

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

with Old Testament and classical Greek and Roman tradition (see particularly 1:43–44).

The second chapter reviews all the material for the life and writings of Jón lærði and gives an exhaustive account of all his literary activity and of the works attributed to him and their origins. There are several works that have been incompletely understood and wrongly attributed in the past, including the two that are edited in the work under discussion, both of which have often been attributed to Björn of Skarðsá. This chapter gives a definitive survey of the works that can now with certainty be attributed to Jón. These two chapters provide a significant contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the literary history of Iceland in the seventeenth century, and many earlier views about this will now have to be revised.

In view of the fullness of the account of Jón's literary activities in this chapter, it may seem churlish to complain of further details that might have been investigated. But, as the writer himself says, there remain things to be found out, though archaeological investigations are perhaps outside the scope of this work (see 1:84–85); in 1:65, however, there is mention of “a great plant-book . . . printed in Frankfurt . . . it ought to be easier to try to find what plant-book is referred to, since the place of publication is known” [stóra grasabók, sem prentuð var í Frankfurt am Main . . . Nú ætti að vera auðveldara að reyna að finna við hvaða grasabók er átt, fyrst útgáfustaðurinn er kunnur]. There is an index of early German printed books in the Wolfenbüttel Library (Herzog August Bibliothek, *Verzeichnis medizinischer und naturwissenschaftlicher Drucke, 1472–1830*, vol. 8, comp. Ursula Zachert [Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus-Thomson, 1978]) which lists a dozen or more works about herbs and plants printed in Frankfurt in the sixteenth century, and some of these are in German. It seems likely, moreover, that it is the same book that is referred to twice in 1:247 as “Um nokkrar/sérlegustu grasanáttúrur af D. Alberto,” and this is probably Albertus Magnus's *De virtutibus herbarum*, which was printed in German seventeen times in Frankfurt from 1531 to 1592 (see *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, comp. Irmgard

Bezzel, Abteilung 1, vol. 1 [Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1983], 195–99). It is also now possible to search more widely for the book printed in Lübeck referred to in 1:334, though I have had no success in finding it; nor have I found any book by Johannes Herolt that is not in Latin (1:347; referred to by Jón lærði in *Samantektir* 53.25–27), but it is probably to be sought in German collections rather than in the Library of Congress. It may be that these foreign sources are not all that important for Jón lærði's work, as is claimed in 1:398, but it is important to know what foreign influences there may have been on his thought and on that of his contemporaries.

A new picture emerges in this work of Jón lærði himself. He was a layman and not formally educated and evidently knew little Latin (this comes out clearly in 1:347 and 372), but was far from the unlettered superstitious peasant that he has sometimes been depicted as. There is evidence that he was somewhat inclined to Catholicism, and he certainly did entertain some beliefs that we would now call superstitions, as well as, in his relations with the authorities, apparently showing signs of paranoia (like some other Icelanders both at that time and since), but he also reveals in some places in his writings a degree of scepticism unusual in the seventeenth century, though it perhaps hardly amounts to rationalism. See for instance the scribal comment on *Samantektir* 60.2, referred to in 1:245 (Jón says that the story of Loki and Svaðilfari may seem incredible; the scribe adds that it is strange that he should have doubts about this and not about so much else), and Jón's words in *Samantektir* 88.7–9, where he refers to *æfintýr*, which people have used for testing their understanding, but have now rejected because of their difference from current understanding; cf. 2:60.22–24. Einar Gunnar discusses this in 1:152 and 363–64 and comes to the conclusion that Jón was not in fact more superstitious than many others of his time. Though he lacked Latin and had not been educated to be a cleric, he was well read and translated various things from German and quoted from German books in his writings, and is not so very different as a writer from his contemporary the priest Magnús Ólafsson.

