

The Historical Worth of *Rígsþula*

The worth of *Rígsþula* to historians of medieval Scandinavia, such as Aaron Gurevich (1982, 270–71, 321), Ruth Mazo Karras (1988, 60–63, 208–10, and passim), or Helgi Guðmundsson (1997, 315–18), is necessarily bound up with the dating of this poem, a long disputed matter which we must take up again in greater detail. Mercifully, in the secondary literature on the matter, there seem to be but roughly two epochal alternatives, either the Viking Age, from the tenth century to ca. 1100, or the High Middle Ages, ca. 1200–1250. Finer chronological demarcations are distinguishable in one alternative or the other, but it is tacitly agreed that the earliest date cannot be pushed back much beyond the tenth century,¹ and that the latest should stand as a *terminus ad quem* in the thirteenth century. Whichever alternative is chosen, as we shall see, commits the historian or literary scholar to an appropriate conjunction of historical persons and events for a context of the poem. Yet there is one large component of *Rígsþula* which, despite attempts to date it, will always be undateable—viz., the “timeless” etiological folk-tale motifs (dimly discerned in the secondary literature)² which purport to “explain” the origin of the three social estates in medieval Scandinavia, and to characterize their chief representatives.³ This component may have been eventually reworked as a *mythus philosophicus*⁴ by a learned hand at the High Middle Ages, but fundamentally it embodied popular curiosity about the causes or origins of society and social divisions.

Though many analogies have been drawn far and wide from the Indo-European world (Dumézil 1968, 183–90; 1973a,c) and from the Bible (see Hill 1986 on

1. Folklorists and Georges Dumézil and his Scandinavianist followers will overstep the boundaries of time to explore the ahistorical backgrounds of *Rígsþula*.

2. Andreas Heusler, having first proclaimed “Hier haben wir kein naives Göttermärlein,” then concedes with more truth, “Die einfache Vorstellung: ‘Einst gab es im Norden noch keine “konungar,” bis ein dänischer Herr diesen Titel aufbrachte’ [cf. *Rígsþula* 1], könnte alte volkstümliche Sage gewesen sein” (Heusler 1969, 185–86).

3. Both the mythological “explanation” and the social characterization are folkloric motifs, as in Boberg 1966, A1650–57, A1660; cf. Stith Thompson’s fuller index, 1955–58, vol. 1, A1610, A1650, A1660.

4. Heusler’s pet term (1969, 186; 1941, 96).

Genesis 9.18–27 and medieval glosses of this text), the exact tale-type of the fable of Rígr’s perambulatory procreations has not as yet been established, the closest analogue being an Irish interpolation in Solinus’ geographical compilation of the third century A.D., which tells of a nameless king of the Hebrides, without a queen and without progeny, whom his subjects allow to cohabit with any woman to his liking, “per vicissitudines” [“one after another”],⁵ a rather aimless promiscuity in comparison with Rígr’s purposeful philandering. Nevertheless, not only the etiological conception of the origin of the three social estates but also the repetitive and schematic stylization of the Old Norse fable stamp it unmistakably as a folktale in its own right,⁶ and as such, the fable need not be stretched to approximate either the Hebridean king’s round of liaisons or the commoner custom of the Celtic kings of sleeping with the wives of their vassals by *droit de seigneur*.⁷ Helgi Guðmundsson’s guess that Rígr’s dissemination of the three-tiered social system of medieval Scandinavia was “native lore” [innlend þekking] of Old Norse culture may prove right (1997, 317).

In toto, the proposed datings for the composition of *Rígsþula* split along national lines, German, Dutch, and Swiss scholars tending toward the twelfth or thirteenth century,⁸ the Scandinavian holding to the tenth or eleventh century,⁹ and the English and American vacillating between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.¹⁰ Almost all scholars seem to acquiesce at least in the ascription of Icelandic authorship to the poem,¹¹ but there is no firm consensus about the place of composition (Northumbria, Ireland, Norway, or Iceland?), even though it is gener-

5. The text of the interpolation, translated by Nora Chadwick (1953–57, 188), reads in Mommsen’s edition of Solinus: “Rex unus est universis [*scil.*, Ebudes insulae], nam quotquot sunt, omnes angusta interluevie dividuntur. Rex nihil suum habet, omnia universorum. Ad aequitatem certis legibus stringitur ac ne avaritia devertat a vero, discit paupertate iustitiam, utpote cui nihil sit rei familiaris, verum alitue publico. Nulla illi femina datur propria, sed per vicissitudines, in quamcunque commotus sit, usurariam sumit. Unde ei nec votum nec spes conceditur liberorum” (Mommsen 1895, 219.6–15).

6. On the style of the European folktale see Lüthi 1976, “Abstrakter Stil,” 25–36, esp. 33–34. The most obvious folkloric touches to *Rígsþula* are the opening lines of the poem (“Once upon a time,” etc.) and the description in *Rígsþula* 29 of Móðir, whose breast and throat gleam whiter than the driven snow. (References here and elsewhere to *Rígsþula* are to the new edition by Ursula Dronke [1997, 162–73].) The schemata and repetitions of the European folktale harmonize with the form and style of a *þula*.

7. See on this not peculiarly Celtic custom Young 1933, 101–2, and Sveinsson 1957, 6.

8. Andreas Heusler—beginning of thirteenth century (1969, 188); Klaus von See—first half of thirteenth century (1981a,c,d); Hans-Dietrich Kahl—second half of twelfth century or beginning of thirteenth (1960, 214); Jan de Vries—thirteenth century (1967, 127). An exception: Rudolf Meißner—end of Viking Age (1933, 128).

9. Alexander Bugge—ca. 900 (1905, 212 and passim); Finnur Jónsson—890–920 (1920, 193); Sören Hansen—ca. 900 (1931, 89–90); Einar Ólafur Sveinsson—tenth century (1962, 268, 287–88, 291); Birger Nerman—ca. 1000 (1969, 18). Exceptions: Inge Skovgaard-Petersen—mid-thirteenth century (1971, 715 n. 178); Helgi Guðmundsson—ca. 1200 (1997, 317).

10. Young—eleventh century (1933, 106–7), and Dronke—ca. 1020 (1997, 207); versus Karras—thirteenth century (1988, 61) and Birgit and Peter Sawyer—thirteenth century (1993, 142).

11. Dronke 1997, 207: “We have no evidence that [the poet] was not an Icelander.” De Vries, however, is for a Norwegian poet (1967, 127).

ally believed that the tripartite society constructed in the poem must be an artistic projection of Scandinavian society in Norway, at one stage or another in Norwegian history during the Middle Ages.

This scholarly belief, which has much to recommend it in the poem, governs a string of possible historical contexts for *Rígsþula*. We begin with the contextualizations of Andreas Heusler and Klaus von See, the alpha and omega of Germanic scholarship. By a thirteenth-century date a royal Norwegian context can be extrapolated, wherein, under the reign of Hákon Hákonarson (1217–63), his chief councilor, Earl Skúli Bárðarson, and the king's son, Hákon ungi (d. 1257), correspond in their contention for the kingship respectively to Jarl and his youngest son, Konr ungr, in the poem.¹² In the broader social structure of thirteenth-century Norway, with its amplified hierarchy of ranks or estates, the remove between the noble and free farmers on the one hand and the farm laborers and/or slaves on the other became ever greater, and this socioeconomic separation of noble and free-holding estates from the landless, laboring, and enslaved peasantry is likewise strongly implied in the poem by the contrasts between the physically repulsive drudge, Þræll, and his “betters,” the ruddy yeoman, Karl, and the idle aristocrat, Jarl, whose sole occupations are raiding, hunting, and swimming.¹³ But notwithstanding the warlike aspect of Jarl and his sons, the Old Norse society in *Rígsþula* breathes an air of contentment and peace that is most unusual in the eddic corpus. The peaceful domestic atmosphere in which each couple of three generations awaits the visit of a god would seem artificial for the Viking Age and more natural in a Norwegian setting of the thirteenth century after the last of the civil wars (1202–27). Hunting, not fighting, is the passion of Jarl's youngest son, Konr ungr, as it was of Hákon ungi, the heir to the Norwegian throne, and farmer Karl in the poem is unarmed and unprepared for war service, as if he had been dispensed from *leið-angr*—ship duty—by payment of a tax, according to thirteenth-century practice (von See 1981c, 516; 1981d, 96–97).

