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## MORKINSKINNA'S GIFFARÐSPÁTTTR

*Literary fiction or historical fact?*

### 1. Introduction

MOST OF THE *þættir* and extraneous episodes incorporated in the Old Norse kings' sagas describe the dealings between an Icelandic or a Norwegian protagonist and a Norwegian king. It is therefore surprising to find an episode in *Morkinskinna's* *Magnúss saga berfœtts* in which the main character is a Norman knight, Giffarðr, whose cowardly behavior during Magnús's Swedish campaign in the early spring of 1101 is explored at length and with considerable glee.

The story goes as follows: During the winter after Magnús's first campaign to the western isles a Norman knight by the name of Giffarðr appeared at Magnús's court and offered his services. He accompanied Magnús on his first Swedish expedition, but at the onset of the battle with King Ingi at Fuxerna he was conspicuously absent. Magnús inquired about his whereabouts with the following skaldic ditty:<sup>1</sup>

1. Villat flokk várn fylla  
falsk riddari enn valski.<sup>2</sup>

One of Magnús's retainers immediately retorted (*Morkinskinna* 2000:303):

2. Spurði gramr hvat gerði  
Giffarðr (þars lið barðisk)  
vér ruðum vápn í dreyra  
vasat hann kominn þannig:  
framreiðar vas fnauði  
fulltrauðr á jó rauðum  
villat flokk várn fylla  
falsk riddari enn valski.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The skaldic stanzas are quoted from Andersson and Gade 2000:303–05. See also “Notes on Stanzas” (sts 202–05), *ibid*:486.

<sup>2</sup> “Does he not wish to complete our company? Was the Norman knight hiding?”

<sup>3</sup> “The king asked what Giffarðr was doing where the army fought; we reddened weapons in

After the battle Giffarðr rode into the camp and received harsh words because he had failed to render King Magnús assistance. He got a bad reputation among the king's men and departed to go west to England.

At this point Morkinskinna interrupts the main narrative of Magnúss saga to incorporate a small story about Giffarðr's subsequent passage to England: On the journey they had stormy weather in the North Sea, and Giffarðr, who apparently suffered from a bout of mal de mer, did little to help out. Among the other passengers was an Icclander from Húsavík by the name of Eldjárñ, who was on his way back from Constantinople. When Eldjárñ went to bail and saw Giffarðr lying about, he taunted him with the following stanza (*Morkinskinna* 2000:304):

3. Hví samir hitt at dúsa  
hirðmanni geðstirðum  
vest nú (þótt kjöl kosti)  
knár riddari enn hári:  
þats satt at býðk byttu  
(breiðhúfuðum) reiða  
(austrs til hár í hesti  
hvaljarðar) Giffarði.<sup>4</sup>

When they arrived in England, Giffarðr immediately summoned Eldjárñ for slander before the reeve in the nearest town. To clear himself of the charge, Eldjárñ was told to recite the alleged scurrilous stanza to the reeve, and he produced the following (*Morkinskinna* 2000:305):

4. Frák at flótta rákuð  
falsk annat lið manna  
(þar vas harðr es heyrðak  
hernaðr) á Foxerni:  
varð hjalmþrimu herðis  
hár (þars staddir váruð)  
gangr (þars gauzka drengi  
Giffarðr í hel barði).<sup>5</sup>

blood; he had failed to appear. The coward was quite reluctant to advance on his chestnut steed; he does not wish to complete our company: the Norman knight was hiding."

<sup>4</sup> "Why is it fitting for an unbending retainer to lie there and rest? Be active now, old knight, although the keel [ship] is sorely tried. It's true that I tell Giffarðr to swing the bucket: the bilge water is too high in the broad-bellied horse of the whale land [sea, ship]."

<sup>5</sup> "I heard you pursued those who fled at Fuxerna; the other units of the army hid; there was a hard fight there, as I've heard. The success of the strengthener of the helmet crash [battle, warrior] was immense where you stood, when Giffarðr sent Gautish warriors to their death."



Morkinskinna continues (1932:326):

Pá mælti greifinn: „Lítt em ek skældinn, en heyra kann ek at þetta er ekki nið. Ok þér er vegr at þessu, Giffarðr, ok lof. Ok kann ek ekki annan dóm á þetta leggja.“ Giffarðr þykkisk engu svara kunna. Hann veit þat með sér at honum er þetta háð en eigi lof at því sem efni váru til, en vildi víst eigi gera þat bert fyrir monnum hversu hann hafði fram gengit á Foxerni. Þeir skilja nú við svá búit, ok líkar Giffarði illa þessi málalok, ok er nú lokit frá þeim at segja.