son, though he is perhaps less scholarly and accurate, especially in his quotations. It is interesting to compare the two. Magnús Ólafsson wrote to impress the authorities with his seriousness and moral probity, in order to gain reinstatement to his profession after being found guilty of adultery, and to further the career of his son; but it was as a result of his writings that Jón lærði got into trouble with the authorities and was accused of heresy and witchcraft. While Magnús Ólafsson wrote in Danish and Latin largely for Danish scholars, Jón lærði wrote in Icelandic largely, it seems, for Icelandic churchmen and scholars, who seem to have regarded both writers equally highly (though Einar Gunnar does not seem to me to have demonstrated with complete certainty that *Saman-tekktir* was compiled at the request of Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson in connection with the latter's planned treatise on ancient religion, though it is probable). Jón's history illustrates that as in other circumstances, it is often allowable to say things in Latin or other foreign languages that are forbidden in the vernacular (in Jón lærði's case things concerned with runes and superstitions; Ole Worm had no trouble with his book of 1636 on runes). Jón lærði was perhaps not more superstitious or credulous than many of his contemporaries, but he does write about superstitions and show interest in them more than most of them (perhaps, as is argued here, largely at the request of his ecclesiastical patron — and his interest in folklore may well also be a mark of his enlightened historical attitudes), to the extent that there is a tendency for any anonymous piece of writing in the seventeenth century which is about things supernatural to be ascribed to him (cf. 1:152).

There is some discussion in the book about the origin of Jón Guðmundsson's nickname *lærði*. It has sometimes been assumed that he got it from the way common uneducated people regarded him, though Einar Gunnar argues that he was regarded as learned by the clergy as well. Cf. 1:82, 90, 130. *Lærði* is usually, however, used as an equivalent of *litteratus* or *grammaticus*, but these words imply learning in Latin, and Arngrímur Jónsson is the best-known person to have been given the name. I wonder if it

was not originally ironic, and applied satirically to Jón Guðmundsson by some of his learned contemporaries who were not impressed by his learning. It would not be the first time that a scornful epithet came eventually to be a title of respect. There are also, it is true, instances (somewhat later than Jón's time) of the word being used to mean knowledgeable about magic.

Chapter 3 contains a very full and detailed account of the manuscripts of *Saman-tekktir* which establishes their relationship and which ones have independent textual value. Individual manuscripts are described in extraordinary detail, and their origins and histories traced in a way that is not often done for paper manuscript copies of post-medieval texts. One might even complain that sometimes there is too much detail, and this chapter might have benefitted from a more rigorous exclusion of material not directly relevant to Jón lærði and his work, and of material which might be regarded as in itself insignificant. There is also a lot of repetition and some lack of clarity; though there are usually cross-references to other places in the book where particular items are discussed, these are often rather confusing.

In the last part of chapter 3 and in chapter 4 the relationships of the manuscripts of *Samantektir* and *Snorra Edda* are discussed. Some of the arguments used to establish these relationships are not in accordance with modern methods of textual criticism. Some of the variants quoted in 1:268, for instance, do not support the stemma on that page. Cf. also 1:278 and 280. A relationship between two manuscripts, particularly derivation of one manuscript from another, can only be demonstrated by the existence of common errors or departures from the original that are not otherwise explicable, but the habits of different scribes are often very similar, and two scribes frequently make the same alterations independently (as is indeed acknowledged by the editor). In particular a relationship cannot be based on the existence of common omissions, since if scribes are given to omitting things at all, they will tend to make the same omissions. Moreover the agreement between two branches of the stemma cannot be used to reconstruct the text of the archetype, since scribes so fre-

quently make the same alterations to their texts. There are also clear examples of scribes correcting their text, though it is often not possible to be sure whether they have used manuscripts other than their main exemplar for this or whether it is from their own memory of other texts or from guesswork. It must be said, however, that though the evidence for the relationships established in this edition is less strong than the editor argues, the text itself is not seriously at fault, and the editor's methods are very conservative anyway (cf. 1:283); emendation is kept to a minimum. The textual notes are also very selective; generally variants are only noted when there is some possibility of their being derived from the archetype, and this selection seems to have been done generally in a logical way.

In chapters 4 and 5 a good deal of space is devoted to speculations about the text of *Snorra Edda* used by Jón lærði in *Samantektir*. His text seems to have been generally similar to that of Codex Wormianus (W; AM 242 fol.), and includes some of the material that was added to Snorri's text in W, though there are many readings more similar to the text of the Codex Regius (R; Gks 2367 4^o). There are also quite frequent readings showing a relationship to the Uppsala manuscript (U; DG 11). There is also quite a lot of material in *Samantektir* that looks as though it is derived from R (e.g., that derived from *þulur* that are in R but not in W or U; see, e.g., 2:84) as well as some material (e.g., genealogies) related to U and clearly derived from it, whether directly or indirectly, that is not in W or R (see 1:290 and especially 297).

