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LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING  
IN THE OLD NORSE WORLD

Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross

edited by

Judy Quinn, Kate Heslop, and Tarrin Wills



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Fiqlð ek fór, fiqlð ek freistaða,  
fiqlð ek reynda regin. (*Vafþrúðnismál* 3)

Much have I travelled, much have I contested,  
much have I tested the powers.

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## OLD ICELANDIC GRAMMATICAL LITERATURE: THE LAST TWO DECADES OF RESEARCH (1983–2005)

Fabrizio D. Raschellà

A state-of-the-art report on Old Icelandic grammatical literature (hereafter OIGL)<sup>1</sup> appeared under the present writer's name in the German journal *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* about twenty years ago.<sup>2</sup> Since that time a large amount of research has been carried out on this subject and a considerable number of studies have correspondingly been published. It therefore seemed to me appropriate, when I was invited to make a contribution to this volume in honour of Margaret Clunies Ross, who in recent years has been so engaged in investigating the role of grammatical and rhetorical studies in the context of the Old Icelandic poetic tradition, to take the opportunity to present an up-to-date outline of the main developments that have occurred in this branch of Old Norse-Icelandic studies during this period.<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying, however, that the space is far from sufficient to touch on all relevant points: the subject matter is in fact too vast and variegated to be reasonably epitomized in so few pages. I shall

<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations, variously combined, will be used throughout this article: G for 'grammatical'; L for 'literature'; OI for 'Old Icelandic'; T(s) for 'treatise(s)'. The individual Old Icelandic grammatical works will be abbreviated as *FiGT* (*First Grammatical Treatise*), *SGT* (*Second Grammatical Treatise*), *ThGT* (*Third Grammatical Treatise*), and *FoGT* (*Fourth Grammatical Treatise*).

<sup>2</sup> Raschellà 1983 (author-date references are used in this chapter where the work appears in the appended bibliography).

<sup>3</sup> A preliminary version of this paper was presented in oral form at the Twelfth International Saga Conference (Bonn) in August 2003. Among the people who took part in the following discussion was Margaret Clunies Ross herself, to whom I wish to renew here my gratitude for useful remarks and suggestions.

therefore have to be selective, and some studies will inevitably receive less consideration than they might deserve and others will not be commented on at all. While I apologize for such necessary omissions, I endeavour to do justice, at least in part, to these works by including them in the bibliographical list at the end of this paper, which aims at being as exhaustive as possible.<sup>4</sup>

In light of this, it seems reasonable to start the discussion with an account of the general surveys of OIGL that have been written in the period we are concerned with. The first to be published after Raschellà's report in 1983 appears to be an article by Jurij K. Kusmenko which appeared in a Russian miscellany on the history of medieval linguistic doctrines in 1985.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, I have not as yet been able to see this article and, even if I had, I would not have the necessary linguistic competence to read it, but I presume that its content may, in part at least, have flowed into a later study published by Kusmenko in 1993 in the German periodical *Skandinavistik* with the title 'Einige Bemerkungen zu den altisländischen grammatischen Abhandlungen', which I will discuss in some detail further on.

In 1987 Even Hovdhaugen published an article entitled 'The First Vernacular Grammars in Europe: The Scandinavian Area' in issue no. 9 of the French journal *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* (entirely devoted to the earliest grammatical works in the European vernaculars).<sup>6</sup> As the title clearly suggests, Hovdhaugen's article embraces the *whole* Scandinavian area. Therefore only a small part of it is devoted to Icelandic grammatical literature (both medieval and early modern) and is no more than an essential informative sketch. Hovdhaugen uses, among other things, the term 'grammar' in a very narrow and rather modern sense, which entitles him to assert that 'the Icelandic scholars [of the Middle Ages] seem to have been rather uninterested in writing a grammar of their own language'.<sup>7</sup> After some general remarks on the analogies of OIGL with contemporary Irish and Provençal material, Hovdhaugen quickly goes on to consider Runólfur Jónsson's *Grammaticae Islandicae rudimenta* (written in 1651), reserving the rest of his attention to the modern period.

<sup>4</sup> Even so, the list tends to include only those works, or parts of works, that have a direct bearing on the subject at hand. There are in fact a number of investigations of adjacent or more comprehensive subjects (especially works on the history of the Icelandic language and/or literature) which contain occasional references to one or more OI grammatical works but which have not been included in the list.

<sup>5</sup> Kusmenko 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Hovdhaugen 1987.

<sup>7</sup> Hovdhaugen 1987, p. 74.