The little story of the cowardly Norman knight has been neglected in the research on the Old Norse kings' sagas.<sup>6</sup> Because the episode is not included in *Heimskringla* or *Fagrskinna*,<sup>7</sup> and because the *Morkinskinna* version of Magnús's first Swedish campaign contains unmistakable interpolations from Ágrip, scholars agree that the Giffarðr episode was not part of the *Oldest Morkinskinna* (*ÆMsk*), that is, the compendium from around 1220 that served as a source for Snorri and for the author of *Fagrskinna*, and they unanimously dismiss it as a later interpolation (Finnur Jónsson 1901:628; *Morkinskinna* 1932:xxvii; Indrebø 1917:22, 213; Bjarni Aðalbarnarson 1937:158; Louis-Jensen 1977:69, 83 n. 1).<sup>8</sup> Sigurður Nordal (1973:136) drew attention to the fact that there is a close verbal correspondence between the final section of *Giffarðspáttir* and the following section from Snorri's preface to *Heimskringla*:

En þat er háttr skálda at lofa þann mest, er þá eru þeir fyrir, en engi myndi þat þora at segja sjálfum honum þau verk hans, er allir þeir, er heyrði, vissi, at hégómi væri ok skrok, ok svá sjálfr hann. Þat væri þá háð, en eigi lof. (*ÍF* XXVI:5).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The story has not been edited separately. For an English translation, see Andersson and Gade 2000:303–05.

<sup>7</sup> See *ÍF* XXVIII:225–28; *ÍF* XXIX:310–11. The Giffarðr episode is incorporated in the later compendia *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna* (*Fornmanna sögur* VII 1832:56–57, 59–61, *Fríssbók* 1871:272–74, and *Eirspennill* 1916:121–22).

<sup>8</sup> For the relationship between the different versions of the royal biographies see Louis-Jensen 1977:66–70. For recent overviews of the state of the art of the research on *Morkinskinna*, see Ármann Jakobsson 1997:30–34 and Andersson and Gade 2000:1–72. *ÆMsk* is usually dated to around 1220 (Bjarni Aðalbarnarson 1937:136).

<sup>9</sup> The section is also included in the preface to the separate saga of St. Óláfr (*ÍF* XXVII:422). Sverrir Tómasson (1988:375–83) gives a detailed discussion of the relations between the two prefaces and of earlier scholarship in this area. For a discussion of the concepts of praise and derision in Snorri's preface, see Sverrir Tómasson 1990, esp.: 260–62.

Sigurður accordingly proposed that the story of Giffarðr must have served as the source for this statement in Snorri's preface, but that suggestion has been rejected by scholars who view the episode as a later interpolation in *Morkinskinna* (Bjarni Aðalbjarnason 1937:158 n. 1).

The following discussion of Giffarðspátr will show 1) that the story must have been part of *ÆMsk* and consequently available to Snorri; 2) that the Norman knight Giffarðr was a historical person of dubious reputation and not a twelfth-century Icelandic fabrication; and 3) that his presence at Magnús's court in 1100–1101, far from being a mere coincidence, provides the motivation, which is missing in all the Old Norse-Icelandic sources, for Magnús berfœtr's second and fateful expedition to the west in 1102.

## 2. Giffarðspátr in *Morkinskinna*

The core of the narrative in Giffarðspátr is captured in a series of skaldic stanzas (sts 1–4 above). The poetry contains all the pertinent information, such as the name Giffarðr (sts 2–4), his knightly occupation (*riddari*; sts 1–3), his nationality (*valskr*; sts 1–2), his age (*enn hári*; st. 3), as well as the name of the place of the battle (*Fuxerna*; st. 4) and details about Giffarðr's behavior during the battle and on the journey to England (sts 1–3).<sup>10</sup> The skaldic stanzas would appear to have been composed before 1150. First of all the medio-passive ending *-sk* occurs twice in internal rhyme (*falsk* : *valski*; sts 1–2). That ending began to change to *-zc* or *-zt* in the late twelfth century, and *sk*-rhymes are not attested in the thirteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, line 3 in stanza 3 contains the non-rhotasized form *vest*, also in internal rhyme (*vest* : *kosti*). The first rhotasized forms occur in internal rhyme as early as 1150, and nonrhotasized rhymes are characteristic of the period prior to that date.<sup>12</sup> The prose, too, shows signs that are consistent with the style of the author of *ÆMsk*, such as inflected past par-

<sup>10</sup> For *valskr* 'Norman' see Fritzner III 1973:847–48.

<sup>11</sup> For the phonetic development of the mediopassive ending, see Kjartan G. Ottósson 1992 (esp.: 57–64, 116–21, 137–45). The scribes of the individual MSS that contain the stanzas in question in most cases failed to understand the mediopassive *-sk* ending of their exemplars. Consider the following variants: *falsc* (Mork, J2), *fask* (Hr), *faskr* (F), (sts 1–2; Finnur Jónsson 1912:432, 591); *fasc* (Mork), *falk* (Hr), *falsc* (H, J2), *feckz* (F) (st. 4; Finnur Jónsson 1912:437).

