whole  
gathering what he had learned of the activities of the Scottish  
king and his great army.... But it was resolved that King  
Æthelstan should go back and work through the south of  
England, and bring his own army north up the length of the

country. This was because they realised that they would be slow in collecting as many men as they needed if the king himself did not call out the people.]<sup>41</sup>

5) The following points in William's account also have their parallels in *Egils saga* according to Bjarni:<sup>42</sup>

(a) Anlafus' espionage mission mirrors the saga's account of the tents of Æthelstan's troops having been pitched in such a way as to give the enemy an exaggerated impression of the strength of the English forces.

(b) The English troops are said to have pitched their tents and waited for reinforcements both in William's account and in the *Vínheiðr* episode.

(c) Both narratives talk of a night raid by the enemy and a king who is woken up.

(d) In both accounts the enemy is recognised at dawn.

(e) William and the saga author both state that the English did not fear a surprise attack.

In general terms Bjarni's theory creates more problems than it solves. It suggests that the saga author had access to and made some use of a version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the works of Simeon of Durham and William of Malmesbury. Furthermore, it implies that the author made selective use of these works — first one and then another — without any effort to collate different and conflicting information. Regardless of this peculiar mode of working, a good deal of research would have been required. Why should an author whose chief purpose was to entertain his readers have bothered to do it, and why did he not incorporate a good story like William's account of the harpist-spy? It seems extraordinary that the above-mentioned sundry details from William's work were the only ones that the saga author saw fit to use.

As to the specific issues that Bjarni raises, the following objections may be considered:

(1-2) The suggestion that the author's reference to the Irish and the Welsh derived from English sources does not solve the various problems that surface at this point in the text. Chapter 50 relates that King Alfred established himself as an overlord in England. With the succession of his young grandson to the throne, those lords who previously had been forced to surrender their lands rebel against him, and the reader would expect these to be some of his English vassals. Instead, the rebellion comes from places that have not previously been mentioned as parts

of Æthelstan's realm: Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Irish are never heard of again, and should the reader wonder why Óláfr is a King of Scotland — since we have already been told that all kings of territories conquered in Alfred's day had been demoted to earls (ch. 51) — it is evident from the following chapter that the King of Scotland had indeed never yielded to any English form of overlordship, nor is it ever quite clear why he is invading Æthelstan's kingdom. Similarly, the reader is informed at the beginning of ch. 52 that King Óláfr has conquered all of Northumbria, whereas Egill's stanza (16) refers to Álfgeirr's losing half of it. Æthelstan's dealings with the Scots, the Welsh and Sihtric of Northumbria are duly explained in William's work, and so is the reason why the Scots and the Welsh choose to rebel. Yet, the author of *Egils saga* supposedly decided to ignore that information. As to the presence of the Irish, it seems incredible that an author who had access to the *Chronicle* poem would not have realised that he was dealing with members of a Norse kingdom in Ireland. It seems more likely that the saga's account relates in some way to the state of affairs in the British Isles at the time of its composition in the mid thirteenth century.

(3) The idea of deliberately editing William's text to conflate Constantinus and Anlafus into a single person in order to pay some kind of a tribute to a noble family in Iceland seems far-fetched and hardly sufficient reason to explain such a drastic change in William's account.

(4) The passage quoted from *Egils saga* relates that Æthelstan meets with his leaders, solicits their advice and decides to travel back south to gather more troops. Bjarni's argument for a parallel rests solely on his interpreting the phrase 'ex consulto cedente' to mean that the king withdrew (in order to gather troops) after a council. Dorothy Whitelock translates the same phrase to mean that Æthelstan 'deliberately retired',<sup>43</sup> and reads William's panegyric as not only confirming the king's failure to take action, but also apparently rebuking him for this:

For since our king, confident and eager in youth, deeming his service done, had long spent slow leisure hours, they [i.e. the enemy] despoiled everything with continuous ravages.... At length the complaining rumour roused the king, not to let himself thus be branded that his arms gave way before the barbarian axe.<sup>44</sup>

(5) The remaining similarities that Bjarni claims between William's work and *Egils saga* are tangential and in some cases not entirely correct:

(a) Apart from the intrigue involved, I fail to see any parallel between Anlafus' spying in Æthelstan's camp and the saga's story of the cleverly arranged tents.

(b) It is true that the English army waits for reinforcements in both William's account and in the saga, but all other circumstances are different. In William's work the wait provides the framework for Anlafus' spying and his attempt to assassinate Æthelstan; *Egils saga* describes elaborate delay tactics rather than passive waiting.

(c) The raids in the two accounts are entirely different. The saga tells of forces that set off at night and reach their destination at dawn to begin a battle; William describes an attack that takes place at night with the express purpose of murdering the English king. The kings who wake up in the two stories are different kings responding to different circumstances.

(d) It is correct that the coming of daylight is mentioned both in the saga and by William, but in different contexts. The surprise raid led by Hringr and Aðils fails because their troops are spotted at daybreak by the guards in Þórólfr and Egill's camp. William, on the other hand, describes a battle that begins at night and has the English at a disadvantage until dawn, when King Æthelstan successfully fends off the enemy.

(e) That the English are said not to fear a surprise attack in both accounts is also somewhat misleading. In William's story it is King Æthelstan who is caught by surprise, because he does not fear that the enemy would dare to attack him in the night. In *Egils saga* we are told that Aðils thinks that the English will not be prepared to meet an attack, and events prove him wrong.

### **The kings' sagas: *Knýtlinga saga* and *Heimskringla***

All in all, Bjarni Einarsson's ideas concerning the influence of the English ecclesiastical historians on *Egils saga* are not convincing, and neither are similar claims that have been made in respect to two of the kings' sagas: *Knýtlinga saga* and *Heimskringla*. *Knýtlinga saga* introduces us to Sveinn Fork-beard, already King of Denmark, and keen to add England to his collection. Unfortunately, *Knýtlinga saga* says less about his campaigns in England than one would wish, but the very short account has, as we shall see, some interesting touches. King

Sveinn, we are told, turns his attention to England after campaigns in Saxony and elsewhere. In England he raids extensively and fights many battles against King Æthelred with mixed success. King Sveinn attacks London in 994, presumably with Ólafr Tryggvason, but fails to capture the city. Sveinn made another attempt in 1013, when he besieged London, and again he failed. Yet it seems that at least some Icelandic authors believed that he had been successful in his campaigns against London. The Appendix to *Jómsvíkinga saga* in *Flateyjarbók* (I, ch. 164) has Sveinn establishing an army of élite troops [*Þingamannalið*] and placing it in London. In reality, however, London eluded Sveinn's capture, although he was eventually to conquer the greater part of England. He spent a number of years harrying and burning and became known as *sfándi Engla*, 'the enemy of the English'. At the height of these hostilities, King Æthelred fled the country. King Sveinn died in his sleep one night, according to *Knýtlinga saga*, which adds that the English believed that King Edmund killed him in the same manner that St Mercurius killed Julian the Apostate.

