

Old Norse in Italy: From Francesco Saverio Quadrio to *Fóstbræðra saga*

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ABSTRACT: Old Norse texts and literary motifs have been circulating in Italian literature since an early period of its history. Already in the second half of the eighteenth century, we find evidence of the interest of some Italian intellectual circles in the cultural tradition of ancient Scandinavia. The aim of this article is to show how and why Italian culture “imported” Old Norse texts during the last two centuries, especially how the mandates of different projects determined which texts to translate, how to translate them, and how to present them to an Italian readership. In keeping with the theme of this special volume, particular attention is paid to the case of *Fóstbræðra saga* and the context of its appearance in Italian translation, including associated references to the twentieth-century rewriting of this saga by the Icelandic writer Halldór Kiljan Laxness.

RÉSUMÉ: Les textes et motifs littéraires en vieux nordique circulent dans la littérature italienne depuis le début de son histoire. Déjà dans la seconde moitié du dix-huitième siècle, nous trouvons des preuves de l'intérêt de certains cercles intellectuels italiens pour la tradition culturelle de la Scandinavie antique. Le but de cet article est de montrer comment et pourquoi la culture italienne a « importé » des textes en vieux nordique au cours des deux derniers siècles, en particulier comment les mandats de différents projets ont déterminé quels textes traduire, comment les traduire et comment les présenter à un lectorat italien. Conformément au thème de ce volume spécial, une attention particulière est accordée au cas de *La saga Fóstbræðra* et au contexte de son apparition dans la traduction italienne, y compris des références associées à la réécriture de cette saga par l'écrivain islandais Halldór Kiljan Laxness.

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A Brief Introduction

The history of the reception of Old Norse literature and culture in Italy presents specific features that make it very different from, for example, the developments in Germany or in the English-speaking world. As a matter of fact, until recent times the Italian cultural milieu has conceived of itself as rooted in the Classical tradition and, more specifically, as a direct heir to the Latin culture. Consequently, in Italy there has hardly been any attempt at appropriating the Old Norse heritage as an identity factor. Nonetheless, despite the “exotic alienness” of the Old Norse culture—or perhaps thanks to it—medieval Norse texts or literary motifs have been circulating in Italian literature since an early period of its history. Even if we do not take into account free rewrites of Latin sources, such as Torquato Tasso’s tragedy *Re Torrismondo* (1587) [King Turismod] and Orazio Ariosto’s epic *Alfeo*, which both drew their figures and plots from Johannes and Olaus Magnus’ *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555) [A Description of the Northern Peoples],¹ we find already in the second half of the eighteenth and at the very beginning of the nineteenth century some remarkable evidence of the interest of at least some Italian intellectual circles in the cultural tradition of ancient Scandinavia. Since then, different factors have influenced the activities of translating, studying, and rewriting Old Norse texts in Italy, due to both the development of the Italian literary system, and the different agendas—cultural, political, religious—of the individual and institutional actors involved.

The aim of this article is to show how and why Italian culture “imported” Old Norse texts during the last two centuries. It is particularly concerned with how different—and sometimes opposite—projects determined which texts to translate, how to translate them, and how to present them to an Italian readership. Due to the heterogeneity of such projects, it will prove impossible to bring back all such operations to one and the same field of interest. The decision to translate one or more Norse texts has sometimes been made according to an academic, scientific project; other times in order to promote specific ethical values, such as heroism, individualism, or bravery and the disregard of death (and in such cases the decision to translate a Norse text is very often connected to political biases). Finally, in more recent times, both the increased interest in fantasy literature and the spread of new religious cults such as Odinism and Wotanism have contributed to enhancing the diffusion of Old Norse topics in Italian popular culture. As this article has been submitted to a special journal issue concerned with *Fóstbræðra saga* and its rewrite by Halldór Kiljan Laxness, more space will be dedicated to the Italian translation of this saga. This very translation, moreover,

serves as an interesting example of how specific political biases can influence the translation and the diffusion of an Old Norse saga in Italian contemporary culture.

From Pre-Romanticism to WWII: The Predominance of Eddic Translations

The first signs that the Italian cultural elites were interested in the old literature of Scandinavia date back to the second half of the eighteenth century. That Italian scholars already in this period took interest in the literary traditions of Scandinavia is demonstrated by a strange poem published by Francesco Saverio Quadrio in 1751. Entitled “Versi in lingua runica” [Verses in the runic language], it may only be a joke, a muddle of words deprived of any meaning; yet as Andrea Meregalli points out, “it is quite easy to recognise single words, inflected forms, and expressions of the Old Norse language” (58). Quadrio had certainly some acquaintance with the works on Old Norse literature published abroad, as is revealed by his *Indice universale della storia, e ragione d’ogni poesia* (1752) [Universal index of the history and reason of all poetry], where he concisely refers to Snorri Sturluson as well as to antiquarians and scholars in the field, such as Thomas Bartholin, Johann Georg Keißler, Olof Rudbeck, Henry Spelman, and Ole Worm (Meregalli 60).

Some decades later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, an important role in spreading information about the international debate on the history and culture of ancient Scandinavia was played by a Swedish immigrant, Jakob Gråberg. Gråberg was a man of many interests, and his most important scientific contributions are within the fields of Statistics and Geography. Besides his many scientific essays he published a little book about Old Norse poetry in 1811: *Saggio storico sugli scaldi o antichi poeti scandinavi* [Historical essay about the skalds, or the ancient Scandinavian poets]. In this book, Gråberg presents and translates some eddic and skaldic verses and poems—mainly from the French translations by Pier Henri Mallet, from the Latin by Johan Isaakszon Pontanus and by Thomas Bartholin, and from the Swedish by Eric Julius Biörner. Moreover, he also quotes from previously unpublished translations by other Italian poets, such as the Somascan Father Bernardo Laviosa and the renowned librettist Felice Romani.² Gråberg’s book thus attests to a certain knowledge of Old Norse literature within Italian intellectual circles at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Following in Gråberg’s footsteps, the abbot Francesco Venini included translations of four Old Norse poems in his anthology of world poetry *Saggi della poesia lirica antica e moderna* [Essays of ancient and modern lyric poetry], published in Milan in 1818. In the third part of the anthology, *Poesia lirica de’ Caledonj e degli Scandinavi* [Lyric poetry of the Scots and of the Scandinavians], Venini republished some stanzas attributed to King Haraldr Harðráði and already printed in Gråberg’s *Saggio storico*. Moreover, he published translations of Asbjörn’s death-song from