Towards the missing ending of the poem, however, a judgmental crow up in a tree admonishes Konr ungr at his hunting that he would do himself and the birds a favor by killing men instead of the feathered folk; for in nearby Denmark dwell the royal princes Danr and Danpr in stately halls, with a longer pedigree than he can boast; these should be foemen worthy of his steel, or else he might ally himself with one of them, Danpr, through marriage to his daughter (Dana).¹⁴ In either case, a Viking expedition is in the offing as the poem breaks off. The croakings of the crow have been taken for prophecies of the wars between the Danes and Norwegians in

12. Von See's contextualization (1981a, 94–95).

13. See Heusler 1969, 192, on thirteenth-century Norwegian social structure; cf. Karras 1988, 63, on human relations between the estates in *Rígsþula*.

14. See the lost *Skjoldunga saga* in Arngrímur Jónsson's sixteenth-century Latin version: “Is [Rigus] Danpri cujusdam, domini in Danpsted, filiam duxit uxorem, cui Dana nomen erat” (Guðnason 1982, 9). The lost saga from the last quarter of the twelfth century supplies a “happy ending” to *Rígsþula*. On the names see von See 1981d, 97–98.

the mid-thirteenth century (von See 1981a, 94–95), but they should rather remind us that the pacific details of *Rígsþula* do not obviate a Viking Age date for the poem.

Rudolf Meißner (1933, 128), dissenting from Heusler, moved the poem tentatively to the end of the Viking Age, but only one scholar, Birger Nerman, though dismissed or simply ignored by others, has had the archaeological expertise to evaluate the material Viking culture in *Rígsþula* and come up with a definite date for it around the year 1000.¹⁵ This dating is calculated on the average age of the luxury objects in the household or on the persons of the noble couple, Faðir and Móðir, to whom Jarl was born after Rígr shared their bed. The wealthy farmer's wife, Amma, is also graced with a pair of these objects (*Rígsþula* 16.8). Of course the artefacts could have been much older in themselves than the composition date of the poem, but even sophisticated later poets would hardly have gone to the archaic lengths of recreating so faithfully the material culture of leading Vikings and their ladies. Most Old Norse poets, skaldic or eddic, were, if anything, historically naive (by saga standards) and dealt historically in the here and now as well as a timeless past. Hence it is not out of the question that a Viking-Age Icelandic poet should have bestowed on the upper estates in *Rígsþula* all the material appurtenances pertaining to them that were in his immediate purview.

At the millennium the gradations of Norwegian society were four- or five-fold—not more—and the ties between freemen of different stations in life were tighter.¹⁶ At the top of society were two grades of nobility, the *hersar* and *jarlar*, both figuring in the poem; then follow two grades of yeomanry, the *bœndr* and *holdar*, either of which Karl, his parents, and his family may typify in the poem; and finally, segregated from the rest by their servile status but not without hope of gaining their freedom, the *prælar* were down at the bottom. These last are prejudicially profiled in the poem as Þræll and his gawky wife, Þír (Bondmaid), and their misshapen brood.

The labors and the prospects of thralls in eleventh-century Norway are more objectively reported by Snorri Sturluson in *Óláfs saga helga* chap. 23 of *Heimskringla* (Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, 2:30) when he records how the foremost landowner in the country, Erlingr Skjálǫgsson, revolved his labor force of thirty thralls,¹⁷ who according to the price he put on their heads could buy their way to freedom in two or three years, and even count on his assistance thereafter to go into the herring fisheries or clear land of their own of forests. Then Erlingr would buy new slave-workers with

15. Nerman 1969, 18; cf. Nerman's previous article (1954). His articles fall in line with the archaeologist Johannes Brøndsted's "Viking Way of Life" (1965, chap. 13, esp. 238–42). On Nerman's archaeological dating see Fidjestøl's positive assessment (1999, 145–50).

16. See Heusler again on tenth-century Norwegian social structure (1969, 191) and Brøndsted on the ties between freemen (1965, 241). It would be too much to say, however, with Karras that "the class of jarls was not socially distinct from that of the most prosperous *bönder*—yeoman farmers—in the tenth and eleventh centuries" (1988, 62). The king-makers, the Hlaðajarlar, were not in a class with "the most prosperous *bönder*."

17. On this slave-owner and his large labor force, see Hansen 1931, 94, and the cautionary remarks of Karras (1988, 78, 146–47).

the proceeds from the old, and so on. The profit motive is not wanting to this recycling of his slave-labor force, but the quasi-altruism of Erlingr is best accounted for by the economic fact that manumission and land-clearance went hand in hand at the end of Viking period in Norway (Karras 1988, 146). The country was apparently behind Sweden in the clearing off of forests for agriculture (Hansen 1931, 101), and there was a desire for free workers with a stake in the land who would perform more readily the back-breaking labor of clearing it.

In this eleventh-century context of Norwegian slavery, Þræll of the poem stands ambiguously between servitude and freedom. By the fable of *Rígsþula* he was created first from the oldest generation of Edda and Ái (Great-Grandmother and Great-Grandfather) to be an example for all time of the slavishness and repulsiveness of thralls, already before there were any masters like Karl and Jarl to dominate him. He appears to be a true primitive, a “masterless man” in medieval terms. Appearances aside, however, his aged parents and he and his family live together as tenants of one farmhouse, and his most onerous chore is keeping the household in firewood (*hrís*), which he carries home from the woods “through the wearisome day” in cords of bast (*Rígsþula* 9). The field work of his sons, especially the cutting of turf (st. 12), is more like the kind of services that slaves would render to a master in the Old Norse world. If Þræll too were actually a slave to someone, he might have been allowed leisure time, such as Erlingr granted to his slaves, to cultivate a plot of land and do some household chores about the cottage; but otherwise in the poem he works hard for himself and his family as if he were a freed man, gleaning faggots from clearings in the woods. His working status is unhappily indeterminate.

By contrast, the second creation of Rígr, the free farmer Karl, is prosperous enough to be a *stórbóndi* and *óðalsmaðr*, i.e., a landed proprietor or inheritor of the family farm. His elderly parents, Amma and Afi (Grandmother and Grandfather), are freeholders who own the farm building on their place (*Rígsþula* 16), and among his sons is one named Hǫldr (Franklin, st. 24), an appellation for the highest bracket of farmers.¹⁸ His mother, Amma, wears on her outer dress to pin up its straps two stylish shoulder ornaments called “dwarves” (st. 16) because of the shortness of their pins; such jewels of the Viking Age once adorned a rich lady buried in a grave of Gotland (Nerman 1954, 213, fig. 6). A further show of wealth and status by this family of farmers occurs at the wedding of Karl and his bride Snør (Daughter-in-Law), who distribute gold rings to the guests with the liberality of a Viking chieftain or an earl (*Rígsþula* 23; cf. st. 39). Their daughters may be the mothers of the run-of-the-mill race of *bændr* (st. 25), but they themselves and Karl’s parents seem to have been idealized with one son of theirs as *hǫldar* at the head of their estate.