<sup>12</sup> The first examples of such rhotasized *-r* forms in internal rhyme in skaldic poetry occur in the stanzas of Einarr Skúlason from around 1150 (*Haraldsdrápa* II, 4:2; *lausavísa* 1:3): *vara* : *fara*; *ert* : *skortir* (Finnur Jónsson 1912:457, 482). The MSS contain the following variant forms in this line: *verþr* (Mork), *vestv* (H-Hr), *verstv* (F) (st. 3; Finnur Jónsson 1912:437).



ticiples with the auxiliary *hafa*.<sup>13</sup> From a linguistic point of view, then, we may conclude that the stanzas in the Giffarðr episode were probably composed before 1150. Furthermore, the prose contains no linguistic features that are inconsistent with the style of the author of *ÆMsk*.

Magnús's Swedish campaigns are described in Theodoricus's *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* (61), in *Ágrip* (*ÍF* XXIX:45), as well as in the later compendia, but, as stated above, the Giffarðr episode is only found in *Morkinskinna*. In *Heimskringla* Snorri rearranges the narrative and rewrites the sections pertaining to Magnús's expeditions to Sweden (*ÍF* XXVIII:225–29), and the author of *Fagrskinna* leaves out all information about Giffarðr (*ÍF* XXIX:310–11). That circumstance, combined with the fact that the initial sections in *Morkinskinna*'s Giffarðr episode contain interpolations from *Ágrip* (*Morkinskinna* 1932:323–24), has prompted the conclusion that the episode was incorporated into *Morkinskinna* after that version was interpolated from *Ágrip*, and, furthermore, that *Fagrskinna* represents the uninterpolated text of *ÆMsk*.<sup>14</sup>

A look at the text of *Fagrskinna*, however, reveals that that version, rather than reproducing the text of *ÆMsk*, must have been drastically abbreviated. The motivation for Magnús's first campaign was his wish to annex certain districts in Götaland, and this is explicitly stated in Theodoricus's *Historia* (61), in *Ágrip* (*ÍF* XXIX:45), in *Heimskringla* (*ÍF* XXVIII:225–26), and in *Morkinskinna* (*Morkinskinna* 1932:323). In the latter version that information is incorporated into Giffarðspátttr, and the wording is similar to that of *Ágrip* (*ÍF* XXIX:45). *Fagrskinna*, however, fails to include any information about Magnús's claim to the Swedish districts at this point. After the Giffarðr episode *Fagrskinna* follows the *Morkinskinna* text almost verbatim, and both texts describe the peace treaty between Ingi and Magnús in identical terms: as part of the settlement Magnús was to marry Ingi's daughter, Margréta, and "she received as dowry those districts in Götaland which they had contended about" (*Morkinskinna* 1932:329; *ÍF* XXIX:312).<sup>15</sup> In *Morkinskinna* there is no discrepancy between that statement and the initial information about Magnús's claim to the Swedish districts (*Morkinskinna* 1932:323). *Fagr-*

<sup>13</sup> "[H]afi niddan Giffarð" (*Morkinskinna* 1932:325.32 [emphasis added]). Compare the similar construction "hefir sá ok, er ritaði söguna, fleiri sannorða menn nefnda til þessar frásagnar" (*ibid*:419.14–5 [emphasis added]). For a discussion of this construction, see Nygaard 1966:190–91.

<sup>14</sup> See n. 4 above. See also Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson in *ÍF* XXVIII:xlvi n. 3.

<sup>15</sup> "... ok fylgði henni heiman jarðir þær í Gautlandi sem þeir höfðu deilt um" (*Morkinskinna* 1932:329); "... ok fylgðu henni heiman jarðir þær ok <he>ruð er þeir höfðu áðr um deilt" (*ÍF* XXIX:312).



skinna, however, does not contain that information, and the reason must be that the author was too heavy-handed in his incisions in the text of his exemplar: he deleted the story about Giffarðr, and, in doing so, he also deleted information pertinent to the main narrative.

Thus the textual transmission can be reconstructed as follows: The Giffarðr episode was part of *ÆMsk*, but it was regarded as extraneous and left out by Snorri and by the author of *Fagrskinna*. Whereas Snorri rewrote the pertinent sections, the author of *Fagrskinna* abbreviated the text of *ÆMsk* and left out the information about Magnús's claim to the Swedish districts. Later, when *Morkinskinna* was interpolated from *Ágrip*, the interpolator must have expanded the original text with sections from *Ágrip*, thus leading scholars to believe that the Giffarðr episode, too, was a later interpolation.