*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* fully confirms this short description of Sveinn's military exploits in England. According to the *Chronicle*, he raids England on three separate occasions: first by attacking London in 994, then there is a second campaign (1003-1005), and a third in the summer of 1013 when Sveinn did indeed conquer much of England, which resulted in King Æthelred's flight. King Sveinn died of an unknown disease in February 1014.

Sveinn's death, as English people view it (according to *Knýtlinga saga*), is an interesting story in itself. Julian the Apostate was a nephew of Emperor Constantine the Great and was an emperor himself from 361 to 363. He was brought up as a Christian but renounced the faith at an early age. Julian was more interested in Greek religion and philosophy than the Church deemed fit and proper, and that earned him the unflattering title of *apostata*. As an emperor, he tried to resurrect the old Roman faith, while allowing his subjects freedom of religion. He was noted for his many talents and compared to the likes of Marcus Aurelius and Alexander the Great. He was fatally wounded by a spear in a battle against the Persians in Mesopotamia in his thirties. When he died, it was rumoured that the Virgin Mary had sent St Mercurius to kill him. St Mercurius' successor in destroying heathen invaders, Edmund, King of East Anglia, was killed by the Vikings in 870. The story that King Sveinn died at his hands is also told in Hermannus' work *De miraculis sancti Eadmundi*, which relates that Sveinn refused to relieve the heavy burden of taxation from the monastery of Bury St Edmunds, which was Edmund's own monastery.<sup>45</sup> Whatever the reason, for the



English to recall the story of Julian's death in connection with the death of King Sveinn says a great deal about what the native population must have felt about him and other Viking raiders. Bjarni Guðnason, the editor of *Knýtlinga saga*, believes that the kenning *ffándi Engla* and the story of Sveinn's death reflect English views and sympathies. He furthermore argues that it is likely that the ultimate source of *Knýtlinga saga*'s account of Sveinn's campaigns in England was an English book,<sup>46</sup> which is of course not impossible, but difficult to prove from evidence as scanty as this.

Sveinn's son, King Cnut, continued his father's efforts to conquer London. During his siege, the town was — as before — defended by Edmund Ironside and his brothers. Then, *Knýtlinga saga* tells us that messengers went between the two sides, because — as the saga wrongly claims — King Cnut was married to their mother. A deal was eventually struck, and it was agreed that King Cnut and Edmund Ironside should divide the country between them, and, in the event of one of them dying without issue, the other should then rule over all of England.

Bjarni Guðnason firmly believes that in the saga's account of peace being brokered between King Cnut and Edmund Ironside he has found a genuine contact point between English and Icelandic historical works.<sup>47</sup> His argument is briefly as follows. The *Annals* of Roger of Hoveden include a short work relating the history of England between 975 and 1042 called *Liber de legibus Angliæ*. This text, of unknown authorship, is assumed to date from around 1050. Bjarni argues that the account of how peace is made between King Cnut and Edmund Ironside in *Liber de legibus Angliæ* and in Icelandic texts such as *Olafs saga hins helga* (in *Flateyjarbók*), the Appendix to *Jómsvíkinga saga*, and finally in *Knýtlinga saga* itself, is so similar that accidental likeness can be ruled out, and a genetic relationship can be confidently asserted between the English and Icelandic versions.

*Liber de legibus Angliæ* and other English sources are agreed that Edmund reigned for nine months and that during this time he fought five battles against King Cnut. Icelandic histories say the same, according to Bjarni. *Liber de legibus Angliæ* and various Icelandic histories describe how peace was made, but only *Knýtlinga saga* and *Olafs saga hins helga* state that important or powerful people — *rikismenn* — acted as go-betweens. *Knýtlinga saga* is the only Icelandic source to mention that as a part of the truce between King Cnut and Edmund Ironside oaths were sworn and hostages exchanged. Bjarni has to admit, however, that *Liber de legibus Angliæ* does not mention anything about this. Yet the oath swearing is found in the *Chronicle* of Florence of Worcester, and the hostage

exchange in *Encomium Emmae*, and both find expression in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. According to Bjarni, we must assume that a now lost *Knúts saga* was the main source for *Knýtlinga saga* (and for the description of these events in *Olafs saga hins helga*), and it is clear, he says, that the author of this *Knúts saga* drew upon English sources.

It has to be said that Bjarni Guðnason provides most of the ammunition against these claims in the course of his own discussion. Concerning the nine month reign of Edmund Ironside and the five battles he fought with King Cnut, it emerges that *Knýtlinga saga* says nothing at all about the length of Edmund's reign and enumerates only four battles; five says Bjarni, if we add the battle over London, but then he has to admit that the saga mentions various other battles that King Cnut also fought in England. The very close agreement that Bjarni sees between *Liber de legibus Angliæ*, *Knýtlinga saga*, *Olafs saga hins helga* and the Appendix to *Jómsvíkinga saga* concerning the details of the peace process is quite simply not there. Neither *Liber de legibus Angliæ* nor *Knýtlinga saga* say anything about important or powerful people acting as intermediaries between the two kings. It is only *Olafs saga hins helga* that mentions such dignitaries. The Appendix to *Jómsvíkinga saga* states that both Danes and Englishmen urged the two kings to make peace. *Knýtlinga saga* only talks about *menn*, 'people', going between them — something that even the most slow-witted Icelandic historian would probably have been able to figure out for himself — and *Liber de legibus Angliæ* makes no mention at all of any go-betweens, and states simply that peace was made. That *Knýtlinga saga* alone of Icelandic sources notes that oaths were made and hostages exchanged proves nothing about this information being derived from English historical sources, even if the *Encomium Emmae* agrees with one point, Florence of Worcester's *Chronicle* with another and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* with both. Under the circumstances surrounding the peace process between King Cnut and Edmund, it would have been naturally assumed that this — or something like it — was the way in which a deal would have been brokered. As for the three English works of history that Bjarni cites to establish the English connection of *Knýtlinga saga* in its description of the peace process, it has never been conclusively demonstrated that any of them was known in Iceland during the Middle Ages.