Orms þáttur Stórolfssonar [The Tale of Orm Stórolfsson]; *Krákumál* [The Lay of Kraka], and Eyvindr Skáldaspillir's *Hákonsdrápa* [Hákon's Poem].³ All three new translations were done on the basis of the Latin translations of Thomas Bartholin, as Francesco Venini himself explains in the comments that precede each of them. Thus it seems that the Italian intellectuals during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century were exclusively interested in the poetic genres of Old Norse literature, and widely ignored prose literature. The important exception was the texts that were regarded as historical sources: Snorri's tale about the migration of the ancient *Æsir*, for example, or the sagas about the origins of the Scandinavian peoples. It should be noted, however, that such texts did not belong, according to the Italian cultural circles of that period, to "literature proper" but rather to historiography. Yet the sagas were considered untrustworthy as historical sources, since legends and myths played too great a role in them. In the words of the historian Virginio Soncini, who in 1825 published a *Storia della Scandinavia ossia Svezia, Danimarca e Norvegia* [History of Scandinavia, that is Sweden, Denmark, and Norway]:

Niente altro che cose incerte ed oscure ci presenta la parte antica di quest'istoria, la quale è sì intrecciata colle favole, che più veramente potrebbe dirsi mitologia. So che la favola è la culla di tutte le istorie, e che ogni popolo ha collocato i suoi fondatori tra gli Dei, o almeno tra i Semidei, e vestita la propria origine di favoloso splendore; ma le altre nazioni hanno relegati quei prodigi fanciulleschi ne' più remoti secoli, gli hanno ristretti in brevi cenni, sì che lo storico non v'impiega che poche pagine: laddove nell'istoria degli Scandinavi noi troviamo dappertutto le favole a piene mani e i portentosi; e insomma l'infanzia di quella nazione durò tanto, che fin nel mille e dugento dell'Era nostra vediamo collocati i racconti fanciulleschi delle Valchirie e delle altre deità appartenenti alla mitologia scandinava.
(8)

[The ancient part of this history shows nothing but uncertain and murky things: it is so much intertwined with fairy stories that we should more properly define it as mythology. I know that fairy tales are the cradle of history, and that every nation has put its founders among the gods, or at least among the demigods, and has enveloped its own origins in fabulous magnificence. The other nations, however, have confined those childish marvels into their very first centuries and have limited themselves to some short mentions, so that the historian needs only to write a few pages about that. In the history of the Scandinavians, on the contrary, we find everywhere a profusion of fairy tales and marvels. In conclusion, the childhood of that nation lasted so long that still in the thirteenth century of our era we find the childish tales about Valkyries and other deities of Scandinavian mythology.]⁴

The relative lack of interest that the Italian scholars had in Old Norse prose literature may be explained by the particular Italian literary system of the time. Before the extraordinary success of Alessandro Manzoni's historical novel *I*

promessi sposi (1840-42) [The betrothed], which rapidly rose to the status of a modern classic of Italian literature, prose works occupied a relatively marginal position in the literary system, at whose centre stood poetry and dramatic literature. Indirect evidence of this marginalization of prose genres is also provided by Melchiorre Cesarotti's translation of James MacPherson's *Poems of Ossian* (1772). As a matter of fact, whilst Macpherson's pretended translations from Gaelic Scottish are written in an archaizing, biblical prose, Cesarotti transposes them into blank hendecasyllables.⁵ Even such a radical restructuring of the Italian literary system⁶ as was produced by the breakthrough of the novel (and in particular of the "historical novel" genre) around the middle of the nineteenth century did not, however, seem to affect the attitude of the Italian translators of Old Norse texts, and Icelandic sagas continued to be neglected also in the second half of the nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth century. A survey of the Italian translations of Old Norse literature from the beginning of the nineteenth century to 1997 (Radici) shows that only one saga was completely translated into Italian before World War II: the *Völsunga saga* was translated into Italian for the first time in 1927 under the title *La saga dei Volsunghi e dei Nibelunghi* [The saga of the Volsungs and the Nibelungs]. The addition of the reference to the Nibelungs clearly reveals the reason for this choice: the huge popularity of the Wagnerian version of the legend had aroused an interest in all its sources, Norse as well as German.

After Venini and Soncini's works and up until 1917, only eddic poems and short excerpts from the *Völsunga saga* were translated into Italian. The interest in skaldic poetry seems to have completely vanished after the first decades of the nineteenth century. This should probably be understood as a consequence of the dominant interest of the Romantics in what they considered as genuine "popular" poetry, a concept which hardly was applicable to the refined and complicated art of the skalds. In the period from 1874 to 1911, we find two different, partial translations of *Hávamál* (1874, 1911), three versions of the *Völuspá* (1887, 1906, 1908), and some other eddic poems: *Atlakviða* (1876, 1883), *Sigurðarkviða* (1883), *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* (1903), and *Þrymskviða* (1906).⁷ A broader interest in all genres of Old Norse literature is manifest only in Guido Fornelli's book *L'Islanda antica* (1917) [Ancient Iceland], in which the author collects translations of Egill Skallagrímsson's *Höfuðlausn* [Head's Ransom] and *Sonatorrek* [Loss of Sons], of some stanzas of *Hávamál*, and of excerpts from *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* [The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason]. The period between the wars does not see a growth of interest in Old Norse literature. On the contrary, in the years 1918-1945 we find—besides the translation of the *Völsunga saga* cited above—only a translation of *Völuspá* published in Guido Manacorda's book *La selva e il tempio* (1933) [The forest and the temple] and some translations of eddic and skaldic poetry contained in a survey of world literature, edited by Ugo Dèttore (Radici 16-17).

From the Fifties to the Eighties: The Philological Turn

The first decades after WWII did not witness a radical change in the interest that Italian intellectuals had in Old Norse literature. Up to the beginning of the Sixties there were no translations of an entire saga, but several translations of eddic and skaldic poetry and excerpts from different sagas and from *Snorra Edda* (1220), The “Prose Edda” attributed to Snorri Sturluson, were published. What does change is the type of intellectuals involved in the translations and in the debate on Old Norse literature more generally. Previously, the Italian translators used as source texts translations from Old Norse into other languages: Latin or French at first, then also German. These translators were often men of wide erudition, sometimes writers, but always amateurs. In the period between the end of WWII and the beginning of the Sixties, the studies of Old Norse literature and culture were taken over by university professors who could read the original texts and were aware of the international scientific discussion (Tagliavini 183–216). The first philologically reliable translation of all eddic poems—including the so-called *Eddica minora*—was thus published in 1951 by the linguist Carlo Alberto Mastrelli, and in 1962 the Professor of Scandinavian Literatures Mario Gabrieli published an anthology of skaldic poetry with parallel original texts.

