

no one, to have no conflict-filled genealogy, and hence to be related to everyone. I suspect that this unifying figure conforms more closely to a late-twentieth-century audience's aspirations than to those of a genealogy-obsessed contemporary audience.

Not every reader will be able to assent wholeheartedly to the conclusions of this stimulating book; though much is suggested, only a limited amount can be proven. However, in opening up eddic poetry to political and social rather than religious and archetypal investigation, Gro Steinsland's book is likely to change the way many of us think about the mythological poetry of the Edda and the way in which its myths interact with Norse history.

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Peter A. Jorgensen, editor and translator. *Valla-Ljóts saga: The Icelandic Text According to MS AM 161 fol.* Bibliotheca Germanica: Series nova, volume 1. Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 1991. 120 pages.

A bilingual edition is really two books, not one, which is both its strength and its weakness. Although in some bilingual editions only the translation represents original work, in this volume by the American Germanic scholar Peter Jorgensen both "books" are original contributions to Old Icelandic studies. The volume also contains three introductions, "The Edition" (11–20), "The Saga" (21–35), and "The Translation" (37–40), which are brief but to the point and well written, an index to the characters, and a bibliography.

No extant manuscript of *Valla-Ljóts saga* is older than the seventeenth century. AM 161 fol. is one of the two from which the rest apparently derive and which themselves seem to stem from a common source. The differences are minor and have already been registered in the apparatus to Jónas Kristjánsson's diplomatic Samfund edition (1952) of the other major manuscript, AM 496 4°, but since 161 fol. has not been edited as a whole since 1830, the present edition is welcome.

Jorgensen follows the spelling and punctuation of the manuscript exactly, including dieresis and the special forms *a* and *ð*. Otherwise, modern letter forms are used, allographs are disregarded, and abbreviations silently expanded. But letter forms, allographs, and abbreviations are described carefully in the first introduction. The statement on page 15, though, that *d*, which represents etymologically *d* and *ð*, "always has a rounded ascender" is not completely accurate, since the ascender is occasionally straight: "Gudmundur," "haffde," "villde hann" (ms. p. 86); "brodur minn" (ms. p. 90). A check against a facsimile made available to me by the Arnarnaganaeian Institute in Copenhagen showed that Jorgensen's edition is reliable. I found only one, insignificant discrepancy: "illt" on page 94

(ms. p. 92) should be “illtt” (cf. “audvelltt” six lines down, transcribed correctly).

The footnotes to the text address transmission problems, including all corrections made in the manuscript either by the scribe Jón Erlendsson or later users. They are thorough, though one can find a few inconsistencies. Jorgensen observes in 94n68 that a minim is missing in the word “mun,” manuscript page 92, but there is no note on page 104 for “munu,” manuscript page 96, which also seems to have one stroke too few. Jorgensen has annotated only a few of the instances where words appear in the wrong case (100n76, 108n87) or declension (54n18). In the discussion of the phrase “Halle baud Þorer” (13, 66n32; ms. p. 83), which a later hand has emended to “Þorer baud Halla,” Jorgensen does not mention that the first version was ungrammatical and thus, strictly speaking, untranslatable. It might have been worth noting that either “Halle” or “Þorer,” the latter with the superscript abbreviation for *-er*, must have been in the wrong case or declension to start with, perhaps miscopied, unless the abbreviation could have been intended to stand for an *r*-less form. (The shape of the abbreviation in question ranges from a backwards *c* to an only slightly left-curving vertical stroke, which is the shape it has here.) A similar problem is presented by the accusative plural “vondar frændur,” manuscript page 92, in which the first word has the superscript abbreviation for *-ar*. Other examples of wrong case are “vmm þoris” (a correction for “vmm þorvard,” see 58n26) and the nominatives “Skaptte Þoroddsson win Liötz” (ms. p. 87) and “Havardur aust mann” (with the final *n* doubled by a macron, ms. p. 91). Several names switch declension. There is a note on the form “Hallur” for the otherwise consistent nominative “Halle”/“Halli” (54n18, ms. p. 79) but no note on the same form a few lines earlier at the bottom of manuscript page 78; nor are there notes on the two instances of nominative “Bjarne” (ms. p. 90) for the character Björn (in various spellings) or on the nominative plural “Svarfdælar” (ms. p. 93) for “Svarfdæler” (ms. pp. 81, 86). (The translation standardizes to “Halli,” “Bjorn,” and “Svarfdalers.”) Also, it is not clear why

Jorgensen tells us in 92n67 to read “söma” (i.e., *sóma*) for the infinitive “sama” on manuscript page 92, when he does not object to the preterite “samdi” five lines above.

But one cannot expect the editor of a diplomatic edition to address each inconsistency in the manuscript in detail. Indeed, some apparent errors, such as the nominatives “win” and “-mann,” are attested already in the Middle Ages and have their roots in the history of the language, not in the history of *Valla-Ljóts saga*. My purpose in listing these examples is not so much to note omissions in Jorgensen’s apparatus as to point out the wealth of linguistic information that a diplomatic edition, whether annotated or not, supplies.