Edmund Ironside died in 1016, and his death was quite obviously a major turning point in King Cnut's career. Judging from English sources such as the *Encomium Emmae*, Florence of Worcester's *Chronicle* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, it seems likely that he died of some unspecified disease. Of course,

little imagination is required to see that the agreement between the two kings could have encouraged Cnut to have Edmund murdered, bearing in mind what was at stake. This is precisely what happens in some later sources which blame King Cnut for Edmund's death, beginning with Hermannus' work *De miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*. *Knýtlinga saga* (ch. 16) describes King Edmund's death as follows:

Heiðrekr strjóna hét einn ríkr maðr, er fé tók til þess af Knúti konungi, at hann sviki Játmund konung ok dræpi hann með morðvígi, ok þetta varð hans bani. Heiðrekr var þó fóstri Játmundar konungs, ok trúði hann honum sem sjálfum sér. [There was a powerful man called Eadric streona who was paid by King Cnut to betray King Edmund and to make a murderous attack upon the king, and this was the cause of his death. Yet, Eadric had fostered King Edmund, who trusted him as he would trust himself].<sup>48</sup>

According to English sources, Eadric streona was a notorious deserter and traitor whom King Cnut had had killed in 1017. The *Encomium Emmæ* relates that his execution was carried out by Earl Eiríkr. The great faith that King Edmund had in Eadric streona is also described in the *Encomium Emmæ* which says that Edmund relied heavily on Eadric, who was a wise but wily man. The *Encomium Emmæ* then adds that King Edmund did not think that any matter had been properly deliberated unless Eadric had been there to advise. Bjarni Guðnason wonders if *Knýtlinga saga* might have derived its references to King Edmund's trust in Eadric from the *Encomium Emmæ*. That, however, seems unlikely. If the author of *Knýtlinga saga* had had access to the *Encomium Emmæ*, he would also have known its description of how King Edmund Ironside actually died, and would then surely have realised that the *Encomium Emmæ* was a source much closer to Edmund and the events of his life than Hermannus or the Icelandic kings' sagas. Therefore, it makes no sense to believe that the *Knýtlinga saga* author would have borrowed one relatively unimportant detail of the story from the *Encomium Emmæ* only to leave out an element of real importance — namely, the manner in which King Edmund actually died.

In Snorri's *Heimskringla* two sentences in which he first refers to the long reign of King Cnut's family in Denmark (II, ch. 130) and a further remark, where Snorri explains that he inherited his Danish kingdom but waged a war to possess

England (III, ch. 78), have been singled out by Ove Moberg in an attempt to prove that they originate from a single sentence in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. The first of Snorri's sentences simply reads: 'Þeir langfeðgar höfðu ráðit langa ævi fyrir Danmörku' [[Cnut's] ancestors had reigned over Denmark for as long as they lived]. This, Moberg claims, is comparable with a stitched-together sentence from William's work: 'Danamarchia, quam avito...obtenebat' ['Denmark...which he held by inheritance']. The second sentence reads: 'En gamli Knútr eignaðisk at erfð Danaríki, en með hernaði ok orrostu England' [But old Cnut inherited the kingdom of Denmark but came to possess England through warfare and battle]. Moberg believes that this mirrors a longer version of William's sentence, '[Cnuto] nec contenta Danamarchia quam avito, et Anglia quam bellico jure obtenebat' [[Cnut] not content with Denmark which he held by inheritance and England which was his by right of war].<sup>49</sup>

This argument does not seem to make sense. We are asked to believe that Snorri had access to William's work, and that the best use he could make of it was to take one sentence element and create from it two sentences in his *Heimskringla*. The sentence elements do not even match particularly well, and the information that they contain was common knowledge that Snorri did not need William — or anyone else — to tell him. Elsewhere, Moberg has argued with remarkable confidence that the monastery of Þingeyrar and the bishopric of Hólar both possessed books containing extracts from the works of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon.<sup>50</sup> This is wishful thinking, as there is no evidence at all to confirm that these two places owned the above-mentioned works.<sup>51</sup>

In *Knytinga saga*, the final chapter in King Cnut's life describes his pilgrimage to Rome (ch. 17), which took place in 1027, although the saga — along with other Icelandic sources — assumes that it was made in 1031. We learn of his great generosity to all and sundry during his journey, and a letter which King Cnut sent to his subjects from Rome confirms that he was given a splendid reception there.<sup>52</sup> On his return to England the saga relates that he was struck down by yellow fever and died in the same year on the 'ides of November', that is on the thirteenth.<sup>53</sup> English sources tell a different tale, including the C and D versions of the *Chronicle* as well as Florence of Worcester: they maintain that King Cnut died on 12 November 1035. Despite this difference — presumably arising because both the Icelandic and English sources share the word 'ides' — it has been suggested that, in the absence of any further evidence, an English source, probably Florence of Worcester, was being used.<sup>54</sup> This claim is all the

more curious, because it implies that the borrower was only interested in lifting one commonplace word from the English text and chose to ignore its information about the exact date and the year of the king's death. King Cnut's cause of death is also unconfirmed by English or any other sources. *Knytlinga saga*, which on the whole is strangely ill-informed about its main hero, states (ch. 18) that King Cnut is buried in the great city of Morstr, and ends with an incorrect statement of the length of his reign over Denmark and England.<sup>55</sup> King Cnut died in Shaftesbury and was buried in Winchester.

