

Love and Death in the *Männerbund*:

An Essay with Special Reference to the *Bjarkamál* and *The Battle of Maldon*

Erum Magnús vér vægnir,
vildak með þér mildum
(Haralds varðar þú hjörvi
haukey) lífa ok deyja!

Sighvatr Þórðarson (c. 995–1045) concludes his *Bersöglisvísur*, “straight talk” of admonition to the young King Magnús, with what appears to be a reference to the power and dignity of the relationship between the leader and his man and poet: *meðal okkar alt’s hálígt* (all is holy between us two).¹ The relationship, while it cannot be equal, is reciprocal, and, in the last words of the poem, Sighvatr “relents” from his threat to transfer his allegiance to another king: “I give way, Magnús—you who guard with sword Norway, the hawk-isle of Haraldr—with you, generous one, it is my wish to live and die.”² Sighvatr’s jealousy, his emotional giving in, and his devotion to the death, despite his famous criticism of his lord, is presented in biographical terms in *Heimskringla* where we get to know both parties as individuals, but a larger understanding would proceed from the context of their institutional setting: Emile Benveniste comments that “it is society and social institutions which furnish concepts which are

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1. *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, BI (Copenhagen: Gyldendal; Kristiania: Nordisk forlag, 1912), pp. 238–39. The phrase might refer to Sighvatr’s baptismal relationship as godfather to Magnús (so Samuel Laing, trans., Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, Part Two: *Sagas of the Norse Kings*, rev. by Peter Foote [London: Everyman, 1961], p. 140 n.), but Lee M. Hollander seems to be right in seeing the more general reference as primary in the context (*The Skalds: A Selection of their Poems* [Princeton: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1945], p. 174, n. 65).

2. Alfred Vestlund, “Om strofernas ursprungliga ordning i Sigvat Tordarsons ‘Bersöglisvísur’,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, tilläggsband till band XL ny följd (XLIV) (1929): 281–93, esp. 292.

apparently the most personal."³ The ideal of men dying with their lord in the nearly contemporary poems *Bjarkamál* and *The Battle of Maldon* has for some time constituted a scholarly problem, though it is not thoughts of death among warriors that seem to need an explanation; rather it is the special form those thoughts take and the historical relationships implied. The interpretive hurdle seems less formidable, however, when this "ideal" is not isolated, for the institutional context links death with other expressions of love and solidarity.

The institution in question is traditionally identified as the *comitatus*, whether in first-century Germania or thirteenth-century Norway, but the continuity and distinctiveness of the institution are now in serious doubt. Yet all that was formerly identified as belonging to the *comitatus* can still be ascribed with confidence to all-male groups with aggression as one major function, and these, in turn, can be located under the umbrella of the concept *Männerbund* in the extended sense in which the word is currently used. There is no doubt that the problematic ideas about warrior self-sacrifice were in the air in the hypertrophy of heroic ethos of the late Viking Age,⁴ but this essay, casting its net very broadly, will propose the importance of a timeless psychological context in terms of male associations.

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As a concept for analysis of Old Germanic social groupings, the *Männerbund* fell into an undeserved disrepute as a result of reaction against the excesses of Otto Höfler's famous book *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen* and of the generally positive reception of its theories and its author by the National Socialists.⁵ Höfler combed Germanic sources, early and late, for traces of secret cultic societies, often associated with

3. Emile Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1973; French orig. 1969), p. 271.

4. Hans Kuhn, "Uns ist Fahrwind gegeben wider den Tod: Aus einer großen Zeit des Nordens," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 106 (1977): 147-63.

5. Otto Höfler, *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen* (Frankfurt am Main: Dietrich, 1934). The book is volume 1 of a planned three volumes (see p. xi, n. 1); the later volumes were never published, but Höfler's *Verwandlungskulte, Volkssagen und Mythen*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, 279, No. 2 (Vienna, 1973) is in some sort a continuation.

masks and animal affinities and based on an ecstatic union of the living member with the ancestors. He had a great deal of success with Tacitus's Harii and Chatti, with the Old Norse *einherjar*, the berserks, and the werewolf life of Sigmund and Sinfjötli in *Volsunga saga*—to name just a few high points. For Höfler the confraternities formed part of the Odinic religion, and he argued strenuously for a cultural continuity that directly entailed modern customs and beliefs, such as the Wild Hunt. It is a great and frustrating book, exemplifying too much of the kind of afflatus it celebrates, but for that very reason obviously valuable to the fascist movement in the year of its publication, 1934. Yet even within the movement there were readers who gagged. A review by Harald Spehr in the 1936 issue, the third year of *Rasse: Monatsschrift der Nordischen Bewegung*, opens with the skeptical question *Waren die Germanen 'Ekstatiker'?*⁶ Not everyone who wished to make the Germanic past useful and relevant in the Third Reich welcomed Höfler's irrationalism and ecstatic religion; apparently Albert Rosenberg preferred the very different myth of the past in Bernard Kummer's *Mitgards Untergang* (1927).⁷ Certainly the one time I personally met Otto Höfler, he took the occasion to regale me with a Hitler anecdote to Rosenberg's discredit, but it is to the contemporary secondary accounts by Klaus von See and especially to the splendid obituary of Höfler by Helmut Birkhan that I owe any real understanding of Höfler's coy relationship to the Party itself, to the SS's cultural foundation, *Ahnenerbe*, and to the rival intellectual faction.⁸ After the war few German scholars were willing to touch Höfler's subjects unless, like von See, with condemnation; but to accuse Höfler of making Germanic heroic legend serviceable for Stalingrad,

6. Pp. 394–400.

7. Höfler's own critique of Kummer is contained in one huge footnote, number 169, pp. 335–39.

8. The most relevant of von See's many works in this area: *Kontinuitätstheorie und Sakraltheorie in der Germanenforschung: Antwort an Otto Höfler* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1972); "Der Germane als Barbar," *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* 13, No. 1 (1981): 42–72; "Die Altnordistik im Dritten Reich," in Bernd Henningsen and Rainer Pelka, eds., *Die Skandinavistik zwischen gestern und morgen: Bestandsaufnahme ... eines "kleinen Faches,"* Schriftenreihe der Akademie Sankelmark, n.s. 59 (Sankelmark, 1984), pp. 39–51; "Das 'Nordische' in der deutschen Wissenschaft des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* 15, No. 2 (1984): 8–38; "Kulturkritik und Germanenforschung zwischen den Weltkriegen," *Historische Zeitschrift* 245 (1987): 343–62; "Politische Männerbund-Ideologie von der wilhelminischen Zeit bis zum Nationalsozialismus," in *Männerbünde—Männerbände: Zur Rolle des Mannes im Kulturvergleich*, ed. Gisela Völger

as von See does, does not refute but only contextualizes Höfler's arguments. Von See has successfully attacked many parts of Höfler's total oeuvre, but I agree with a recent comment on the *Männerbünde* book that no objective evaluation has yet been attempted.⁹

It is interesting that the central term and most of the main concepts of Höfler's famous book were introduced by a woman, Lily Weiser, in a much more modest work inspired within the same Vienna School by Rudolf Much's teaching. Höfler copiously acknowledged Weiser's *Altgermanische Jünglingsweihen und Männerbünde*,¹⁰ but he differs, apart from tonally, in making large claims for the *Männerbünde* as vehicles of historical power and state formation, in emphasizing ecstatic religion, and in his outcroppings, rather mild and traditional, of hostility toward women. The word *Männerbund* was apparently the construction of the anthropologist Heinrich Schurtz, making its first appearance in 1902 in his book *Altersklassen und Männerbünde: Eine Darstellung der Grundformen der Gesellschaft*, where it was intended to provide a concept for a widespread social form in primitive societies.¹¹ The typical *Männerbund* in the stricter sense is a secret organization in a tribal society to which only men, but not automatically all men, may belong; it will be highly organized under

and Karin v. Welck, 2 vols. (Cologne: Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum Köln, 1990), 1:93–102. See also Helmut Birkhan, "[Nachruf auf] Otto Höfler," *Almanach der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 138 (1987/88; Vienna, 1988): 385–406. On Lily Weiser's politics and further to Höfler, see Olaf Bockhorn, "Wiener Volkskunde 1938–1945," in *Volkskunde und Nationalsozialismus: Referate und Diskussionen einer Tagung ...*, ed. Helge Gerndt (Munich: Münchner Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1987), pp. 235–36, n. 25.

9. Stefanie v. Schnurbein, "Geheime kultische Männerbünde bei den Germanen—Eine Theorie im Spannungsfeld zwischen Wissenschaft und Ideologie," in *Männerbünde—Männerbünde* (n. 8 above), 2:97–102; cf. p. 102: "Eine fundierte feministische Kritik an Höflers die Männerbünde und männliche Tugenden verherrlichenden, häufig direkt frauenfeindlichen Schilderungen der kultischen Geheimbünde wäre der kritiklosen Übernahme der Höflerschen Ergebnisse und ihrer Umdeutung in feministische Richtung sicher vorzuziehen." Even the very critical review of Höfler by Friedrich von der Leyen (*Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum* 54 [1935]: 153–65) sees value in testing Höfler's inventive hypotheses.

10. Lily Weiser(-Aall), *Altgermanische Jünglingsweihen und Männerbünde: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen und nordischen Altertums- und Volkskunde*, Bausteine zur Volkskunde und Religionswissenschaft I (Bühl, Baden: Konkordia, 1927).