The year 1988 saw the publication of volume XI of Strayer's *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, which contains an essential survey of the Scandinavian grammatical literature by Einar Haugen.<sup>8</sup> In just a few lines, the great master of Scandinavian language history gives us an effective picture of the OI grammatical writings. As is to be expected, given his previous contributions to this field of research and his pre-eminently linguistic concern, the balance of Haugen's treatment is slightly displaced towards the *FiGT*;<sup>9</sup> moreover, the author makes a point of stressing the close connections between grammatical studies in Iceland and in other European countries during the Middle Ages.

As mentioned above, the Russian linguist Jurij K. Kusmenko — for many years active in German universities — published an article in 1993 in which he points out some prominent features of the OIGTs, especially of the *FiGT* and *ThGT*.<sup>10</sup> Kusmenko seems here to be mainly concerned to compare the different opinions that scholars have expressed over the course of time about the origin and the distinctiveness of the GTs. Even keeping one's distance from the harsh criticism uttered against Kusmenko's views — especially concerning the *ThGT* — by Bjarne Ulvestad two years later,<sup>11</sup> it must be admitted that Kusmenko's article contains a number of statements and inferences that may objectively appear surprising. In particular, he takes up again the old dispute about the attribution of the passage on runic writing in the *ThGT* to the eleventh-century Icelandic master of runes Þóroddr Gamlason — an attribution that would put back the date of the passage relative to the rest of the Icelandic grammatical tradition. In doing this, he brings back the terms of reference to exactly the same point at which Björn M. Ólsen had left them in 1883,<sup>12</sup> irrespective of later criticism.<sup>13</sup> An

<sup>8</sup> Haugen 1988.

<sup>9</sup> It is hardly necessary to be reminded that we owe to Haugen the first separate edition and thorough commentary of the *FiGT*, originally published in 1950 and reprinted with revisions in 1972 (*The First Grammatical Treatise: The Earliest Germanic Phonology*, ed. by Einar Haugen, 2nd rev. edn (London: Longman, 1972)).

<sup>10</sup> Kusmenko 1993.

<sup>11</sup> Ulvestad 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Björn M. Ólsen, *Runerne i den oldislandske litteratur*, ed. by Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1883), pp. 44–80; cf. also *Den tredje og fjerde grammatisk afhandling i Snorres Edda tilligemed de grammatisk afhandlingers prolog og to andre tilleg*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 12 (Copenhagen: Knudtzon, 1884), pp. xxiii–xxv.

<sup>13</sup> See, in particular, Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Gad, 1920–24), II (1923), 922, and *Óláfr Þórðarson máhljóða-*

evident misinterpretation of the passage on the names of vowel runes, for instance, leads Kusmenko to establish a direct connection between the *ThGT* and the *FiGT* that probably never existed.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Kusmenko's view, shared by most Old Norse scholars, of the close ties between the OI grammatical tradition and the theoretical foundations of skaldic poetry is beyond dispute.

Of an essentially descriptive and informative character, yet accurate and well-documented, is the survey of OIGL presented by Magnús Snædal at the '7. Rask-ráðstefna', a seminar on early Icelandic grammatical studies held in Reykjavík under the auspices of Íslenska málfræðifélagið in 1994, and published, together with the other papers delivered at the seminar, in issue no. 15 of the journal *Íslensk mál og almenn málfræði*.<sup>15</sup>

In 1993 and 1996 two lexicon entries on the OIGTs appeared in Pulsiano's *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia* and in Stammerjohann's *Lexicon grammaticorum*, respectively. The former was written by Fabrizio D. Raschellà and the latter by Federico Albano Leoni.<sup>16</sup> Another lexicon article was published in 1998 by the German linguist Kurt Braunmüller in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*.<sup>17</sup> Braunmüller's treatment has a more far-reaching scope than the works previously mentioned and aims at covering the whole Germanic area, in that it considers all those products of grammatical learning 'die in einer germ. Sprache abgefaßt sind oder die (auf Lat. verfaßt) einen Aspekt einer germanischen Sprache behandeln' ('which are composed in a Germanic language or which, although composed in Latin, treat an aspect of a Germanic language').<sup>18</sup> Even in this perspective, however, the North Germanic documentary evidence holds a prominent position and is opposed, as such, to that deriving from the 'West Germanic' area, which shows an incomparably poorer and more fragmentary picture. On the other hand, it should be noted that Braunmüller's attention in regard to the North Germanic area is almost exclusively devoted to the *FiGT* and *SGT*, the only ones

*málskrúðsrit: Grammatisk-retorisk afhandling*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Det kgl. danske videnskaberne selskab, Historisk-filologiske meddelelser, XIII, 2 (Copenhagen: Høst, 1927), pp. 15–16.

<sup>14</sup> Kusmenko 1993, p. 90.

<sup>15</sup> Magnús Snædal 1993. The seminar proceedings (pp. 121–240) include, besides Snædal's contribution, articles by Guðrún Kvaran, Gunnar Harðarson, Jan Ragnar Hagland, Kristján Árnason, and Sverrir Tómasson, some of which will be discussed below.