The figures of Mario Gabrieli and of the Germanic philologist Marco Scovazzi dominated the field of Old Norse studies in Italy during the Sixties and the Seventies. A rather strange phenomenon in this sphere is that the Italian scholars passionately participated in the international discussion on the origins of the Icelandic sagas before any Icelandic saga—with the exception of *Völsunga saga*, as we have seen—was available in an Italian translation. Scovazzi, in fact, published his book *La saga di Hrafnkell e il problema delle saghe islandesi* [Hrafnkell’s saga and the question of Icelandic sagas] in 1960, three years before the first edition of his translation of a collection of sagas and long before a translation of *Hrafnkels saga* was published in Italian (which happened only in 1997). Since the book was written in Italian, it did not have a wide international circulation, and the Italian readership was limited to scholars and students. Notwithstanding this, the book is particularly interesting as it clarifies Scovazzi’s interpretation of the sagas as cultural products, an interpretation that deeply influenced his later presentation of his collection of translated sagas. First of all, according to Scovazzi, the original Germanic tradition had been preserved more or less intact in Scandinavia until the days of King Harald Fairhair. Secondly, Iceland was colonized by refugees who did not accept the innovations of the new king and who restored the ancient political and legal institutions in the new fatherland. Speaking of *Hrafnkels saga*, Scovazzi writes:

nel fondo del suo spirito, l’autore, o rielaboratore, non si è staccato dalla tradizione, se per tradizione intendiamo il rispetto di tutto un mondo spirituale, che gli *Islandesi*

avevano difeso tenacemente, che avevano salvato dalle insidie della tirannide e che avevano voluto ricostruire intatto nella nuova patria ricercata e trovata dopo un'avventurosa migrazione. I caratteri, i contrasti fra gli animi dei vari personaggi, la loro ansia di primeggiare, la lotta fra l'individuo e la collettività, sono tutti elementi che dobbiamo far risalire alla più arcaica manifestazione dello spirito germanico.

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[Deep in his spirit, the author, or rewriter, did not move away from tradition, if we understand tradition as respect for a whole spiritual world that the Icelanders had tenaciously defended and saved from the snares of tyranny and that they wanted to reconstruct intact in the new fatherland they had looked for and found after an audacious migration. The personalities, the conflicts between the characters' souls, their anxiety to excel, the struggle between the individual and the community: we have to derive all these elements from the most archaic manifestation of the Germanic spirit.]

On this ideological basis, it is fully understandable that Scovazzi was a passionate opponent of the so-called *Buchprosathorie* and that Sigurður Nordal and Walter Bätke were his main targets.⁸ What is more relevant to our discussion, however, is that Scovazzi's interpretation of the sagas as faithful testimonies to the most archaic Germanic culture is clearly expressed in the para-text surrounding his translation of four Icelandic sagas: *Eyrbyggja saga* [The Saga of the People of Eyri], *Eiríks saga rauða* [The Saga of Eric the Red], *Vatnsdæla saga* [The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal], and *Hallfreds saga* [The Saga of Hallfred]. This collection was first published in 1964 by Multa Paucis, a minor publishing house based in Varese, and then reprinted in 1973 by the publisher Giulio Einaudi in the very prestigious series *I Millenni*. The series started in 1947 with the publication of Ernest Hemingway's tales, and since then it has published modern as well as ancient and medieval classics of world literature.⁹ The publication of Scovazzi's translation in the series thus implies the acceptance of sagas within the Italian literary canon. It is all the more significant, then, that Scovazzi, in his introduction to the book, presents the sagas not so much as literary works, but as testimonies to the historical period they describe:

Le saghe islandesi non possono essere valutate esclusivamente quali fenomeni letterari; costituiscono anche una testimonianza cospicua della fase storica, che contraddistinse la società nordica medievale.

(VII)

[The Icelandic sagas cannot be exclusively considered as literary phenomena; they are also a remarkable testimony to the historical period the medieval Norse society went through.]

These words not only open Scovazzi's introduction, but they are also printed on the book-jacket and are thus the first hints the reader gets about the contents of the volume. Moreover, as in his book on *Hrafnkels saga*, Scovazzi reaffirms the unbroken continuity from archaic Germanic society to Icelandic medieval culture. He explains that Icelanders consciously preserved this legacy:

Essi intesero salvare ... quel patrimonio ideale arcaico, che manteneva ancora, pressoché inalterati, i valori più schietti, di cui si era alimentata la società nordica e germanica, trasferendolo – per quanto possibile – in una sede nuova e destinandolo a una nuova vita. Le saghe islandesi non sono che la testimonianza e il ricordo, fedeli e appassionati, di questa trasmigrazione, materiale e spirituale, dalla Norvegia all'Islanda, e del rinascere, dopo l'avventuroso trapianto, di un mondo arcaico che non voleva perire.

(VIII)

[They wanted to salvage ... that ideal archaic heritage that still preserved, almost intact, the most genuine values that had nourished the Norse and the Germanic society; they wanted to transfer it – as far as possible – into a new land and to revitalize it. The Icelandic sagas are nothing but the faithful and passionate testimony to and memory of this material and spiritual migration from Norway to Iceland, and of the rebirth, after the adventurous transplantation, of an archaic world that refused to die.]

Much more cautious and up to date with the international developments in the field is the other Italian grand old man of Scandinavian studies of this period: Mario Gabrieli. In his handbook *Le letterature della Scandinavia* [The literatures of Scandinavia], published in 1969, Gabrieli takes an intermediate position between Freiprosatheorie and Buchprosatheorie.¹⁰ Indeed, he recognizes the role played by oral tradition in creating the corpus of sagas, but he also acknowledges the contribution of the different saga writers, and he underlines how Old Norse literature developed from the encounter of local oral traditions with an international, Latin, and Christian culture.¹¹ In spite of Gabrieli's balanced contribution to the discussion, however, Scovazzi's opinions continued to be very influential in the Italian field of Old Norse studies. In the introduction to her new translations of *Eiríks saga rauða* [The Saga of Eric the Red] and *Grœnlendinga saga* [The Saga of the Greenlanders] in 1995, Rita Caprini advances pretty much the same theses expressed by Scovazzi thirty-five years before (*La saga di Eirik il rosso*, 9, 20).

