

belief in one of the dominant cultural paradigms of their day? On the other hand, if any medieval country was capable of developing an alternative view of kingship, it was Iceland, which for several centuries governed itself without a monarch. Resistance to Norwegian rule had been important at other times in Iceland's history (e.g., when the Icelanders declined to grant King Olaf Haraldsson's request for the island of Grímsey and a poll tax) and in other genres of its literature (e.g., the plot of *Egils saga* revolves around the hostility that Egill feels towards the sons of Haraldr hárfagri). The complex and changing nature of Icelandic attitudes towards the Norwegian parent society has been the subject of much research in recent years, and Ármann Jakobsson's reconstruction of the ideas about kings and kingship that underlie the individual sagas' representation of individual rulers is a valuable contribution to a discussion that naturally tends to emphasize difference over similarity.

Elizabeth Ashman Rowe

Bjarne Fidjestøl. *Selected Papers*, ed. Odd Einar Haugen and Else Mundal, trans. Peter Foote. The Viking Collection 9. Odense: Odense University Press, 1997. 406 pages.

These seventeen essays by the late and much missed Bjarne Fidjestøl are, like his longer studies, characterized by intellectual courage and originality, methodological elegance, and interpretive sensitivity. Their skillful Englishing by Peter Foote was a labour of love, extending the knowledge and appreciation of the author's work to readers outside Scandinavia. Fourteen of the articles originally appeared in Norwegian (*nynorsk*), in journals and volumes not easily accessible; two are translated from German, and one, originally published in English, has here been rendered into a graceful, idiomatic form of that language. Bjarne Fidjestøl's prose, supple, personal, understated, and suffused with gentle humour, is a treat even in translation.

The papers, selected from the large number he published, are arranged in five groups: skaldic studies, saga studies, prose and poetry, literary history, and "in lighter vein." The first section includes five articles: "The Kenning System: An Attempt at a Linguistic Analysis" (16–67); "The King's Skald from Kvinesdal and his Poetry" (68–92); "Arnórr Þórðarson: Skald of the Orkney Jarls" (93–116); "'Have You Heard a Poem Worth More?': A Note on the Economic Background of Early Skaldic Praise-Poetry" (117–32); and "Skaldic Poetry and the Conversion, with Some Reflections on Literary Form As a Source of Historical Information" (133–50). The next group contains: "Algirdas Julien Greimas and Hrafnkell Freysgoði: Semiological Models Applied to an Icelandic Saga" (151–67); "The Legend of Þórir hundr" (168–83); "European and Native Tradition in *Óláfs saga helga*" (184–200); and "Óláfr Tryggvason the Missionary: A Literary Portrait from the Middle Ages" (201–27). Four papers make up the third section: "Icelandic Sagas and Poems on Princes: Literature and Society in Archaic West Norse Culture" (228–54); "Skaldic Stanzas in Saga-Prose:

Observations on the Relationship between Prose and Verse in Snorri's *Heimskringla*" (255–76); "The Tale of Haraldr harðráði and Þorgils the Fisherman" (277–93); and "'See What Happens, Compose on It Later': A Footnote to a Piece of Historical Criticism Found in a Prologue" (294–302). The sole essay in the fourth group, "Norse-Icelandic Composition in the Oral Period" (303–32), is an extract from Bjarne Fidjestøl's contribution to a new history of Norwegian literature (1994). The final section contains three papers: "'Out They Will Look, the Lovely Ladies': Views of Women in Norse literature" (333–42); "Snorri Sturluson — European Humanist and Rhetorician" (343–50); and "Romantic Reading at the Court of Hákon Hákonarson" (351–65), chosen, the editors explain, because they illuminate Bjarne Fidjestøl's ability to convey the meaning and relevance of current Old Norse scholarship to a wider audience. Even in his most "popular" pieces, he never falsifies, or betrays, his calling as a scholar-writer; there is no second-rateness in this gathering.

These essays, most of which focus on verse in the preliterate period (ca. 870–1100), were written to stand alone; there is the risk, when they are bundled into a collection, of what William Trevor calls "cancellation" — one work shadowing the effect of the next all the way through — or at the very least of repetition. This does not happen here, owing in part to Bjarne Fidjestøl's multifarious and constantly developing interests. Papers in this volume discuss the sociology of medieval literature, structural linguistics, skaldic stanzas as historical sources, the output of individual poets, the conversion of the North to Christianity, iconography, native and foreign elements in saga-literature, manuscript transmission of the skaldic corpus, and much else. An ever present concern in these essays, almost imperceptible because so delicately handled, is the relationship between Old Norwegian and Old Icelandic, the "peaceful rivalry" (236) between the two nations for ownership of the rich early literature. The author quietly suggests that Norse praise poetry, which had its opening phase in Norway, was itself not restricted by political divisions, that its view was largely fixed on the waters and coasts of the North Sea and

Baltic, the places named lying "like beads on a string" along the shipping lanes of Europe (237). Bjarne Fidjestøl, with deep roots in the Sognefjord parish where he grew up and in Bergen where he taught for nineteen years, was as international in outlook as the poetry he studied. He delighted in the breadth of scholarly interest in Old Norse-Icelandic studies outside Scandinavia and was, of course, an early and enthusiastic supporter of *Alvíssmál*. He would, I think, be pleased to know that his proposal, first presented at the Sixth International Saga Conference in Helsingør (1985), for a collaborative reediting of the skaldic corpus, is at last bearing fruit in an international project with plans for completion in 2005.