Since the poem pretends to retrace, after a folktale, not only the mythical origins of old Scandinavian society but also the very birth of the first Norwegian king from the preeminent estate of the earls, the composition date of *Rígsþula* has not

18. See Helle 1964, 156, on the *hǫldar*: “Høyest i det egentlige bondesamfunnet sto over hele landet ‘haulden.’” “The absence of *hauldar* in Iceland is surprising,” Peter Sawyer adds (1994, 43).

illogically been set back in the Viking Age by several Scandinavian scholars (e.g., Bugge 1905, 212; Jónsson 1920, 193; Hansen 1931, 89–90) as far as the beginning of the tenth century, when Harald Fair-Hair had unified Norway into one kingdom (ca. 872–92), driven the opposition out to Iceland, and then ruled over the kingdom (with the Orkneys) as “ættfaðir Noregs”¹⁹—i.e., the first in a hereditary line of Norwegian kings. Thereby Konr ungr, Jarl’s youngest son, in the poem could pass for the pagan Harald at this date, and just as in *Haralds saga ins hárfagra* chap. 3 (Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, 1:96–97) the daughter of King Eiríkr of Hǫrðaland spurns Harald as a lover until he has once possessed himself of all of Norway, the way Gormr gamli had Denmark and Eiríkr Eymundarson Uppsala, so the crow in *Rígsþula* 48–49 belittles the bird-hunting of Konr ungr in order to spur his territorial ambition towards Denmark (so Hansen 1931, 97–98). If the latter in the missing ending of the poem did in fact go on a bridal quest to the halls of the Danish prince, Danpr, and marry his daughter, it would have been a fitting tribute to Harald and his Danish consort, Ragnhildr Eiríkisdóttir.²⁰

The tenth century is a *terminus ab quo* and about as far back as anyone has cared to date *Rígsþula*. In this century, however, “when Scandinavian and Westerner were about to blend” (Olrík 1930, 115–16), other historical vistas on the poem open up. Inasmuch as the all-fathering god of the fable in *Rígsþula* bears an Irish name for “king” (OIr. *rí*; inflected, *ríg*), and the word *karta* in the text (*Rígsþula* 22.7) may be an Irish calque (< OIr. *cairt*),²¹ some scholars have localized the poem in a Norse-Irish milieu, as in Viking Dublin.²² There perhaps the poem’s Norwegian setting was colored by linguistic, literary, and mythological influences from Irish sources. The closest Hebridean analogue to the *Rígsþula* fable has already been cited above (4), and more than enough has been made of the so-called sex-hospitality of the medieval Irish to visiting royalty; but sexual licence of this official kind is not the only Celtic parallelism to the procreativity of Rígr.

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson cites also a poorly preserved Irish tale of the ninth century, “The Wooing of Étain” [Tochmarc Étaíne], concerning an amorous god,

19. Ármann Jakobsson’s term for Harald (1997, 160–66). Heusler’s objections to Harald being the first king of the Norse world are quite beside the point (1969, 185).

20. Ragnhildr’s patronymic is uncertain and may have been concocted by Snorri in *Haralds saga ins hárfagra* chap. 21 of *Heimskringla* (see Aðalbjarnarson 1941–51, 1:118 n. 2).

21. Young 1933, 102. OE *cræt* is inadmissible as a calque before metathesis has taken place to form ME *cart* (in the thirteenth century). Apart from a few dateable loan-words, there are a number of Old Icelandic nouns in the poem for farm tools, household objects, and a housewife, as listed by Heusler (1969, 188–89) and von See et al. (2000, 504), which these authors wish to date by prose texts of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, where the words also appeared, and thus attach *Rígsþula* to the later Middle Ages. But it must be self-evident that prosaic words such as *húskona* ‘housewife’, *rokkr* ‘distaff’, and *plógr* ‘plough’, etc., were in common use throughout Old Norse cultural history long before they came to literary expression in Old Icelandic prose. Except for *Rígsþula*, Icelandic poetry had no use for them because of their prosaic or “low” connotations.

22. E.g., Bugge—Orkney Islands (1905, 256); Rudolf Meißner—Ireland or British Isles (1933, 129); Einar Ólafur Sveinsson—Dublin and/or Northumbria (1962, 253, 291); Hans Kuhn—Ireland (1971a, 95); Dronke—Norse-Celtic or Anglo-Danish settlements in Northumbria (1997, 203, 207).

the Dagda, or “the great father” (*ollathair*), who resembles Rígr somewhat, e.g., in Rígr’s (controversial) twofold character of Irish “king” and patriarchal Old Norse god (Heimdallr).²³ Like Rígr with the high-born lady, Móðir, the Dagda has an affair with the wife of another man—a formidable elf who must be circumvented by a trick. Unbeknownst to either the elf man or the Dagda, the elf woman bears the god a son named Oengus Mac Óc, or Mac Óc for short, with the meaning “the young boy,” a sobriquet which matches semantically the name of Konr ungr in the second generation of earls. This Irish boy is brought up by a foster father, but being taunted by someone for having no real parents, the boy demands to know of his foster father who or where they are, and is taken by him to the Dagda. Once father and son are informed of their relationship, the foster father (or Mac Óc himself) declares that it would not be just for the Dagda, the true father, to deprive his son of his inheritance in the hill property (*síd*) of his elfin stepfather. The Dagda, compliant, advises the boy how to overcome the elf by confronting him at a feast (of Samain, November 1), when he is weaponless, and forcing him at sword’s point to surrender his property, if only for “a day and a night.” This property transfer is slyly accomplished *in perpetuum* by Mac Óc with a verbal quibble on the duration of his ownership, and then the wooing of the beautiful Étain Echraide can commence in earnest, though it seems to get nowhere in the telling.²⁴ No matter! As at the end of *Rígsþula*, a lofty lineage and the acquisition of land by force or fraud are preconditions for the hand of a fair lady, whether it is ever given to the hero or not.

Still another point of contact between Irish mythological or heroic tales and the Old Norse poem is the expedient for hunting birds of stunning them with a blunted arrow or a stone, rather than killing them outright.²⁵ Konr ungr out hunting “let fly his bolt, / quelled the birds” [*kólfi fleygði, / kyrði fugla*] (*Rígsþula* 47.3–4), and Cúchulainn as a boy brought down a flock of swans alive with his “stunning-shot” of stones. The Norse crow might disapprove the expedient, but Cúchulainn’s charioteer applauded it: “The quickest and the most expert [hunters] take them [the birds] alive” (*Táin Bó Cúailnge* [The Cattle-Raid of Cuailnge]; trans. Kinsella 1969, 91; text and another translation in O’Rahilly 1976, 24, 147).

Although there is no Irish tale of a wandering god who engenders the estates of medieval society in Rígr’s manner (so Thurneysen in Meißner 1933, 116 n. 1), it has not gone unnoticed that the ancient laws of Ireland expatiate on questions of status and fosterage in “minute descriptions of appearance, dress and milieu” (Young 1933, 100) and thus avow a preoccupation with social distinctions on a

23. See Rudolf Thurneysen’s translation of this difficult three-part narrative (1921, 598–616); cf. Sveinsson 1962, 252, 290; Dillon and Chadwick 1967, 149–50, 240. On Rígr’s much debated identity see pp. 13–14 and note 44 below.

24. Mac Óc is soon supplanted as wooer of Étain by his foster father, Midir, and the wooing thereafter is conducted on a purely supernatural plane throughout the bewildering metamorphoses of Étain, the marriageable but forever elusive heroine of the tale.

25. Noted by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (1962, 252); von See’s reading of *Rígsþula* 47 as a description of the Norwegian taming of hawks is erroneous (1981d, 96) and is corrected by Dronke (1997, 235).

par with that of the *Rígsþula* poet. Fosterage was a family institution common to medieval Scandinavia and Ireland, and among the Irish, children of both sexes were fostered up to a marriageable age—fourteen years for the girls, seventeen years for the boys—in strict conformity with the social status of their parents.

