The volume is the third stage of a wider project of commentary and translation of Snorri Sturlson's *Heimskringla*, the best known of the old Norse king's sagas. Francesco Sangriso, its curator, delves here into the *Haralds saga gráfeldar,* which is a sort of stand-alone in the general structure of the *Heimskringla,* because it is not focused on a single character, but rather on several historical figures, whose role will expand in the ensuing Olaf Tryggvason's saga. The importance of this book actually spans well beyond the Norse boundaries and embraces the whole Baltic region, as Sangriso correctly points out.

The Italian translation is based on Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's 2002 edition and embedded in a much larger framework of three chapters and three appendixes. The first chapter is basically a very long foreword to the translation, where the author investigates all those aspects of the *Haralds saga gráfeldar* that mark a difference from the former books. Harald is not a lone actor and his tales are blended with those of his brothers and especially of his mother Gunnhildr, who behaves like a sort of secret "spin doctor" behind the screen of her sons. Snorri's vision of Harald's deeds (or misdeeds, when his rapacity overshadows some of his virtues), according to Sangriso, is somehow biased. There's a sort of bleak aura around Harald that Snorri highlights in various details, such as the grey colour of the king's fur cloak and the emphasis on the ill effects of bad ruling, leading to a climax of dearth and famine. In this first chapter Sangriso mixes in equal parts a historical and a philological approach, the latter being especially obvious in the sections devoted to its poetic inserts, whose structure and function is thoroughly detailed and explained.

The second chapter is the pivot of the whole book and contains the translation itself. As in the first chapter, a rich critical apparatus of footnotes is a testament to the curator's philological struggle. A special praise should go to the fluency of the translation, that makes the reading quite pleasant and rewarding, with some echoes of its original epic.

The third chapter is about poetry in the *Haralds saga gráfeldar*. Honestly, it looks like the curator's philological background is taking here the upper hand. The poetic text is thoroughly analyzed word by word, in a way that will be impervious to common readers. Even though I have some historical background, I couldn't actually cope with the technical level of these pages, which left me baffled and overwhelmed. However, the extent of the research is once more praiseworthy, but a warning tag should be put on this chapter: "for

philologists only: no trespassing".

The framework of this edition is finally completed by its three appendixes. In the first one, "Il re vittorioso" (The Victorious King), Sangriso focus on a couple of historical figures quoted in the eleventh chapter of the saga: the Swedish king Eirikr *inn sigrsæli* and his wife Sigriðr. The foreword to the transaltion of the *þáttr Styrbjarnar Sviakappa* is actually one of the few sections of the book where a welcome historical hand takes over philology. The second appendix is mostly devoted to the translation of another text whose significance can shed more light on chapter fourteen of the *Haralds saga gráfeldar:* the *þáttr frá Sigurði konungi slefu* (Tales of the King Sigurði Slefa). This is particularly relevant since the two sources yield different perspectives of the same facts. The third and last appendix is about poetry in the *þáttr Styrbjarnar Sviakappa* and the *þáttr frá Sigurði konungi slefu.* Once more, the approach becomes very technical and addressed to a limited audience of philologists.

This work quite obviously shows a very high degree of scholarship. When you come across Sangriso's analytical approach and overlong footnotes, you can feel confident that almost every facet of the subject has been thoroughly analyzed and his magnifying glass picked even the tiniest detail. However, this is a strong point and weakness at the same time. Snorri's text spans over 40 pages only out of about 260 and any casual reader, allured by the saga, will find it, to his utter surprise, confined to a relatively narrow space. The first time I opened the book, I was almost unable to locate this pivotal section. Thus, calling this volume an "Italian edition" of the *Heimskringla* is quite misleading. We should rather see it as Sangriso's effort to conjure up a comprehensive essay about the saga itself. Actually, all the excerpts on poetry go well beyond the ability (and perhaps interest) of any common reader. They are written for a small community of scholars, who could appreciate and understand them as they deserve. No space is reserved to simple biographies (Appendix I being a notable exception) or to any historical overview of the period that would have helped greatly any neophyte. There are no maps nor genealogical trees to guide the "non-specialist reader" in this endeavour. A simple short historical foreword to the first chapter is sorely missing, but this book mostly looks like (and probably is) a philological essay made to titillate the palate of the specialist, rather than any common reader. That said, this edition will probably set a milestone in the study of Snorri's *Heimskringla* and it is highly recommended to all those with a good background in Norse philology. Other readers will

enjoy the fluency of the translation and the flavour of Old-Norse epic that sometimes gleams through the lines of Snorri's text.

- The fourth volume of the book series is also available as of May 2017: https://www.ediorso.it/snorri-sturluson-heimskringla-le-saghe-dei-re-di-norvegia-iv.html/

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