slight mistake has crept into the introduction, where the order of the first edition from 1815 and second edition from 1824 is reversed (p. xcii). Overall, the volume is yet another splendid addition to the Íslenzk fornrit series and should spark further interest in and wider readership of this fascinating piece of literature.

Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir
Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum


The volume under review includes a translation of one of the earliest Icelandic texts, Jómsvíkinga saga, and a scholarly introduction to this remarkable work. The saga has been translated into English before; however, both earlier translations (by Lee M. Hollander (1955) and Norman Blake (1962)) are of the shorter version of the saga in the manuscript Holm. Perg. 7 4to. The present translation is based on the longer AM 291 4to, the oldest of the Jómsvíkinga saga manuscript witnesses, making this version of the saga available to the English-speaking public for the first time. In addition to the introduction and the translation, the book comprises four grayscale figures, endnotes, bibliography divided into primary texts and secondary sources and a combined index of persons and places mentioned. The choice of exemplar and the full introduction that offers an up-to-date scholarly discussion of the saga, as well as emphasising its entertainment value, indicate that the book is aimed at both the scholarly community and the general public.

Alison Finlay has translated the saga text, while the introduction is largely based on Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir’s doctoral thesis on Jómsvíkinga saga (University of Iceland, 2016). Both contributors have been actively involved with an international group of scholars engaged in studying the saga and translating it into several European languages. As a result, both introduction and translation are thoroughly researched and rooted in a lively scholarly environment. So far, two further publications have resulted from this informal scholarly cooperation: a volume of Scripta Islandica (2014) devoted to Jómsvíkinga saga and Sirpa Aalto’s translation of the saga into Finnish (Nordbooks, 2019).

The introduction covers all the major issues concerning Jómsvíkinga saga, such as historicity, genre, the saga’s manuscript witnesses and the relationships between them. Undoubtedly, one such controversial matter is the identification and location of two places featuring prominently in the saga: Jómsborg, the legendary fortress of the Jómsvikings, and Hjǫrungavágr, the site of the final battle of the famous Viking company and the execution of most of its surviving members. As Þórdís shows, the widespread identification of Jómsborg with the Polish town of Wolin is not without problems. Furthermore, even the foundation of the scholarly quest for the most appropriate candidate for the bay of Hjǫrungavágr can be questioned. Þórdís thoroughly reviews the scholarly debate, clearly distinguishing between the saga itself and its presumed legendary basis. She reaches the conclusion that
the Jómsborg and Hjörungavágr of Jómsvikinga saga must pertain to the realm of fiction.

This sceptical response to the tendency in some earlier scholarship to romanticise the saga and its origins is maintained throughout the introduction. Jómsvikinga saga has been considered exceptional in many respects, occupying a special position in the generic categorisation of Icelandic literature. Þórdís attempts to make sense of the saga’s characteristic features by contextualising it within the body of contemporaneous Icelandic and European historical, literary and manuscript tradition. One such feature is the saga’s portrayal of kings, which has not infrequently been understood as negative, a seemingly unique characteristic that led Melissa Berman to include Jómsvikinga saga in the category of ‘political saga’ along with Færeyinga saga and Orkneyinga saga. Þórdís argues convincingly for a nuanced treatment of kings and kingship in Jómsvikinga saga (p. 10) as well as a gradation in the negative attitude towards royalty between the work’s different versions (p. 52). For instance, the portrayal of Sveinn tjúguskegg (Forkbeard) in the saga indicates that kings are seen as individuals rather than generally disliked representatives of a more abstract power structure.

Þórdís also finds similarity between Jómsvikinga saga and a number of other sagas in terms of age, manuscript preservation, tone (including the treatment of kingship), content and style. The author adopts a dynamic view of genre, finding it most appropriate to place the saga ‘at the intersection of kings’ sagas, legendary sagas, and sagas of Icelanders’ (p. 41). Although this handling of the traditional saga taxonomy as a general frame with fuzzy boundaries is of course not new, and this use of traditional terminology implies general conformity with the standard categorisation, the suggested classification of Jómsvikinga saga does bring to the fore a combination of characteristic factors that make the saga unique. More positively, the notion of ‘literary network’ used metaphorically in the introduction (p. 31) offers an inductive and empirically rooted alternative to overly prescriptive categories. Placing Jómsvikinga saga, or any other saga, within a network of individual works in their material setting has the potential to be a truly dynamic way of conceptualising and visualising relationships between texts in the Icelandic literary and manuscript tradition.