11. Heinrich Schurtz, *Altersklassen und Männerbünde: Eine Darstellung der Grundformen der Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Reimer, 1902).

the mantle of religious mystery and symbolically opposed to everything female in the tribe; explicit goals of such groups differ greatly, but the preservation of male power is everywhere implicit.¹² The evolutionary and psychosexual theories with which Schurtz overlaid his ethnographic descriptions would seem extremely dated nowadays; however, the basic concept not only captured a cross-cultural generality of importance for ethnography, but also filled a need in the German cultural debate, especially in the twenties and thirties—hence the “ideologische Belastung” of the word in present-day German and its virtual disappearance, even, from the German lexicon of sociology.¹³ But as a writer for *Die Zeit* tartly reported: “The thing itself ... flourishes and prospers just as before in every conceivable shape and form, be it as officers’ club, professional association, ... or secret society.”¹⁴

In the teens and twenties, before male associations became part of Nazi ideology properly speaking, Schurtz’s work was developed in an important direction by a literary depth-psychologist named Hans Blüher whose loosely Freudian cultural criticism focused on what he called “the role of love in male society,” to translate his most famous title, the 1917 book *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft*. Blüher was a brilliant writer and potentially more accessible today when we are used to thinking in terms of “desire” and “gender” and are equipped with a word like “homosocial” for an all-encompassing concept of male associations.¹⁵ But in his time Blüher was extremely

12. Paraphrased from Georg Höltker, “Männerbünde,” in *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie*, ed. Alfred Vierkant (Stuttgart: Enke, 1931), pp. 348–53, at p. 348.

13. Gisela Völger and Karin v. Welck, “Zur Ausstellung und zur Materialsammlung,” p. xix; René König, “Blickwandel in der Problematik der Männerbünde,” pp. xxvii–xxxii; Jürgen Reulecke, “Das Jahr 1902 und die Ursprünge der Männerbund-Ideologie in Deutschland,” pp. 3–10; all in *Männerbünde—Männerbände* (n. 8 above), vol. 1.

14. Sigrid Löffler, “Das herrliche Geschlecht,” *Die Zeit*, 27 April 1990 (No. 17), p. 24, col. 3: “Die Sache selbst ... blüht und gedeiht nach wie vor in allen möglichen Ausprägungen und Gestaltungsformen, sei’s als Offiziersverein, Berufs- oder Karriereklub, sei’s als ... oder Geheimgesellschaft.”

15. Hans Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft: Eine Theorie der menschlichen Staatsbildung nach Wesen und Wert*, new ed. by Hans Joachim Schoeps (Stuttgart: Klett, 1962). For a discussion of the “homosocial” see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), esp. Introduction and chap. 1.

controversial, and Höfler does not allude to him or deal significantly with the emotional life of his *Männerbünde*.¹⁶

In contemporary Germany, since, say, 1968, the women's movement and other influences too familiar to mention have revived interest in what bonds men, even though contemporary scholars will obviously evaluate their material very differently. The most relevant of the newer studies known to me are two: a two-volume compendium deriving from a 1989 museum exhibition in Cologne under the title "Männerbünde—Männerbände: Zur Rolle des Mannes im Kulturvergleich" and Klaus Theweleit's vast literary meditation *Männerphantasien*, its two volumes published in Germany (1977–78) and in America (1987–89).¹⁷ The museum exhibition and accompanying volumes took their point of departure from Schurtz and anthropology; but the book includes ninety-eight substantial essays covering not only the psychological and sociological theory, the anthropological instances, and the German heritage, as one might expect, but many chapters I would not have predicted—for example, on the Dervishes, the Assassins, the monastic community of Mt. Athos, Freemasonry, Oxbridge colleges, Rotary Clubs and the like, Turkish cafés in Cologne, and Eskimo whaling communities. Schurtz had already impressed his readers in 1902 with the suggestion that the social structures he had investigated were based in a psychosocial binarism—sexual difference—that persisted through evolution and that, therefore, modern European mens' clubs and the like were not only "survivals" like other folk remnants but still vital responses to human essentials. In the book from the Cologne exhibition, we see not only the predictable feminist values and cultural relativism but a readiness to generalize the definition of the phenomenon further and to investigate its margins. Theweleit's study is equally imbued with contemporary liberal and radical values but is based chiefly on the autobiographies and novels of Freikorps-men, members of the private armies that were part of

16. Höfler was well aware of the contemporary sociological debates, as his language and specific indebtedness to Alfred Baumeister (on whom see Reulecke, "Das Jahr 1902," n. 13 above, p. 10) make clear. Weiser (*Jünglingsweihen*, n. 10 above, p. 42 n.) notices and rejects Blüher.

17. *Männerphantasien*, trans. as *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols., by Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987–89) and n. 8 above. See also Bernd Widdig, *Männerbünde und Massen: Zur Krise männlicher Identität in der Literatur der Moderne* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991).

the chaotic German scene after the First World War. In this corpus Theweleit seeks common psychological features of what he calls the "Warrior-Male," and any student of Old Germanic literature wading through Theweleit's thousand pages will hear many familiar echoes despite the author's hostile relation to his subject.

Outside Germany at least one important modern work should be mentioned: Lionel Tiger's *Men in Groups*.¹⁸ Tiger had obviously not read Schurtz, to whom he barely alludes under a garbled title, and he does not know Blüher's work at all. Yet he recapitulates Schurtz's general argument that the gendered difference in bonding in historical cultures is a product of adaptive evolution (and therefore innate) and a precondition for aggression and other cultural advances. This socio-biological theme is, however, only half the book; and the descriptive parts seem to me a useful background, full of echoes for the student of Old Germanic male groups.

Classical *Altgermanistik* was somewhat tentative about appreciating the relevance of Schurtz's *Männerbund* concept, apart from the narrow application beginning with Weiser in 1927. This is peculiar because Schurtz himself attempts a discussion of the initiation of young men in Old Germanic times and makes connections with post-medieval German folk customs (pp. 110–24). The great *Reallexikon* of 1907, compiled by Hoops, has no entry for *Männerbund*, but by 1913 Friedrich Kauffmann was citing Schurtz's analogous materials copiously in footnotes to his *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, and was probably generally influenced by Schurtz in his presentation of early Germanic social groupings.¹⁹ One reason for the tardy welcome may have been reticence to put the ancestors, already "barbarians," on a level with primitive peoples;²⁰ another may be positivistic reluctance to extend Schurtz's narrower concept, despite his own example. The *Männerbünde* of Weiser and Höfler are not to be understood in any metaphorical sense; their rituals are not somehow immanent in the *dissecta membra* of the evidence. Instead, their claim, imbued with the ritual theory in its most literal form, is for the real historical existence of cultic societies

18. Lionel Tiger, *Men in Groups*, 2nd ed. (New York: Boyars, 1984); Tiger's Preface to the second edition gives some idea of the stormy reception of this book.

19. Friedrich Kauffmann, *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, 2 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1913–23), chiefly 1:436–49; 2:385–414.

20. Cf. Birkhan, "[Nachruf auf] Otto Höfler" (n. 8 above), p. 403.

such as those that actually exist or existed in Africa and elsewhere in the realms of ethnography. But the more obvious male institution, the *Gefolgschaft* or *comitatus*, plays relatively little role in Höfler's conception; Weiser, on the other hand, several times notices the transition and overlap from age classes and secret societies to the retinue (e.g., p. 25).

That the *comitatus* was a *Männerbund* has already been recognized explicitly by some commentators. For example, Jan de Vries assigns it qualities of *Männerbünde* in other early Indo-European and primitive peoples, including even a religious dimension.²¹ An influential essay by Felix Genzmer discussed cultic *Männerbünde*, with their death-and-rebirth initiations, then passed to the *comitatus*: "Auch die Gefolgschaft ist ein *Männerbund*," even though it *lacks* features such as religious sanction.²² In a soberer postwar vein, Reinhard Wenskus seems to look favorably on such an understanding of the retinue in early Germanic times.²³ One value of this identification is that it allows the sparse data for the *comitatus* to be filled out by references to the normal morphology of the *Männerbund* cross-culturally understood; the tentativeness of this exercise is already evident in the disagreement just alluded to over putative cultic correlatives.

Kauffmann's presentation of 1913 already shows this kind of analogical filling out of the paradigm: At puberty the boy was separated from women, passing into the care of his father or a male substitute; the initiation includes tests and ends in the bestowal of weapons. But the boy passes from his father's protection into the household of a *princeps*, where he will serve and learn; the inner structure of the closed group is imitated from the family. Ultimately, however, the retinue is a free association around a leader. The companion is free to leave and usually exits the retinue when it is

21. Jan de Vries, *Die geistige Welt der Germanen*, 2nd ed. (Halle/Saale: Niemeyer, 1945), pp. 156–65; *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), 1:492–99.

22. Felix Genzmer, "Staat und Gesellschaft," in *Germanische Altertumskunde*, ed. Hermann Schneider (Munich: Beck, 1938), pp. 123–70, at p. 142; Cf. Weiser (*Jünglingsweißen*, n. 10 above, p. 32): "Auch die Gefolgschaft ist im Grunde eine Kampfgenossenschaft. Das Gefolge besteht der Hauptsache nach aus Unverheirateten und diese werden auch im Heer die Kerntruppen gebildet haben," etc.

23. Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Cologne and Graz: Böhlau, 1961), esp. pp. 361–63.

time to marry. As initiation begins the age-cohort of the “youth,” so marriage begins that of the middle-aged men. *Heirat* and one Old English word for the *comitatus*, *hired*, are cognates, but notice that actual marriage stands in complementary distribution to *comitatus* service. Yet the retinue contained some older men also, and recognition of age stratifications survives, for example, in the OE *duguð ond geoguð*. One word for the older bachelors is OE *hægsteald*, German *Hagestolz*, and traditional pictures of the retinue in the literature often cite an oldest companion, a *Waffenmeister* like Dietrich’s Hildebrand, Gizurr of *Hlōðskviða*, or the *eald geneat* of *Maldon* and the *eald æscwiga* of *Beowulf*’s Ingeld episode. In the context of reciprocal loyalty that constitutes the inner bonds of the group, Tacitus mentions a *sacramentum* or oath that many connect with the *bēot* or *heitstrenging* of later texts, and it is, of course, in this context that we hear the famous sentiments about shame and the ideal of men dying with their lord. Tacitus commentators have supplied early parallels as well as later ones.

So far some traditional features of the picture of the *comitatus*. I am aware that this trips lightly over many vexed questions and that the whole subject has become more complicated in postwar scholarship. The two major problems, especially since Hans Kuhn’s “Die Grenzen der germanischen Gefolgschaft,” would seem to be the continuity of the institution and the distinction between this institution and similar ones. The gist of Kuhn’s formidable study is that more discriminations erase the appearance of continuity.²⁴ Kuhn’s narrow definition of the *comitatus* allowed him to recognize it in only two periods, that of Tacitus and that of the late Viking Age, where it was a new growth responding to the same social circumstances. There must be an ideological context to Kuhn’s shift from a traditional treatment in 1938 to the new and fragmentary view of 1956,²⁵ but it is enough to cite Wenskus’s balanced assessment of Kuhn: Kuhn is often hypercritical in this monograph, and the hypothesis of continuity sometimes seems

24. Hans Kuhn, “Die Grenzen der germanischen Gefolgschaft,” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 73, Germanistische Abteilung (1956): 1–83; repr. in his *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), pp. 420–83.

25. Hans Kuhn, “Kriegswesen und Seefahrt,” in *Germanische Altertumskunde* (1938): 98–122, esp. p. 101 (n. 22 above).

to make better sense of the evidence.²⁶ Kuhn's essay was impressively answered by the historian Walter Schlesinger and by the philologist D. H. Green.²⁷ Helmut Gneuss remained ambivalent; he adopted much of Kuhn's theory of non-continuity, yet he showed conclusively that the English evidence through the eighth century can hardly do without the concept of the *comitatus*.²⁸ There would be, of course, a great deal to be said about the historical questions.

If, however, in this post-feminist age, our interest is in the *comitatus* as a *Männerbund* and in the psychosocial explanatory power of the realization that the members of these groups were not just men in the sense of persons but male men (cf. OE *wæpnedmen*), it is not necessary to take a position on these questions of continuity and discrimination: virtually all the social forms bordering the *comitatus* would also qualify as male associations in the current loose understanding, though internal organization and the intensity of feelings will have varied. This emotional life can be understood, if at all, through the literature; but in view of the questionable continuity of the *comitatus*, we need to replace pre-war formulations with something like this: *comitatus*-like all-male groups with aggression as one major function continued through the entire Old Germanic period as important sponsors of poetry in which their ethos can (fragmentarily) be read.²⁹ Most of these emotional constants are already well known.

In contrast to the family, the *comitatus* and other *Männerbünde* were voluntary associations and therefore "social." The young man is

26. Chiefly pp. 346–61 (see n. 23 above).

27. Schlesinger, "Randbemerkungen zu drei Aufsätzen über Sippe, Gefolgschaft und Treue," in *Alteuropa und die moderne Gesellschaft: Festschrift für Otto Brunner* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), pp. 11–59; repr. in his *Beiträge zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), pp. 286–334; Green, *The Carolingian Lord: Semantic Studies on Four Old High German Words: Balder, Fró, Trúttin, Hæro* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1965), passim. There are also some qualifications in the generally relevant John Lindow, *Comitatus, Individual and Honor: Studies in North Germanic Institutional Vocabulary*, University of California Publications in Linguistics 83 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976).

28. Helmut Gneuss, *Die Battle of Maldon als historisches und literarisches Zeugnis*, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1976, Heft 5 (Munich), esp. pp. 15–45.

29. The *comitatus* as sponsor of poetry is a widespread idea; e.g., Helmut de Boor, "Dichtung," in *Germanische Altertumskunde* (n. 22 above), pp. 387–88; Andreas Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung*, 2nd ed. (Potsdam: Athenaion, 1941), p. 15. Heusler's book constitutes a definition of "Old Germanic" as used here.

attracted to his leader and could change lords; Caesar and Tacitus comment on what in modern times came to be called the charisma of the leader. There clearly were practical aspects to the relationship of lord and retainer, but it is the passionate and less rational ones that seem most important in literature. Beside *Treue*, there is betrayal, and in Norwegian law and in literature a large body of material reflects the tension of that primary relationship; commentators also note generational conflict.³⁰ Though the vocabulary for leader, retainer, and *Männerbund* itself has been thoroughly sifted, its evidence for relationships would warrant study. Some vocabulary belongs to an intense emotional sphere: Arminius had his *dilectis*, Chnodomarius, his *tres amici iunctissimi*. The *duguð* or the *dryht* may be *dīere*, the *gesīðas* (*comites*) may be *swāse* (dear); the major word for loyalty, *hold*, suggests etymologically two men “inclined” together in conversation. The lord is *lēof* (beloved), from the root of *lufu*, *lof*, *lufian*; both lord and retainer are called *wine* (friend) alone and in many compounds, and like *lēof*, this word serves for both male-male and male-female relationships. (OHG *winileodas*, for example, are lovesongs.) The etymology of *wine* includes Latin *venus*, and the same semantic development from love to friendship and kinship took place in this root in Irish. The lord may be a *frēowine* or *frēodryhten* with the IE root **prī-* “love.” When Hrothgar adopts Beowulf we are told he will “love him as a son” with the verb *freogan*, and, of course, *frēond* (friend) and its derivatives are from the same root. Frederick Klaeber comments on the phrase *ne his myne wisse* that “desire” for *myne* would be rather out of place; but elsewhere the word does mean “love, desire,” and it is Hrothgar’s “love” that Grendel, in his role as monstrous hall-thane, cannot know. For the analogue of this line in *The Wanderer* I think the more intimate formulation with “love” is satisfactory, despite some philological difficulties.³¹

The Wanderer’s passionate picture of the displaced retainer dwells on language: he has no “dear confidant”; he lacks a “friend” or a

30. E.g., Weiser (*Jünglingsweißen*, n. 10 above), p. 23. I would substitute “loyalty problematic” for the “germanische Treue” debunked by František Graus, “Über die sogenannte germanische Treue,” *Historica* (Prague) 1 (1959): 71–121.

31. T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss, eds., *The Wanderer* (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 61–65; Fr. Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. rev. (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1950), line 1696 and note, pp. 134–35.

"gold-friend" who will *wēman mid wynnum*. Famous difficulties here, but I would look to Norwegian *ōma*, Icelandic *œmta* (whisper).³² In his dream it seems as if the Wanderer embraces and kisses his lord and lays hand and head on his knee. These are institutional, not purely personal, gestures, of course; but if they are a part of a ceremony of admittance to the *comitatus*³³ they are here dreamed of as a part of the Wanderer's happy youth in the *Männerbund* (taken together with lines 35–36). The deprivation of the *swæsne* (dear man), is a wound in the heart (lines 49–50). It is interesting that, to a large extent, the same language, that of retainership, does duty for male-male and male-female attachment. In *The Wife's Lament* only three inflections prove that the speaker is a woman, while everything else could be and has been interpreted as the language of a retainer separated from his lord. In *The Husband's Message* only a single half-line, *pēodnes dohtor* (prince's daughter), assures a female internal audience; but the situation is different with *Wulf and Eadwacer*, and the corpus of old poetry is too small for confidence.

