

Professor Odd Einar Haugen, Bergen
‘What happened to the critical edition?’

The advent of “new philology” is often dated to the early 1990s, referring to the works by Bernard Cerquiglini, Stephen G. Nichols and others. While it is true that the critique raised by the proponents of this direction is justified in many editorial traditions, it is far from new in the history of Medieval Nordic editing. In this field, editing has been predominantly based on new philological principles for the last hundred years. A more pressing question is what happened to the *critical* edition at the turn of the 19th century. Through classical scholars like J.N. Madvig, Medieval Nordic editors were very early initiated in the Lachmannian principles for the constitution of text editions. In the second half of the 19th century, several editions were published following these principles. Then it all seemed to stop, many decades before Joseph Bédier’s famous attack on the Lachmannian method in an article in the journal *Romania* (1928).

In this paper, I will look more closely at two texts, which have been edited more than once. One is *Barlaams ok Josaphats saga*, first edited by Rudolf Keyser and Carl Richard Unger (1851), and then by Magnus Rindal (1981). The second is *Laxdæla saga* in the edition of Kristian Kålund (1889–91) and in the edition of Einar Ól. Sveinsson in *Íslenzk fornrit* (1934). These four editions differ in many respects, and I believe that a closer study of them can reveal focal positions as to textual recension (“recensio”) and constitution (“constitutio textus”). The aim is not to make any kind of ranking of these (or any other editions), but rather to discuss what is gained and what is lost by the various and partly conflicting approaches to the text.

By way of conclusion, I would like to discuss why the critical edition more or less expired for over a century ago, and whether this is a premature or deserved death.

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Professor Vésteinn Ólason, Reykjavík
‘The “new” Eyrbyggja saga: a challenge’

In my paper I shall discuss Forrest S. Scott’s edition, *Eyrbyggja saga. The Vellum Tradition*, which appeared as *Editiones Arnarnagæanae A 18* in 2003, with special reference to its significance for the study of the saga as literature.

The textual tradition of individual Sagas of Icelanders is so varied that one can hardly say that the transmission of *Eyrbyggja saga* is exceptionally difficult, and yet it is certainly not easy to establish a text for the whole saga which can be assumed to come close to a thirteenth century archetype. While there are preserved fragments of four medieval manuscripts from the Middle Ages, all of them rendered diplomatically in this edition, the whole text is only preserved in paper copies of a lost manuscript from the late fourteenth century, the A-version. While the A-version has for several reasons been the basis of all former editions of the saga, the vellum fragments frequently contain more archaic

expressions, and there is also some variation in the arrangement of the material in the different versions. All this is well accounted for in the new edition, and I shall give a summary of its conclusions.

For the student of the saga the AM edition presents a huge advantage over former editions. Previously one could only get information about the vellum texts from scattered and, in fact, often randomly chosen variants; it is now possible to read a precise rendering of each of these texts while the synoptic layout makes it easy to compare them with each other. Although an edition of the A-version is not the aim of the edition, it is present, however, in a somewhat awkward shape. A seventeenth century text copy of the A-version, AM 447, contains “ a large number of readings of M (the medieval Melabók fragment) in parts of the saga where M is now deficient, in the form of corrections, interlinear additions and marginalia, written by séra Áórñur Jónsson of Hítardalur, ca 1609-70.” Consequently it has been decided to print AM 447 in its entirety with Áórñur Jónson’s variants published as footnotes. There is reason to ask whether a more practical way could have been found to present this material, although that is not obvious. As a matter of fact Scott published a study of 447’s exemplar, ÍB 180 8vo, in *Opuscula XI* 2003, which is an important supplement to his edition.

On the basis of this new edition it is possible to ask several questions, the most important of which are: 1) is it possible, acceptable, or even desirable to try to establish a more original text of the whole saga than the one we find in the best representatives of the A-version, by “correcting” an A-text with readings from other medieval (or post-medieval manuscripts)? 2) What would be gained by such a procedure, and what would be lost? 3) What are the alternatives for someone who wants to make an edition aimed at students and scholars of literature? 4) Could an edition with a normalized spelling and minimal textual (palaeographical, linguistic) commentary present the whole material in a user-friendly way without hiding or neglecting too much of the facts about the texts?

It goes without saying that this edition of the vellum tradition needs to be followed up by an edition of the A-version that could make it possible to establish a reconstructed Vatnshyrna-text (A). Until that has been done Scott’s edition must be used with reference to older Eyrbyggja editions (Guñbrandur Vigfússon, Hugo Gering, Einar Ól. Sveinsson).