Under the post-tenth-century articles on fosterage of the *Senchus Már* law code [The Great Tradition], boys of humble birth are to be taught herding of livestock, kiln-drying, combing wool, and their sisters instructed in grinding corn in querns, kneading dough, and the use of a sieve; whereas chieftains' sons and boys of noble birth are to be exercised in horsemanship, shooting of arrows, chess-playing, and swimming, and well-bred girls practiced in sewing, cutting of cloth, and embroidery (Hancock, Neilson, and O'Mahony 1869, 152–59). The *Rígsþula* poet similarly enumerates the status-bound activities of the three Norse estates from the lowest condition of the laborer (free or unfree) and his children to the highest of the leisured lord and his. Through all the slight discrepancies of detail, due to local circumstances, between the education of the Irish foster children and the upbringing of the Norse youth, one thing stands out in bold relief: the identicalness of the Irish and Norse programs for the formation of the male nobility (cf. *Rígsþula* 36, 42–43). This is the more noteworthy on the Norse side for the main focus of *Rígsþula* being on the nobility, the jarldom that gave rise to the kingship in early medieval Norway.

A whole law-book with a shorter sequel—the oft-cited *Críth Gabhlach* [Law of Status]²⁶—was devoted by the Irish jurists (the *brehon*) to the niceties of social standing in a well-ordered society, but the codification is overdone, an intellectual excess of the legal mind, and so proliferous of rules and regulations as to leave doubt of their real relevance to the Irish way of life at any time in the Middle Ages.²⁷ Under its articles, social prestige is measured by such tangibles as a man's "honor price" (*eneclann* = *wergeld*), the validity of his oath and evidence as a witness, the feasts he should expect from his hosts, the number of his tenants, size of his house, etc.²⁸ And Irish society itself, in which these measurements obtain, is stratified by the jurists in twenty-six groups and/or individuals, of whom seventeen are free people and nine unfree (slaves, robbers, cowards, and other marginalized men).²⁹

Some of the Irish and Norse "points of honor" might have been more or less equivalent (e.g., *eneclann* and *wergeld*), but the twenty-sixfold stratification of Irish society exceeds altogether the social hierarchies of medieval Norway, even in the thirteenth century. The old nineteenth-century editor of the *Críth Gabhlach* has, however, simplified the jurists' stratification for us from twenty-six to five catch-all ones: (1) three grades of kingship plus the royal entourages, (2) four grades

26. Richey, O'Mahony, and Hennessy 1879, 298–341; Sequel to *Críth Gabhlach*, 344–69. Dillon and Chadwick date the *Críth Gabhlach* to the eighth century (1967, 102).

27. See Alexander G. Richey in Richey, O'Mahony, and Hennessy 1879, CLXXX.

28. See Richey's analytical summary of *Críth Gabhlach* passim (Richey, O'Mahony, and Hennessy 1879, CLXXXII).

29. Sequel to *Críth Gabhlach*, as in Richey, O'Mahony, and Hennessy 1879, 344–69.

of nobility, (3) freemen of property (*bó-aire* chieftains), (4) landless freemen (*firimidboth*), and (5) the unfree populace (Richey, O'Mahony, and Hennessy 1879, CXCIX).³⁰ This telescoping of the structure of medieval Irish society brings it a good deal nearer to the elementary tripartition of Old Norse society in *Rígsþula*; but no further than that can the two societies be merged because of their Indo-European unlikeness, the Irish having once had a priestly caste (the druids), which the Norse never did.³¹

So far, it seems to me, within the time frame of the thirteenth to the tenth century, the temporal indicators of archaeology, history, and literature lean preponderantly to the Viking Age rather than the High Middle Ages for a date to the *Rígsþula*. Contrary to the “drift” of eddic chronology, the poem has not been “towed” down the stream of time, but anchored upstream by Birger Nerman, Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, and Jean Young.³² Its author was probably an Icelander, and the society portrayed in it was certainly medieval Norwegian, but since the Viking Age was an epoch of ethnic blending of the Norse and the Irish in the western islands, some Irish cultural and literary attributes have shaded into their respective Norse complements in passages of *Rígsþula*, despite the deeper societal difference between the Celts and the Scandinavians.

In the Viking Age the most decisive event of the Norse world by which to date the poem's composition was the unification of Norway in the last quarter of the ninth century under the rule of Harald Fair-Hair, the “ættfaðir” of a kingly line. Although the *roman à clef* contextualization of literature, favored by modern interpreters of *Rígsþula*, is admittedly a weak procedure, the historical consequences of Norway's unification were so momentous, in fact as in fiction, that it would be strange indeed if they did not reverberate somehow in an Old Norse poem that culminates pointedly with the emergence of the first Norwegian king—Konr ungr—from the earls' estate. Hence of the many conceivable impersonations by our hero, that of the king, Harald Fair-Hair, seems the most convincing. All these deductions from early medieval Norwegian and Irish history can be corroborated philologically by the initial reception of *Rígsþula* among the skalds and by their usage of the key word, *konr*, at the turn of the eleventh century.

For the moment it will be safe to say that sometime *before* this reception, but *after* Harald's subjection of Norway to his rule, an oral text of the poem, not unlike the written version we have, had been composed.³³ In the oral compositional pro-

30. Cf. the most recent regrouping of OIr. persons in three social categories of power and wealth (king and nobility), professional skills (poets, druids, law-men, etc.), and incompetence in the eyes of the law (women, slaves, the insane, etc.), as in chapters 1–3 of Kelly 1988.

31. So Dumézil (1973c, 118–19), but one may wonder whether the pagan *goðar* of Iceland and continental Scandinavia were not relics of an Indo-Germanic priesthood.

32. Cf. Jenny Jochens' words (1997, 113): “Although the general drift in modern *Edda* scholarship—to move the lays forward in time—has towed *Rígsþula* in its wake, historians have continued to see in it illustrations of the social conditions during the Viking age.”

33. Cf. Finnur Jónsson (1920, 194) on the time intervals.

cess that runs down to the mid-fourteenth century in the *ritöld*, other versifications of the timeless folktale of Rígr (alias Heimdallr) may have competed with this text, or improvisations and elaborations on it overlaid passages, but whatever its vicissitudes this must have been substantially the text that has survived to us in manuscript from the later Middle Ages, thanks to a monk of one of the monasteries in northern Iceland (Þingeyrar or Munka-Þverá).³⁴

Hans Kuhn has pursued the philological clues to the date and place of composition of *Rígsþula* in the usage of the word *konr*, which, with the meaning of “scion” or “descendant,” was current in skaldic poetry from the tenth to the eleventh century (Kuhn 1971a, 95). The word penetrated the eddic corpus to our poem and the *Reginismál* (sts. 13–14) with the same meaning; the *Reginismál* will not occupy us here,³⁵ but the *Rígsþula* poet mounted his folk-etymology for “king” on the name “Young Scion.” Thus these two eddic poems come within the ambit of discourse of the skaldic *vísur* of Gunnlaugr ormstunga,³⁶ Einarr Helgason,³⁷ and Óttarr svartí,³⁸ poets who address their patrons under the honorific *konr*, as “descendants” of gods or kings and in one case as “royal scion”—not as ordinary mortals, mere men. Since the patrons of a couple of the skalds held court in Dublin and England, Sigtryggr silkiskegg of Dublin patronizing Gunnlaugr, and King Knútr inn ríki and Saint Óláfr Haraldsson Óttarr in England, it can be inferred with Kuhn that *Rígsþula* with its Irishisms and its wordplay on *Konr ungr* was another literary product of tenth-century Norse-Irish culture, in Dublin, if not in northern England somewhere.³⁹ The initial reception of *Rígsþula* by the skalds will lend weight chronologically to this inference.