We may conclude, then, that the little story about Giffarðr can most likely be dated to the twelfth century (assuming that the stanzas were transmitted with accompanying prose). The current version was part of *ÆMsk* and could not have been composed later than 1220. Thus it was certainly available to Snorri, and, because the essence of the story is captured by him in the preface to *Heimskringla* and because the two texts show verbatim correspondences,<sup>16</sup> Sigurður Nordal's suggestion that the *Morkinskinna* episode served as the immediate source for this section of the *Heimskringla* preface would appear to be correct.

### 3. The Identity of the Norman Knight Giffarðr

We may ask, then, whether the Giffarðr episode was an amusing fictive account designed to highlight the dual function of skaldic poetry as a tool of praise and punishment, or whether the story contains vestiges of actual historical events. Aside from giving a graphic description of Giffarðr's cowardly behavior, the skaldic stanzas contain concrete information about his person: his name was Giffarðr, and he was an old Norman knight who participated (or failed to participate, as it were) in the battle of Fuxerna. According to the chronology of *Heimskringla*, which is more reliable than that of *Morkinskinna* at this point, that battle took place in the early spring of 1101, and Giffarðr must have arrived at Magnús's court in Viken during the winter of 1100 or, at the latest, during the early spring of 1101.<sup>17</sup> After the battle he left for England in disgrace.

<sup>16</sup> Consider the following sentences from *Morkinskinna* and from the preface to *Heimskringla*: "Hann veit þat með sér at honum er þetta háð, en eigi lof" (*Morkinskinna* 1932:326); "Pat væri þá háð, en eigi lof" (*ÍF* XXVI:5).

<sup>17</sup> In *Morkinskinna* the introduction of the Giffarðr episode caused an incorrect doubling of the



If we turn to Normandy and Norman England, the name Giffarðr (Giffard) is well attested among the ranks of Norman nobility.<sup>18</sup> The name originated as a nickname meaning "chubby-cheeks" (*Carmen de Hastingae proelio*:119) and was first attached to Walter Giffard I, the son of the Norman nobleman Osbern of Bolbec and Wevia, sister of Gunnor, the wife of Duke Richard I of Normandy (William of Jumièges II:268–69; White 1921:57–58). Walter Giffard I was a landholder in Bolbec in Normandy, and after 1055 the family honors comprised lands in Longueville-sur-Scie (William of Jumièges II:268–69 n. 5; Loyd 1975:45; Le Maho 1976:38–46). In 1066 he accompanied William the Conqueror to England with a fleet of thirty ships and one hundred soldiers (*Brevis relatio*:22) and fought alongside William in the battle of Hastings. He remained one of William's faithful supporters, was appointed Earl of Buckingham (Le Maho 1976:31), and died before 1084 (William of Jumièges II:269 n. 8; Ordericus Vitalis IV:183 n. 2).

According to Robert of Torigni, the continuator of William of Jumièges, Walter Giffard I had one son, Walter Giffard II, and many daughters (William of Jumièges II:269). His son witnessed charters from 1060 to 1066 (*ibid*:269 n. 8; Le Maho 1976:35). He succeeded his father as Earl of Buckingham, married Agnes of Ribemont, and died in July of 1102 (William of Jumièges II:269 n. 8; Toll 1927:178). Shortly after his death his body was moved to Normandy, where he was interred in the church of the Virgin Mary in Longueville (Ordericus Vitalis IV:183–84).<sup>19</sup> He left behind one son, Walter Giffard III, who began to subscribe charters in 1107 to 1109 and died without offspring in 1164 (*ibid*:184 n. 2).

battle of Fuxerna. According to that version, the first battle (where Giffarðr was present) must have taken place in the spring of 1100, whereas the second battle occurred in the early spring of 1101 (*Morkinskinna* 1932:328–29). Snorri, who apparently had access to direct information concerning these campaigns (see *ÍF* XXVIII:xlvi–xlvi), places the second campaign (which included the battle of Fuxerna) in the early spring of 1101, when he states that Magnús set out for Götaland "[þ]egar um várit, er ísa leysti" (*ÍF* XXVIII:227). For a discussion of the chronology, see Bugge 1914:32–34; Power 1986:123.

<sup>18</sup> The name is spelled variously as *Gifardus*, *Gyfordus*, *Vyfordus*, *Gifart*, *Giffart*, *Giffard*, or *Giphardus* (*Carmen de Hastingae proelio* 119 n. 1).

<sup>19</sup> Ordericus Vitalis gives his epitaph as follows (IV:183–84):

Stemma Gifardorum Gualterius ingenuorum,  
Quæ meruit vivens, busta sepultus habet.  
Templi fundator præsentis et ædificator,  
Hoc velut in proprio conditus est tumulo.  
Qui se magnificum, patriæque probavit amicum,  
Dux virtute potens, et pietate nitens,  
Religiosorum sed præcipue monachorum  
Cultor, multimodæ profuit Ecclesiæ.