The remarkable increase in the number of courses in Germanic Philology in Italian universities during the Seventies and the Eighties meant not only a clear upward trend in the number of publications on Old Germanic texts and cultures, but also a growth in the number of translations from Old Norse into Italian. Hence, in 1977, another major publishing house, Rusconi, published the volume edited

by Gianna Chiesa Isnardi *Storie e leggende del Nord* [Stories and legends of the north] containing the translations of *Ynglinga saga* and *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*.¹²

In 1982 Alessandro Mari Catani edited a book that was a collection of excerpts from sagas. The title of the book is *I vichinghi di Jomsborg e altre saghe del Nord* [The Jomsvikings and other sagas from the North], and it contains chapters from *Jómsvikinga saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Njáls saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*.¹³ This volume was published by a major publishing house, Sansoni, and thus had a relatively wide circulation. A different case in point is Vittoria Grazi's translation of *Grettis saga* (1983),¹⁴ which was published by an academic institution, the Istituto Universitario Orientale of Naples. The length of the introduction, 100 pages, suggests that the intended readership was scholars. In it, Vittoria Grazi discusses the sources of the saga, its textual tradition and structure, the history of the research, and the different critical approaches. Moreover, quotations by foreign scholars are never translated, even though they may be in languages, such as Icelandic and Norwegian, that very few Italian readers were presumably able to understand. The book in general conveys a different opinion of sagas than Scovazzi's collection. In the prefatory remarks by the editorial board of the series in which the saga is published, what is pointed out is the "profonda, e spesso raffinata, consapevolezza d'autore" [the deep and often sophisticated authorial awareness] that distinguishes the saga, and more generally the "qualità strettamente letteraria delle saghe famose" [the strictly literary quality of the famous sagas] (7). Vittoria Grazi acknowledges her debt to Marco Scovazzi (10), but she also emphasizes the "innegabile letterarietà" [undeniable literary character] of Icelandic sagas (22).

Vittoria Grazi's translation highlights an issue of paramount importance concerning the reception of Old Norse literature in Italy. In spite of the fascinating plot of the saga and the accurate translation, in fact, the book had almost no circulation at all due to its academic character and to the irrelevant presence of its publisher in the Italian editorial market. The same problem cropped up over and over again in the following years: the circulation of translated sagas, in fact, was largely determined by the ability of the publishing houses to distribute them. It was only the success of online booksellers during the Nineties that considerably changed the terms of the question. Before the end of the Eighties, yet another Icelandic saga was translated into Italian: in 1985 Jaca Book published *La saga di Gísli figlio di Súrr*, a translation of *Gísla saga Súrsonar* by Gianna Chiesa Isnardi.¹⁵ Jaca Book is a medium-sized publishing house, whose fields of interest range from theology, anthropology, and literature, to economics and politics. For such a company it is much easier to let its own books circulate than for an academic publishing house; thus Gianna Chiesa's translation was able to reach a broader readership than Vittoria Grazi's.

Between 1975 and 1990 several important Old Norse texts other than the sagas mentioned above were published. In 1975, two different (partial) translations

of the *Snorra Edda* appeared in Italian: one by Gianna Chiesa Isnardi and one by Giorgio Dolfini. As in the case of *Storie e leggende del Nord*, Chiesa Isnardi's translation was published by Rusconi, whilst Dolfini's translation was published by Adelphi, one of the leading Italian publishers. In 1982, another leading Italian publishing house, Garzanti, published a new and less academic translation of the eddic poems in a volume edited by Piergiuseppe Scardigli and Marcello Meli. A new choice of skaldic poetry was translated and edited by Ludovica Koch and published by Einaudi in 1984. What may appear more surprising is that learned texts, such as the *Leiðarvísir*, the First Grammatical Treatise, and a selection from the Icelandic *Physiologus*, were also published in Italian translation in 1967, 1975, and 1985-1986.¹⁶ Almost all translators and editors mentioned here were (or would later become) university professors.

The Explosion of the Nineties: Scholarly Translations, Pop Culture, and Heathenism

Due to the consolidation of Old Norse studies at Italian universities and to the consequent increasing number of potential translators from Old Norse into Italian, we have witnessed an explosion of translations of Icelandic sagas since the beginning of the Nineties. It is impossible of course to analyze and discuss each of these translations here, and thus I will limit myself to making a list of the translated sagas and to pointing out how different editorial strategies have contributed to the spread of saga literature within the Italian cultural context. The list is chronologically organized and does not take into account the subsequent reprints of the same translation.¹⁷ The names of the translators are provided in parentheses:

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|------|---|
| 1990 | <i>Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks</i> (Marcello Meli) |
| 1993 | <i>Völsunga saga</i> (Marcello Meli)
<i>Ragnars saga loðbrókar</i> (Marcello Meli) |
| 1994 | <i>Qrvar Odds saga</i> (Fulvio Ferrari)
<i>Völsunga saga</i> (Annalisa Febbraro, Ludovica Koch) |
| 1995 | <i>Laxdæla saga</i> (Guðrún Sigurðardóttir)
<i>Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana</i> (Fulvio Ferrari)
<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i> (Rita Caprini) |
| 1996 | <i>Nornagests þáttr</i> (Adele Cipolla) |
| 1997 | <i>Hrafnkels saga</i> (Maria Cristina Lombardi)
<i>Okneyinga saga</i> (Marcello Meli)
<i>Egils saga Skallagrímssonar</i> (Marcello Meli)
<i>Njáls saga</i> (Marcello Meli) |

- 1999 *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* (Gianna Chiesa Isnardi)
- 2001 *Parcevals saga / Valvers þáttur* (Massimo Panza)
- 2004 *Reykjahólabók: Frá Sancto Nicholao* (Simonetta Battista)
Gautreks saga (Massimiliano Bampi)
Bjarnar saga hítðælakappa (Marusca Francini)
- 2008 *Kristni saga* (Agata Ermelinda Gangemi)
- 2009 *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* (Giovanni Fort)
- 2010 *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* (Lorenzo Lozzi Gallo)
- 2011 *Íslendingabók* (Agata Ermelinda Gangemi)
- 2012 *Fóstbræðra saga* (Antonio Costanzo)
- 2013 *Heimskringla: Halfðanar saga svarta, Haralds saga ins Hárfagra*
 (Francesco Sangriso)
- 2014 *Heimskringla: Hákonar saga góða* (Francesco Sangriso)
- 2015 *Heimskringla: Haralds saga gráfeldar* (Francesco Sangriso)
Laxdæla saga (Silvia Cosimini)
Friðþjófs saga ins frækna (Maria Cristina Lombardi)
- 2016 *Ynglinga saga* (Vidofnir 14)
Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans (Vidofnir 14)
- 2017 *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (Gabriele Giorgi)
Völsunga saga (Serena Fiandro)
Völsunga saga (Vidofnir 14)
Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks (Vidofnir 14)
Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka (Carla Cucina)