In the texts of skaldic reception assembled by Ursula Dronke,⁴⁰ the most audible echo of the poem is the phrase “niðrbiúgt [er] nef” [down-bent is the nose] (*Rígsþula* 10.5) with which the Icelandic skald Stefnir Þorgilsson satirized the Danish Earl Sigvaldi of Jónsborg for having underhandedly betrayed the skald’s patron, Óláfr Tryggvason (d. 1000), and for kidnapping the king of Denmark, Sveinn Forkbeard, from Sjælland.⁴¹ When Stefnir was so foolhardy, after a pilgrimage to Rome,

34. See Sverrir Tómasson 1993, 227–28, and, most recently, Johansson 1998 on paleographical aspects of *Rígsþula*.

35. On *Reginismál*, together with *Fáfnismál* and *Volsunga saga* in the Sigurðr literature, see von See 1981a, 90–92, and Dronke’s refutation of his reasoning about these texts as sources of *Rígsþula* (1997, 206–7).

36. *Sigtryggs drápa silkiskeggs* 1.3: “konungmanna kon” (Jónsson 1912–15, B1:185).

37. *Vellekla* 32.2: “ragna konr” (Jónsson 1912–15, B1:123).

38. *Höfuðlausn* 10.6: “bragna konr,” and *Knútsdrápa* 3.8: “stillis konr” (Jónsson 1912–15, B1:270, 273).

39. Dronke’s own preference (1997, 207).

40. See Dronke 1981; 1997, 204, 206. Her citations range from tenth-century skaldic verses to the apex of the classical sagas, *Brennu-Njáls saga*, in the final decades of the thirteenth century; I have omitted her unpersuasive attestation of Víga-Glúmr’s line, “sem jarlar . . . forðum” (Jónsson 1912–15, B1:113, *lausavísa* 8), vis-à-vis *Rígsþula* 36–39.

41. Cf. *lausavísa* 1 in Jónsson 1912–15, B1:146, with item 392 of Jón Þórðarson’s version of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Flateyjarbók* (Nordal et al. 1944–45, 1:555–56).

as to recite his *vísa* in the face of the earl, who did have an ugly nose,⁴² the Jónsborg chieftain, recognizing his own feature in the verse, had him killed instantly. The skald had gone too far with the line from *Rígsþula* by subjoining to it that a hooked nose is the mark of a *níðingr*, but in the eddic original the line was insulting enough to Sigvaldi, for it denoted an unattractive woman and a female slave—Þráll’s wife. Stefnir was cut down after the death in naval battle of his lord, Óláfr Tryggvason.

A pair more of skaldic allusions from the first quarter of the eleventh century recaptures the fierce, steady gaze (as of a snake) from Jarl’s eyes in his infancy (*Rígsþula* 35.7: “*ötul vóru augu*” [baleful were his eyes]). The Icelandic skalds Björn Hítöelakappi and Björn Breiðvíkingakappi, namesakes whose verses were easily confused with one another in literary tradition,⁴³ both composed similar *lausavísur* about young male offspring of theirs, born of their mistresses, and these boys are claimed by their fathers as true sons because of the fearsomeness of their boyish gaze: “*ægiligr í augum / at glíki mér*” [with fearful eyes / in the image of me] or “*iðglíki mér*” [perfectly like me].⁴⁴ The eddic prototype of such fierce-eyed and frightening little boys was the infant, Jarl, in the third household of *Rígsþula*, whose stare betokened his noble parentage and his belligerence. Whichever skald’s recasting of the male-gaze motif we choose, the intertextuality of the *lausavísur* with *Rígsþula*, in the opinion of a good American judge, “certainly gives no comfort to those who advise a late date” for the *þula* (Harris 1985, 97).

The last skaldic allusion to be adduced, from the end of the tenth century, is involved in needless controversy about the secret identity of Rígr, who is designated as an *áss* by the poet (*Rígsþula* 1.4) and revealed as Heimdallr by the Icelandic redactor of the poem in the prose preface to it. If one insists with the German-Dutch contingent of scholars that the *áss*, Rígr, is really Odin and not Heimdallr (Meißner 1933; von See 1981a, 84; von See 1981c, 514; de Vries 1967, 125), then the epithet for Heimdallr of Úlfr Uggason in *Húsdrápa* 2.1, *ráðgegninn* ‘the helpful’ or ‘shrewd with advice’ (Jónsson 1912–15, B1:128), will have no bearing on *Rígsþula*; but otherwise the epithet covers throughout the poem the appointed office of Rígr as Heimdallr, which is to give marital advice to each of the couples he visits: “*Rígr kunnir þeim / ráð at segia*” [Rígr knew how to advise them] (*Rígsþula* 5, 17, 30, 33).

The one truly Odinic trait in Rígr is his knowledge of runes, which he imparts to Jarl, his son (*Rígsþula* 37), but neither this trait nor his walking around from house to house in disguise, like Odin, can divest him of the given character of Heimdallr. For, as one of the oldest and most mysterious of gods in the Scandinavian pantheon, who had every title to be revered as the father of gods *or* men—his *megir*

42. *Jónsvíkinga saga* chap. 17: “nefljótr” (Blake 1962, 19)—a reference missed by Dronke in her note to *Rígsþula* 10.5 (1997, 220).

43. On this traditional literary confusion, see Bjarni Einarsson (1961, 247).

44. Cf. with Björn Hítöelakappi’s *lausavísa* 29 in his saga, chap. 21 (Nordal and Jónsson 1938, 171–72), Björn Breiðvíkingakappi’s *lausavísa* 27 in *Eyrbyggja saga* chap. 40 (Sveinsson and Þórðarson 1935, 108). Finnur Jónsson arbitrarily combined these *lausavísur* in one stanza under the authorship of Björn Hítöelakappi, as *lausavísa* 19 (Jónsson 1912–15, B1:281).

‘sons’ as in *Völuspá* 1—, Heimdallr had already accrued to his character in early medieval times not only the external traits of Odin, but of Thor also; and another eddic poet even endowed him with the farsightedness of the Vanir (*Þrymskviða* 15.3–4).⁴⁵ With all these alien characteristics he was still no less Heimdallr.

I think the Icelandic redactor of *Rígsþula* knew very well what he was talking about when he spoke of “old stories” [fornar sögur] of the wanderings of Heimdallr, who was wont to disguise himself among men under the cognomen of Rígr, his mask in the *þula* (*Rígsþula* preface). The redactor’s Heimdallr may not be the “purified” Heimdallr of Germanic scholarship, but, then, the received character of the god was thoroughly mixed by the mid-fourteenth century with Odinic and other gods’ traits. What is crucially of the essence of Heimdallr, however, is his willingness to give advice, which is reiterated through the poem, and it is to this constant advising of his that the late-tenth-century skald Úlfr Uggason alludes in *Húsdrápa* 2.1.

The foregoing reception of the *þula* by the skalds would confine its first oral version(s) to the last years of the tenth century, while at about this date the skaldic usage of *konr* maps out a likely place of composition for it in an Irish-Norse milieu of Dublin under the rule of Óláfr Sigtryggsson or his son, Sigtryggr silkiskegg. Of the historical data marshalled in this paper, the archaeological evidence for millennial luxury objects in the poem from the mid-Viking Age most emphatically confirms this composition date. The hypothesis of Irish influence, on the other hand, is necessarily provisory and not so positive historically, relying as it does on literary, cultural, and legal parallels between two societies basically dissimilar in social structure. But be that as it may, the few congruences between *Rígsþula* and the Irish myths, heroic tales, and articles of law of fosterage are therefore the more remarkable.