The charters from the reigns of William I, William Rufus, and Henry I, however, show that the information provided by Robert of Torigni concerning the offspring of Walter Giffard could be inaccurate. In addition to Walter Giffard I we also find a Ralph Giffard, the benefactor Montivilliers and St. Ouen, in a charter from 1067 (Le Maho 1976:35, 39, 76); Osbert (or Osbern) Giffard is mentioned as a landholder in Gloucestershire in a charter of 1111 (*Regesta regum* II, no. 976:99; cf. William of Jumièges II:269 n. 8); Elias Giffard is mentioned in a charter of 1096 (*Regesta regum* II, LXIa Addenda no. 379a:410); and Robert Giffard occurs in charters between 1074 and 1083 (*Regesta regum* I, nos 114, 192:30, 52). In addition William Giffard, whose relationship with Walter Giffard I is unclear, served as the chancellor of William Rufus from 1094. Upon the death of William and the accession of Henry I in August of 1100 he was appointed bishop of Winchester but remained chancellor until April 21, 1101.<sup>20</sup> William Giffard died in 1128 (*Annals of the Church of Winchester*:362).

Thus late eleventh- and early twelfth-century England and Normandy abound with Giffards who in one way or another must be related to Walter Giffard I; namely, Walter Giffard II and III, Ralph Giffard, Osbert or Osbern Giffard, Elias Giffard, Robert Giffard, and William Giffard, and there is no lack of candidates for the knight who turns up in Norway in 1100–1101. In Eldjárn's stanza the Norman knight is described as „old”, which would tentatively place him in the second generation of Giffards, that is, among the sons of Walter Giffard I. It is clear, however, that some of these candidates can be dismissed out of hand: Walter Giffard III was a minor in 1100, and William Giffard, the king's chancellor and later bishop of Winchester, was present in England during the period in question.

Unlike Old Norse-Icelandic scholars, Anglo-Norman historians have not failed to notice the presence of a Giffard in Magnús berfœttr's retinue. In 1882 Freeman mistakenly claimed that this Giffard accompanied Magnús on his second expedition to the west in 1102, but he made no attempt to disclose his identity.<sup>21</sup> Twenty-five years later the Swedish scholar Hans Toll, perpetuating Freeman's mistake, identified the „Giffarðr” in Magnús's fleet as Walter Giffard II, Earl of Buckingham (Toll 1927:179), a suggestion that was ten-

<sup>20</sup> He was not officially consecrated bishop of Winchester until 1107. See Ordericus Vitalis IV 1852:92 n. 2; *Annals of the Church of Winchester* 1856:362.

<sup>21</sup> Freeman 1882 II:451. In his reconstructions of the events that took place in England and Normandy after 1066, Freeman also consistently confuses Walter Giffard I with his son, Walter Giffard II (Freeman 1873:305, 310–11; 1882 I:231, 472, II:395; see the criticism by Round 1964:296–97).



tatively considered by Rosemary Power in 1986 (125–26).<sup>22</sup> The Anglo-Norman charters from the early reign of Henry I, however, show that Walter Giffard II, who died in July of 1102, was present at Henry's court at Easter of 1101, when he, along with William Giffard the Chancellor, King Henry, Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, and Queen Mathilda, witnessed a charter on April 21 (*Regesta regum* II no. 524:8–9). Hence neither William Giffard nor Walter Giffard II could have partaken in Magnús's Swedish campaign in the early spring of 1101 and displayed such contemptuous behavior in the battle of Fuxerna, and we have to look elsewhere if we wish to establish the identity of Magnús's cowardly Norman knight.

An examination of Anglo-Norman historical sources reveals a rather curious coincidence: there is yet another Giffard who distinguished himself by unacceptable behavior during a battle, namely, a certain „Gilfardus, known by his father's surname". The battle in question is the battle of Hastings in 1066, in which Walter Giffard I, with one hundred soldiers, fought alongside William of Normandy against Harold Godwinson of England. The poem *Carmen de Hastingae proelio*, possibly composed before 1072 by Guy of Amiens (xv), tells the following story of Harold Godwinson's last moments (*ibid*:35, 37):<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Power's article is the most detailed and historically correct examination to date of Magnús's reign and of his two expeditions to the west. Bugge, too, noticed the presence of Giffard at Magnús's court, but he did not connect him with Magnús's subsequent expedition to the west (Bugge 1914:33).

<sup>23</sup> *Carmen de Hastingae proelio* ll. 531–50 (pp. 34, 36; emphasis added):

Iam ferme campum uictrix effecta regebat,  
Iam spoliū belli Gallia leta petit,  
Cum dux prospexit regem super ardua montis  
Acriter instantes dilacerare suos.  
Aduocat Eustachium; linquens ibi prelia Francis,  
Oppressis ualidum contulit auxilium.  
Alter ut Hectorides, Pontiui nobilis heres  
Hos comitatur Hugo, promptus in officio;  
*Quartus Gilfardus, patris a cognomine dictus:*  
Regis ad excidium quatuor arma ferunt.  
... Per clipeum primus dissoluens cuspidē pectus,  
Effuso madidat sanguinis imbre solum;  
Tegmine sub galeae caput amputat ense secundus;  
Et telo uentris tertius exta rigat;  
Abscidit coxam quartus; procul egit ademptam:  
Taliter occisum terra cadauer habet.