Jón lærði frequently refers in *Samantektir* to various copies of the *Prose Edda* that he has used (*í þeirri stærri Eddu*, 37.19, *smáedda*, 51.19; cf. 81.5), noting that they were not all complete, so that he has supplemented them from each other. He had himself made a copy of U, now in Bodleian Library, Marshall 114, and though neither copy nor original can have been available to him when he wrote *Samantektir*, it is possible that he had made another copy (or perhaps extracts) for his personal use. His reference to a manuscript he had seen in his youth (*fullri edda*, 91.11; see 1:299) seems to be to one with the *Second Grammatical Treatise*

in the form it has in U, but it is unlikely that all his readings that are evidently derived from U can have been from memory, even though his copy in Marshall 114 (1636–37) was made not all that long before he wrote *Samantektir* (1641). Cf. 1:393.

Jón lærði also clearly made alterations to his text; he was not a scholarly writer, and anyway, as is pointed out on more than one occasion by the writer of this book, his purpose was not primarily to produce an accurate text of Snorri's work. Jón Erlendsson, who made the copy from which the most extensive text of Jón's work is derived (there is no surviving autograph), also probably modified it in some respects. It is therefore not to be expected that the principal text, that in Á (Stockh. Papp. fol. nr 38), would follow any medieval manuscript precisely. It is hardly possible in any case for Jón to have used any of the vellum manuscripts directly. It therefore cannot be argued that because of the extent of the deviations in his text from a particular vellum manuscript he cannot have used a manuscript derived from that vellum. In particular, as noted above, no deductions can be based on his omissions, neither that he must have used a shortened text nor that he must have used a different text. His treatment of the text is so idiosyncratic that one cannot assume that he would have included any particular passages that were in his exemplar (cf. 1:289 and 313–14).

There are at least two possibilities: that Jón lærði used three texts of the *Prose Edda*, one derived from R, one from W and one from U, or that the text he used was already an eclectic one, containing parts derived from all three vellums (this is made clear by the variants quoted in 1:289–97). It is virtually impossible now to decide which of these possibilities is the correct one. The editor of *Samantektir* has assumed that he used a lost manuscript *O which was independent of the surviving vellums, though it would have sometimes been more similar to one, sometimes to another. But *O could only be shown to be an independent text of the *Prose Edda* if it had in some places better readings than any other extant manuscript. I cannot see that any of the passages that the editor regards as certainly independent of the

surviving vellums need be so. There is no evidence as there is with the exemplar of the Utrecht manuscript for it having been a medieval manuscript (and indeed in 1:298 it is said to be more likely that it was a young one). The readings and passages that are said in various places in this edition to be likely to be from *O are of a kind that is unlikely to have been included in any medieval text of the *Prose Edda*. It is extremely improbable that any medieval text of the *Prose Edda* independent of the surviving vellums existed that contained occasional readings similar to the text of U as well as being in general closely related to W unless it contained an eclectic text, for W and U are not closely related texts (cf. 1:299). But there are many examples of seventeenth-century manuscripts that contain readings from more than one exemplar, even within the same sentence, including some with eclectic texts of *Snorra Edda*. It is shown in chapter 5a that Jón lærði used more than one text, and that one of his texts had readings similar to U, which he certainly knew. It is perhaps most likely that another of his sources had an eclectic text derived partly from W and partly from R. This seems a simpler solution to a complex problem than assuming the existence of a sister manuscript to W independent of other surviving texts. The case seems to have been similar with Magnús Ólafsson's *Edda*. In Jón lærði's case, there is the further likelihood that some of his readings are derived from memory of texts he had read earlier in his life, which has happened with other texts he refers to besides the *Prose Edda*. In view of all this, I cannot see that there is any likelihood that Jón lærði's *Edda* contains any readings that derive from a lost medieval text of *Snorra Edda*, as Einar Gunnar claims, nor that it would be possible to use Jón lærði's text in editions of *Snorra Edda* (1:299). The value of Jón's book is in his own commentary, not in his text of the *Edda*.