As one can observe from this list, two of the translators who were already active in the previous decades (Gianna Chiesa Isnardi and, above all, Marcello Meli) still play a pivotal role in the scene of Italian translations from Old Norse. It is also interesting to note that the majority of the translators who entered the scene after 1990 belong to the academic world: Massimiliano Bampi, Adele Cipolla, Fulvio Ferrari, Marusca Francini, and Lorenzo Lozzi Gallo, are all professors of Germanic Philology; Maria Cristina Lombardi is professor of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures, whilst Rita Caprini is a professor of Linguistics. Giovanni Fort and Francesco Sangriso, though not employed in academic positions, have each earned a PhD in Germanic Philology; whilst Simonetta Battista regularly works at the Arnemagnæanske Kommission in Copenhagen. The academic training of nearly all the translators explains why the translations are preceded or followed

by introductions, afterwords, critical essays, and bibliographies, which, in general, show awareness of international research and discussion.

It is also manifest that the Italian interest in Icelandic sagas has greatly expanded during this period and, besides Family sagas, several other subgenres of saga literature are represented in the list of translations. Many Legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) have been translated for the first time or retranslated (e.g. *Völsunga saga*), but we also find the translation of a chivalric saga, of an hagiographic saga, and a partial translation of the *Heimskringla*.¹⁸ Not all of these sagas, of course, have had a wide circulation. In this regard, the size and profile of the publishing houses have been decisive: an editorial giant like Mondadori (*Njáls saga*, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, *Orkneyinga saga*) is obviously able to ensure a wide circulation in the bookshops. Yet even small but specialized publishers can be successful in reaching interested readers: *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, *Ǫrvar Odds saga*, *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, *Hrafnkels saga*, *Gautreks saga*, and *Laxdæla saga* (in Silvia Cosimini's translation) have been published by Iperborea, a relatively small publishing house founded in 1987 and specializing in Northern European literatures, which can count on a faithful readership of enthusiasts of Scandinavian literatures.¹⁹ *Völsunga saga* (in Annalisa Febbraro and Ludovica Koch's translation), *Eiríks saga rauða* (in Rita Caprini's translation), and *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* (in Giovanni Fort's translation) were published instead in the "Biblioteca medievale" series, which addresses a readership of students and scholars interested in the different literary traditions of the Middle Ages.²⁰ It is interesting to note that Marcello Meli's translations of *Völsunga saga* and *Hervarar saga* were first published by academic publishers but were both reprinted by Mondadori in 1997, together with *Njáls saga*, *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, and *Okneyinga saga*, in a two-volume edition under the title *Antiche saghe nordiche* [Old Norse sagas].

Though most translations have been made by scholars in the field, in the last few years a new phenomenon also seems to have emerged: the popularity of Old Norse literature and mythology in popular culture. The increasing interest of the Italian readership in fantasy literature—which more often than not makes use of mythological and heroic motifs—and the growth of interest in Northern heathenism have caused some amateurs (Serena Fiandro, Vidofnir 14) with no specific professional training to publish translations that can easily circulate thanks to the existence of online bookstores. The wotanist known under the pseudonym Vidofnir 14, for example, has so far published four sagas.²¹

The *Fóstbræðra saga* in Italy: Translation and Political Appropriation

As already mentioned, part of the *Fóstbræðra saga* was translated by Alessandro Mari Catani in his anthology *I vichinghi di Jomsborg e altre saghe del Nord*, published in 1982. The book opens with a rather long introduction (5–51) that

clearly addresses a readership of non-experts. In the introduction, Mari Catani concisely summarizes the history of Iceland and of its literature, discusses the main stylistic traits of the sagas, and comments on the presence of supernatural phenomena in saga narratives. As for the debate concerning the literariness of saga literature, he clearly takes sides with Sigurður Nordal against the Freiprosatheorie (21). In other aspects, however, Mari Catani proves to be more conservative: he agrees with the mainstream scholarship of the 19th and of the first half of the twentieth century by accepting a hierarchization of the saga subgenres that no doubt puts the Family sagas at the top of the hierarchy (19). Moreover, Mari Catani agrees with Marco Scovazzi in considering the Christian faith of the saga writers as superficial and conventional: “il Cristianesimo era appena una sottile mano di vernice passata su un paganesimo quasi fisiologico” [Christianity was only a thin coat of paint on an almost physiological paganism] (35).

Each excerpt in Alessandro Mari Catani’s anthology is preceded by a short presentation of the saga from which it is taken. In the very concise presentation of *Fóstbræðra saga*, Mari Catani argues that the work was written at an early date, around 1200, and he praises its narrative vivacity. Furthermore, he explains that he has chosen two passages from the *Flateyjarbók* redaction as edited by Guðni Jónsson in the 6th volume of *Íslenzk Fornrit*, and finally he refers to Halldór Laxness’s parodic rewriting of the saga.²² The first translated episode is contained only in the *Flateyjarbók* and narrates how Þorgeirr and Þormóðr go to the cliffs to gather angelica together, and Þorgeirr risks falling into the void. He delays the fall by grabbing at the base of one of the angelica plants, but refuses to call his friend for help (chapter XIII in Guðni Jónsson’s edition). The second passage is the final part of the saga, from the arrival of King Óláfr and Þormóðr at the Veradal to the very end of the saga (chapter XXIV). Although the translated part of the saga is rather short (little more than nine pages in translation), the general translation strategy is quite evident. On the one hand, Mari Catani makes use of an archaic and elevated style when he translates skaldic verses: in stanza 38, he translates Old Norse *magn* (strength) not with the usual Italian word *forza* but with the antiquated term *possanza*; in the same way he translates Old Norse *hættlig* not with the modern Italian form *pericoloso*, but with the archaic *periglioso*. In the dialogues, on the other hand, the translator often makes use of a low, sometimes even vulgar register. He translates the Old Norse word *fylur* with the Italian *stronzi*, the colloquial equivalent to English *assholes*, and the Old Norse word *þjóhnappana* with the Italian *chiappe* [butts].