Comradeship among retainers seems less prominent as an emotional value than might be predicted. The Wanderer and *Beowulf's* Last Survivor grieve for lost mates, and one may find a developed comradely vocabulary, such as *eaxlgestellan* (shoulder companion), and some Norse anecdotes of retainers' solidarity. The more prominent emotion, however, is rivalry; in Tacitus it is *aemulatio*, competition for the place closest to the leader, and Icelandic stories of court life are full of more or less petty envy, emulation, and jealous slander.³⁴ It appears that *Männerbünde* are rarely egalitarian, and ranking relative to the leader is part of the bonding.³⁵ A particular variety of the comradeship of arms, of *Waffenbruderschaft*, begins with a direct test of strength. (A timeless motif told of Gilgamesh and Enkidu as well as of Robin Hood

32. Ibid., pp. 70, 110 n. to line 29.

33. Ibid., p. 112.

34. In Old English, cf. Deor and Heorrenda.

35. Eric John, "War and Society in the Tenth Century: The Maldon Campaign," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., vol. 27 (1977): 176, commenting on the laws of the *Jómsvíkingar*, alludes to the question of the continuity of the *comitatus*: "What we have here is the ancient *comitatus* made into a new institution by the intensity and permanence of the military life prescribed and what we might call the hardware that enshrined this life." By Kuhn's definition the leaderless viking groups could not have been called *comitatus*.

and Little John, it continues into what Tiger calls “buddy movies.”) The motif is applied both to retainer-retainer and to lord-retainer relations. For example, in *Þiðreks saga* heroes are drawn as if magnetically to Þiðrekr, and, as Hans Naumann says, “sometimes the youthful warriors sue for an initial duel with the new foreign lord in ways that otherwise only a lover sues for the first favors of the beloved.”³⁶ The new leader must be the stronger, as in the Icelandic story of Eindriði ilbreiðr. The Icelandic *Sorla þáttr* contains two instances of the formula in which two heroes fight to a draw, then swear blood-brotherhood, the first being especially interesting in that obliteration of family ties leads to the warrior idyll.³⁷

In the time of Tacitus and later, the *comitatus* seems to have had an educational function, and in a broad sense development of the man is a purpose of *Männerbünde* in general. Naumann emphasizes this function of the *comitatus* in one of the most readable books on the subject, despite its sentimental fascist politics.³⁸ Weiser regards the period of foreign adventures so common in Norse stories in this light (pp. 72, 81), and the existence of age classes (OE *hyse*, *geogoð*, *dugoð*, etc.) in conjunction with a rite of passage is necessarily education in some sense. Traditional German accounts of the *Gefolgschaft*, such as Naumann’s, are confident that the *Gefolgschaftsälteste* corresponded to a real-life ceremonial and pedagogical mentor. Tacitus contrasts such *comites* with the adolescents as “the others, men of maturer strength and tested by long years.”³⁹ Naumann discusses,

36. Hans Naumann, *Germanisches Gefolgschaftswesen* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1939), p. 15: “manchmal werben die jungen Recken dabei um einen Erstlingszweikampf mit dem fremden neuen Herrn, wie sonst nur ein Liebender um die erste Huld der Geliebten wirbt.”

37. On these Icelandic stories see J. Harris, “Gender and Genre: Short and Long Forms in the Saga Literature,” in *The Making of the Couple: The Social Function of Short-Form Medieval Narrative*, ed. Flemming G. Andersen and Morten Nøjgaard (Odense: Odense Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 43–66 [reprinted in this volume, Eds.].

38. Weiser (*Jünglingsweihen*, n. 10 above), pp. 28, 29, 42, 43; Naumann (*Germanisches Gefolgschaftswesen*, n. 36 above) points out that Lat. *sc(h)ola*, as well as *magister*, was borrowed into the terminology of the *comitatus* (p. 49), but note that the relevant Late Latin sense was not transmitted in the educational sphere but already referred to a group of soldiers (see OE *scolu*, *handscolu*, *genēatscolu*, OS *skola*, etc.).

39. *Tacitus in Five Volumes*, I: *Germania* [etc.], trans. M. Hutton, rev. by E. H. Warmington, Loeb Classical Library 35 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press; London: Heinemann, 1970), pp. 150–51: “[young men] *ceteris robustioribus ac iam pridem probatis adgregantur.*”

among others, Hildebrand, Starkaðr, Innsteinn, Hagen, Thomas in the *Heliand*, Wiglaf, Iring, and Heime. This may be the traditional context in which to understand the moment in the *Finnsburg Fragment* when one warrior attempts to dissuade a young man from risking his life against the proven warrior who holds the door.

Every exclusive group, such as *Männerbünde*, practices some kind of initiation, even if it is only (as our *Zeit* reporter wrote) “saftige Aufnahmegebühren,” and, of course, Höfler and Weiser deal in detail with *Jünglingsweihen*, the morphology of rites of passage and their social and religious context. The older sources seem to take little notice of rites of admission to the group—Unferth’s challenge may be one example—but Norse sources are full of tests and initiations. The “initiation ceremonials” from the sagas discussed by Mary Danielli in 1945 show the neophyte passing tests for admission into a group of warriors and/or establishing his rank relative to them;⁴⁰ but a wider selection and more precise social context had already been brought to bear by Weiser and Höfler. An interesting example of a condition of admission to the select warrior group is reported by Saxo: taking a sword blow on the brow without flinching.⁴¹ Various rules about wounds remind one of the importance of scars in such modern *Männerbünde* as dueling fraternities, but such semi-otic aspects—hair is the most obvious—would lead too far afield. To the initiatory patterns in *Hálfs saga* and *Völsunga saga* Weiser adds (without benefit of Propp) that of the *Märchen*; it is, however, worth distinguishing between individual hero initiations in a broad sense and entry into the male warrior band specifically.

Much of the contemporary work on the larger subject of *Männerbünde* dwells on the exclusion and repression of women, but Lily Weiser was already quite clear about this: “Behind the tribal initiations is concealed the battle of two generations ... and

40. Mary Danielli, “Initiation Ceremonial from Norse Literature,” *Folk-Lore* 56 (1945): 229–45; Danielli makes the suggestion about Unferth’s challenge on pp. 241–42.

41. Saxo 7.10.11 (*Saxonis Gesta Danorum*, ed. J. Olrik and H. Ræder, vol. 1 [Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1931], p. 209; Saxo Grammaticus, *History of the Danes*, vol. 1: Text, trans. Peter Fisher, ed. Hilda Ellis Davidson, 2 vols. [Cambridge and Totowa, N.J.: D. S. Brewer and Rowman and Littlefield, 1979], p. 228; Weiser, *Jünglingsweihen*, n. 10 above, p. 68).

also the struggle for male authority over against women.”⁴² With the maleness of the Germanic *Männerbünde* in mind, we may notice a misogynistic strain in the literary tradition. In his chapters on public life and the *comitatus*, Tacitus implies only that the boy becomes a man by moving from the *domus* to the company of men in the public sphere (13), but, in his chapter on the Chatti (31), we encounter a celibate warrior elite without “house or land or any business.”⁴³ A standard comparison to the celibate berserks is augmented in Weiser by reference to the *Hansa* (p. 38). One scholar compared the Chatti to monastic begging orders, and from our quasi-sociological point of view it is indeed a “‘convergent’ phenomenon.”⁴⁴ The Chatti were apparently not a tribe or caste, but an order or *Männerbund* composed chiefly of warriors lingering in the state between boy and married man, *Junggesellen*, until they grew old. Whether berserks continue or revive this order is debatable, but they are usually presented as unmarried, dangerous gangs, groups often conceived as brothers.⁴⁵ The rules or laws of

42. Weiser (*Jünglingsweihen*, n. 10 above), p. 23: “Hinter den Stammesweihen verbirgt sich auch der Kampf zweier Generationen ... und der Kampf um die Herrschaft der Männer den Frauen gegenüber.” John Lindow, “Riddles, Kennings, and the Complexity of Skaldic Poetry,” *Scandinavian Studies* 47 (1975): 311–27, has suggested that the inherent ideology of Norse *dróttkvætt*, which was named for and flourished in the *drótt* or *comitatus*, correlated with its notoriously difficult, riddle-like style so that it functioned as a kind of test or sign of initiation into the warrior group: “Early skaldic poetry might, therefore, be regarded as a device for isolating non-members, i.e. the lower classes and women, from the *drótt*. It functioned, in effect, as a kind of secret language in which the members of the *drótt* could maintain their collective traditions in a special way and also communicate without being wholly understood by others, indeed to the exclusion of others” (pp. 322–23). For another explanation of *drótt(kvætt)*, see Kuhn, “Gefolgschaft” (n. 24 above), pp. 437–40. The anti-feminist trends discussed here need not be considered as contradictory to significant actual power invested in the women on the margins of *Männerbünde*; see Michael J. Enright, “Lady With a Mead-Cup: Ritual, Group Cohesion and Hierarchy in the Germanic Warband,” *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 22 (1988): 170–203, an impressive study discovered too late to influence the present paper.

43. Trans. Hutton, pp. 180–81 (see n. 39 above): “nulli domus aut ager aut aliqua cura.”

44. *Die Germania des Tacitus*, erläutert von Rudolf Much, 3rd ed., rev. by Herbert Jankuhn, ed. Wolfgang Lange (Heidelberg: Winter, 1967); reference and quotation, p. 389. Much’s famous compendium is relevant at many points of the present essay but for reasons of space cannot be cited each time.

45. *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 389–92; Weiser (*Jünglingsweihen*, n. 10 above), esp. pp. 44, 58, 66.

the viking groups provide for explicit rejection or regulation of dealings with women. The most famous are the laws of the *Jóms-víkingar* that prohibit any member from bringing a woman into the fort or from being away—presumably visiting a woman—for more than three days.⁴⁶ The laws of King Frodi in Saxo and the similar rules in *Hálfs saga*, *Hrólfs saga*, and *Orvar-Odds saga* give special attention to problems such as rape and marriage. This may be a distant echo of the orgiastic sexual freedom that Schurtz found frequently associated with the liminal period, the Irish *fianna* preserving still more traces.⁴⁷

Rejection of women can be related to success of the male group as warriors: Waltharius is lying to Attila when he voices the following sentiments, but the sentiments must have been plausible in the warrior context:

If, following my lord's command, I take a wife,
I will be bound first by my love and care for the girl
And often kept away from service to the king.
The need to build a house and supervise my farmland
Will hinder me from being present in your sight
And giving to the Huns' realm my accustomed care.
Whoever once has tasted pleasure then becomes
Accustomed to find hardships unendurable.
For nothing is so sweet to me as always being
In faithful obedience to my lord. I ask you, therefore,
To let me lead my life free of the yoke of marriage.⁴⁸

46. Discussed by Naumann, Kuhn, and Weiser, among many others; see B. R. Berg, *Sodomy and the Perception of Evil: English Sea Rovers in the Seventeenth-Century Caribbean* (New York and London: New York Univ. Press, 1983), for the customary absence of women on pirate ships.