<sup>16</sup> Raschellà 1993; Albano Leoni 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Braunmüller 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Braunmüller 1998, p. 573. An article with similar characteristics was published in 1984 by the present writer in an Italian journal of Germanic studies (Raschellà 1984).

which would testify to the existence of 'strukturelle Denk- und Analysemethoden unabhängig von der herrschenden grammatischen Tradition der Spätant[ike]' ('structural methods of thought and analysis independent of the dominant grammatical tradition of late antiquity'), while the *ThGT* and *FoGT* are stigmatized as mere 'konventionelle Bearbeitungen lat. grammatischer Werke' ('conventional adaptations of Latin grammatical works').<sup>19</sup> In brief, therefore, Braunmüller reaffirms the substantially original character of the *FiGT* and *SGT* and their foreshadowing of some of the principles of modern structural phonological analysis.

We thus come to the last general treatment of OIGL published so far, that by Valeria Micillo, which appeared in the year 2000 in volume XVIII of the monumental de Gruyter series *Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft*, devoted to the history of language sciences.<sup>20</sup> In spite of its delimitative and somewhat misleading title, 'The Latin Tradition and Icelandic', Micillo's work is in fact a complete and accurate, though summary, treatment of the fundamental aspects of OIGL. The author's attention is particularly directed towards the theoretical foundations of the GTs, which she concisely but carefully accounts for throughout the work.

To conclude with the general surveys of OIGL, two more contributions should be mentioned, which are included in larger works on Old Norse-Icelandic literature as a whole. One is by Sverrir Tómasson, the author of the chapter on the Trivium arts in the first volume of *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* published under the imprint of Mál og Menning;<sup>21</sup> the other is contained in the chapter 'Rhetoric and Style' which Þórir Óskarsson wrote for the recent handbook on Old Norse literature and culture edited by Rory McTurk.<sup>22</sup>

Let us now have a look at works dealing with the individual OIGTs. In presenting these works, I will follow the established order of the treatises, which principally originates from their sequence in Codex Wormianus (AM 242 fol) of Snorri's *Edda*.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Braunmüller 1998, p. 577.

<sup>20</sup> Micillo 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Sverrir Tómasson 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Þórir Óskarsson 2005, pp. 355–58.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of the presumable chronological order of the treatises, I take the liberty to refer to my article from 1983 (see note 2 above), pp. 306–15, as well as to the commentary following my edition of the *SGT* (*The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise: An Orthographic Pattern of Late Thirteenth-Century Icelandic*, ed. by Fabrizio D. Raschellà, *Filologia Germanica*, Testi e Studi, 2 (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1982)), pp. 126–32. Besides, it should be noted that the

Between the years 1985 and 2005 a dozen articles were published on matters specifically concerning *The First Grammatical Treatise*. Leaving aside the long-lasting — and often specious — dispute about the degree of originality and independence of the *FiGT* with respect to Latin tradition, which has seen the opposing parties in dispute even in recent times,<sup>24</sup> I would like to begin by mentioning two articles by Jan Ragnar Hagland.<sup>25</sup> Both works deal with an aspect of Icelandic grammatical literature in the Middle Ages which, in my opinion, is of paramount importance for a better understanding and a correct evaluation of the relationship between the Icelandic and the Latin grammatical tradition: the existence, in medieval Iceland (at least until the end of the thirteenth century), of a 'digrafisk skriftspråksituasjon' ('digraphic literary situation'),<sup>26</sup> which led to a fruitful interference between two literary cultures ('skriftspråkskulturar'<sup>27</sup>), each of which referred to a different writing system, that is, the runic one and the Latin one, the former assuring the preservation of the indigenous grammatical tradition and the latter providing the means of acquisition of the new cultural requirements coming with ever-increasing influence from continental Europe. In fact, an attentive consideration of this point might, among other things, curb the persistent and largely unjustified interpretative tension that characterizes this aspect of research on OIGL and particularly on the *FiGT*, as Hagland himself has tried to demonstrate.<sup>28</sup> In a third, more recent article Hagland investigates the *FiGT* as a source of evidence of possible connections between runic literacy and skaldic poetry.<sup>29</sup> Starting from the observation that, on more than one occasion, the First Gram-

so-called 'Fifth Grammatical Treatise' — a small manuscript fragment originally belonging to a treatise on skaldic rhetorical figures contained in the codex AM 748 I b 4° — will not be taken into consideration; on the other hand, no specific study has been devoted to it, as far as I know, in the last two decades.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the controversy between Jurij K. Kusmenko and Bjarne Ulvestad referred to above. In this connection, two more articles, one written by Harry Perridon and the other by E. F. K. Koerner (Perridon 1985; Koerner 1997), should be mentioned, both rejecting the interpretation of the 'First Grammarian' as a forerunner of modern structural phonology, as expressed, for example, in the works of Einar Haugen and Hreinn Benediktsson.