The title *Fóstbræðra saga* is translated by Mari Catani as *La saga dei fratelli giurati* [The saga of the sworn brothers]. Antonio Costanzo, in his new translation of the saga published in 2012, chooses, instead, the title *La saga dei fratelli di sangue* [The saga of the blood brothers]. Each translation is born out of a cultural project

and, as a cultural product, shares a worldview. As Edwin Gentzler rightly points out:

the translator has never been a neutral party in the translation process but, rather, an individual with linguistic and cultural skills and her or his own agenda. Ideology works in funny ways—some of it conscious and some of it unconscious. ... Translation does not simply offer a window onto some unified, exotic Other; it participates in its very construction.
(216)

The case of Antonio Costanzo's translation of *Fóstbræðra saga*, however, is quite extreme: the ideological dimension is already made clear by all of the para-texts. The biographical note on the book-jacket informs the readers that Costanzo lives in Reykjavík, that he is one of the organizers of the cultural centre Nostra Romanitas (something like "Our Roman spirit and traditions"), and that he is responsible for the *Sunna* series of books published by the publishing house Diana Edizioni. Nostra Romanitas is an organization located in Frattamaggiore, in the province of Naples, and is connected with the scene of far-right-wing cultural and political organizations. Another organizer of Nostra Romanitas is Gianfranco Della Rossa, founder of Diana Edizioni and author of a book interview with Rutilio Sermonti, one of the founders of the Italian neo-fascist party Movimento Sociale Italiano, which Sermonti later left as he judged it too moderate. Gianfranco Della Rossa is also the author of a foreword to *La saga dei fratelli di sangue*, and Antonio Costanzo has dedicated the book to him. In the colophon on the verso of the title page, Costanzo writes: "Dedicato al fratello di sangue Gianfranco Della Rossa" [Dedicated to my blood brother Gianfranco Della Rossa].

In the *Sunna* series, three books have been published so far, all by Antonio Costanzo: in 2010, *Hávamál. La voce di Odino* [*Hávamál. The voice of Odin*], an annotated translation of the eddic poem with a foreword by Gísli Sigurðsson; in 2012, the aforementioned translation of *Fóstbræðra saga*; and in 2014, *Il sacrificio di Odino. Tracce sciamaniche tra i vichinghi* [*Odin's sacrifice. Traces of shamanism among the Vikings*], an attempt at the interpretation of *Hávamál* in the light of the comparison between different religious traditions, above all Old Norse paganism and Buddhism. In this analysis, Costanzo adopts the traditionalist approach of the repeatedly quoted fascist philosopher Julius Evola.²³ In Antonio Costanzo's words: "Nella nostra analisi abbiamo avuto in vista soprattutto il carattere universale degli elementi tradizionali comuni alle diverse culture che di volta in volta abbiamo ravvicinato" [In our analysis we have especially taken into consideration the universal character of the traditional elements that the different cultures that we have successively considered have in common] (47).

The text of the translated saga is accompanied by an unusual number of para-texts, which deserve to be taken into consideration. The book-jacket contains

a brief description of the translator, a concise account of the text, and a completely new subheading: “Una leggendaria epopea di fratellanza vichinga” [A legendary epic of Viking brotherhood]. The book opens with a “Presentazione” [Presentation] by the renowned historian Franco Cardini (VII-IX). Cardini is quite a peculiar personality in the Italian cultural scene. His studies on medieval history, in particular on chivalry and the crusades, are unanimously considered as fundamental. However, the political role he played during his life is more controversial. Although he refuses to be considered as a right-wing intellectual, he was a militant in the Movimento Sociale Italiano and in Jean-François Thiriart’s *Jeune Europe*. Yet, during the 2003 Iraq war, he resolutely opposed the invasion, and afterwards he repeatedly took positions against the hate campaign directed towards Muslims. In his short “Presentation” of the book, he points out some parallels between the pair of warriors Þorgeirr/Þormóðr in the saga and mythical pairs of heroes, such as Gilgamesh/Enkidu, Indra/Arjuna, Ajax/Diomedes, and so on. He then wonders about the reasons that induced the Icelanders to preserve the memory of their pagan past and concludes: “A queste domande non sappiamo rispondere” [To such questions we have no answers]. Cardini’s cautious presentation, together with his reputation as an historian and as a nonconforming, right-wing intellectual clearly serves as a legitimation for Costanzo’s cultural operation.

Cardini’s “Presentation” is followed by Gianfranco Della Rossa’s much more explicit Foreword (XI-XIV). In Della Rossa’s style and formulations, the cultural and ideological roots of the publishing house come clearly to light. According to him, “una natura indomita e bellicosa infiamma i cuori” [an indomitable and martial nature inflames the hearts] of the blood brothers (XI), and for them death is an “ospite sempre atteso” [an always awaited guest] (XI). He writes the words *Onore* [Honour], *Coraggio* [Courage], and *Temerarietà* [Recklessness] with capital letters (XII); in his opinion, the society depicted in the saga is “non ancora contaminata dalla cultura cristiana” [not yet contaminated by Christian culture] (XIII), and he concludes by quoting Oswald Spengler: “Una civiltà, per dirla con Oswald Spengler, in piena fase di *Kultur*, non priva quindi di una certa barbarie” [A civilization, as Oswald Spengler would say, which was still in its phase of *Kultur*, and therefore not devoid of a certain barbarism] (XIV). Following Della Rossa’s foreword, a longer “Introduzione filologica” [Philological introduction] by the translator accounts for the scholarly debate about the saga and presents its textual tradition. Furthermore, Costanzo explains that he has chosen the version of the *Flateyjarbók* as the basis for his translation, then he describes the difficulties faced in translating the saga, and makes a list of culture-bound terms that have not been translated (XV-XXIX). After the translated text of the saga (which also includes the *Þormóðar þáttur*)²⁴ and before the two appendices in which Costanzo comments on the stanzas contained respectively in *Fóstbræðra saga* and *Þormóðar þáttur*, yet another para-text is printed: an afterword by the former chairman of

the Icelandic Social Democratic Party, Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, who limits himself to making some very general reflections about medieval Icelandic society and to evoking the memory of an encounter, in his childhood, with Halldór Kiljan Laxness (147–51).