After the death of King Cnut, *Knytlinga saga* relates that his sons Harold and Hardacnut divided the realm in such a way that Harold got England and Hardacnut Denmark. Furthermore, the saga adds that at this point Edward the Confessor returned to England where he was received with great hospitality, as was fitting for such a man. For the most part, this account is stuff and nonsense. In reality, Hardacnut was staying in Denmark when his father died. By virtue of being the son of King Cnut and Emma, he alone was the rightful heir to the English throne. It was probably because he feared that a war with his neighbour King Magnús the Good of Norway was impending that Hardacnut chose to remain in Denmark. Under these circumstances, his half-brother Harold, son of Cnut and Ælfgifu, took the opportunity to secure the English crown for himself. Queen Emma then fled to Flanders. When peace was finally made between Hardacnut and King Magnús, Hardacnut immediately went to Flanders to see his mother and began to plan for an invasion of England so that he could drive Harold out. In 1040, before the invasion had materialised, King Harold died. Edward the Confessor did not return to England until after Harold's death; he would certainly have had good reason to fear for his life had he returned while Harold was still alive. *Knytlinga saga* also claims that King Harold was buried in that mysterious city of Morstr, whereas Snorri (*Heimskringla* III, ch. 17) locates his burial in Winchester. According to the *Chronicle* and other sources, he was actually buried in Westminster.

Ove Moberg claims that Snorri's description of the deaths and successions of the kings of England after the relatively long reign of Cnut reveals such close affinities to the E version of the *Chronicle* that there must be a connection. He maintains that either Snorri was using the *Chronicle* or a work closely related to it as his source.<sup>56</sup> In presenting Moberg's comparison of the two texts, I have taken the liberty of substituting for his earlier edition of *Heimskringla* the standard one by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, and in the Icelandic and Old English passages, I have underlined those parts that do not have clear parallels in the other text, and bold-

faced material that does not match at all:

*Heimskringla* III, ch. 17:

Haraldr Englakonungr andaðisk **fimm vetrum eptir andlát Knúts** ins ríka, fœður síns. Hann var jarðaðr hjá feðr sínum í **Vincestr**. Eptir andlát hans tók konungdóm í Englandi Hǫrða-Knútr, bróðir Haralds, annarr sonr gamla Knúts. Var hann þá konungr bæði yfir Englandi ok Danaveldi. Réð hann því ríki tvá vetr. Hann varð sótt dauðr á Englandi ok er jarðaðr í Vincestr hjá feðr sínum. Eptir andlát hans var til konungs tekinn í Englandi Eatvarðr inn góði, sonr Aðalráðs Englakonungs ok Emmu dróttningar, dóttur Ríkharðar Rúðujarls. Eaðvarðr konungr var bróðir sammœðri Haralds ok Hǫrða-Knúts.  
[Harold, king of England died **five years after the death of his father Cnut the Great**. He was buried with his father at **Winchester**. After his death, another of old Cnut's sons, Hardacnut, the brother of Harold, became king of England. With that he ruled both over England and Denmark. He ruled over this kingdom for two years. He died of a disease in England and is buried in Winchester with his father. After his death Edward the Confessor, son

*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, E version:

1039. Her forðferde Harold cyng...  
7 he wæs bebyrged æt **West mynstre**.  
7 he weolde Engla landes **iiii gear 7 XVI wucan ...7 on þis ilcan gear com** Hardacnut cyng to Sandwic...  
7 he wæs sona under fangen ge fram Anglum ge fram Denum....1041:  
7 he wæs cyng ofer eall Engla land twa gear buton X nihtum. 7 he is be byrged on Ealdan mynstre on Winceastre mid Cnute cynge his fæder.  
7 ear þan þe he bebyrged wære. eall folc ge ceas Eadward to cynge on Lundene. 1040: On þis ilcan gear com Eadward Aepelredes sunu cinges hider to lande of Weallande. se wæs Hardacnutes cynges broþor, hi wæron begen Aelfgiues <sup>57</sup> suna. seo wæs Ricardes dohtor eorles.  
[1039: In this year king Harold passed way...and he was buried at **Westminster**, and he had ruled England for **four years and sixteen weeks**.... In this same year came king Harthacnut to Sandwich,... and he was at once received by both English and Danes.... 1041: he was king over all England for two years all but ten days. He is buried in the Old Minster in Winchester with king Cnut, his father. Before he was buried, the whole nation chose Edward to be king in London. 1040: In this same year Edward, son of king Æthelred, came

of King Æthelred and Queen  
Emma, the daughter of Duke  
Richard of Rouen, was made king  
of England. King Edward was  
the brother of Harold and Harda-  
cnut, having the same mother.]<sup>58</sup>

hither to this country from France: he  
was the brother of king Harthacnut,  
and they were both sons of Ælfgifu,  
who was the daughter of duke Richard.]

One does not have to inspect these allegedly parallel texts for long to see that there are plenty of differences between them. It is well known that as a historian Snorri always placed his faith in what he perceived to be his oldest sources; hence his great reliance upon the supposedly genuine skaldic verses which he believed had been composed at the same time as the events that they describe. It is therefore hard to imagine that Snorri, using a contemporary English chronicle, would not have believed it to be more accurate than any other source materials. And yet he does not follow the *Chronicle* as regards the length of Harold's reign or his place of burial. The methodology which is used to produce this comparison also leaves something to be desired. The entries for the three years are taken apart and then spliced together in an attempt to match Snorri's text (cf. 1039-1041-1040), and in the case of the entry for 1039, bits of individual sentences are stitched together in order to produce a parallel. With these problems in mind, it is surprising that both Bjarni Guðnason, the editor of *Knýtlinga saga*, and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, the editor of *Heimskringla*, accept Moberg's findings without any apparent hesitation.<sup>59</sup> Bjarni Guðnason is so convinced that the kings' sagas make use of English materials that he calls for a full-scale investigation to identify them. That study, however, has yet to be written.

### *Jatvarðar saga*

Although the hunt for English sources which Icelandic medieval historians might have used has not produced any very convincing results, there is at least one work, the Icelandic history of St Edward the Confessor, which perhaps can be said to have made a small contribution to Anglo-Saxon history, in spite of its having been written as a saint's life. The saga, probably a fourteenth-century work, is extant in two versions — as *Saga hins heilaga Játvarðar* in *Flateyjarbók*, and as *Jatvarðar saga* in the Appendix to the first volume of Guðbrandur Vigfússon's *Icelandic Sagas and Other Historical Documents*

*Relating to the Settlements and Descents of the Northmen on the British Isles.*<sup>60</sup>

There is as yet no critical edition of the Icelandic history of St Edward, and the saga was largely ignored until the 1970s, when Christine Fell discussed it at length in three very informative articles.<sup>61</sup> Her work is particularly useful for showing that the Icelandic author used at least three foreign sources: a service book containing the lections for St Edward's day, Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*, and the anonymous *Chronicon Laudunensis*. Of particular interest is Fell's conclusion that in some instances the sources which the Icelandic author used appear to have been fuller than the texts in which they survive today.