Chapter 5 contains a detailed commentary on the text of *Samantektir*, and many sources and parallels to Jón lærði's compilation are noted. In fact in some respects it is too detailed and unnecessarily prolix, and there seems little point in repeating that no parallels have been found to specific passages and in paraphrasing everything Jón

lærði says. And yet there are some passages about which more could have been said. I cannot make many contributions to the knowledge of Jón lærði's sources, but it should perhaps have been mentioned (cf. 1:348) that what he says about the Finns in *Samantektir* 53.27–54.3 has a partial parallel in *Historia Norwegiae*. The indexes of folklore motifs by Stith Thompson (*Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 2d ed., 6 vols. [København: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1955–58]) and Inger Boberg (*Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature*, Bibliotheca Arnarnagana 27 [København: Munksgaard, 1966]), and perhaps also Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale*, FF Communications 184 (Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia, 1961), should have been consulted about things such as the story of the man who lived with a seal-woman (1:352–53) and the people that hibernate (1:382). The first of these stories has parallels under Stith Thompson's no. B81.2.1 ("Mermaid has son by human father"; see Boberg, who refers to *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, ed. Henrik Bertelsen [København 1905–11], 1:46, 2:63–64, 395) and B651.8; the second under F564.3.1. The story in *Samantektir* 60.14–21, about the anchor that comes down out of the sky, is said to be from *Konungs skuggsjá*, though it is acknowledged that Jón must have got it from oral tradition rather than from a book (1:363–64), but investigation of the occurrence of the motif in the indexes might have established whether the source was in fact independent of *Konungs skuggsjá*. For example, there are "magic airships" in Thompson, D1118. In 1:324 it is said that the idea that giants are descended from Cain must be Jón lærði's own, but the same idea is found in *Beowulf*, and is also known from patristic writings and is considered to be a deduction from Genesis 6.1–4; and that Cain built cities or fortifications, which in 1:313 is said to be perhaps an addition to the manuscript *O from an unknown source, is straight from Genesis 4.17.

Even when there are correspondences with Old Icelandic sources, the references are not always satisfactory. The metre of the verse in *Samantektir* 91.1–9 (see 1:393) is rather like *hálfhnept*, if not quite identical (cf. *Háttatal* st. 77). This metre, or variants

of it, is found quite widely in skaldic poems. In 1:339 it is correctly stated that *Svíþjóð hin kalda* or *hin mikla* is not referred to in *Snorra Edda*, but it might have been pointed out that Eilífr Guðrúnarson's *Þórsdrápa*, quoted in *Snorra Edda*, refers to *Svíþjóð kólgu*, evidently the same place, and it might have been added that *Svíþjóð the Cold* or the Great is referred to a number of times in Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga*, Arngrímur Jónsson's *Danish History*, and elsewhere, for instance in *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds*. In relation to the formula *Sator arepo* (1:393–394) it would have been helpful to have referred to *Alfræði íslensk*, vol. 3, *Landlýsingar m.fl.*, ed. Kristian Kálund (København 1917–18), 113. In 1:328 it is shown that Jón lærði in 1641 used a manuscript closely related to AM 568 4°, perhaps the exemplar from which it was copied. It would have been interesting to note that Magnús Ólafsson of Laufás used a manuscript closely related to the same manuscript, and maybe again its exemplar, for some of his quotations in *Specimen lexici runici* in the early 1630s.

In chapter 6 we have the introduction to the short text *Ristingar*, again with accounts of the manuscripts, a discussion of the authorship and date, and, as with *Samantektir*, detailed and extensive accounts of the sources. This part of the introduction is of course most interesting when it can be shown that the author used or referred to works that are now no longer extant, and there are several examples of this, including some clear cases of the use of now lost manuscripts of eddic poems. These are especially interesting in view of the uncertainty about what other texts of eddic poems may have been around in Iceland in the seventeenth century besides the Codex Regius (Gks 2365 4°) and AM 748 I 4°. This topic is given extensive treatment, and Jón lærði's part in the developing understanding of the nature of the Elder Edda in the period is clarified. His quotations and references of course lose much of their value when there is reason to suspect that they are made from memory and may be unreliable.

