

EDDA

Eleventh ed., Vol. VIII, 921

Prose Edda Only work known by this name to the ancients was the miscellaneous group of writings put together by Snorri Sturlason(q.v.; 1178-1241), the greatest name in old Scandinavian literature. Is divided into five parts one of which is the "most precious compendium which we possess of the mythological system of the ancient inhabitants of Scandinavia." This part, the Gylfaginning, is written in prose, with brief poetic insertions.

Poetic Edda Date from 10th and 11th cent. Fragments. Are composed in the simplest and most archaic forms of Icelandic verse. Author of no one of them is mentioned. It is evident that they were collected from oral tradition; and the fact that the same story is occasionally repeated, in varied form, and that some of the poems themselves bear internal evidence of being more ancient than others, proves that the present collection is only a gathering made early in the middle ages, long after the composition of the pieces, and in no critical spirit. . . . There is no doubt that it was collected in Iceland, and by an Icelander.

In many places the prose of _____ follows the verse of the Eddaic fragments with the greatest precision, often making use of the very same expressions. At the same time there are poems in the Edda which the author of the saga does not seem to have seen.

1956, Vol. VII, p. 945-6

They present many difficult problems upon which scholars have expended an inexhaustible but not always conclusive erudition. Comprises 34 poems. Two songs of Helgi the Hunding's Bane, Helgakvida Hundingsbana, open the long and very important series of lays relating to the two herid families of the Volsungs and the Nibelungs.

FLORE AND BLANCHEFLEUR

Eleventh ed., Vol. Vol. X, p. 528

The similarity between the story of Floire and Blanchefleur and Chante-fable of Aucassin et Nicolette has been repeatedly pointed out, and they have even been credited with a common source.

1956 ed., Vol. IX, p. 387

Little change, if any.

Gawain

Eleventh ed., Vol. XI, p. 539 also 1956 ed., Vol. X, p. 78

In the earlier form of the prose romances, e.g. in the Merlin proper, Gawain is a dominant personality, his feats rivalling in importance those ascribed to Arthur, but in the later forms such as the Merlin continuations, the Tristan, and the final Lancelot compilation, his character and position have undergone a complete change, he is represented as cruel, cowardly and treacherous, and of indifferent moral character. Gawain belongs to the very earliest stage of Arthurian tradition, long antedating the crystallization of such tradition into literary form. Known in Italy at an early date. The explanation of the very perplexing changes which the character of Gawain has undergone appears to lie in a misunderstanding of the original sources of that character. . . . When the source of the name was forgotten its meaning was not unnaturally misinterpreted, and gained for Gawain the reputation of a facile morality, which was exaggerated by the pious compilers of the later Grail romances into persistent and aggravated wrong-doing