Fell<sup>62</sup> argues that most of the material concerning Edward's genealogy comes from the first lection for St Edward's day. *Jatvarðar saga* is, of course, wrong in maintaining that Emma was the sister of Earl Robert, the father of William the Conqueror, but this is an error that it shares with other Icelandic sources. That Robert gave up his dukedom to become a hermit derives from the *Chronicon Laudunensis*, a work believed to have been written by an English monk at Laon, and so does the suggestion that William was wrongly called 'the Bastard' because his ancestors were. That William's mother was a woman named Gunnhildr also comes from this source. It is not clear how this mistake, which would link William to the Danish royal family, came about. King Cnut had a daughter and a niece by the name of Gunnhildr, the daughter eventually marrying Emperor Henry of Germany. William's hereditary claim to the English monarchy was actually quite remote; it was only through Queen Emma, the sister of his grandfather and wife successively to two English kings, Æthelred and Cnut. The story that Matilda first rejected William's proposal of marriage, because she thought he was a bastard son, but later accepted him on account of his violent behaviour towards her, is only found in Norman sources, including the *Chronicon Laudunensis*.

Most of *Jatvarðar saga*'s information about the king comes from hagiographic sources, except for the story about Edward's three wives who retained their virginity with his encouragement — this derives from the *Chronicon Laudunensis*; other chronicles and *Heimskringla* state that King Edward was only married to Godwine's daughter. The story of St John and Edward's gift to the pilgrim of his coronation ring also derives from the *Chronicon*. *Jatvarðar saga*'s account of Edward's vision of the seven sleepers of Ephesus is clearly based on a very similar story told by William of Malmesbury. But, as Christine Fell warns, the author only borrows one very brief story from William, and had he had access to the whole text, he would surely have used



more of it. The author of *Jatvarðar saga* only knew William 'in some exceedingly abbreviated form', most probably through the *Speculum Historiale* by Vincent of Beauvais.<sup>63</sup> For other stories about King Edward, a number of other sources are used, but for the story about Earl Godwine denying his responsibility for the death of Edward's younger brother, the saga author returns to the *Chronicon*. The tale itself, which is found in most English and Norman chronicles, is, of course, entirely folkloristic. The short explanatory paragraph in *Jatvarðar saga* that introduces Godwine and his family (at the beginning of ch. 5 in Guðbrandur Vigfússon's edition) is not to be found in the extant copies of the *Chronicon Laudunensis* but may have been there in the text available to the saga author.

In the section of *Jatvarðar saga* that tells of events just before King Edward's death and Harold's succession (ch. 6 in Vigfússon's edition), the author combines material from *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* in *Heimskringla* (III) and the *Chronicon Laudunensis*. Understandably, these sources differ on a number of points. One interesting example is Harold's visit to Duke William. In the *Chronicon Laudunensis* Harold promises to hold the kingdom of England for William, but in *Jatvarðar saga* his oath is that he will not oppose William's succession to the English throne upon Edward's death. This change may well have been inspired by the oath as related in *Morkinskinna*,<sup>64</sup> that Harold would never oppose William. Harold's claim that the dying King Edward bequeathed him the crown is undoubtedly taken from Snorri's account in *Heimskringla*. The story of King Edward's body being moved to a splendid shrine by Thomas à Becket does not derive from any sources on St Edward but is found both in the Latin and Icelandic lives of St Thomas. With events leading up to the Battle of Stamford Bridge (ch. 7 in Guðbrandur Vigfússon's edition), the saga author condenses the description of the Icelandic kings' sagas and acknowledges his debt to them.<sup>65</sup> However, the saga's reference to English nobles' dislike of serving under foreign rulers is not in the Icelandic histories and may well be derived from the *Chronicon Laudunensis*, as it tells of the nobles' reluctance to take an oath of support for William. *Jatvarðar saga* moves the Battle of Fulford to York and substitutes the name of Earl Waltheof, who flees from the battle in the Icelandic histories, for Gyrth [Gyrðr], assuming, as do other Icelandic sources, that both are the sons of Godwine. The account of the Battle of Stamford Bridge is short and muddled in the *Chronicon Laudunensis*, and the author of *Jatvarðar saga* ignores it and uses Snorri's description instead.

With the Battle of Hastings, *Heimskringla* is also the saga author's main source. However, he does borrow the occasional item from the *Chronicon*

*Laudunensis*, such as Gyrth warning Harold not to fight William because of his perjury. The story in *Heimskringla* about Waltheof's burning a hundred of William's men in a wood is reversed in *Jatvarðar saga*, and Fell's suggestion that the mistake is due to the author's faulty memory is entirely plausible.<sup>66</sup> Chapter 8 of *Jatvarðar saga* also records the story that King Harold did not perish in the Battle of Hastings but was rescued by friends and healed of his wounds in secret. This legend is not uncommon in medieval narratives and chronicles<sup>67</sup> and occurs in the *Chronicon Laudunensis*. But in introducing the story, the author of *Jatvarðar saga* claims an English source for it ('þat er sōgn Enskra manna' [as the English relate the story]). This has given rise to speculation that he may have had other materials than just the *Chronicon Laudunensis*, but what these might have been is impossible to determine.