Bjarne Fidjestøl's highly developed sense of the past goes hand-in-hand in these essays with an equally strong awareness of continuities. "The King's Skald from Kvinesdal," a paper that first appeared in a volume narrowly concerned with local history, describes the ancient Swedish king Aun, who dies of old age in *Ynglingatal*, stanza 16, as "so feeble that he had to drink milk from a prehistoric baby's bottle, an ox-horn with a hole in the sharp end" (85). The fourth paper in this collection, on the economics of skaldic composition, mentions the generous rewards given to skalds by princes, the correlation between a prince's wealth and the number of skalds in his stable, and the relationship between the "finances of the ruling houses of early medieval Scandinavia and the prominence poets give to gold in their praise of princes" (132). The editors remind us that this material was first presented by the author in the lecture (on a subject of his choice) required of him as a doctoral candidate. It is a superb illustration of Bjarne Fidjestøl's wit, subtlety, and moral balance: the skaldic scholar speaking, on this particular occasion, about the reciprocal obligations of skald and patron, and on the financial rewards to be gained by skaldic effort.

Peter Foote appears to this reviewer to have done an almost flawless job of translation. Even the paper originally published in English is not so much "lightly revised" (14) as skillfully edited and transformed, so that the author's own distinctive voice comes through. The editors provide a crisp intro-

duction that includes summaries of each paper, a bibliography of Bjarne Fidjestøl's scholarly publications (which reveals his fluency in Russian), and another of works cited by him in the seventeen essays. In the index of personal names and primary sources, Snorri Sturluson gets the largest number of entries; St. Óláfr easily outdistances Óðinn, who is mentioned only a few more times than God. The volume is handsomely printed. There are remarkably few typographical errors: read *því* for *qví* (94). One skaldic phrase, "þvít kannk yrkja" (243), has not been rendered into English. Equally trivial, the original Norwegian "i kong Alfreds engelsk" is probably preferable to "in King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon" (131). Under the section heading "troops of skalds" (69), the translator renders Old Norse *greppa ferðir* as "ways of the poets" (70), but later emends to "clusters of poets" (127). In an effort to remove the syntactical ambiguity in Bjarne Fidjestøl's own English translation ("Magnús, hear my powerful poem; I know none better than you"), the translator inadvertently creates another ambiguity ("Magnús, hear my mighty poem; no other know I superior," 110) before correcting to "no other man know I superior" (245). Such mishaps are rare.

Skaldic art had to be learned by studying the work of predecessors; scholarship is much the same. The translator and editors have produced a volume that not only honours the author but will inform and delight readers in lands beyond Norway for years to come.

Roberta Frank

Einar Gunnar Pétursson. *Eddurit Jóns Guðmundssonar lærða: "Samantektir um skilning á Eddu" og "Að fornu í þeirri gömlu norrænu kölluðust rúnir bæði ristingar og skrifelsi."* Þættir úr fræðasögu 17. aldar. Volume 1, *Inngangur*. Volume 2, *Texti*. Rit 46. Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1998. 512 and 116 pages.

The book here under review, a doctoral thesis by Einar Gunnar Pétursson, Sérfræðingur at Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, presents the first full-length study of the life and literary activity of the seventeenth-century Icelandic autodidact Jón Guðmundsson, known to his contemporaries and since as Jón lærði [the learned], in addition to editions of two of the works attributed to him: *Samantektir*, a version of parts of the *Prose Edda* with extensive additions and annotations, and *Ristingar*, a commentary on *Brynhildarljóð* in *Völsunga saga*. This review is a shortened and translated version of the writer's *andmælaræða*, presented at the author's doctoral defence at the University of Iceland on 30 June 1998. The original Icelandic version, together with the candidate's responses, are expected to be published soon in *Gripla*.

The first chapter of the book has a detailed account of the two pieces which are edited in the second volume, examines all available evidence for their authorship and origin, and concludes that they were both written by Jón lærði, probably for Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson. The argument is careful and convincing, and it is unlikely that anyone will find it possible to refute it. This chapter also has a detailed survey of the study of native lore in seventeenth-century Iceland and shows how this was to a large extent influenced by the historical interests of the bishops of Iceland. It is shown that *Samantektir* in particular was written from a Christian point of view and that the authorial attitudes are not exclusively native or pagan ones, that is, that the writer distances himself from the native and non-Christian attitudes of his sources. He shows particular interest in comparison of Norse mythology