For a discussion of the identity of the four who killed and mutilated Harold, see *Carmen de Hastingae proelio*, Appendix D:116–20. I am grateful to Paul A. White, Indiana University, for calling my attention to this reference.

Now the victor, joyful France almost ruled the field; already she was seeking the spoils of war when the duke sighted the king far off on the steeps of the hill, fiercely hewing to pieces the Normans who were besetting him. He [William] called Eustace to him; leaving the conflict in that place to the French, he brought strong aid to the hard pressed. Like a second son of Hector, Hugh, the noble heir of Ponthieu, escorted these two, prompt in service; the fourth was Giffard, known by his father's surname: these four bore arms for the destruction of the king .... The first, cleaving his breast through the shield with his point, drenched the earth with a gushing torrent of blood; the second smote off his head below the protection of the helmet and the third pierced the inwards of his belly with his lance; the fourth [Giffard] hewed off his thigh and bore away the severed limb; the ground held the body thus destroyed.

None of the other early Anglo-Norman or Anglo-Saxon sources mentions the mutilation of Harold's body (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* E, D:198–99; Florence of Worcester I:227; Eadmer:8–9; William of Poitiers:204; William of Jumièges II:168; Ordericus Vitalis II:149), but William of Malmesbury reports that one of William's soldiers sliced off the thigh of the dead Harold, for which ignominious and shameful deed he was subsequently expelled from the army by William:

Jacentis femur unus militum gladio proscidit; unde a Willelmo ignominia notatus, quod rem ignavam et pudendam fecisset, militia pulsus est (II:303).<sup>24</sup>

That mutilation is also depicted on the Bayeux tapestry from the end of the eleventh century, where a Norman knight bends down from his horse and with his sword slices into the left thigh of the prostrate king (*English Historical Documents* II:277). Although the historicity of the *Carmen* has been much debated,<sup>25</sup> the fact that the desecration of Harold's body is reported by

<sup>24</sup> According to Henry of Huntingdon Harold, who had been pierced in the eye by an arrow, was slain by a crowd of horsemen falling upon him: "Interea totus imber sagittariorum cecidit circa regem Haraldum: et ipse oculo percussus corruit. Erumpens autem multitudo equitum regem vulneratum interfecit ..." (203–4).

<sup>25</sup> See *Carmen de Hastingae proelio*:xvi–xxx, xxxv–lix; Davis 1978; Allen Brown 1996:200, 214–15; Grainge and Grainge 1996:141–42.



three independent historical sources would seem to lend authority to the episode.<sup>26</sup>

Scholars have variously identified the Giffard who committed the sacrilege of mutilating the body of Harold Godwinson as Walter Giffard I (Douglas 1943:139) or with his son, Walter Giffard II (Toll 1927:177–78; Douglas in *English Historical Documents* II:227 n. 7). It is clear, however, that the perpetrator of this deed could not have been Walter Giffard I, because he was not known by his father's surname; rather, he was the first to be known by the nickname „Giffard”. As far as Walter II is concerned, there is no blemish on his future career to suggest that he had been guilty of the shameful act at the battle of Hastings and subsequently expelled from the Norman army. Walter II witnessed charters from 1060 to 1066 onwards and went on to have a distinguished career under William I and his son, William Rufus. But if we assume that the dishonored soldier from the battle of Hastings was an unnamed son of Walter I Giffard, and that he was a youth at the time of the Norman conquest, from the point of view of chronology it is certainly possible that he, as an old man, could have been present in Norway in 1101.

In a footnote to the most recent edition of the *Carmen*, Morton and Muntz suggest that there could have been a connection between the incompetent Giffarðr at Magnús's court and the dishonored „Gifardus” from Hastings (120 n. 1).<sup>27</sup> It is, of course, impossible to prove that this was the case, but it is tempting to speculate that the protagonist of Morkinskinna's Giffarðr episode indeed was that illfated unnamed son of Walter Giffard I who was expelled in disgrace from the army by William the Conqueror in 1066, suffered a similar fate at the hands of Magnús berfœttr of Norway in 1101, and ended up as the object of Eldjárn's ridicule on his return to England.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the authority of the Bayeux tapestry, see Brooks and Walker 1978. The death of Harold as depicted on the tapestry is discussed in detail on pp. 23–34. Brooks and Walker (28) consider the possibility that William of Malmesbury could have seen the tapestry.