47. See Kim R. McCone, "Werewolves, Cyclopes, Díberga, and Fianna: Juvenile Delinquency in Early Ireland," *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 12 (1986): 1–22, esp. pp. 13–15; see also McCone, "Hund, Wolf und Krieger bei den Indogermanen," in *Studien zum indogermanischen Wortschatz*, ed. Wolfgang Meid, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft 52 (Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft, 1987), pp. 101–54, esp. p. 104.

48. *Waltharius and Ruodlieb*, ed. and trans. Dennis M. Kratz (New York: Garland, 1984), lines 150–60, pp. 10–11; cf. Naumann, *Germanisches Gefolgschaftswesen* (n. 36 above), p. 14.

Saxo tells how two brothers make parallel and comparable viking expeditions: one took married men and met disaster, the other took bachelors and succeeded.⁴⁹ Saxo's antifeminism in speeches such as that of Starcatherus in the Ingellus episode is probably rightly related to his monastic position (another *Männerbund*), but he did not entirely misread the Ingeld tradition, for in *Beowulf* the opposition of honor and marriage is already clear so that after incitement and revenge, Ingeld's "woman-loves ... grew colder" (*wīflufan ... cōlran weorðað*). A symbolic rejection is probably to be read in the Norse *Hrímgerðarmál* where the demonized female is sexually threatening but finally unable to break up the male group.⁵⁰

Hrímgerðr's insults to the retainer Atli are partly sexual, typical concepts from the realm of *níð*.⁵¹ While *níð* abounds in Norse sources, I do not find much correlation with male-group contexts even though the cross-cultural literature on *Männerbünde* would lead one to expect male joking behavior like the Black American insult game of "sounding." One suggestive example, though, is Sneglu-Halli's bawdy joking about how the king acquired a coveted axe.⁵² Symbolism of male-male sexual dominance and submission, especially upturned buttocks, has been brilliantly exposed by Preben Meulengracht Sørensen in *Gísla saga*,⁵³ and it seems to me that literature of the

49. Saxo, 7.1.1–2 (Orik and Ræder, p. 181; Fisher, p. 201; see n. 41 above); Weiser (*Jünglingsweihen*, n. 10 above), p. 67, adds King Hálfr's men among the unmarried.

50. *Beowulf*, lines 2065b–66; *Hrímgerðarmál* in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, st. 12–30, in *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, ed. G. Neckel, 4th ed. rev. by H. Kuhn, vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1962). Perhaps the original spirit behind the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard condemned the "woman-visit" (*wif-cyððu*); in any case, she is a *meretrix* in one version.

51. For the concept and a recent fundamental discussion, see Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of sexual defamation in early Northern society*, trans. Joan Turville-Petre, The Viking Collection I (Odense: Odense Univ. Press, 1983).

52. *Sneglu-Halla þátrr* in *Eyfirðinga sögur*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, Íslensk fornrit 9 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1956), pp. 293–94; discussed in Harris, "Gender and Genre" (n. 37 above), and by Meulengracht Sørensen, p. 27 (n. 51 above); see also Michael Minkov, "Sneglu Halli, 2: 11: *Dróttinserðr*," *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 22, Pt. 5 (1988): 285–86.

53. *Unmanly Man* (n. 51 above), ch. 4, and "Murder in marital bed: An attempt at understanding a crucial scene in *Gísla saga*," in *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*, ed. John Lindow et al., The Viking Collection III (Odense: Odense Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 235–63; see also Tiger, *Men In Groups* (n. 18 above), pp. 27, 147.

Männerbund offers two further unnoticed examples: in *Hrólfs saga* when Aðils is *svínbeygðr* (caused to bend over in a swinish fashion) on Fyrisvellir and struck on the rump; and in the *Haraldskvæði* of Þorbjörn hornklofi, where wounded enemies tried to hide under rowing benches, "let their rumps stick up, thrust their heads toward the keel" (st. 10 in Finnur Jónsson, BI: 23).

Initiations are often modeled on the two more primary passages of life, birth and death, and it is well known that the symbolic male rebirths of *Männerbünde* are often explicitly births without female agency: the boy was born of the mother, the man of the father or of his own power. A possible example, unrecognized in Tacitus, is the Chatti custom that the young warrior might only cut his beard and hair when he stood over a slain enemy: at that moment, and not before would he cry that he had paid the price of his birth-pangs and was worthy of country and kin.⁵⁴ Rudolf Much explains the symbolism "as if nature demanded one life as a sacrifice for another coming into being," but a more precise understanding would result if the enemy, lying in his own blood, were symbolically the male mother.⁵⁵ In any case, the initiatory pattern of death and rebirth, *stirb und werde*, is common and documented for Germanic in Weiser and Höfler; I will mention only Sigmund's slaying and revival of his son Sinfjötli in a context that, except for the concentration to two characters, is almost paradigmatic for *Männerbünde*. The symbolism of non-female birth can be present in the institution of blood-brotherhood where, as in the familiar instance in *Gísla saga*, previously unrelated males die and are reborn without female agency as "brothers."

In the ideology of the *Männerbund*, candidates for initiation and brothers often stand in a closer relation to death and the dead than do excluded males, children, and women; often they *are* the dead, ritually speaking. Again Weiser and Höfler have thoroughly explored this point, but the transition from, say, the Harii-Einherjar to literary *comitatus*-like groups is a gradual one. I would underscore that the imagination of

54. Trans. Hutton, pp. 178–79 (see n. 39 above): "super sanguinem et spolia revelant frontem, seque tum demum pretia nascendi rettulisse dignosque patria ac parentibus ferunt."

55. Much, *Germania* (n. 44 above), p. 387: "*pretia nascendi*: 'den Entgelt für das Geborensein.' Dieser besteht aber nicht in dem Haaropfer, sonder in der Tötung des Feindes, als ob die Natur für ein werdendes Leben ein anderes als Opfer verlangte."

death, not solely from an individual point of view but in a social context, is a frequent feature. For example, Hálfǫr's warriors must not avoid death or speak fearful words; bloodbrothers and *Jómsvíkingar* must avenge each other. This would seem to be part of the wider institutional framework for Tacitus' sentence: "But to have left the field and survived one's chief, this means lifelong infamy and shame" (ch. 14; Hutton, p. 153 [note 39 below]). Much and other annotators cite as parallels *Beowulf*, the *Heliand*, the capture of Chnodomarius and his retainers as told by Ammianus Marcellinus, the death of the Herulian Fulkaris and his men as told by Agathias, Caesar on Germanic *soldurii*, Tacitus on Chariovalda in the *Annales*, and a certain King Herlaugr in the time of Haraldr hárfagri. The notices of suicide pacts of the Celtiberians are not Germanic; but I cannot agree when Kuhn dismisses the whole phenomenon as rather Celtic than Germanic: "Mir kommt die erörterte Forderung ungermanisch vor, den heißeren Kelten trau ich sie eher zu" ("The requirement under discussion seems to me un-Germanic; I would sooner trust it to the more hot-blooded Celts")—so much for the objectivity of the postwar correction. Other comparable passages would include the famous decisions of the retainers of Cynewulf and Cyneheard; Kuhn objects to the self-sacrifice of a *minister* or *miles* in Bede (in the year 626) that both words indicate vassals rather than retainers.⁵⁶ A larger collection of sentiments that in a general way connect death with the bonds of the *Männerbund* could probably be made.⁵⁷

* * *

The *Bjarkamál* has been called "das Hohelied der Gefolgschaftstreue." Taken together with its wider narrative context, it is a condensed mythos of the *Männerbund*. Hrólfr kraki's retainers are berserks in

56. Much's list of parallels (*Germania*, n. 44 above), pp. 227–30; Kuhn on the hot-blooded Celts, "Gefolgschaft" (n. 24 above), p. 425, and on English instances, esp. p. 447. There are many other discussions of these passages in the literature.

57. For example, *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, ch. 19: "The crew were delighted to see their King in good shape, because they'd made up their minds, if necessary, to go against the giant and avenge their lord, for they'd no wish to live if their King had been killed" (Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, trans., *Hrólfr Gautreksson: A Viking Romance* [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972], p. 89); ch. 29: Hrólfr's men are all killed: "They'd wanted nothing but to do their best to help their King like good retainers" (p. 129).