I do not intend to give unequivocal answers to my questions but use the AM editon as a source of arguments for various answers.

Professor Margaret Clunies Ross, Sydney **‘Verse and prose in *Egils saga*’**

It is well known that *Egils saga* contains a great deal of poetry, much of it ascribed to Egill Skallagrímsson himself. Scholars and students with literary interests in the saga have been accustomed to a text based on the Mōñruvallabók (M) A-redaction manuscript and on certain editorial conventions of presentation of the verses, especially those of the long poems ascribed to Egill. Serious study of the verses associated with the three major redactions of the saga (A, B and C) can alter our understanding of the whole text as a literary work quite considerably. In addition, if the disposition of the verses in the three redactions is compared, the literary role of the poetry in the saga comes into a sharper focus and is also more complex than a consideration of the A-redaction tradition alone suggests. In this paper I shall examine some of the literary implications of the three redactions with a focus on the interrelationship of verse and prose in each.

Professor Russell Poole, Western Ontario **‘Thoughts on the prehistory of sagas: or, what is it to *āylia*?’**

In my paper I propose to continue a line of discussion exemplified in recent publications by Judy Quinn and Gísli Sigurñsson. My focus will be the preservation and development of

saga materials in eleventh- and twelfth-century Iceland. Starting with a comprehensive survey of attestations of the word group *ǣulr/ǣylja/ǣula*, I hope to indicate the extent to which the productions of *ǣulr*-like speakers went beyond straightforwardly catenulate compositions, such as genealogies and lists of heiti (composition on the ‘paradigmatic axis’), so as to incorporate a narrative strand (composition on the ‘syntagmatic axis’). Can some instances of skaldic encomium, for example, be analysed as constituting an intermediate or transitional form, midway between pure listing on the one hand (as seen in the so-called *ǣulur*) and largely cohesive narrative on the other hand (as seen in the kings’ sagas and sagas of Icelanders)

Professor Judith Jesch, Nottingham

‘Orkneyinga saga – a work in progress?’

Scholars have always found *Orkneyinga saga* difficult both to classify and to characterise. It is often considered to be a kind of kings’ saga, or it is lumped together, *faute de mieux*, with those other anomalous sagas, *Færeyinga saga* and *Jómsvíkinga saga*. The scholarly consensus seems to be that the saga was originally composed c. 1200 and revised sometime after the 1220s, with additions continuing to be made to it even later, e.g. in *Flateyjarbók*. The manuscript transmission is patchy, with no single, complete text of the saga. Both the two most complete texts are problematic in different ways: *Flateyjarbók* with its fragmented text and later additions, and the seventeenth-century version of a lost medieval codex because it is a translation into Danish.

Orkneyinga saga as a unified work with that name is thus a gradual creation of its editors. While Gudbrand Vigfusson saw it as ‘a complex work, made up of parts of different date and character’, parts which he calls ‘sundry works’ and designates as *saga* or *ǣáttir*, the trend in scholarship since then has been increasingly to emphasise its coherence and unity as a text. Alexander B. Taylor also saw the saga as ‘a compilation of shorter Sagas or *ǣattir*’, with an even longer list of ‘sources’ than Vigfusson, but he nevertheless followed Finnur Jónsson in arguing for the unity of the saga, concluding that it was ‘made by a single worker and welded by him into a fairly coherent whole’. Finnbogi Guðmundsson followed Sigurður Nordal in preferring the singular form of the name (*Orkneyinga saga* rather than *sögur*) because ‘hún gefi í skyn, að sagan sé ein heild, svo sem hún hafir sennilega ávallt verið og sé a.m.k. í fleirri gerð, er hún hefur varð veitt í.’

Yet both Nordal and Finnbogi emphasise the uncertainty of their stemmas because of the fragmentary nature of the manuscripts, and this unified version of the saga can be rather hard to pin down. By re-focusing on the question of the unity or otherwise of the saga, and by considering the extent to which the surviving manuscripts might reflect versions rather than variants, it should be possible to get a better idea of the genesis of the text and to question when it was ‘created’. In this paper, I re-assess the development and character of *Orkneyinga saga* by focusing on the literary qualities of the individual manuscripts, in particular those which relate to its style and genre.

