

BOOK REVIEWS

Snorri Sturluson Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning. Edited by Anthony Faulkes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982. Pp. xxxiv + 177.

Reviewed by Foster W. Blaisdell.

"The over-all structure of the work... reveals artistry of a high order. It is therefore a pity that the work has been difficult of access, particularly to English students, and has been read mainly in extracts that give a poor impression of the work as a whole." So Faulkes states at the beginning of the Introduction, after having made the point that Snorri's *Edda* "contains the most extensive and coherent account of Scandinavian mythology that exists from the Middle Ages" (p.xi). I applaud Faulkes' attempt to remedy the deficiency.

The Introduction contains a synopsis of the Prologue and *Gylfaginning* as well as sections on Snorri, the title (*Edda*), the contents of the work as a whole, the models and sources (an indication of the Scandinavian and-- briefly -- general European context), and the manuscripts. There is a very short section on bibliography (pp. xxxiii-xxxiv), but there are a number of footnotes throughout the Introduction as well as some bibliographic references in the "General notes" to the text and in the Index of names. The general notes (pp. 57-72) concern a variety of points but contain "only a minimum of comment on mythological matters" (p. xi), lest the book become too large. There follows a section, Textual notes (pp. 73-76), which contains some variant readings. The selection of variants is very limited, but Faulkes notes that he is in no way trying to provide a critical text. He bases his on MS R alone (for the initial lacuna he uses the 17th century copy K) and indicates other readings only when R is "incoherent

or has obvious omissions" (p. 73). This includes, however, some indications of physical damage to R as well.

The Glossary (pp. 77-162) is supposed to contain all words except the common pronouns. **Hann** and **hon** are omitted, but **sá**, **sjá**, **þat** are listed (if the last, why not also **þetta**?). A dagger is set before words to indicate "specifically poetical" usage. Line references are, of course, very select, but some of the entries are fuller-- for example, the entry for **koma** contains 28 references and runs to 13 lines, that for **af** 49 references (also 13 lines). The Index includes some bibliographic references (e.g., to Anne Holtmark's **Studier i Snorres Mytologi under Loki**), as I have already noted, but also references to occurrences of the particular name in question in various poems of the Elder Edda, in **Heimskringla**, in Saxo Grammaticus, and so on.

This could be a very useful book. I have, for that reason, gone into quite a bit of "descriptive detail" in the preceding. Time and thought have obviously been spent on features which might prove helpful to the intended audience. Snorri is a master of style and often simply fun to read, and he merits as wide an audience as possible. It is, perhaps, unfortunate that selections from **Skáldskaparmál** could not have been included, but the work as it stands presents a certain unity. Increased size would certainly have meant increased price, and today books in general are too expensive to begin with. A welcome addition to our tools for the study of Old Icelandic.

Rites and Riots, Folk Customs of Britain and Europe. By Bob Pegg. Poole, Dorset, U.K.: Blandford Press, 1981. Pp. 140, bibliography, index. \$24.95, cloth.

Reviewed by Regina Bendix.

"New book describes the ancient roots of folk customs that flourish to this day," reads the headline of the publisher's accompanying letter to this richly illustrated book, thereby neatly exemplifying the position towards