The counterarguments for an initial composition date in the High Middle Ages, to which I have tried to do justice, cannot muster the array of evidence that the pro-Viking Age arguments afford, and are often reduced to the one procedure of historically contextualizing *Rígsþula* as if it were a *roman à clef*—a weak approach to history, as I have said (11). On the pro-Viking Age side of the argumentation, to be sure, the great historical consequences of the kingship of Harald Fair-Hair for

45. Whether the Sibyl’s words of *Völuspá* 1, “allar helgar kindir, / meiri ok minni mögu Heimdalar” [all holy beings, (and?) sons high and low of Heimdallr] (Nordal 1952, 45), are addressed *only* to the gods or to gods *and* men, the addressees are not just “Genossen” of Heimdallr, as von See would have it (1981c, 515), but rather “sons,” real or symbolic. *Mögr*; not unlike *konr*, means either “son” or “man,” without intermediate senses (see Jónsson 1913–16, s.v. “mögr,” “konr”). If, as Meißner thought (1933, 112–14), the obscure stanza 43 of *Hyndluljóð* (as in Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 295) refers to Heimdallr, then the lines, “þann qveða stilli stórauðgastan, / síf sífjaðan síqtum gørvqllum” [him they pronounce the most powerful ruler, related by blood to each and every nation (lit., “seat of people”)], will testify further to Heimdallr’s all-inclusive paternity. Von See, however, mistranslates “síf sífjaðan” after Kuhn as if it were a substrate Gothicism meaning “in Frieden lebend,” so as to turn the unknown god in *Hyndluljóð* 43 into a Christian deity (von See 1981c, 515; cf. Kuhn 1971c, 419). For the rest, on the position of Heimdallr in *Rígsþula*, see Johansson 1998, 78–81, and on the many-sidedness of this god, Turville-Petre 1964, chap. 6, along with the line from *Þrymskviða* 15, “vissi hann vel fram, sem vanir aðrir” [he (Heimdallr) foresaw clearly, like the other Vanir] (Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 113).

Norsemen everywhere may certify him as the best candidate for the literary role of Konr ungr, but it is rather the kingship itself, as the first of its kind in medieval Norway, that dictates the climax of the poem, particularly the lines stating Konr ungr's superiority in runes to his father, "Þá ǫðlaðiz / ok þá eiga gat / Rígr at heita" [Then he prevailed (over Jarl) and got the right to be called Rígr] (*Rígsþula* 46.5–7), which signal the "Young Scion's" eligibility to become king as *Rígr konungr* by the criterion of runic knowledge.⁴⁶ At all events, the late-tenth-century dating of *Rígsþula* does not rest solely on a literary impersonation of Harald Fair-Hair.

The dating problem is complicated, however, by the very process of oral transmission, which, if it is long, as with *Rígsþula*, entails, strictly speaking, a continuum of dates, or as many dates as there were recitative performances, in the course of the evolution and ultimate fixation of a text. As against those literary-minded scholars who shy away from orality and "illiterature" (Friedman 1956, ix–x) and cling to single dates as near as possible to the written record, the English editor of the *Rígsþula* text envisions its transmission from age to age thus:

the tight network of ideas behind the many scenes of the poem must have begun to be woven before the latest poet caught hold of its threads and perfected it as he wished. A poem such as *Rígsþula*, and its antecedents, would have been a social possession, frequently adapted and augmented to fit prevailing politics—and fashions—by the spontaneous genius of the oral poets and their critical, participating, audiences. (Dronke 1997, 204)⁴⁷

In this long perspective any of the later datings reviewed above might be valid with more cogent argumentation or documentation, and then our early date towards the end of the tenth century would merely be one among many dates, equally valid, for the continuous composition of the poem; but at present, so far as I can tell, there remain but two assured dates of interest, the end-of-tenth-century date for the oral text of *Rígsþula* and the mid-fourteenth-century date for the written text.

How the poem might have passed from the oral medium to script in the Codex Wormianus is a vexed question to which the oral-formulaic theory has had no good answers until very recently, in the domains of the Homeric and Indic epics.⁴⁸ In its canonical form the theory was staunchly individualist, stressing within the epic tradition the uniqueness or individuality of each oral composition in perfor-

46. On which see Fleck 1970, 46: "[N]uminous knowledge [is] necessary to decide the succession [to the throne] in the [youngest son's] favor despite the principle of primogeniture."

47. Unfortunately, Dronke's example of a *Rígsþula* improvisation "adapted and augmented to fit prevailing politics" is an imaginary skit celebrating the Hlaðajarl, Hákon inn ríki Sigurðarson, of pagan and womanizing fame (1997, 204–5). But none of the Hlaðajarlar aspired to kingship. "Hvorki Hákon né synir hans reyna að kalla sig konung, jarlsheiti virðist duga þeim" (Jakobsson 1997, 163). Jarl Hákon would not have posed as Konr ungr for such a skit.

48. The researches of Gregory Nagy into oral-formulaic epic poetry, west and east, are summed up in his majestic essay, "An Evolutionary Model for the Making of Homeric Poetry" (Nagy 1995). The essay is broken up into two chapters of Nagy's *Homeric Questions* under the titles "An Evolutionary Model for the Making of Homeric Poetry" and "Homer and the Evolution of a Homeric Text" (chapters 2 and 3 in Nagy 1996, with supplementary ancient notices of the final recensions of Homer in the third chapter).

mance,⁴⁹ which, whenever the ancient or medieval epic was written down, diversified the text in marked variations or even separate recensions. The drawbacks to this theoretical stance were twofold: the ever evolving oral text was practically undateable at any point in its recomposition,⁵⁰ and the gap between the unstable oral text and the fixed literary one was unbridgeable except by such makeshifts as dictation.⁵¹ Of late, however, the Hellenist Gregory Nagy has modified the theory with some useful correctives applicable to the textual derivation of *Rígsþula*.

Over long periods of recomposition of an epic text one hitherto neglected factor will be operative—namely, diffusion of the epic tradition—which facilitates the transition from oral performance to written recording by stabilizing and fixing the oral text and thus impeding its innovative recomposition (Nagy 1995, 165; 1996, 38–42). These are constraints on composition in performance that would not have been countenanced by the theory in its canonical form, which relegated the fixation of the oral text exclusively to the written record. As with the Homeric epics, so with *Rígsþula* and the eddic poems, the diffusion of authoritative epic and folk traditions radiated from feasts, festivals, or prestigious courts, wherever an appreciative or a wider audience could be secured; and the farther these traditions spread in the Norse world, the more the eddic texts solidified formulaically, *before* they were recorded on durable parchment. Hence a prerequisite for the faithful recording of any of those texts is a longer rather than a shorter oral gestation period of recomposition, diffusion, and stabilization. The chronological trend to the thirteenth century in the dating of the eddic corpus shortens the time-span of oral composition unconscionably for its poems.

The special advantage to us of the modified oral-formulaic theory is that it now enables us to correlate unobjectionably bits and pieces of an oral text of *Rígsþula* quoted or alluded to by the skalds with the written text of the poem in Codex Wormianus, in order to arrive at a textual *terminus ab quo* towards the close of the tenth century. We are at least theoretically entitled to posit for the skalds' reception an oral text that was already becoming fixed through diffusion of the *Rígsþula* folktale and beginning to resemble the written text in Codex Wormianus. We may never learn of the final steps in the textual derivation of *Rígsþula* that led in the mid-fourteenth century to the Icelandic redaction of the *þula* (partly for the poetic sake of its exemplary lists of synonymous *heiti*),⁵² but we can be nonetheless con-

49. Cf. the statements of William F. Hansen and Mary P. Coote in *Heroic Epic and Saga* (Oinas 1978, 16, 275): “[the Greek rhapsode] never sings a song twice in precisely the same words, but composes anew each time he performs” (Hansen); “No two oral compositions [of Serbocroatian heroic song] are exactly the same; every performance is a unique variation on traditional material” (Coote).