Trine Buhl, Århus

‘The value of narrativity in representing a realistic past’

It is generally held in saga criticism that the long prose form known to be the saga grew out of a tradition of historical writing in the twelfth century, reached its climax with the interaction of fact and fiction in the thirteenth, and then became debased as it became purely fictional during the course of the fourteenth century. After the earliest historical writings were produced, Icelandic historians are thought to have begun to write relatively condensed histories of early Norway as well as biographies of individual Norwegian kings, and a synthesis of these two approaches to historical writing are presumed to have given rise to the

composition of longer narratives about the reigns of several kings. It is usually said that this development of historical writing also led to the creation of the more fictional family sagas, that is, the composition of longer vernacular texts about the Icelandic past, and to the creation of a type of literature more objectively and realistically narrated than the former historical writings. In my paper I will address the notions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘realism’ that have conventionally been associated with the family sagas and attempt to show, why there has been a tendency to consider the narrative discourse of the historical writings of the twelfth century less as a form of fictional representation than that of the family sagas. The paper will throw light on a commonly used distinction between ‘historical discourse’ in which the subjectivity of the discourse is given by the explicit presence of a narrator, who can be defined as the person who maintains the discourse, and a ‘fictional discourse’ in which the objectivity of narrative is defined by the absence of all reference to the narrator. What will be revealed, I hope, is that the historical writings of the twelfth century have been considered less fictional and more factual than the family sagas because the modern discussion of both history and fiction presupposes a notion of reality in which ‘the true’ is identified with ‘the real’ only insofar as it can be shown to possess the character of narrativity.

Emily Lethbridge, Cambridge

‘The Treatment of Marital Relations in the Three Versions of *Gísla saga Súrssonar*’

Scholars of Old Norse saga literature have been aware of the existence of a shorter version, a longer version, and arguably a third, fragmentary version of *Gísla saga Súrssonar* for many years. The shorter version is represented principally in the medieval parchment AM556a quarto (c. 1475 or the last quarter of the fifteenth century), and in a number of later, paper copies that derive from it. The longer version is preserved in two eighteenth-century paper copies—AM 149 folio (c.1700) and NkS 1181 folio (c.1780)—which were made of a subsequently lost fourteenth-century parchment (the *Membrana Regia Deperdita*). The third, incomplete version survives only in the fragmentary fifteenth-century parchment AM 445c I quarto.

While the earliest antiquaries and scholars of the saga evidently regarded the longer version as equally deserving of critical attention as the shorter version, this was not the case for much of the twentieth century when almost invariably the longer version was dismissed as an amplified and degenerate reworking of the shorter version, and the fragment considered to be an abbreviation of the shorter version. Thus to a great extent, the focus of much previous scholarship on the saga has been concerned with attempting to reconstruct the processes by which the text of the versions preserved in the extant manuscripts might have been derived from or arisen out of a—or ‘the’—hypothetical, ‘original’ saga about Gísli Súrsson.

In my opinion, this kind of approach by its very nature is somewhat limiting, and, I think, outdated. We must rather “accept the fact that the original written version [of *Gísla saga*] is irretrievably lost” (Ólason 2002: xlv) and instead of looking backwards, consider ourselves fortunate to have access to the three extant versions of the saga. The fact that these three versions have survived must become our starting-point, and we must teach ourselves to draw on and interpret the variations between the versions in a positive, complementary way.

I am most interested analysing and comparing the three versions from a literary perspective: investigating if, how, and the extent to which the textual differences between each extant version can affect our/the audience’s understandings and interpretations of the narrative of the saga—that is, the characterisation of the saga’s protagonists, the presentation of the events that constitute the action of the saga, and the treatment of the central themes of the saga.

In this paper, I will examine the representation in each version of the marital relationships between Gísli and his wife Auñr, and Gísli’s brother Áorkell and his wife

Ásgerðr, and assess the extent to which the versions present or communicate their own, distinctive portrayal of the characters involved, and the dynamics of their relationships. One scene in particular—which begins with Áorkell overhearing Ásgerðr and Auðr gossip as they cut out shirts—provides several good examples which illustrate clearly how textual differences between the versions can sometimes nuance the portrayal of certain characters in certain respects. I will present a detailed analysis of this scene, and then set the findings into the broader context of each version’s portrayal of Gísli and Auðr’s, and Áorkell and Ásgerðr’s relationships throughout the saga.