Snorri's version, and Kuhn produces convincing reasons for believing they were berserks or "champions" in the original tradition.⁵⁸ With Kuhn's narrow definition this is grounds for denying the term *comitatus*, but Hrólfr's men certainly qualify as a warlike *Männerbund*. Moreover, Hjalti's initiation shows typical features of Höfler's narrower cultic sense of *Männerbund*: animal affinities, a ritual slaying, a monster, traces of masking. Hjalti's passage into the valued status of man involves change of name, gift of a weapon, membership and ranking; there is rivalry and competition; Bjarki is Hjalti's initiatory guide, perhaps also the *Gefolgschaftsälteste*. In the fourteenth-century saga Bjarki is married to Hrólfr's daughter as a sign of esteem, but more characteristic of the Warrior-Male's attitude to women is Hjalti's visit to his mistress as the final battle looms: he picks a quarrel, and: "You whore, you shall pay for those words," cried Hjalti, and going up to her he bit off her nose.... "You used me ill," said she.... "One cannot keep track of everything," said Hjalti, whereupon he grabbed his weapons and returned to his comrades, faced with a treacherous attack inspired by Hrólfr's own sister.⁵⁹ The nose-biting episode seems a little less arbitrary when we realize that the purpose of the preceding dialogue was to test the woman's loyalty, a test she fails in contrast to the retainers who will never serve another lord after Hrólfr. Saxo tells this segment similarly; when Hialti chooses "bravery before lust," Saxo asks: "Can we guess what affection for his monarch burned in this soldier, who reckoned it better to risk his safety in obvious danger rather than save himself for pleasure?"⁶⁰ But the rejection of "woman-loves" was already present in the oldest reconstructable *Bjarkamál* as we can conclude from the agreement of Saxo and the fragments on the following segment of the waking topos: "I do not ask you to learn to sport with young girls," etc.; "I do not wake you to wine, nor to the whispers of a woman, rather I wake you to the hard game of Hildir."⁶¹ The only women proper to these

58. Kuhn, "Gefolgschaft" (n. 24 above), pp. 471-76, esp. p. 475; for the characterization with "Hohelied," see p. 458.

59. *Eirik the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas*, trans. Gwyn Jones (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 309; *Hrólfs saga kraka*, ed. D. Slay, Editiones Arnarnaganae, B, 1 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1960), p. 113.

60. Saxo 2.7.3 (Olrik and Ræder, p. 53; Fisher, p. 56; see n. 41 above).

61. Saxo 2.7.4 (Fisher, pp. 56-57; see n. 41 above). *Vekka ek yðr at víni / né at vífs rínum, / heldr vek ek yðr at hörðum / Hildar leiki* (*Eddica minora: Dichtungen eddischer Art ...*, ed. Andreas Heusler and Wilhelm Ranisch [Dortmund: Ruhfus, 1903], p. 31).

bonded men are Hildir or Skuld, valkyrie or death goddess. The contrast of warrior life in the company of comrades with the stay-at-home who spends his time kissing slave girls behind the quern is something of a topos in Old Norse,⁶² and it seems to be present in the *Bjarkamál* in a form that would seem familiar to Theweleit's Freikorps-men.

So the *Bjarkamál* and its saga were understandably associated with the last rite of passage. A famous anecdote tells how, on the morning of the battle of Stiklastaðr in 1030, the fatal last stand of St. Olaf, the king asked his poet Þormóðr to perform a poem; Þormóðr's choice, the *Bjarkamál*, moved the hearers, who knew it under the name "Húskarlakvøt" ("Retainers' Incitement"). According to Snorri, the king rewarded Þormóðr, but the poet replied: "We have a good king, but it is difficult to see how long-lived a king he will be. It is my request [i.e., as reward for the poem], king, that you let the two of us be parted neither by life nor death." The king answered: "As long as I control things, we will all go together if you do not wish to part with me."⁶³ Þormóðr continues with the topic of loyalty unto death but cannot resist a dig at his rival poet, Sighvatr: "I hope, my king, that whether there is safety or danger, I shall be positioned near you as long as I have any choice—whatever we may hear about where Sighvatr is travelling with his golden-hilted sword." Þormóðr's poem, quoted at this point, repeats these thoughts: "I shall still hover before your knees, bold king, until other skalds draw near [i.e., Sighvatr]; when do you expect them? We shall escape alive, though we feed carrion to the greedy raven, or else we shall lie here. That is certain, o seafarer."⁶⁴

62. See Cecil Wood, "Nis þæt seldguma: Beowulf 249," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 75 (1960): 481–84. See *ne to wife wynn* in the OE *Seafarer*, line 45, where *peregrinatio* has perhaps replaced war as the hard life. Perhaps a very old trace of the "not for love, but for war" idea is to be seen in *Germania*, ch. 38, where the Suebi pay attention to grooming, "not for making love or being made love to" but to terrify the enemy (trans. Hutton, pp. 192–95 [see n. 39 above]: "neque enim ut ament amenturve").

63. Snorri Sturluson, *Óláfs saga helga*, ch. 208: *Heimskringla*, II, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 27 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1945), p. 362. The King's phrase *meðan ek ræð fyrir*, and Þormóðr's echo *meðan ek á þess kost*, could be regarded as prose reflection of the heroic "as long as" topos, e.g., *Sár fló égi at Uppsalum / en wá, með hann wápn hafði; Pa hwile ðe he wæpna wealdan moste* (examples from Bertha S. Phillpotts, "The Battle of Maldon: Some Danish Affinities," *Modern Language Review* 24 [1929]: 172–90).

64. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 363 (see previous note); Finnur Jónsson (*Skjaldedigtning*, n. 1 above), BI, p. 265.

Rosemary Woolf's brilliant article on the ideal of men dying with their lord in *The Battle of Maldon* poses something of an obstacle to the proposed institutional context of these ideas of death.⁶⁵ Here is a summary of her arguments: (1) the "ideal" is found in precisely three texts only, *Germania*, *Bjarkamál*, and *Maldon*, and since the "ideal" was not current in Anglo-Saxon life or elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon literature, a huge gap must be recognized between the first-century and tenth-century instances; (2) she considers it possible that the *Maldon* author drew the "ideal" directly from Tacitus but silently rejects (or brackets) this possibility; and (3) she concludes instead that it was introduced as a "foreign ideal" from the *Bjarkamál* but that the author of *Maldon* contrived to blend it convincingly into the fabric of his poem. The case for influence from the *Bjarkamál* to *Maldon* is based on Bertha Phillpotts's classic article, and I agree that some form of the *Bjarkamál* was known to the *Maldon* poet. But Woolf leaves unasked the question of the origin of the "ideal" in *Bjarkamál*. Since this late tenth-century oral poem can hardly be expected to have borrowed from Tacitus (and the resemblances to Tacitus are stronger in *Maldon*), Woolf's solution for *Maldon* merely transfers the problem of the gap to the *Bjarkamál*.⁶⁶ But her solution for *Maldon* is based on several errors (as I see it) in her point (1). To arrive at the isolation of the three texts she is forced to almost theological sophistications to refine "the ideal" out of its contexts; the resulting separation from passages such as the Cynewulf and Cyneheard story seems unnatural. And why should the author adopt a totally foreign ideal at all? This is not the way ideas are transmitted. The argument that the *Maldon* author intertwined the "ideal" with other features of a heroic ethos in order to naturalize it is overingenious: in fact it is so intertwined because it exists only as part of a larger traditional package. This package is also to be found in the *Bjarkamál*, which, contrary to what Woolf's argument would lead us to expect, also presents the "ideal" only in close context with revenge and other relevant features. Woolf's treatment of the *Bjarkamál* is cursory; in fact she seems to

65. Rosemary Woolf, "The Ideal of Men Dying with their Lord in the *Germania* and in *The Battle of Maldon*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976): 63–81.

66. The date of the *Bjarkamál* is not undisputed; for discussion and references, see J. Harris, "Eddic Poetry," in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, ed. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow, *Islandica* 45 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 118–19.

have forgotten about the Icelandic fragments.⁶⁷ She finds the “ideal” expressed purely only once in Saxo’s prose commentary and goes on to admit that it is “not stated so roundly in Saxo’s actual version of the poem” but is merely implicit in tone and structure, its only explicit statement in the poem being intertwined with the physical disposition of the corpses, a motif to be studied below.

Finally, the “ideal” in relatively pure form is expressed in other texts of the period of the *Bjarkamál* and *Maldon*. Woolf seems to have relied here on Phillpotts, who exaggerated the specifically Danish qualities she found in *Maldon*, especially in her claim that certain motifs are shunned in Norwegian and Icelandic verse. Jess Bessinger and other scholars have noticed parallels with Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld’s *Óláfs Erfidrápa* (*Tryggvasonar*), but a closer parallel with *Maldon* occurs in our Sighvatr’s *Erfidrápa* for St. Olaf (c. 1040). Speaking of one of the king’s major retainers, Sighvatr’s st. 18 says:

I have also heard that Björn long ago instructed the retainers with great courage how to keep faith with one’s lord. He advanced in battle. He fell there in the host along with the loyal men of the king’s bodyguard at the head of his famous lord. That death is praised.⁶⁸

Here in the midst of a disastrous battle we find a vignette similar to those of the second part of *Maldon*; a retainer steps into the spotlight and urges his comrades, now that the lord is dead, to keep faith with him; then the retainer himself advances and falls beside his lord. A few years later Arnórr jarlaskáld composed a funeral poem for the Norwegian king Haraldr harðráði describing his famous ill-fated attack on England in 1066, a poem with several parallels to *Maldon* and including this stanza:

67. Woolf (“The Ideal,” n. 65 above), pp. 79–80, esp. p. 79: “No close comparison between *Maldon* and the *Bjarkamál* is possible, since the latter is known only from Saxo’s translation of it into Latin hexameters.”