50. The second principle of Preben Meulengracht Sørensen in *Saga and Society* (1993, 76–77).

51. See the criticisms of Albert Lord's advocacy of dictation by Nagy (1995, 164; 1996, 31–34) and also by von See (1981e, 174).

52. So Johansson 1998, 73: “Om *Rígsþula* ses ur detta perspektiv, är det möjligt att föreställa sig att dikten har betraktats just som ett slags synonymlista, eller *þula*, för skalder. Skalden kunde finna synonymer för det som var speciellt för klassen, t.ex. vad de arbetade med, vad de åt, hur de levde och så vidare.”

tent that the gap between oral and literary text in this poem has been narrowed, even if still unbridged, by Nagy's critical modification of the oral-formulaic theory.

To conclude: with *Rígsþula*, in all probability, we have to do with a poem that grew out of a folktale of the origin of the Norse estates, which is to say the three Indo-Germanic social groups of nobles, freemen, and slaves. A god such as Heimdallr was made responsible for the creation of these estates by having him sleep with their ancestral progenitricers from three generations, of which the oldest gave birth to the thralls, the next older to the freeborn, and the youngest to the nobility. This sexual scenario was in brief the nonhistorical core concept of *Rígsþula* in its incipient, folkloric phase of development. When the folktale entered history in the tenth century as an oral-formulaic poem, to be recited to Viking audiences at royal courts or popular festivals, it must have acquired its Irish linguistic and literary coloring and assimilated to its scenario the model kingship of Harald Fair-Hair, which is refounded mythically by Rígr konungr at the fragmentary end of the poem. The pun on the name of "Young Scion" (Konr ungr = *konungr*) may smack of Icelandic clerical learning at the height of the Middle Ages,⁵³ but it is no more than a simple-minded *ofljóst* pun of skaldic inspiration in the Viking Age.

As *Rígsþula* was transmitted orally down the Christian centuries from poet to poet and audience to audience, other adaptations of its subject matter to historical persons and events like the political machinations of Earl Skúli and Hákon ungi were naturally always viable, but the oral text that reached the Codex Wormianus seems to have retained all the vestiges of the primary historicization of the *Rígsþula* folktale in the mid-Viking Age when the poem proper was under composition.

In its Irish aura and the prospective kingship of Konr ungr, in its elementary social structure of three main divisions of people with no more than five gradations of rank among them, and in the dress, ornaments, and occupations of its *dramatis personae* inheres the historical worth of *Rígsþula*, make of it what we will. In the view to which I subscribe, these things are so many facets of the life, times, and places (at home and abroad) of early medieval Norwegian society on the eve of the millennium, as seen by some Icelandic poet who frequented Norse-Irish courts. Regrettably, of the historians named at the outset of this paper perhaps Gurevich alone would wholly concur in this final assessment; Karras and Helgi Guðmundsson, who opt for a composition date to the poem in the High Middle Ages (1200–1250), would scarcely regard *Rígsþula* as a mirror of early medieval society. But the minority view may still be the truer one.

53. I suspect that Heusler's dating of *Rígsþula* to the thirteenth century was motivated from the start by skepticism that such word-play about the name and dignity of the first Scandinavian king befitted the poetic imagination of the Viking Age, when to him it was merely an etymological game of thirteenth-century "Icelandic philology" at the revival of pagan Old Norse literature: "Einem nordischen Kopf aus Harald Schönhaars Zeit . . . dürfen wir Gedankengänge dieser Art nicht zutrauen . . . Es ist ein sprachliches Gedankenspiel, das . . . nach isländischer Philologie riecht" (Heusler 1969, 186–87). On the modern etymology of *konungr*, either from Gmc. **kuniz* ("höchster Ehrentitel") or from Gmc. **kunja-* (kin), see Kahl 1960, 237, 238–39 n. 212, or, better, Magnússon 1989, s.v. "konungr."

Bibliography

- Aðalbjarnarson, Bjarni, ed. 1941–51. *Snorri Sturluson, "Heimskringla."* 3 vols. Íslenzk fornrit 26–28. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag.
- Blake, N. F., ed. and trans. 1962. *Jómsvíkinga Saga. The Saga of the Jomsvikings.* Icelandic Texts. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons.
- Boberg, Inger Margrethe. 1966. *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature.* Bibliotheca Arnarnaeana 27. København: Munksgaard.
- Brøndsted, Johannes. 1965. *The Vikings,* trans. Kalle Skov. Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- Bugge, Alexander. 1905. *Vesterlandenes indflydelse paa nordboernes og særlig nordmændenes ydre kultur, levesæt og samfundsforhold i vikingetiden.* Oslo: Jacob Dybwad.
- Chadwick, Nora Kershaw. 1953–57. "Literary Tradition in the Old Norse and Celtic World." *Saga-Book of the Viking Society* 14:164–99.
- de Vries, Jan. 1967. *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte.* Vol. 2, *Die Literatur von etwa 1150 bis 1300, die Spätzeit nach 1300.* Grundriß der germanischen Philologie 16. 2d ed. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Dillon, Myles, and Nora K. Chadwick. 1967. *The Celtic Realms.* New York: New American Library.
- Dronke, Ursula. 1981. "Sem jarlar forðum: The Influence of *Rígsþula* on Two Saga-Episodes." In *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre,* ed. Ursula Dronke et al., 56–72. Odense: Odense Univ. Press.
- , ed. 1997. *The Poetic Edda.* Vol. 2, *Mythological Poems.* Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Dumézil, Georges. 1968. *Mythe et épopée: L'Idéologie des trois fonctions dans les épopées des peuples indo-européens.* Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1973a. "Comparative Remarks on the Scandinavian God Heimdall," trans. Francis Charat. In Dumézil 1973b, 126–40.
- . 1973b. *Gods of the Ancient Northmen,* ed. Einar Haugen, trans. John Lindow et al. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- . 1973c. "The *Rígsþula* and Indo-European Social Structure," trans. John Lindow. In Dumézil 1973b, 118–25.
- Einarsson, Bjarni. 1961. *Skáldasögur.* Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs.
- Fidjestøl, Bjarne. 1999. *The Dating of Eddic Poetry: A Historical Survey and Methodological Investigation,* ed. Odd Einar Haugen. Bibliotheca Arnarnaeana 41. København: Reitzel.
- Fleck, Jere. 1970. "Konr—Óttarr—Geirroðr: A Knowledge Criterion for Succession to the Germanic Sacred Kingship." *Scandinavian Studies* 42:39–49.
- Friedman, Albert B., ed. 1956. *The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World.* New York: Viking Press.
- Guðmundsson, Helgi. 1997. *Um haf innan: Vestrænir menn og íslenzk menning á miðöldum.* Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Guðnason, Bjarni, ed. 1982. *Danakonunga sögur: Skjöldunga saga, Knýtlinga saga, Ágrip af sögu Danakonunga.* Íslenzk fornrit 35. Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag.
- [Gurevich] Gurjewitsch, Aaron J. 1982. *Das Weltbild des mittelalterlichen Menschen,* trans. Gabriele Loßack, ed. Hubert Mohr. München: C. H. Beck.
- Hancock, William Neilson, and Thaddeus O'Mahony, eds. 1869. *The Ancient Laws of Ireland.* Vol. 2, *Senchus Mor, Part 2. Law of Distress (Completed); Laws of Hostage-Sureties, Fosterage, Saer-Stock Tenure, Daer-Stock Tenure, and of Social Connexions.* Dublin: Alexander Thom.
- Hansen, Sören. 1931. "Rígstula." *Nordisk tidskrift för vetenskap, konst och industri* 7:89–101.