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Thórdur Ingi Guðjónsson, Reykjavík **Editing the three versions of *Gísli saga***

I shall describe the preservation of The Saga of Gísli Súrsson. It is preserved in two fairly complete redactions, S (the longer) and M (the shorter), and a fragment of a third (B). I am at present preparing a new edition of *Gísli saga* which will contain all three versions in normalized 14th century spelling. My aim is to present to the reader texts that are reader-friendly but preserve the differences and characteristics of each version. In my paper I will discuss the reasons for this method compared with methods used in older editions of *Gísli saga*. The saga is preserved in 35 mss. Only four paper mss. contain the longer version, and only two of these have independent textual value, both 18th c. copies of a lost 14th c. vellum. The variation of these copies shall be accounted for in the printed text but no attempt is made to reconstruct this version. The shorter version is preserved in a 15th c. vellum from which most paper mss. are derived. The third version, a 14th c. fragment, has been diplomatically edited by Jón Helgason. ◊ My edition strives to give literary scholars a sound basis to study the saga in all its medieval versions.

Dr Guðrún Nordal, Reykjavík **Manuscript versions of *Njáls saga***

Dr Kate Heslop, Newcastle

‘Strategies of re[tr]ojection: reading *Grettisfærsla* back in to *Grettis saga*

The poem *Grettisfærsla* is mentioned by name, and the circumstances of its composition described, in ch. 52 of *Grettis saga* in all but one of the extant medieval manuscripts. AM 556a 4to, while it lacks this mention (thanks to a lacuna), quotes the poem in full, beginning on the last leaf of its text of *Grettis saga*. Despite this *Grettisfærsla* was lost to textual culture for some hundreds of years, scraped away by a bowdleriser who carried out his or her task with such zeal that Guðbrandur Vigfússon, whose 1861 article ‘Um Íslendingasögur’ seems to be the first scholarly mention of the poem, could read only the first seven words of it. The technique of UV photography, coupled with the immense scholarship and dedication of Ólafur Halldórsson, transformed this sad state of affairs when Ólafur’s semi-diplomatic transcription of about two thirds of the poem appeared in 1960. Perhaps the most curious aspect of its chequered career, though, is the fact that even though this text, of a poem mentioned by name in a major *Íslendingasaga* and transmitted in its main manuscript, has now been available for over forty years, no serious effort has yet been made to integrate it into interpretations of the saga. Indeed, the association of the two in the manuscripts has been viewed as a unfortunate error.

An instructive contrast to this state of affairs is offered, for example, by the long poems of Egill Skallagrímsson (in particular his *Arinbjarnarkviða*, whose manuscript relation to *Egils saga* is very similar to that of *Grettisfærsla* to *Grettis saga*). Egill’s long poems are thought to offer insights into his personality, the emplotment of *Egils saga*, ancient Germanic ritual, or even the nature of cultural development, as well as occasionally being seen as

instances of the ingenuity of late-medieval forgers. *Grettisfærsla* has not even attracted much attention under the last head. My paper therefore briefly outlines the strategies of *rejection* which have marginalised this – admittedly obscene, repetitive, and crucially, very poorly preserved – work: separation of the poem from its manuscript context; exaggeration of its status as an isolated case; late dating, with all that implies of decadence and inauthenticity; and heavy emphasis on source-criticism (Ross Arthur has made similar points about the treatment of ‘obscene’ texts in Old French). I then consider some modes of *retrojection* – or perhaps “retrolection” – by which it might be possible to read *Grettisfærsla* back not only into literary history (milieu of composition, transmission process, position in the generic system), a process valuably begun in Ólafur’s 1960 article, but also into the complex of ideas that circulated around Grettir and *Grettis saga* in medieval Iceland (see Hastrup 1986, Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2000). Can the Grettir of *Grettis saga* ch. 52, a feared and hated social outcast as well as a man of good family and impressive abilities (*margt kann Grettir vel at vinna*, as the poem says), and the ‘omnivorous erotical monster’ of *Grettisfærsla* be brought back into contact?