In the story of the Anglo-Saxon emigration to Byzantium Christine Fell notes that 'the author of *JS* [*Jatvarðar saga*] appears either to have had access to a fuller and more coherent text than our present manuscripts of *CL* [*Chronicon Laudunensis*], or himself to have imposed coherence on a confused source'.<sup>68</sup> Still, it is from the *Chronicon* that the author of *Jatvarðar saga* derives his information on English resistance to William's rule. Many of the English nobles hated it, and their overtures towards King Sveinn of Denmark proved unsuccessful as William bought him off. The saga and the *Chronicon* both specify the ranks of the leaders involved in the decision to emigrate, the number of English nobles, the number of ships, and the stopping places on the way to Byzantium. Both texts also state that after their arrival in Byzantium and their subsequent settlement, the English rejected Greek Orthodoxy in favour of the Latin rites of the Hungarian church. As for the name of the leader of the English expedition, the Icelandic version differs from its source. In the *Chronicon* he is called Stanardus, a name which does not readily translate into the saga's Sigurðr. Professor Fell believes that, in this instance, the author of *Jatvarðar saga* may be closer to the truth, as no one by the name of Stanardus is known to have played a role in English mid-eleventh century politics, whereas more than one Siward [Sigurðr] is known to have opposed William's rule.<sup>69</sup>

In Old Norse studies *Jatvarðar saga*'s story of the English emigration to Byzantium was traditionally dismissed as pure fantasy by scholars such as Guðbrandur Vigfússon, Jón Helgason and Sigfús Blöndal.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, the story is supported by the Anglo-Norman chronicler Orderic and the hagiographer Goscelin.<sup>71</sup> It is, however, on the evidence of Byzantine sources, Anna Comnena's *Alexiad* and other documentary evidence, that it can be firmly established that

there were large numbers of emigrant Englishmen present in Byzantium at the end of the eleventh century.<sup>72</sup> Although some of the details of the emigration story, such as the vast number of ships that leave England, are probably an exaggeration, the story as a whole is quite plausible. The motivation of the English nobles to escape from William's rule was real enough. Moreover, if the English joined the Varangian guard but were no longer needed to defend Byzantium itself and the neighbouring regions, it would make perfect sense to give them an outpost like Crimea to hold. As a saint's life, *Jatvarðar saga* may seem an unlikely candidate as a text contributing something to Anglo-Saxon history, but in this instance, it does indeed serve to suggest that emigration may well have occurred in the first years of William's reign, even if English sources are silent about it.

It is commonly agreed that Icelandic students studying in England during the twelfth century would have brought books with them when they returned to Iceland. Two bishops from wealthy and prominent Icelandic families, Páll Jónsson and his uncle Þorlákr Þórhallsson (St Þorlákr), are believed to have studied in Lincoln, and both have been singled out as learned men, particularly interested in history, who would surely have obtained any books available on the history of Anglo-Saxon England, in particular the works of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon.<sup>73</sup> Unfortunately, however, as I have tried to show, these and other English histories — at least in the shape that we now have them — have not left their mark on Icelandic literature. The desire to put them into the hands of Icelandic medieval writers of history is understandable, but it remains unsatisfactory when this can only be achieved by scholars finding a snippet here and there, or by their emending texts in order to accommodate an English source. What has been demonstrated is that a few Icelandic authors had access to Latin anthologies of European or world history — works such as the *Speculum Historiale* — that repeated the occasional story told by English historians. It is clear to anyone familiar with the kings' sagas that the authors are often so ill-acquainted with Anglo-Saxon history that it is simply inconceivable that they had access to texts such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* or William's history. This is the larger picture with which those that seek to identify parallels between Icelandic and English histories must contend.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 700, and E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Scaldic Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. LXX.

<sup>2</sup> Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslenzk fornrit 26-28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941-1951). All subsequent references to *Heimskringla* are to this edition.

<sup>3</sup> *Páttir af Ragnars sonum*, in *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 3 vols (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Forni, 1943), I 159. English sources vary in the way they confirm that this event took place. In Abbo of Fleury's *Passio sancti Eadmundi*, the Danes are said to be Inguar and Hubba and are not described as brothers. Moreover, it is Yngvarr alone who beheads King Edmund after shooting him with so many arrows that he seemed to bristle like a hedgehog. In Roger of Wendover's account, the sons of Ragnarr are falsely informed that King Edmund had killed their father. They challenge King Edmund to a battle in which the English suffer such heavy losses that the king decides to surrender his own person. He is then tortured and killed in the manner described by Abbo of Fleury. For further discussion, see Rory McTurk, *Studies in Ragnars saga loðbrókar and its Major Scandinavian Analogues* (Oxford: The Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1991), pp. 229-33.

<sup>4</sup> *Illuga saga Tagldarbana*, in *Íslendinga sögur*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, 12 vols (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1953), III [*Snæfellinga sögur*] 438: 'þá var England at mestu kristnat'.

<sup>5</sup> *Ragnars saga loðbrókar ok sona hans*, in *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 3 vols (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Forni, 1943), I 140-43.

<sup>6</sup> For further discussion, see Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850-880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 50.

<sup>7</sup> See *Icelandic Sagas and Other Historical Documents Relating to the Settlements and Descents of the Northmen on the British Isles*, ed. and trans. by Gudbrand Vigfusson [Guðbrandur Vigfússon] and Sir G. W. Dasent, 4 vols (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887-94), I (*Orkneyinga Saga* and *Magnus Saga* with Appendices).

<sup>8</sup> *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta*, in *Flateyjarbók*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, 4 vols (Reykjavík: Flateyjarútgáfan, 1944), I, ch. 397: 'Aðalráðr konungr Játvarðsson hafði ráðit fyrir Englandi þrjú ár ok tuttugu, þá er Ólafr konungr barðist fyrir Svoldr' ['King Æthelræd the son of Edward had governed England for 23 years when King Ólafr fought at Svoldr'].

<sup>9</sup> See *Dunstanus Saga*, ed. by Christine Fell [Editiones Arnarnagænanæ. Series B, vol. 5] (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963). The following table of the kings of England in the tenth

## Magnús Fjalldal

century, adapted from Fell's edition p. XLVII, shows the complexity of succession with which the author of *Dunstanus Saga* had to battle:

Edward the Elder (901-925)			
Æthelstan (925-940)	Edmund (940-946)	Eadred (946-955)	Edward (died early)
Eadwig (955-959)		Edgar (959-975)	
Edward (975-978)		Æthelred (978-1016)	

In *Dunstanus Saga* the author has reduced this table to:

Æthelstan > Edward the Elder
Edward > Æthelred

<sup>10</sup> Sigurður Nordal, *Flateyjarbók*, I, ch. 79: 'Eftir [Aðalmund Játgeirsson] var konungur Aðalbrikt. Hann var góðr konungr ok varð gamall' ['After Æthelmund the son of Edgar] Ethelbriht succeeded to the throne. He was a good king and lived to an old age'].