68. Bjarni Aðalbarnarson (*Heimskringla*, n. 63 above), p. 386; Finnur Jónsson (*Skjaldedigtning*, n. 1 above), BI, p. 243. Axel Olrik, *The Heroic Legends of Denmark*, trans. Lee M. Hollander (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1919), p. 170, took the stanza to be an allusion to the *Bjarkamál*; Roberta Frank, *Old Norse Court Poetry: The Dróttkvætt Stanza*, *Islandica* 42 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 129–31, agrees and adds an independent reason for believing in the allusion, the “bear” names Bjarki and Bjorn; Frank also compares this stanza to *Maldon*, p. 123.

The death of the fear-inspiring king was not easy. Points red with treasure did not spare the foe of robbers. All the retainers of the generous prince chose rather to fall around the war-quick king than that they would wish peace.⁶⁹

Such literary parallels do not prove that the "ideal" was truly followed in daily life, but Woolf's apparent belief that the "ideal" was quite limited in Old Norse seems mistaken; she herself cited several prose parallels. An implicit argument seems to be that because an idea may be borrowed from another literary utterance, it is somehow culturally void. (The "semi-suicidal resolve not to outlive [one's] lord is peculiar to the *Bjarkamál* and later poems closely influenced by it" [p. 80].) This assumption seems wrong, for traditional ideas live in the "texts" of discourse.

Maldon, then, seems to be a poem in touch with traditional oral literature. It probably draws on an oral *Bjarkamál* but also shares various features with contemporary Northern European praise verse. Its articulation of the mythos of the *Männerbund* is realistic and intense but much narrower than that of the *Bjarkamál* taken together with its saga. There are no traces of initiation or hostility to women, but age classes and warrior education are obvious in the poem whether or not any of the groups mentioned constituted a continuation of the Tacitan *comitatus*.⁷⁰ The features of the mythos dwelled upon in *Maldon* are, of course, loyalty and betrayal, oaths, reputation, and revenge, all in the imminence of death.

69. Finnur Jónsson (*Skjaldedigtning*, n. 1 above), BI, p. 325. The other major *Maldon* parallels in the poem include *uppganga* (which perhaps explains the exceptional weak form of the same technical term in *Maldon*, line 87, as a further example of "literary dialect" in the poem [see Scragg, pp. 73–74, n. 71 below, and Dietrich Hofmann, *Nordisch-englische Lehnbeziehungen der Wikingerzeit*, Bibliotheca Arnarnaganaeana 14 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1955), pp. 194–95]) and *ofrausn* (cf. the vexed *ofermōd*). Diana Edwards, "Christian and Pagan References in Eleventh-Century Norse Poetry: The Case of Arnórr Jarlaskáld," *Saga-Book* 21 (1982–83): 44, has previously made the latter comparison. I have not been able to take account of a very relevant article that arrived when the present essay was substantially complete: Roberta Frank, "The Ideal of Men Dying with their Lord in *The Battle of Maldon*: Anachronism or *nouvelle vague*," in *People and Places in Northern Europe 500–1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. Ian Wood and Niels Lund (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1990), pp. 95–106; but Frank also compares the cited stanza from Arnórr's poem and the two technical words as parallels to *Maldon* (p. 102).

70. Cf. J. Harris, "*Stemnettan: Battle of Maldon*, l. 22," *Philological Quarterly* 55 (1976): 113–15.

Two forms of death are shown. Byrhtnoð's death takes place in the midst of a throng, and the devils (*helsceaðan*, line 180) he imagines threatening his soul in his lorica-like last words mirror the earthly enemies around him (*hæðene scealcas*, line 181). But there is no spiritual analogue of his *heorðwerod* (line 21), and the drama of his death is enacted in Christian isolation between the individual and God: his soul will escape the world and be judged alone. His body, however, remains with the male group as a sign that elicits loyalty or betrayal, and the following deaths in the poem (as well as the desertions) are played out both physically and spiritually in the social context. The deaths of the retainers are individualized only within that context, seen only in relation to each other and the earthly lord, not under the aspect of eternity. Social context is realized as spectacle, addresses to the other retainers, or memory of former addresses. Allusions to dying with the lord seem to escalate in intensity.⁷¹ References to the spectacle of the dead lord, the good man in the dirt, extend through the entire passage, each time conjoined with the idea of self-sacrifice, and every explicit reference to the "ideal" also refers to the visible body of the fallen lord.⁷² But the last two major death vignettes in the fragment, those of Offa and Byrhtwold, add a new theme, the "profound fittingness of the body of a thegn lying beside that of his dead lord" (Woolf, "The Ideal," p. 80); of Offa: "He lay in a thanely manner beside his lord" (line 294); of Byrhtwold: "I will not turn away, but rather I think to lie by the side of my lord, beside the man so beloved" (lines 317a-319).⁷³

Woolf and Phillpotts take this topos in *Maldon* as a borrowing from the *Bjarkamál*, where Bjarki's last words to Hjalti culminate in:

Struck down I shall die at the head of my slain leader,
and you will drop face-foremost at his feet,
so that one who views body on body may see
how we make return for the gold received from our master....

71. *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. D. G. Scragg (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1981), lines 206-07; 220-23a; 232-37a (implied in the "as long as" topos); 246-54; 275-76, 279; 289-94; 312-19. In addition the idea seems implicit in lines 258-60; 272; 306-08.

72. *Maldon*, lines 203-04; 222b; 232b-33a; 250b; 276b; 292b-94; 314-15a, 317-19. The three "implicit passages" (see previous note) lack the visual reference.

73. "He læg ðegenlice ðeodne gehende"; "fram ic ne wille, / ac ic me be healfe minum hlaforde, / be swa leofan men, ligan pence."

Though fearless in war it is proper that earls should fall,
and embrace their illustrious king in a common death.⁷⁴

Independently of both, Einar Ól. Sveinsson had put together a collection of instances of this topos within the larger self-sacrificial ideal, and we have already encountered one specimen in Björn digri's death *at hilmis hofði* (at the prince's head). The *Innsteinslied* has the retainers Hrókr and Innsteinn falling at foot and head of King Hálfir, obviously influenced by the *Bjarkamál*.⁷⁵ And Olrik had pointed out an exact echo of the Danish poem in a Faroese ballad with the arrangement: at the head, at the feet, and finally, “I will rest on my lord's breast.”⁷⁶ The ordered pile of corpses had been mentioned already in the sixth-century work of Agathias, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson's collection, with a Roman example of death *ante regis pedes* (pp. 51–52), suggests that the idea is either ancient and Indo-European or that it can recur independently. The point of his collection, however, is to provide a context for some historical thirteenth-century Icelandic instances of self-sacrifice, especially two in which followers drop upon the fallen body of their leader who, however, escapes alive from the heap of corpses.

This form of dying seems to be a traditional image, especially at home in the military *Männerbund*. Perhaps it is related to the *aemulatio* or competition to be nearest the leader and generally to ranking, but the physical images—a warrior at the foot of the lord, another at the head, an old retainer lying down beside his lord or embracing (*complexos*) his body—associates the scene in my mind with suttee, especially as reported for the Germanic world by Ibn Fadlān and in *Sigurðarkviða in*

74. Saxo 2.7.28 (Fisher, p. 63; see n. 41 above):

“Ad caput extincti moriar ducis obrutus, at tu
eiusdem pedibus moriendo allabere pronus,
ut videat, quisquis congesta cadavera lustrat,
qualiter acceptum domino pensarimus aurum....
Sic belli intrepidus proceres occumbere par est,
illustrem socio complexos funere regem.”

75. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, “Ek ætla mér ekki á braut,” in *Afmælisrit Jóns Helgasonar 30. júní 1969*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson et al. (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1969), pp. 48–58; Sveinsson, “Drottinhollusta,” *Gripla* 2 (1977): 188–90.

76. Olrik, *Heroic Legends*, pp. 172–73 (“Ulf fan Jærn”; see n. 68 above). Further examples of apparently symbolically ordered corpses are found in the Iring story (murdered lord laid atop murdered enemy), in *Beowulf* (Hildeburh's son laid shoulder to shoulder with his uncle), and in the stanza quoted from Arnórr jarlaskáld.

skamma.⁷⁷ There among slain slave women Brynhild has herself laid on one side (*á blið aðra*, st. 66) of Sigurd, on the other side, “my serving men, and [though here the text becomes tricky] two men at his head (*at hofðom*),⁷⁸ two at his feet, two hounds and two hawks—then is everything properly arranged” (st. 67). Compare the sense of propriety here with *ðegenlice* in *Maldon* and *par est* in Saxo. The model for the thanely death beside the lord cannot derive from the portion of these ancient funeral customs that applies to hawk and hounds or even to slaves, but it is worth considering the analogy of the widow, who, according to the mythology of suttee, freely chooses death.

If the family is the primary human group, then all-male groups are secondary, and theorists such as Schurtz believe that their organization is ultimately modeled, to some extent, on the family, despite rejection of women. Wenskus and Schlesinger, for example, offer the opinion that the *comitatus* was modeled after the *domus*.⁷⁹ Among the very limited number of gender roles and relationships in the primary model, father-son and brother-brother relations seem plausible enough because sex

77. For a general account of the Germanic survivals of suttee, see Hilda Roderick Ellis (Davidson), *The Road to Hel: A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1943), pp. 14–15, 46–48.