With regard to the translation itself, it is first of all interesting to observe the alternating use of archaizing words and words belonging to a low register. Examples of archaizing words are *tenebrore* (18) instead of *tenebra/oscurità/buio* for *myrkvi* [darkness]; *venusta* (52) instead of *bella/avvenente for væn* [beautiful]; and *saziaronsi* (63, in stanza 11) instead of *si saziarono for soddusk* [satisfied their hunger]. In contrast, examples of colloquial use are “Parecchio *si stanno allargando*, i fratelli giurati” (24) for “Mjök *ganga þeir fóstbræðr nú af sér*” [They go too far, the sworn brothers], and “Ci sono delle *rogne* dietro ... ?” (70) for “Eru þér *noðkur vandræði á höndum ... ?*” [Are there any troubles ... ?]. Whereas in Mari Catani’s translation the different linguistic registers were used to point out the distance between the highly sophisticated language of poetry and the ordinary language of daily life, Costanzo’s translation gives the impression of a linguistic chaos, where archaisms, anachronisms, and slang expressions follow each other without any apparent reason.

Only the conscious intention to reconnect to the Latin cultural tradition can explain the use of the archaic and very unusual term *viro* (from Latin *vir*, *man*) in the translations of stanzas 13, 14, 15, and 16. Even more disconcerting, however, is the use of the Italian term *duce* in order to translate the Icelandic word *höfðingi* (98, 111). The word *duce*, in fact, has been used in the past as an archaism derived from the Latin term *dux* [commander, leader], but after the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini proclaimed himself “duce del fascismo,” the term connotes far-right-wing policy and culture. In general terms, we can say that the language of Antonio Costanzo’s translation is quite distant from the language(s) of the Italian literary tradition. The odd lexical choices and the peculiar syntactic organization produced by the effort not to stray too far from the original text result in a strongly alienating language, which sometimes comes close to incomprehensibility.

If it is true, as André Lefevere maintains, that the translation of literature takes place “not in a vacuum in which two languages meet but, rather, in the context of all the traditions of the two literatures” (6), then it is impossible to consider Antonio Costanzo’s translation as successful. Furthermore, the choice to have it published by a small publishing house with deep political connotations makes it difficult for the translation to reach a wide readership.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude this concise survey of the history of the translations of Old Norse texts into Italian, it can be useful to summarize the development observed from

the second half of the eighteenth century until today. Although the Italian scholars did not have the necessary linguistic knowledge to read the Old Norse texts in the original language in the very first period of this development (from the middle of the eighteenth to the first decades of the nineteenth century), they had the possibility to read them in translation, and the curious poem by Francesco Saverio Quadrio, “Versi in lingua runica,” demonstrates that at least some of them actually did so. Moreover, the Swedish immigrant Jakob Gråberg played a pioneering role in spreading the knowledge of Old Norse tradition and literature in Italy.

Consistently with the state of the Italian literary system of that period, the Italian intellectual circles showed interest in essentially two genres: poetry and historiography, whereas as good as no attention was paid to other narrative prose genres. Even the interest in skaldic poetry vanished quite soon due to the nearly exclusive interest of the Romantics in the supposed *folk-poetry*. Basically, this attitude persisted until WWII, despite the evolution of the Italian literary system. In the long period comprised between the beginning of the Romantic movement in Italy and WWII, the only major factor that affected the reception of Old Norse culture in Italy was the great popularity of Richard Wagner’s operas, which aroused the interest in at least one Norse saga: the *Völsunga saga*.

The situation changed gradually after WWII, principally in connection with the evolution of the Italian academic system. The progressive integration into the curricula of disciplines such as Germanic philology, Scandinavian studies, and Linguistics created the conditions to develop a new generation of scholars, able both to study the original texts and to translate them. This development resulted, on the one hand, in a broadening of the interests of the Italian scholars who began to actively participate in the scientific international debate, and on the other hand in a closer collaboration between the academic and the editorial worlds. This collaboration, however, did not lead to major, comprehensive projects comparable to the translation of all the Sagas of Icelanders into English (published by the Leifur Eiriksson Publishing in 1997) or to the vast project of translating as good as the whole of Old Norse literature carried out in the first half of the twentieth century by the German Thule Sammlung [Thule book series]. The different translation projects, instead, have been largely determined by the personal contacts of each single scholar/translator with some publishing houses. The success in spreading knowledge about each specific Old Norse text has thus been mainly conditioned by the sales force of each publishing house and by its cultural prestige.

Furthermore, particularly during the last decades some new cultural factors have contributed to modifying the overall picture of the translations from Old Norse into Italian. The huge popularity of fantasy literature—consistently increased after Peter Jackson’s Tolkienian trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* at the beginning of the century (2003–2005)—has induced many fans to go in search of the primary sources of the literary worlds of which they are so fond, thus

promoting non-professional translations and rewritings. Additionally, TV series such as Michael Hirst's *Vikings* (2013–2018) have contributed to enhance the popularity of some sagas: it is worth noting that in 2017 not only Marcello Meli's translation of *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* was reprinted by the publishing house Iperborea, but also a totally new translation was published under the telling title *Vikings: la saga di Ragnar Lodbrok* [Vikings: The saga of Ragnar Lodbrok] by Fanucci, a publishing house specializing in fantasy, horror, and science fiction literature.²⁵