The introduction to *Ristingar* gives the first clear account of the essay and its preservation, which has often been referred to in the past without any clear understanding of

its nature and context, largely because of its confusing manuscript situation. Its authorship by Jón lærði is now established beyond doubt, and the nature and attribution of several pieces of writing about the *Edda* (including some known to be by Björn of Skarðsá) is now clear.

It is very valuable now to have reliable texts of these most interesting works, *Samantektir* and *Ristingar*, available in print. Apart from the light they throw on attitudes to Norse mythology and the information they give about seventeenth-century Icelandic folklore and oral tales, they contain a lot of unusual words, many of which do not seem yet to have found their way into dictionaries; it is to be hoped that in future more of Jón lærði's vocabulary can be incorporated. For instance, there are the words *alfri* and *orðhelgi* (*Samantektir* 4.27, 62.11; see 1:310, 365). The first of these seems to be a sort of equivalent to the concept of antinomianism, comparable to the ideas of Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*. These words occur in poetry included in the work, which is also interesting to have accessible. Much of this is probably contemporary with Jón lærði and seems likely to be by him. Little of it is of high quality and the technique is usually poor, but it throws interesting light on his views and attitudes to literature and life. Much of it is conventional complaint about the ways of the world, but uses curious imagery.

There are, however, some questions about the treatment of the texts in the edition in volume 2. The editor has tried to follow the scribes in capitalization except with proper names (see 1:190–91). The scribe's intentions, however, are frequently unclear, and the distinction between capitals and lower-case letters in scribal copies has rarely any significance; I think it is not really helpful to try to follow their usage in this when, for example, scribal abbreviations are not reproduced.

In the edition of *Samantektir* the parts of the text derived from *Snorra Edda* are printed in normal type, and the parts written by Jón lærði himself are distinguished by being printed in smaller type. It might have been preferable to have used italic instead for the latter, or even, in view of the fact that

the text of *Snorra Edda* in Jón lærði's version adds little to our knowledge of Snorri's work, while the parts written by Jón lærði have not been printed before as a whole and are of great interest and importance, to have used larger type for his contributions than for Snorri's.

There is a lengthy English summary (more than twenty pages) of the introduction, which, however, is very poorly done and seems not to have been proof-read; it is badly spelled and often ungrammatical.

It is very useful to have these two texts printed, and we look forward to editions of the remaining works of Jón lærði (especially *Tíðfordrif* and his still unpublished poems, which now seem very desirable) and maybe of some more of Björn of Skarðsá's writings too.

Anthony Faulkes

Eleazar M. Meletinsky. *The Elder Edda and Early Forms of the Epic*, trans. Kenneth H. Ober, ed. Gerd Wolfgang Weber. Hesperides: Letterature e culture occidentali, volume 6. Trieste: Edizioni Parnaso, 1998. 255 pages.

Eleazar Meletinsky, a distinguished scholar in the area of folklore and the early forms of literature, the author of numerous articles and eleven books treating such diverse subjects as the hero of the wondertale, the heritage of Vladimir Propp, and Dostoyevsky in light of historical poetics (one of these books, namely *Poetika mifa [The Poetics of Myth]*, has been translated into multiple languages), published his investigation of the Elder Edda in 1968. Thirty years later, it became available to those who can read English better than Russian. Kenneth Ober also translated Mikhail I. Steblin-Kamenskij's celebrated book *Mir sagi (The Saga Mind [Odense: Odense Univ. Press, 1973])*, so Scandinavian philologists all over the world owe him a debt of gratitude. He takes no liberties with the text, and his translation is fully reliable. It must be added that the original edition of Meletinsky's *Edda i rannie formy eposa* teems with misprints. Ober had to correct them, look up all the quotations, some of which were given by the author in Russian, expand the bibliographical references, and make difficult decisions concerning some terms current in Russian studies but lacking counterparts in Western scholarship. He undertook and performed a most laborious task.

It can be assumed that Meletinsky was aware of the translation being made of his book and that he is the author of the summary in Russian ([251–53]). It is curious that thirty years later he chose not to add a traditional retrospect. By 1968 he had mastered the enormous comparative material (there was hardly an epic or a tale, from North America to Polynesia, he did not know) and developed the theory of early literature that guided him through several decades, but in 1998 he must have known even more. Yet he neither modified his views nor saw fit to refer to later sources. Such singleness of