- Harris, Joseph. 1985. "Eddic Poetry." In *Old Norse–Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, ed. Carol Clover and John Lindow, 68–156. *Islandica* 45. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press.
- Helle, Knut. 1964. *Norge blir en stat, 1130–1319*. Vol. 1 of *Handbok i Norges historie*, ed. Knut Mykland et al. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Heusler, Andreas. 1941. *Die altgermanische Dichtung*. 2d ed. Potsdam: Athenaion.
- . 1969. "Heimat und Alter der eddischen Gedichte: Das isländische Sondergut." In idem, *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 2, ed. Stefan Sonderegger, 165–94. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Hill, Thomas D. 1986. "Rígsþula: Some Medieval Christian Analogues." *Speculum* 61:79–89.
- Jakobsson, Ármann. 1997. *Í leit að konungi: Konungsmynd íslenskra konungasagna*. Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
- Jochens, Jenny. 1997. "Gendered Trifunctionality: The Case of Rígsþula." In *Hugur: Mélanges d'histoire, de littérature et de mythologie, offerts à Régis Boyer pour son 65^e anniversaire*, ed. Claude Lecouteux and Olivier Gouchet, 111–22. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne.
- Johansson, Karl G. 1998. "Rígsþula och Codex Wormianus: Textens funktion ur ett kompositions-perspektiv." *Alvíssmál* 8:67–84.
- Jónsson, Finnur, ed. 1912–15. *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*. Vols. B.1–2, *Rettet tekst*. København: Gyldendal.
- . 1913–16. *Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis. Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog, oprindeligt forfattet af Sveinbjörn Egilsson*. 2d ed. København: S. L. Møller.
- . 1920. *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*. Vol. 1. 2d ed. København: Gad.
- Kahl, Hans-Dietrich. 1960. "Europäische Wortschatzbewegungen im Bereich der Verfassungsgeschichte: Ein Versuch am Beispiel germanischer und slawischer Herrschernamen; mit Anhang: Zum Ursprung von germ. König." *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Germanistische Abteilung* 77:154–240.
- Karras, Ruth Mazo. 1988. *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.
- Kelly, Fergus. 1988. *A Guide to Early Irish Law*. Early Irish Law Series 3. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- Kinsella, Thomas, trans. 1969. *The Tain*. Dublin: Dolmen Press.
- Kuhn, Hans. 1971a. "Das Eddastück von Sigurds Jugend." In Kuhn 1971b, 2:88–101.
- . 1971b. *Kleine Schriften: Aufsätze und Rezensionen aus den Gebieten der germanischen und nordischen Sprach-, Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Dietrich Hofmann in collaboration with Wolfgang Lange and Klaus von See. 2 vols. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- . 1971c. "Philologisches zur Adoption bei den Germanen." In Kuhn 1971b, 2:410–19.
- Lüthi, Max. 1976. *Das europäische Volksmärchen: Form und Wesen*. 5th ed. München: Francke.
- Magnússon, Ásgeir Blöndal. 1989. *Íslensk orðsifjabók*. Orðabók Háskólans.
- Meißner, Rudolf. 1933. "Rígr." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 57: 109–30.
- Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben. 1993. *Saga and Society*, trans. John Tucker. Odense: Odense Univ. Press. Originally published as *Saga og samfund* (København: Berlingske Forlag, 1977).
- Mommsen, Theodor, ed. 1895. *C. Iulii Solini collectanea rerum memorabilium*. 2d ed. Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Nagy, Gregory. 1995. "An Evolutionary Model for the Making of Homeric Poetry: Comparative Perspectives." In *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule*, ed. Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris, 163–79. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press.

- . 1996. *Homeric Questions*. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press.
- Neckel, Gustav, and Hans Kuhn, eds. 1983. *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*. Vol. 1, *Text*. 5th ed. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.
- Nerman, Birger. 1954. “Rígsþula 16:8 *dvergar á oxlum*, arkeologiskt belyst.” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 69:210–13.
- . 1969. “Rígsþulas álder.” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 84:15–18.
- Nordal, Sigurður, ed. 1952. *Völuspá*. 2d printing. Reykjavík: Helgafell.
- Nordal, Sigurður, and Guðni Jónsson, eds. 1938. *Borgfirðinga sögur: Hœnsa-Þóris saga, Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu, Bjarnar saga Hitdœlakappa, Heiðarvíga saga, Gísls þáttur Illugasonar*. Íslenzk fornrit 3. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Nordal, Sigurður, et al., eds. 1944–45. *Flateyjarbók*. 4 vols. Akranes: Flateyjarútgefing.
- Oinas, Felix J., ed. 1978. *Heroic Epic and Saga*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.
- Olrik, Axel. 1930. *Viking Civilization*, ed. Hans Ellekilde, trans. Jacob W. Hartmann and Hanna A. Larson. New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation. Originally published as *Nordisk aandsliv i vikingetid og tidlig middelalder* (København: Gyldendal, 1907).
- O’Rahilly, Cecile, ed. and trans. 1976. *Táin Bó Cúailnge, Recension 1*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- Richey, Alexander George, Thaddeus O’Mahony, and William M. Hennessy, eds. 1879. *The Ancient Laws of Ireland*. Vol. 4, *Din Techtugad and Certain Other Selected Brehon Law Tracts*. Dublin: Alexander Thom.
- Sawyer, Peter. 1994. *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe, AD 700–1100*. London: Methuen.
- Sawyer, Birgit, and Peter Sawyer. 1993. *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, circa 800–1500*. Nordic Series 17. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.
- Skovgaard-Petersen, Inge. 1971. “Vikingerne i den nyere forskning.” *Historisk tidsskrift* (København), 12. række, 5:651–721.
- Sveinsson, Einar Ólafur. 1957. “Celtic Elements in Icelandic Tradition.” *Béaloideas* 25:3–24.
- . 1962. *Íslenzkar bókmenntir í fornöld*. Vol. 1. [Reykjavík]: Almenna bókafélagið.
- Sveinsson, Einar Ólafur, and Matthías Þórðarson, eds. 1935. *Eyrbyggja saga, Brands þáttur orva, Eiríks saga rauða, Grœnlendinga saga, Grœnlendinga þáttur*. Íslenzk fornrit 4. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag.
- Thompson, Stith. 1955–58. *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. 2d ed. 6 vols. København: Rosenkilde & Bagger.
- Thurneysen, Rudolf. 1921. *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum siebzehnten Jahrhundert*. Halle (Saale): Max Niemeyer.
- Tómasson, Sverrir. 1993. “Formáli málfraeðiritgerðanna fjögurra í Wormsbók.” *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfraeði* 15:221–40.
- Turville-Petre, E[dward] O[swald] G[abriel]. 1964. *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- von See, Klaus. 1981a. “Das Alter der *Rígsþula*.” In von See 1981b, 84–95.
- . 1981b. *Edda, Saga, Skaldendichtung: Aufsätze zur skandinavischen Literatur des Mittelalters*. Heidelberg: Winter.
- . 1981c. Nachtrag zu von See 1981a. In von See 1981b, 514–16.
- . 1981d. “*Rígsþula* Str. 47 und 48.” In von See 1981b, 96–98.
- . 1981e. “Was ist Heldendichtung?” In von See 1981b, 154–93.
- von See, Klaus, et al. 2000. *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*. Vol. 3, *Götterlieder* (Völundarkviða, Alvíssmál, Rígsþula, Baldrs draumar, Hyndlolióð, Grottasöngur). Heidelberg: Winter.
- Young, Jean. 1933. “Does *Rígsþula* Betray Irish Influence?” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 49:97–107.