NOTES

1. Both Orazio Ariosto (a grandnephew of the Italian poet Ludovico Ariosto) and Torquato Tasso belonged to the literary milieu of Ferrara and knew each other. Ariosto's epic, unfinished, was published only in 1982 by Giuseppe Venturini.
2. The "previously unpublished" assertion is to the best of the author's knowledge. For a fuller discussion of Gräberg's relationship to Scandinavian culture see Ferrari 1996.
3. This article provides publication dates for scholarly works, translations, and other modern texts relevant to the reception of Old Norse literature in Italy, but does not enter into discussion of the dating of Old Norse works themselves. In cases where lists of many Norse literary works appear, titles in translation are often supplied in notes.
4. This author's translation. Subsequent English translations of Italian works are also those of the present author.
5. James MacPherson published between 1761 and 1765 a series of prose poems that he presented as translations of the poems by the legendary Scottish bard Ossian. The existence of Ossian's poems has been questioned soon after the publication of MacPherson's collection and the discussion about the forgery is still ongoing. In any case, *The Poems of Ossian* enjoyed huge popularity in the last decades of the eighteenth and in the first decades of the nineteenth century. For a survey of MacPherson's influence on European literatures see Gaskill.
6. For a discussion of the concept of "literary system" see Even Zohar.
7. For the sake of simplicity of presentation, English language translations of the titles of these Eddic poems are provided here: *Hávamál* [Sayings of the High One], *Völuspá* [Seeress's prophecy], *Atlakviða* [The Lay of Atli], *Sigurðarkviða* [The Lay of Sigurd], *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* [Fragment of a Lay of Sigurd], *Brymskviða* [Thrym's Poem].
8. Supporters of the so-called Buchprosathorie (book prose theory) "assumed that the origin of the Icelandic saga, although based originally upon oral sources, was fundamentally in written sources and that saga authors crafted their narratives from a variety of written works that were available to them, including, in some cases, works in Latin or foreign vernaculars" (Clunies Ross 40). The Buchprosathorie was opposed by the supporters of the so-called *Freiprosathorie* (free prose theory), who traced the origins of the sagas exclusively to a supposed long and reliable oral tradition: "many of the early advocates of a largely oral development of the Icelandic saga had also insisted that the oral traditions upon which the sagas were based were historically true and had been passed down without change from one generation to the next" (Clunies Ross 41).

9. For example, the series includes versions of the *Iliad*, *Beowulf*, and the *Nibelungenlied*.
10. That is, the “free prose theory” as opposed to the “book prose theory”; see note 7.
11. Gabrieli’s handbook was first published in 1958 under the title *Storia delle letterature della Scandinavia* [History of the literatures of Scandinavia], but it is the second, revised, and much enlarged edition of 1969 that became for a long time the Italian reference book on Scandinavian literatures.
12. These saga titles have been translated as *The Saga of the Ynglings* and as *The Saga of Hálf and His Heroes*. This “northern stories” volume was then republished in 1989 under the new and more captivating title *Leggende e miti vichinghi* [Viking legends and myths].
13. These titles of these famous sagas have been translated as: *The Saga of the Jómsvikings*, *Grettir’s Saga*, *Njal’s Saga*, *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers*, *The Saga of the People of Laxardale*, and *Egil’s Saga*.
14. *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* is a late outlaw saga with significant supernatural elements and has been translated as, for example, *The Story of Grettir the Strong* (1869) by William Morris and Eiríkur Magnúson.
15. This famous outlaw saga’s title is often translated into English as simply *Gisli’s Saga*.
16. *Leiðarvísir* was translated by Marco Scovazzi and published in the *Journal Nuova rivista storica*, 51 (1967): 359–62; the First Grammatical Treatise was translated by Federico Albano Leoni and published by the academic publisher Il Mulino; the choice of the *Physiologus* was translated by Vittoria Dolcetti Corazza and published in the journal *AION-Filologia germanica*, 30–31 (1985–1986): 141–68. Both fragments A and B of the *Physiologus* were then printed and translated by Vittoria Dolcetti Corazza in her book *Il Fisiologo nella tradizione letteraria germanica (Physiologus in the Germanic literary tradition)*, published in 1992 by the academic publishing house Edizioni dell’Orso. A new translation by Carla del Zotto was published in the same year by the publisher Giardini.
17. For the sake of simplicity of presentation, this list presents only the title of the Icelandic source work, the name of the translator, and the year of publication. English language titles for the sagas listed are provided here on first mention: *Hervör’s Saga*, *The Saga of the Volsungs*, *The Saga of Ragnar Shaggy-Breeches*, *The Saga of the People of Laxardale*, *Egil’s Saga*, *The Saga of Eric the Red*, *The Saga of Orkney*, *Egil’s Saga*, *Njal’s Saga*, *The Saga of Gunlaug Wormtongue*, *Perceval’s Saga*, *The Book of Reykjaholar*, *Gautrek’s Saga*, *The Saga of Bjorn of Hitardal*, *The Book of Christianity*, *The Saga of Bard the Snowfell God*, *The Book of Icelanders*, *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers*, *Chronicle of the Kings of Norway*, *The Saga of Frithiof the Bold*, *The Saga of the Ynglings*, *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki and His Champions*, *The Tale of Auðn of the Westfjords*. For more information on translations see Johnson in this volume, “From the Westfjords to World Literature: A Bibliography on *Fóstbræðra saga*.”
18. *Heimskringla* (c. 1220), attributed to Snorri Sturluson, has been translated into English as *Lives of the Norse Kings* or *History of the Kings of Norway*, although the title has been more literally translated as *Orb of the World*.
19. English language titles for these sagas include *The Saga of Ragnar Shaggy-Breeches*, *Arrow-Odd’s Saga*, *The Saga of Egil One-Hand and Asmund Berserk-Slayer*, *Hrafnkel’s Saga*, *Gautrek’s Saga*, and *The Saga of the People of Laxardale*.

20. The series “Biblioteca medievale” was founded in 1987 and first published by Pratiche. It was then taken over by the small publishing house Luni and finally, in 2001, by the academic publishing house Carocci.
21. For more on the activities of Vidofnir 14, see his webpage at <https://vidofnir14.com/tag/vidofnir-14/>.
22. Mari Catani writes, “Un rifacimento moderno di questa saga è opera dello scrittore islandese Halldor Kiljan Laxness, premio Nobel per la letteratura del 1955, che nel 1952 scrisse *Gerpla*, un romanzo che in stile di saga antica riprende e reinterpreta in maniera critica e a tratti irriverente la trama della *Saga dei Fratelli Giurati*” [A modern rewrite of this saga has been done by the Icelandic writer Halldór Kiljan Laxness – Nobel prize winner for literature in 1955 – who in 1952 wrote *Gerpla*, a novel that in the style of an ancient saga retells the *Saga of the Sworn Brothers* in a critical and sometimes irreverent way, and by so doing confers a new meaning upon it] (166).
23. For a concise presentation of Julius Evola’s biography and thought in English see Goodrick-Clarke (52-71).
24. A tale about Þormódr, one of the Sworn Brothers, is included in English translation with *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers* in the Leifur Eriksson *Complete Sagas of Icelanders, Including 49 Tales*. On the editorial consideration of whether to include related materials with sagas, see Arthur’s discussion of verses attributed to Þormódr in this volume.
25. This translation, however, was not made from the original Old Norse, but from Ben Waggoner’s English translation.

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