The choice of the exemplar for the translation apparently relies on the assumed relationship between the saga’s two major manuscript versions, namely on the premise that the scribe of Holm. Perg. 7 4to shortened the text of the saga as preserved in AM 291 4to. There is a general consensus on this in earlier scholarship, and Þórdís provides several examples from both versions as evidence for the assumption (e.g. pp. 49–51). Nonetheless, her account lacks a conclusive argument against the possibility of the shorter account being expanded in the course of the saga’s transmission. The case of Jómsvikinga saga is one of many where the coexistence of shorter and longer versions requires an explanation. However, this aspect of the saga’s tradition is not contextualised or otherwise compared with any of the other cases in the corpus of Icelandic literature. Furthermore, it remains unclear why the Flateyjarbók version of the saga that ‘represents the same redaction as 291 and Perg. 7 but is slightly shorter than 291’ (p. 26) has been left out of the discussion.
Alison Finlay is an established translator of Icelandic sagas. As with her previous projects, her aim is to offer as direct or literal a translation as possible. For this reason she chooses, for example, to retain the Icelandic sentence structure and variation in tenses. Background information on Finlay’s choices regarding exemplar, translation strategy and rendering of personal names and place names is given in Notes on the Translation (pp. 61–62). She follows Ólafur Halldórsson’s 1969 edition of AM 291 4to. The missing parts of the manuscript text are supplied from the Flateyjarbók version of the saga in the edition as well as in the translation. These passages are clearly marked in the translation by an F in the margin, with information on the exact beginning and the end of each such passage found in the endnotes. Although not mentioned in the Notes, square brackets are used to mark out the less legible text of AM 291 4to as well as the only sentence supplied from AM 310 4to, a manuscript of Oddr Snorrason’s Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (p. 127). Normalised Old Icelandic names are used throughout the translation; bynames are usually translated in parentheses when first mentioned in the saga text.

The translation follows the exemplar very closely and Finlay demonstrates an impressive attention to detail by carefully choosing both wording and sentence structure. The literal rendering of the text makes it possible to ‘see’ the original text behind the translator’s English, which is a clear advantage of the chosen strategy. The present work is thus quite different from what has previously been offered by translators. In addition, the decision to translate the fuller version of the text in AM 291 4to offers readers a version of the saga that is almost twice as long as Blake’s. The only detail to question here is the inclusion in the translation, where there is no lacuna in the original, of a sentence from the version of Oddr Snorrason’s Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in AM 310 4to. Finlay notes (p. 161) that this text is closely related to AM 291 4to in this context, but a fuller rationale would help to convince the reader that the ‘emendation’ is necessary.

It is unclear what purpose is served by the four grayscale figures on pp. 63–66, since they are not referred to in the main text. Furthermore, Figure 1 represents a reproduction of a map entitled ‘Scandinavia and the Baltic in the tenth century’, that was originally published in Blake’s translation (p. xxix). The map includes key places from the saga narrative such as Jómsborg and Hjörrungavagr without any indication of the uncertainty regarding their whereabouts, which seems at odds with the discussion of this question in the introduction. The index is functional but provides little, if any, information on the people and places mentioned. For instance, the entries for ‘Jóm’ and ‘Jómsborg’ do not include any information on their identification. The book is thoroughly proof-read; the typos are very few, e.g. ‘Widukind of Corey’ for Widukind av Corvey (p. 7).

The Saga of the Jómsvikings is a volume of great value for many reasons. First, it presents the only direct translation of the oldest and longest version of Jómsvíkinga saga into English. Second, it makes Þórdís’s full study of the saga, written in Icelandic, available to a wider English-speaking public. Third, the book will undoubtedly popularise the saga generally as well as contributing to further scholarly investigation. The translation will most likely be appreciated by both scholars and students as a natural complement to the Íslenzk fornrit edition of
*Jómsvíkinga saga* (reviewed above, pp. 160–63), the more so since that edition also adopts the AM 291 version as its primary text. Through the fine scholarly efforts of Finlay and Þórdís, one of the oldest Icelandic sagas has become easier to understand and evaluate without losing a sense of its originality.

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*In Prayer and Laughter* is a collection of essays by one of the leading philologists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, some of which are edited and expanded reprints of works published since 1978, whereas others appear for the first time here. As Liberman himself explains in an excellent introduction setting out his personal and professional background (and thus commendably elucidating the assumptions underlying his work), *In Prayer and Laughter* is not a handbook of pre-Christian mythology (p. 18), but a collection of studies united by the author’s strenuous philological and etymological approach, and his interest in the culture and mythologies of the Germanic Iron Age. The work is not without occasional issues, but these are overwhelmingly overshadowed by the value of the book as a whole: its methodological exposition, thorough engagement with source material, wide-ranging surveys of secondary literature (particularly early scholarship no longer in common circulation), and challenging reading of familiar scenes and figures combine to make *In Prayer and Laughter* a book that deserves to be examined again and again in coming years.

*In Prayer and Laughter* contains twenty-one chapters, mostly focused on mythological figures: Óðinn, Loki and Baldr appear repeatedly, alongside less-studied individuals like Þjálfi (pp. 123–41), Lytir (pp. 261–69) and Heiðrún (pp. 337–46). Alongside this majority is a smaller number of shorter chapters exploring particular questions such as the meaning of OE īsig in *Beowulf* 34 (which Liberman argues is a poetic synonym for ‘metallic’, pp. 270–78), the potential reconstruction of a Germanic verb *sendan* ‘to sacrifice [a human being]’ (pp. 279–90) and the origin of *Edda* as a title for Snorri’s *ars poetica* (Liberman suggests it refers to the feathers of an eider duck, similar to the aetiology of *Grágás*’s appellation; pp. 395–405). This essayistic approach frees Liberman from any requirement for a complete coverage of extant Old Norse myth, allowing his studies to be as long or short as they need to be to cover the evidence and its interpretations. *In Prayer and Laughter* is thus not something I would recommend as a whole to an undergraduate interested in mythology (though I would absolutely endorse individual chapters as reading for an essay), particularly as some key figures and themes in pre-Christian myth appear only in passing (Þórr, Æsir/Vanir divide) or not at all (Ragnarok, Ælfur). The lack of translations and transliterations in some, if not all, sections would be another barrier for such an audience.