78. The plural could refer to the pair Brynhild and Sigurd, but most translators seem to take her directions here as referring to Sigurd's head alone. Cf. *Dream of the Rood*, ed. Michael Swanton (Manchester: Univ. Press; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), line 63: “gestodon him æt his lices heafdum”; Swanton's note (in part): “The form here must probably be understood as a locative singular (cf. Campbell, § 574.4) conventionally applied to the head of a corpse or one similarly recumbent,” together with a suggestive parallel. St. 67 is paraphrased and translated here from the reconstruction by Hugo Gering and B. Sijmons, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, vol. 2 (Halle/Saale: Waisenhaus, 1931), pp. 275–76. This reconstruction seems to me fully justified.

79. Walter Schlesinger, “Herrschaft und Gefolgschaft in der germanisch-deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 176 [1953]: 225–75; repr. in *Herrschaft und Staat im Mittelalter*, ed. Hellmut Kämpf, Wege der Forschung 2 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), pp. 135–90; p. 149: “Sie heißen wie die Sippegenossen Freunde; hierher gehört das Wort *nōtfrunt*, Kampffreund. Wiederum das Beowulflied überliefert Bezeichnungen wie *maguthegnas* und sogar *magas* für die Gefolgsleute (v. 1015), für die Gefolgschaft das Wort *sibbegedryht* (vv. 3, 87, 729). Die Bindung der Gefolgsleute untereinander scheint also der sippschaftlichen Bindung nachgebildet zu sein. Dem entspricht, daß Tötung eines Mitgliebes die Rache der Gefolgschaft hervorruft. Auch eine Fehde zwischen Angehörigen derselben Gefolgschaft ist wie zwischen Sippegenossen ausgeschlossen, Streitigkeiten schlichtet der Herr.” Wenskus (*Stammesbildung und Verfassung*, n. 23 above), p. 363: “Diese Züge künstlicher Verwandtschaft im Gefolgschaftswesen unterstreichen die Beobachtung Schlesingers, der aus sprachlichen Zeugnissen vermutete, daß die Bindung der Gefolgsleute untereinander der sippschaftlichen Bindung nachgebildet sei.” This is implicit also in Kauffmann (*Altertumskunde*, n. 19 above).

here coincides with gender, and sometimes such modeling is explicit. But it seems possible, in view of male birth rituals and the like, that gender lines can be crossed in such role-modeling. One impressive example is the archaic metaphor of the poet as the “wife” of the king in Ireland; Proinsias Mac Cana has recently brought forward convincing evidence to argue that this metaphor was Common Celtic and probably even Indo-European.⁸⁰ I do not know of similar gender analyses of primitive groups that could be called on for analogical support here, but I cannot repress the speculation that the *Liebestod* which we see fairly clearly in our Germanic materials is ultimately a male suttee. I will not follow this speculation into the suggestive literature on suttee itself, except to notice that in its promise of being together in the afterlife, suttee provides an archaic reason for self-sacrifice lacking in the ethnographic literature but not out of harmony with the connections expected between the *Männerbund* and the dead.

* * *

Many speculations ago, at the beginning of this essay, we left Sighvatr Þórðarson vowing to live and die with King Magnús Ólafsson. We now recognize that his relationship to Magnús is at least partly shaped by his position as *Gefolgschaftsälteste* and by the love and *aemulatio* inherent in the *hirð*. But the leader who molded Sighvatr’s life was Magnús’s father, St. Olaf. Sighvatr survived Stiklastaðr because he was not there for Olaf’s last battle—a fact he had to deal with in his verse. His journey to Rome saved him but exposed him to the jealous criticisms of his comrades. According to Snorri, Sighvatr learned of the fall of Olaf on his return journey:

One day Sighvatr was going through a village and heard some husband weeping aloud because he had lost his wife; he beat his breast and tore his clothing off, wept a great deal, saying that he would gladly die.

80. Proinsias Mac Cana, “The Poet as Spouse of his Patron,” *Ériu* 39 (1988): 79–85, and references there, esp. James Carney, *The Irish Bardic Poet: A Study in the Relationship of Poet and Patron* . . . (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958; repr. n.p.: Dolmen, 1967), esp. pp. 11–13, 37–40. A milder cross-gender metaphor is implicit in Hjalti’s nose-biting episode (woman:retainer :: retainer:king).

Sighvatr spoke this poem: “The man says he is eager to die if he loses the embrace of the woman. Love is dearly bought if (even) a proud man must weep after (the dead). But the unretreating hero who has lost his lord sheds tears of war-fury; our unavengeable loss seems worse to the men of the king.”⁸¹

This husband’s voluntary death takes place only in his mind, and it is not the bright mead that must be paid for but love itself; moreover, the gender roles here reverse those of real suttee with the dead king likened to the wife, the retainer to the bereaved husband.⁸² Sighvatr expressed his grief in other more or less elegiac poems for Olaf, but, despite the imperfection of its analogy between domestic love-and-death and love-and-death within the *Männerbund*, this *lausavísa* may capture something of the archaic force of the feelings that, at least in imagination, account for the ideal of men dying with their lord.

Postscriptum

Most of the above was written in 1990; its first airings were at oral presentations in the fall of 1990 (Harvard) and spring of 1991 (Princeton, Kalamazoo). I view the piece as an “essay” in the original sense; the evidence and research presented were perforce partial from

81. *Magnúss saga ins góða*, ch. 7; *Heimskringla*, III, ed., Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, p. 15; Finnur Jónsson (*Skjaldedigtning*, n. 1 above), BI, p. 251 (with different interpretation of *oflátinn*).

82. Mac Cana’s Indic evidence shows reversals in such gender metaphors. Carney quotes a traditional fifteenth-century bard who goes to visit the grave of his lord: “As he looks at the grave he wishes to die too, and he recalls how things used to be: ‘Let us be in the bed as we were before, O prince of Bóroimhe; we did not think a narrow bed too narrow for us two, O Félim’” (p. 37; *Bardic Poet*, n. 80 above); the allusion here is to the poet as *fear éinleabtha* or “man of the same bed” with the king. A puzzling passage in *Þorleifs þátrr jarlaskálds* may be mentioned here: “I have composed certain verses during the winter which I call *konuvisir* [woman-verses], which I made about Earl Hákon because an earl is metaphorically a *kona* [woman] in poetry” (Íslensk fornrit 9: 219; n. 3: “Senni-lega hefur verið til einhver kveðskapur, þótt nú sé glataður, þar sem Hákon jarl hefur verið ‘kona kenndr’; mun það hafa verið dregið af því, að síðari hlut nafns hans minnir á orðið *konu*.” (Presumably there was some verse, now lost, in which Earl Hákon was likened to a woman; this must have derived from the fact that the latter part of his name recalls the word *kona* [woman]). In support of this explanation, see *Rígsþula*’s pun on *kon-ungr*.)

the beginning. Nevertheless, the intervening years have brought to my attention several secondary works that should be mentioned. Margaret Clunies Ross, "Hildir's Ring," *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 6 (1973):75–92, had already brilliantly examined some of the same instances of sexual defamation discussed in my essay, together with some glimpses of anthropological background. Especially important is her extensive discussion of *svínbeygja*, which I wrongly thought had been "unnoticed," and the more complex light her discussion throws upon the *jarðarmen* ceremony of blood-brotherhood in Icelandic sources. The Celtic parallel offered in my closing paragraphs can be supported by Katharine Simms, "The Poet as Chieftain's Widow: Bardic Elegies," in *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney*, ed. D. O. Corráin, L. Breatnach, and K. McCone (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1989), pp. 400–11. Simms offers more examples of the metaphor from late medieval and renaissance Ireland and an arresting analysis that includes recourse to the analogy of suttee: "So regularly and insistently is this theme [of the poets' 'duty to die with their master and share the one grave'] harped on, it is almost as if [the poet] had a duty to committ *suttee*" (p. 404). An important article by Heinz Klingenberg must now color the way we understand the historiographical context of Þormóðr's *Bjarkamál*: "Altnordisch *húskarl*, *Bjarkamál*=*Húskarlahvøt* und Stiklastad," in *Festschrift til Ottar Grønvik på 75-års-dagen de 21. oktober 1991*, ed. John Ole Askedal, Harald Bjorvand, and Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991), pp. 183–211. A recent publication is Christine Eike [erroneously Eicke on the title page], *Sozialformen der männlichen Jugend Altnorwegens*, Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie 5 (Vienna: Karl M. Halosar, 1978); this massively documented study should be taken into account when a future evaluation of the Vienna *Männerbund* theory is attempted. I thank Prof. Helmut Birkhan and Dr. Christine Eike for personal communications about the teaching of Höfler and the later career of Weiser-Aall in Norway and for bibliographical help; Birkhan's informative and tasteful "Vorwort" to a selection of Höfler's *kleine Schriften* (to be published by Verlag Helmut Buske, Hamburg) will be of great value to this chapter in the history of the discipline [Otto Höfler, *Kleine Schriften: ausgewählte Arbeiten zur*

germanischen Altertumskunde und Religionsgeschichte, zur Literatur des Mittelalters, zur germanischen Sprachwissenschaft sowie zur Kulturphilosophie und –morphologie, ed. by Helmut Birkhan and Heinrich Beck (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 1992). Eds.]. I wish also to thank Prof. Susan E. Deskis for a helpful critical reading at an early stage.

J. H. 2.14.93