<sup>27</sup> Morton and Muntz, too, find it unlikely that Walter Giffard II could have been guilty of the sacrilege on the battlefield of Hastings (*Carmen de Hastingae proelio*:120). Their discussion of the Old Norse versions of the Giffarðr episode, however, is incorrect (*ibid*:120 n. 1).

<sup>28</sup> The wording of Eldjárn's second stanza (our st. 4) reveals that he had heard about Giffarðr's cowardly behavior second hand: *Frák; es heyrdak*. Because Eldjárn was on his way back from Constantinople when he met Giffarðr, we must assume that he had been told the story either in Greece or on his way back. There is nothing incongruous in this, because a Norwegian contingent consisting of five ships under the command of Skopti Ögmundarson and his sons, Ögmundr, Finn, and Þórðr, set out for Greece via Flanders and Normandy shortly after Magnús's campaigns to Sweden (*ÍF* XXVII:231–32). According to Snorri Ögmundr Skoptason was one of Magnús's commanders in the battle of Fuxerna (*ibid*:227), and he and his men would certainly have taken pleasure in entertaining Norsemen they met along the way with stories about the happenings in Norway.



#### 4. Giffarðr's Norwegian Mission

The question that remains to be answered is why the Norman Giffard suddenly appeared at Magnús's court in 1101, and whether his presence in Norway had anything to do with Magnús's second expedition to the west in 1102. The Old Norse-Icelandic sources give no motivation for that campaign,<sup>29</sup> but in light of the events that took place in England and Normandy at the time it is very likely that Magnús's appearance off the coast of England in 1102 was no coincidence but part of a larger picture that involved King Henry of England, Duke Robert Curthose of Normandy, and the Anglo-Norman nobility.

Upon the death of William Rufus on August 2, 1100, his brother Henry was crowned king of England on August 5 (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* E 235–36). In September of that year Henry's elder brother, Duke Robert Curthose, returned to Normandy from his crusade (*ibid*:236), and certain high-ranking members of the Anglo-Norman nobility joined in a conspiracy to oust Henry and place Robert on the throne of England. According to Ordericus Vitalis (IV:103–04) the conspiracy was spearheaded by Robert of Bellême, Earl of Shrewsbury and Shropshire, his two brothers, Roger and Arnulf of Montgomery, William of Warenne, Walter Giffard, Ivo of Grandmesnil, and Robert of Lacy.<sup>30</sup> On July 20, 1101, Robert of Normandy landed in Portsmouth with an army but was forced to surrender. After the peace treaty at Alton in August he returned to Normandy after Michaelmas with William of Warenne and some of the other traitors (Ordericus Vitalis IV:161; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* E:237).

Upon Robert's departure the rebellion in England was continued by Robert of Bellême and his two brothers, Arnulf and Roger of Montgomery. Robert failed to obey Henry's summons to appear at the Easter assembly in April of 1102, and, fortifying his castles in Wales, he and his brothers sought al-

<sup>29</sup> Theodoricus does in fact report that Magnús's intention was to conquer Ireland:

Paucis deinde interpositis annis iterum classem parat, solita mentis inquietudine Hyberniam repetiit spe subijciendi sibi totam insulam (63).

The author of Ágrip follows Theodoricus at this point (*ÍF* XXIX:46), but Morkinskinna (and Fagrskinna-Heimskringla, which copy *ÆMsk*) simply states that Magnús set out on his second expedition after having ruled Norway for nine years ("Nú er þat sagt, þá er Magnús konungr hafði ráðit landinu .ix. vetr, þá byrjar hann annat sinni ferð sína vestr um haf"; *Morkinskinna* 1932:331; cf. *ÍF* XXIX:312; *ÍF* XXVII:233). For discussions of the possible goals of Magnús's second expedition, see Bugge 1914:40–47; Power 1986:123–25.

<sup>30</sup> Ordericus is our only authority for Walter Giffard's complicity in the conspiracy, but he does not include him among those nobles who were punished by Henry after the peace treaty at Alton in 1101 (IV:161). Walter Giffard II was, however, the second cousin of Roger of Montgomery, the father of Robert of Bellême (see White 1921:60).



liances with the Welsh and with the Irish king Muirchertach Ua Briain. In the autumn of 1102 Henry advanced into Wales where Robert capitulated in September (Brut y Tywysogyon:41–47; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* E:237–38; Florence of Worcester II:49–50).<sup>31</sup>

