

## New/Material vs. 'Old' Philology in Old Norse: settling scores and resolving differences

There are two themes: principally an inquiry into whether recent descriptions of the different 'schools', especially of stemmatics, are representative, secondly a look at ways in which the 'two' approaches can work together. Only 'Arnamagnæan' editions (Danish or Icelandic in origin) are referred to, based as they are generally on the model of manuscript studies undertaken by Jón Helgason (1899-1986).

The salient stemmatic features of four major text editions are examined with a view to their terminology and application of the ominous 'common error', and to the presence or absence of subtlety in the results that emerge – how many types of 'error' are adduced, how are they described and how different are their weightings?<sup>1</sup> This is partly intended as a 'de-mystification' of the stemmatic process. There is an evaluation of what could have resulted had a non-stemmatic approach been applied to these texts – selected as they are for the investigation on account of their complex and extensive transmissions. I comment on recent questioning of the value of stemmatics.

Apropos a standard criticism which is levelled at the 'old school' a survey is presented of the Arnamagnæan editions that give full sociological accounts of the entire transmission and of the extent to which this information works hand-in-hand with the stemmatic history,<sup>2</sup> and it is asked why the findings of facsimile editions are often ignored.

This paper argues that criticisms of older text philology fail to take into account general methodological developments in the humanities. Jón Helgason's school seeks with its editions to serve many masters including, significantly, literary commentators and literary historians who often work within a diachronic perspective. This Helgasonian model emerged in a period before reception theory came into being. But having become acquainted with reception studies we should also hold on to them, since the pendulum is now perhaps swinging back. Recent promotions of new philology, especially two recent ph.d. theses in Copenhagen (Lansing 2011, Hufnagel 2012) make innovative advances in the application of 'quantitative codicology', but their potential rejection of addressing a stemma, which occasionally informs about who copied from whom, risks leaving other scholars, especially the historian of reception, unnecessarily stranded. This is discussed in some detail.

Different editorial approaches can be mixed to produce results which satisfy varying needs. In Old Norse studies it is probably nonetheless unfortunate to wholly equate

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1 Jón Helgason's stemmatics in *Den store saga om Olav den Hellige* (Oslo, 1930-1941) — admittedly 'pre-Arnemagnæan', but nonetheless the nestor's seminal work; *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson (I-III, København, 1961-2000); *Eiríks saga víðförla*, ed. Helle Jensen (København, 1983); *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar : Bind III C-Redaktionen*, ed. Michael Chesnutt (København, 2006).

2 Significant here are the manuscript studies of *Harðar saga* and *Hrólf's saga kraka* (Sture Hast 1960 and Desmond Slay 1960, respectively), and the introduction to *Eiríks saga víðförla* (Helle Jensen 1983).

new philology with material/artefactual philology. The historian Már Jónsson pioneered the quantitative approach in an article in 2001 about Old Norse *mise en page*. This type of study is important, not least because it relates Scandinavian to central European book making, yet there is hardly an immediate need to incorporate this area of codicology in an edition. The debate between old and new philology was charged by the changing needs of informed readers, and it is the nature of a resulting openly-available edition that is still the text-philologist's major concern. Studies such as the physical measurements of text blocks and the density of scribal abbreviating can thus suitably be published in a comparative context of book history for subsequent referral.

A certain hesitancy is expressed as to how a 'material-philological' text edition is to be realised (e.g. Hüpfner 2012 50) and this poses the question of how 'material' it needs to be. Driscoll (2010 102) has pointed out that an example of a printed edition which seems to meet the demands of "new" philology has in fact appeared: *Úlfhams saga* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2001) edited by Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir. This balances old and new, giving full stemmatics and textual assessments alongside detailed material descriptions of all of the manuscripts and of the social status of the individuals involved in their production, and yet, but understandably, it omits the quantitative codicological aspects. Significantly the edition includes a text which barely sheds any light on an original version of the saga – exactly so as to portray an important development within the tradition.

After comments on misconceptions that 'old philologists' perhaps harbour about the 'new guard', the future role of electronic editing in promoting text philology is presented more optimistically than hitherto. As hinted at above, admirable overall results will be achieved where de-mystified stemmatics and the social history of the text and its reception are allowed to go hand-in-hand, thus a more comfortable role and division of labour for the computer will also soon emerge.

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editing experience:

*Beyers saga* (with the text of the Anglo-Norman Boeve de Haumtone) (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2001)

*Tales of Knights : Perg. fol. nr 7 in the Royal Library, Stockholm* Manuscripta Nordica 1 [facsimile] (Copenhagen, 2000)

*La Saga di San Nicola da Tolentino*, ed. Sanders et al. (Tolentino: Bibliotheca Egidiana, 2004)

*Agulandus þáttr* (Karlsmagnúss saga, version A: electronic edition with an Anglo-Norman parallel text ed. by Póvil Skårup, to be presented at the 15th International Saga Conference, Århus 2012)