Professor Andrew Wawn, Leeds A.Wawn@leeds.ac.uk

‘Dusting off a saga: the case of *Áorsteins saga Víkingssonar*’

Although *Áorsteins saga Víkingssonar* has attracted relatively little critical attention over the last century and more, it was one of the earliest medieval Icelandic sagas to be published in an individual edition--that of Jacob Reenhielm in Upsala, 1680, complete with a Swedish translation. Reenhielm's annotation struggles effortfully to situate the saga within classical and old northern cultural parameters, not least in trying to make sense of the underwater fight scene, long regarded as a Beowulf analogue. Two centuries later Rasmus Andersen published a pioneering English language translation of the saga in the United States, complete with a characteristically provocative Introduction, in which the saga finds itself reconfigured as a distillation of the ancestral spirit of Andersen's Scandinavian-American mid-Western community. In my paper I hope to address three related issues: (1) aspects of the saga's reception history in Scandinavia, Iceland and America; (2) the saga's status as a baroque prequel to the neo-classical simplicity of *Friðbjófs saga*; and (3) the medieval politics of the saga. For all Reenhielm's sense that *Áorsteins saga Víkingssonar* was a tale of mainland Scandinavia, unconnected with Iceland, there may be a case for identifying a medieval Icelandic politics beneath the narrative's wondertale exterior. In particular, the saga appears to endorse upward social mobility, while testing (through contrasting images of revenge and restraint) and ultimately promoting a deference culture towards monarchy. A latent curiosity about the maturation of communities may thus underpin the saga's surface exploration of individuals' rites of passage.

Dr Matthew Driscoll, Copenhagen

‘The history of textual criticism in Old Norse’

The paper sketches the history of Old Norse-Icelandic textual criticism from the early printed editions of the 18th century through to the emergence and development of "new" or "material" philology in the last decade of the 20th century. I will address in particular how traditional editorial practices are being adapted in the light of the change in orientation material philology has brought about, and how the new digital media are making it possible to do things which early editors could scarcely have imagined possible.

Professor Jürg Glauser, Zurich Feil! Fant ikke referansekilden.

‘The late transmission and reception of sagas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’

Bergur Thorgeirsson, Reykjavík
‘The work of the creative editors of *Örvar-Odds saga*’

Dr Tarrin Wills, Copenhagen
‘Dreams in *ǣttir*’

Kumlbúa áátttr, *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, *Draumr Áórsteins Siñuhallsonar* and *Bergbúa áátttr* constitute a small corpus of short stories involving skaldic verse composed in a dream or (in the case of *Bergbúa áátttr*) a supernatural setting. The *ǣttir* are of interest to the present paper in two particular respects: the shifting focalisation related to the narrative in a dream; and the function of the verses in relation to the frame narratives. In all cases, the memorisation of the verses composed or heard in one's sleep is significant to the narrative both within the dream and in the dreamer's waking life. This paper examines the relationship between narrative, focalisation and verse composition/memorisation in the dream *ǣttir*, and the significance of these features in the editing of the verses as part of the broader corpus of skaldic poetry.

Dr Karl G. Johansson, Oslo
‘In praise of manuscript culture: texts and editions in the computer age’

In his now famous essay from 1989 the French scholar Bernard Cerquiglini presented a critical view of the history of philology. From his critical assessment of earlier methodological traditions from Lachman to Bediér he proposes a new focus for medieval philology. In the introduction to his last chapter Cerquiglini asks the question that is essential from his arguing in the preceding chapters:

The question could not be more concrete. Philology, a practical science, can be judged by its works: whatever the perspective adopted, whatever the method used, whatever the object chosen, it always comes down to manipulating pieces of writing, arranging them according to one's convictions, then making their calm, self-assured order available to readers. (Cerquiglini 1998:72)

He then goes on to argue for the importance of variance in the medieval work. He states:

Because the variance of a medieval work is its primary characteristic, the concrete otherness of discursive mobility, the figure of a pre-modern written word, editions must give it priority, following it closely. (Cerquiglini 1998:78)

Cerquiglini's essay can be seen as the start of the debate within philology where some of the traditional methods and theories of the field were questioned (see e.g. Nichols 1991; 1997). This debate must be highly relevant for anyone planning an edition of a medieval text as it demands a return to the manuscript culture and its principal artefact, the manuscript.

In 2000 Peter Robinson presented some ideas concerning electronic editing of medieval texts in connection to his work with the electronic edition of the *Canterbury Tale*. Robinson argues that an electronic edition which provides “full transcriptions and images of every witness, the best, the worst, the indifferent – all of them” is in danger of being incoherent and confusing (Robinson 2000:11). From this he concludes that there is a need for a somewhat modified best text, which should help the reader of the edition to find a way through all the variants.

In my paper I will address some of the problems of producing an edition of Old Norse saga material which have been raised by the discussion about New Philology and in recent editorial debate.

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