<sup>11</sup> Gudbrand Vigfusson and Dasent, I 395-96.

<sup>12</sup> Fell, *Dunstanus Saga*, pp. 16 and 18.

<sup>13</sup> See Guðni Jónsson, *Illuga saga Tagldarbana*, ch. 7.

<sup>14</sup> See *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances V*, *Nitida saga*, *Sigrgarðs saga frækna*, *Sigrgarðs saga ok Valbrands*, *Sigurðar saga turnara*, *Hrings saga ok Tryggva* [Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, Series B, vol. 24], ed. by Agnete Loth (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965), ch. 1.

<sup>15</sup> The first and only edition of the saga, edited by Jón Sigurðsson, was published in *Annaler for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* (Copenhagen: Det kongelige nordiske oldskrift selskab, 1854), pp. 3-91.

<sup>16</sup> See Fell, *Dunstanus Saga*, pp. XVI-LIX.

<sup>17</sup> On punishments for coiners of false money decreed by Anglo-Saxon and Norman kings, see Fell, *Dunstanus Saga*, p. 34, 17/29.

<sup>18</sup> In *Danakonunga sögur*, *Íslenzk fornrit* 35, ed. by Bjarni Guðnason (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1982).

<sup>19</sup> For further discussion see Ove Moberg, *Olav Haraldsson, Knut den store och Sverige* (Lund: Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1941), pp. 216-17.

<sup>20</sup> See Eilert Ekwall, 'On Some English Place-Names Found in Scandinavian Sources', in *Festskrift til Finnur Jónsson*, ed. by J. Brøndum-Nielsen et al. (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1928), pp. 219-21.

<sup>21</sup> Magnús Fjalldal, 'A Farmer in the Court of King Athelstan: Historical and Literary Considerations in the *Vínheiðr* Episode of *Egils Saga*', *English Studies*, 77 (1996), 15-31.

<sup>22</sup> See Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1975), p. 234.

<sup>23</sup> *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, Íslensk fornrit 2, ed. by Sigurður Nordal (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1933), XLII.

<sup>24</sup> Sigurður Nordal, *Egils saga*, p. 147. The two lines quoted in the saga from this supposedly long poem read: 'Nú liggr hæst und hraustum / hreinbraut Aðalsteini' [the highest path of the reindeer (the Scottish Highlands) now lies in the power of the brave Æthelstan].

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla*, I LXXVI; Gwyn Jones, 'Egill Skallagrímsson in England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 38 (1952), 130-34; A. C. Bouman, *Patterns in Old English and Old Icelandic Literature* (Leyden: Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1962), pp. 22-23; *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, vol. I, ed. by Vésteinn Ólason et al. (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992), pp. 207, 213; Paul Beekman Taylor, *Sharing Story: Medieval Norse-English Literary Relationships* (New York: AMS Press, 1998), p. 153, and Matthew Townend, 'Pre-Cnut Praise-Poetry in Viking Age England', *Review of English Studies* 51 (2000), 351.

<sup>26</sup> See A. L. Binns, 'The York Viking Kingdom; Relations Between Old English and Old Norse Culture', in *The Fourth Viking Congress*, ed. by Alan Small (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), pp. 186-87; *The Viking Century in East Yorkshire* [E. Y. Local History Series: No. 15] (York: East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1963), pp. 48-49; and *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. by Alistair Campbell (London: Heineman, 1938), pp. 73, esp. n. 2; 62 and 71-72.

<sup>27</sup> Binns, *The Viking Century*, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Binns, *The Viking Century*, pp. 46 and 48.

<sup>29</sup> Binns, *The Viking Century*, p. 52.

<sup>30</sup> Binns, *The Viking Century*, pp. 48-51.

<sup>31</sup> On the status of foreign missionaries in Iceland and books that they may have brought with them, see, for example, Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendingasaga*, vol. I, *Þjóðveldisöld* (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1956), p. 168 and Björn Þorsteinsson, *Íslenska Þjóðveldið* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1953), pp. 192-93.

<sup>32</sup> See Michael Wood, 'Brunanburh Revisited', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 20 (1978-81), 216, n. 68. Like Binns the author insists in his note that 'Vínheiðr...could be a literal translation of the Latin Wendun'.

<sup>33</sup> See Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga*, pp. 238-39.

<sup>34</sup> Bjarni Einarsson, pp. 239-40.

<sup>35</sup> Bjarni Einarsson, p. 244.

<sup>36</sup> Bjarni Einarsson, p. 253.

<sup>37</sup> Bjarni Einarsson, p. 239.

<sup>38</sup> Bjarni Einarsson, p. 240.

<sup>39</sup> Bjarni Einarsson, p. 241.

<sup>40</sup> 'William beretter at Ethelstanus efter rådslagning trak sig tilbage (for at samle flere tropper), og at angriberen imedens fortsatte langt ind i England indtil han blev standset ved Brunefeld...', Bjarni Einarsson, p. 245. [William relates that Æthelstan withdrew (in order to gather more troops), and that in the meantime, the invading army advanced far into England until it was stopped at Brunefeld]. The rest of the translation follows Dorothy Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 2nd edition (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), I 304.

<sup>41</sup> Sigurður Nordal, *Egils saga*, pp. 130-31. The translation is that of Christine Fell, *Egils Saga* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1975), p. 76.

<sup>42</sup> Bjarni Einarsson, *Litterære forudsætninger for Egils saga*, pp. 246-47.

<sup>43</sup> Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 304.

<sup>44</sup> Whitelock, p. 309.

<sup>45</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Bjarni Guðnason, *Knýtlinga saga*, pp. 98-99, n. 2, and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla (Ólafs saga helga)*, II 14, n. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Bjarni Guðnason, *Knýtlinga saga*, Introduction, p. XCIX.

<sup>47</sup> See Bjarni Guðnason, *Knýtlinga saga*, Introduction, pp. C-CIV; I draw on these pages in my subsequent discussion of Bjarni's analysis. Much of Bjarni's argument concerning the saga's supposed use of English historical sources derives from Svend Ellehøj, *Studier over den ældste norrøne historieskrivning* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965), pp. 172-74, 281-82.