It is very plausible, and indeed some historians have suggested as much,<sup>32</sup> that Magnús played a designated part in the Anglo-Norman conspiracy, and that the Giffard who appeared at Magnús's court in 1101 was, in fact, an envoy from the rebellious Anglo-Norman earls, whose mission it was to entice Magnús to support their cause by invading England from the west, while Duke Robert of Normandy attacked from the east. Magnús was certainly a wellknown figure to Robert of Bellème and his brothers, having slain their brother, Earl Hugh of Shrewsbury, in the battle of Menai Strait in 1098.<sup>33</sup> It is also conspicuous that the Irish king Muirchertach Ua Briain, who was allied with Robert and his brothers, and whose daughter, as part of that alliance, was betrothed to Arnulf of Montgomery, was also the father of Bjaðmynja, the Irish princess who was betrothed to Magnús's son Sigurðr Jórslafari in 1102.<sup>34</sup>

If Magnús indeed set out on his second expedition at the instigation of Giffarðr and at the invitation of the Norman earls, in particular Robert of Bellème and his brothers, that may also serve to explain a circumstance that has continued to puzzle historians (Freeman 1882:134, 624; Power 1986:128). According to Ordericus Vitalis Magnús left a treasure in the staggering amount of 20,000 pounds in the keeping of a wealthy citizen of Lincoln, a treasure that King Henry, upon Magnús's death in 1103, appropriated and used to fill his own depleted coffers (IV:194–95). We may ask, then, if that amount could have represented the payment from the Anglo-Norman earls to Magnús, a payment that was deposited in Lincoln, a city with strong mercan-

<sup>31</sup> For an extensive, but highly subjective and sometimes inaccurate, account of these events, see Freeman 1882 II:415–57.

<sup>32</sup> Freeman 1882 II:451 was the first to suggest this connection. See also Toll 1927:179–80, and, more recently, Power 1986:125–6.

<sup>33</sup> That battle is described in detail in all the Old Norse-Icelandic sources (Theodoricus 62–3; *Morkinskinna* 1932:318–20; *ÍF* XXVIII:222–23; *ÍF* XXIX:46, 307–08), as well as by Ordericus Vitalis (IV:29–32). See also Brut y Tywysogyon 1955:37–38.

<sup>34</sup> See *Morkinskinna* 1932:323, 337; *ÍF* XXVIII:224–25; *ÍF* XXIX:47, 309; Ordericus Vitalis IV:29. *Morkinskinna* and *Fagrskinna* both contain a mistake that must derive from *ÆMsk*, namely, that Sigurðr's wife was the daughter of Malcolm of Scotland, and Ordericus mistakenly reports that Magnús himself had married the daughter of the Irish king. For a detailed discussion, see Power 1986:122, 124–25. See also Bugge 1914:33–34, 44, and Curtis 1921 (the latter contains factual mistakes and should be read with caution).

tile ties to Norway (*Regesta Norvegica* nos 73, 101, 103–04, 109, 116:46, 55–56, 57).

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

The results of our discussion of Morkinskinna's Giffarðspátttr can be summarized as follows: 1) The episode was part of *ÆMsk* and not, as earlier scholars believed, a later interpolation; 2) it must have been available to Snorri and could have served as the source for his comments on the historical value of skaldic stanzas in the preface to *Heimskringla*; 3) Morkinskinna's Giffarðr appears to have been a historical person, a member of the powerful Anglo-Norman family Giffard. It is very likely that, in 1101, he served as a messenger from the rebellious earls to Magnús, to solicit his support in their attempt to overthrow Henry I of England. Although the identity of the cowardly Norman knight cannot be established with certainty, it is tempting to connect him with the Giffard who mutilated Harold Godwinson's body at the battle of Hastings. If that identification is correct, we are dealing with a character with the unique and dubious distinction of having had his dishonor commemorated independently in Latin and Icelandic prose and verse, and a colored illustrated version of the shameful act that initially led to his downfall is preserved on the Bayeux tapestry.\*

\* For a more detailed picture of approaches to Morkinskinna, readers may refer to Ármann Jakobsson's discussion in this edition of *Gripla*, pp. 221–245; cf. footnote 8 on p. 183. *Editors.*



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## EFNISÁGRIP

Í þessari grein er rakið hvaðan ritstjóri Morkinskinnu hafi fengið efnið um Giffarð hinn normannska riddara í Magnús sögu berfætts í Morkinskinnu og bent á tengsl við aðrar konungasögur, t.a.m. Fagurskinnu, Heimskringlu og Ágrip. Gert er ráð fyrir að ritstjóri Morkinskinnu hafi sótt þennan efnivið til eldri Morkinskinnu (\*ÆMsk). Leiddar eru að því líkur að Giffarður þessi hafi verið sannsöguleg persóna og af vel þekktri normannskri ætt, Giffarðsættinni sem þekkt var fyrir að þjóna ensk-normönnskum konungum. Höfundur telur ekki ólíklegt að Giffarður hafi verið sendur til Magnúss berfætts af jörlum þeim sem reyndu að steypa Henry I Englandskonungi. Höfundur telur það freistandi að Giffarður sé enginn annar en Gilfardus sá sem hjó lærlegg af líki Haralds Guðinasonar eftir orrustuna við Hastings.

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