For some reason, four English translations of *Valla-Ljóts saga* have appeared since 1985. The others, all based on the Fornrit edition of AM 496 4^o, are *Four Old Icelandic Sagas and Other Tales*, ed. and trans. W. Bryant Bachman, Jr. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 43–69; Paul Acker, “*Valla-Ljóts saga*,” *Comparative Criticism* 10 (1988): 207–37; and *Law and Literature in Medieval Iceland: Ljósvefninga saga and Valla-Ljóts saga*, ed. and trans. Theodore M. Andersson and William Ian Miller (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1989), 256–85. Jorgensen lists these in the bibliography but does not mention them otherwise. His own translation, which is the oldest of the four — he explains in a preface that it was complete in manuscript already by the mid-1970s — is easily the smoothest and liveliest, without being any less accurate. Jorgensen is aware of the many kinds of pitfalls that await the saga translator, and he explains his decisions in the third introduction. He is not afraid of rephrasing when necessary for the flow of the English, as in “Signy, the daughter of Bersi, who had family over at Modruvellir” [Signýu Bessa dottur frænd konu þeirra Mōðrþývellinga] (55) or “He lost no time in secretly reminding Thorgrim how . . .” [Honum bregdur miok vit seiger Þorgrijmi leyniliga fra . . .] (85). Another example of a felicitous choice is the future progressive construction in “he wouldn’t be climbing into her bed, nor would he be sending the

pig” [Torfe munde ej koma j Reckiu hennar. edur sennða henne grijs] (51); it might have been used again to advantage, incidentally, in “you won’t teach me anymore how to observe Church holidays!” [þu skaltt ei optar kienna mier helge halldit] (73).

The saga contains a number of difficult or corrupt passages that cannot be translated with complete certainty, such as Ljótr’s statement at the end of chapter 5; in a few cases, Jorgensen seems to have chosen unlikely interpretations. For example, readers may prefer “when they were alive” or “in their heyday” (continuing the *oratio recta*) to Jorgensen’s translation “when they were on higher ground” (73) for “þa er þeir attu enn efra hlut heimsins.” In the pigsty episode, it is best to assume (see especially Acker’s notes 15 and 17) that Halli cuts off the sow’s snout and takes its piglet; Jorgensen’s translation “Then he hacked off the snout of the animal [aff henne (scil. Gylltunne)], took the sow [Grijsinn!] and walked out” (51) contradicts the text unless he thinks the whole episode deals with only one animal, referred to as both “Gyllta” and “Grijs.” (If Halli had mutilated the piglet, Torfi would have noticed this and reacted as Halli carried it away; rather, Halli must have taken the piglet intact, leaving the mutilated sow to be found by Torfi a short time later. This explains why Halli dismounts and waits in the wood: he is expecting Torfi’s pursuit.) The “fjølmenne” that Guðmundr accords Halli probably includes not only “workmen,” as Jorgensen translates (57), but also the witnesses and armed following that Halli needs to carry out his legal “dirty work.” In the description of Ljótr’s two outfits and their significance, I believe the logical structure of the prose is expressed more clearly by the punctuation and capitalization of the original than by Jorgensen’s sentence division (61); a period after “outfits” and a colon after “handle” might have been a better solution. Also, “whether or not he liked someone” is perhaps too loose for “huorsu honum lijkade.” On page 95, Jorgensen translates “þeir drepnir” as if it were “þér drepnir,” which makes more sense; indeed, Jónas Kristjánsson emends to this in *Íslenzk fornrit* 9:254. A note might have been in order here.

The facing page translation has separately numbered footnotes covering cultural and material background and, occasionally, corruptions or ambiguities in the text. Though not as full as Andersson and Miller’s on legal matters or motivic parallels, the annotations are well chosen. The introductions, translation, and notes together provide a solid, self-contained working basis for the scholar or student of Old Icelandic literature in translation.

The number of misprints in the book is small. Aside from the mistranscription mentioned above and minor inconsistencies in punctuation and editing (footnote numbers, for example, are sometimes inside periods, sometimes outside), I found only “pui” for “þui” (46n11), “Halla” for “Halle” (56n23), and “initial ‘G’” for “initial ‘S’” (15). The only significant oversight, undoubtedly a printing error, is the fact that no translation is given for the last twelve printed lines of chapter 3, from “Þorer spurde huskall.” I also missed at first the translation of the closing sentence of chapter 1, but found it moved to the beginning of chapter 2, where indeed it reads better.

The role of a bilingual edition in language instruction is a delicate question, at least for those educators who do not believe that students should use translations. But students advanced enough to work with the unnormalized Icelandic in this book will not be led unduly into temptation — especially since, due to its modern paragraphing, the facing page translation takes up so much more space than the text that it is aligned only roughly with it; text and translation are often three pages apart. Moreover, a diplomatic edition of a manuscript from this period is a rare thing and can be recommended from a purely linguistic point of view to scholars and students alike. For those, too, who do not know Icelandic, the book provides a good, basic introduction to saga scholarship. Both text and translation make excellent reading.

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