<sup>48</sup> Bjarni Guðnason, *Knýtlinga saga*, pp. 119-20; the translation is my own.

<sup>49</sup> See Moberg, *Olav Haraldsson*, pp. 222-23. The translation of William's text is taken from the edition of R. A. B. Mynors et al., *William of Malmesbury — Gesta Regum Anglorum — The History of English Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 323. 'Avitus' literally means 'relating to a grandfather' or 'ancestral'. The translation of the material from *Heimskringla* is my own.

<sup>50</sup> See Ove Moberg, 'Snorre Sturlasson, Knut den store och Sverige', *Saga och Sed* (1987), p. 76. See also Jan de Vries, 'Normannisches Lehngut in den isländischen Königssagas', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 47 (1931), 78.

<sup>51</sup> Guðmundur Þorsteinsson wrote the history of the monastery at Þingeyrar and investigated what is known about books that it owned. He finds no evidence of these works (see his 'Drög að sögu Þingeyraklausturs', unpublished dissertation, University of Iceland, 1956, ch. 4, pp. 76-105). In his complete list of books that Icelandic churches, monasteries and the two bishoprics are known to have possessed from the early days of Christianity to 1600, Orri Vésteinsson also finds no evidence of works by these two English church historians. It should be noted, however, that Icelandic medieval inventories of religious establishments are often imprecise. Thus Orri finds an English book of history [*Engelsk historiubók*] in an inventory dating from 1396 for the Bishopric at Hólar, but we have no means of knowing what

those histories might have been or who wrote them (see Orri Vésteinsson, 'Bókaeign íslenskra kirkna á miðöldum', unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Iceland, 1990, p. 128).

<sup>52</sup> See Bjarni Guðnason, *Knyttlinga saga*, p. 122-23, n. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Bjarni Guðnason, *Knyttlinga saga*, p. 124: 'Ídús Nóvembris'. Snorri uses the same phrase in *Heimskringla* (III 11) when he describes King Cnut's death.

<sup>54</sup> See Ekwall, p. 221 and Moberg, *Olav Haraldsson*, pp. 219-20.

<sup>55</sup> Bjarni Guðnason, *Knyttlinga saga*, p. 124, states that King Cnut ruled over Denmark for twenty seven years, over England for twenty four years and over Norway for seven years. *Heimskringla* III (p. 11) gives identical number of years in each instance. In reality King Cnut reigned in Denmark for seventeen years (1018-1035) and in England for nineteen years (1016-1035). In his Introduction to *Knyttlinga saga* (CVIII), Bjarni Guðnason suggests that as far as the length of King Cnut's reign in Denmark and England is concerned, the Icelandic sources generally make two mistakes, and that if we correct them, their chronology falls into place. The mistakes that Bjarni has in mind are (a) that Icelandic historians seem to believe that Sveinn Fork-beard died in 1008, when in reality he died in 1014, and (b) that they assume that Cnut came to power in Denmark immediately after the death of his father, whereas he only assumed power when his older brother Haraldr died in 1018. This would explain why *Knyttlinga saga* has Cnut ruling over Denmark for ten years longer than he did. As for the length of his reign in England, he supposedly waited for three years after the death of his father before mounting his invasion and thus would have ruled from 1011 to 1035, according to the chronology of the saga.

<sup>56</sup> See Moberg, *Olav Haraldsson*, p. 219. In his 1987 article ('Snorre Sturlasson, Knut den store och Sverige', p. 60), Moberg cites the works of Henry of Huntingdon or William of Malmesbury as possible intermediary sources between the *Chronicle* and *Heimskringla*.

<sup>57</sup> Used as a title of a king's wife, i.e. Queen Emma.

<sup>58</sup> The translation of the passages from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is from G. N. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London: J. M. Dent, 1992), pp. 161-63. The translation of the *Heimskringla* quotation is my own.

<sup>59</sup> See Bjarni Guðnason, *Knyttlinga saga*, Introduction, p. CVI, and *Heimskringla*, III 32, n. 1.

<sup>60</sup> See Gudbrand Vigfusson's edition, pp. 388-400.

<sup>61</sup> See Christine Fell, 'The Icelandic saga of Edward the Confessor: the hagiographic sources', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 1 (1972), 247-58; 'The Icelandic saga of Edward the Confessor: its version of the Anglo-Saxon emigration to Byzantium', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3 (1974), 179-96 and 'English history and Norman legend in the Icelandic saga of Edward the Confessor', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 6 (1977), 223-36.

<sup>62</sup> Much of the following discussion of *Jatvarðar saga* is based on Fell's articles.



<sup>63</sup> Fell, 'The Icelandic saga of Edward the Confessor: the hagiographic sources', p. 251. Earlier, Ove Moberg ('Olav Haraldsson', pp. 220-21) had insisted that the borrowing of this passage from William in *Jatvarðar saga* proved that his *Gesta regum Anglorum* had been known in Iceland.

<sup>64</sup> See *Morkinskinna*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: J. Jørgensen, 1932), p. 285.

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Gudbrand Vigfusson and Dasent, I 396: 'Sem sagt er í Æfi Noregs konunga' [As it is related in the sagas of the kings of Norway].

<sup>66</sup> See Fell, 'English History and Norman legend', p. 233.

<sup>67</sup> It also occurs in *Hemings þáttur* in *Hauksbók*: see the edition by Finnur Jónsson and Eiríkur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Thieles Bogtrykkeri, 1892-1896), pp. 347-49.

<sup>68</sup> Fell, 'English History and Norman legend', p. 228.

<sup>69</sup> For further discussion see Fell, 'The Icelandic saga of Edward the Confessor: its version of the Anglo-Saxon emigration to Byzantium', pp. 184-86.

<sup>70</sup> For specific references see Fell, *ibid.*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>71</sup> See Fell, *ibid.*, pp. 191-92.

<sup>72</sup> See Fell, *ibid.*, pp. 192-93.

<sup>73</sup> For further discussion, see, for example, Bjarni Guðnason, *Knýtlinga saga*, Introduction, p. XVII and Moberg, 'Snorre Sturlasson', p. 76.