<sup>25</sup> Hagland 1992 and 1993.

<sup>26</sup> Hagland 1993, p. 165.

<sup>27</sup> Hagland 1993, p. 162.

<sup>28</sup> Closely connected to this subject, though not explicitly mentioning OIGL, is a later article by Hagland on the diffusion of runic literacy in medieval Iceland (Hagland 1996). The same aspect has been treated with reference to the *ThGT* by Karin F. Seim (see below for discussion).

<sup>29</sup> Hagland 2005.

marian avails himself of skaldic verses to illustrate and substantiate his treatment of Icelandic orthography, much in the same way as Latin grammarians resorted to the authority of poets of their own tradition, and that part of his technical terminology is arguably drawn from both skaldic and runic usage, Hagland suggests that skalds might have had some skill in runic writing and, consequently, be bearers of metalinguistic competence in the context of runic literacy. This seems to fit particularly well with the word *rýnni*, a typically poetic term which is used by the author of the *FiGT* in the general meaning of 'writing' and which in all likelihood has its starting point in the word *rún*.<sup>30</sup>

A specialized yet nonetheless important issue concerning the introductory section of the *FiGT* has been debated by Gunnar Harðarson and, again, by Jan Ragnar Hagland in recent years.<sup>31</sup> The former raises the question of how to interpret the well-known passage in which the author of the treatise states that 'we [Icelanders and Englishmen] are of one tongue' and, through a series of reasonable arguments, comes to the conclusion that the language referred to is most likely to be identified with that which, according to the Prologue to Snorri's *Edda*, was introduced into Northern Europe by the Æsir and spread throughout Scandinavia as well as to Saxony (and, from there, to England in later times). Some perplexity has been expressed on this point by Hagland, who deems it possible that these words of the First Grammarian may just be the echo of a 'literary topos', for which analogues can be found in several works of Old Norse literature, with no actual linguistic implications.

The *FiGT* as a source of cultural history of twelfth-century Iceland is the central subject of an article written by Sverrir Tómasson nearly two decades ago.<sup>32</sup> The author, espousing a view originally expressed by Einar Haugen,<sup>33</sup> maintains that the treatise is a refined intellectual piece of work, written by a learned man for his fellow scholars and not, as one might think, meant for school teaching. He further speculates about which Latin works, if any, may have inspired the First Grammarian's theoretical approach to orthography and formulates hypotheses about the places abroad where he may have received his scholarly education.

<sup>30</sup> The meaning currently attributed to *rýnni* in contexts of Old Norse poetry is 'runic lore', 'knowledge of runes', and 'knowledge' in general (cf. Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Møller, 1931), p. 474, where it is translated into Danish as *runeforskning*, *runekundskab*, and *kundskab i alm[indelighed]*).

<sup>31</sup> Gunnar Harðarson 1999; Hagland 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Sverrir Tómasson 1988a.

<sup>33</sup> *First Grammatical Treatise*, ed. by Haugen, pp. 5–6.



Finally, mention should be made of a Swedish translation of the *FiGT* published in 2002 as the collective work of a group of researchers at the University of Göteborg.<sup>34</sup>

Research on *The Second Grammatical Treatise* in the period under consideration is definitely dominated by the works of Kurt Braunmüller, who, in the early 1980s, elaborated his theory about the treatise's main concern, which, in his opinion, consists of defining the fundamental features of sound distribution (*Lautdistribution*) and of syllabic structure (*Silbenbau*) in contemporary Icelandic.<sup>35</sup> These are in fact, Braunmüller argues, the necessary premises to a conscious knowledge of skaldic versification, especially for the realization of correct *hendingar*, a term which in skaldic terminology denotes the combinations of vowels with the following consonant(s) in a rhyming syllable. According to Braunmüller, who maintains Oskar Brenner's and Eugen Mogk's view,<sup>36</sup> this would, among other things, explain the placing of the treatise just before *Háttatal* in the Codex Upsaliensis (DG 11) of Snorri's *Edda*, one of the two manuscripts in which the treatise is handed down. On this basis Braunmüller resolutely criticizes the interpretation of the *SGT*, given by Raschellà, as a *pre-eminently* (not 'exclusively', as he would claim)<sup>37</sup> orthographic work.<sup>38</sup> I must admit that the position I took towards the nature of the *SGT* in this early work might appear rather stiff and intransigent, yet that of

<sup>34</sup> Kristinn Jóhannesson and others 2002. The translation is preceded by a short introduction with essential information about the manuscript, the content of the treatise, and the editorial principles applied by the authors.

<sup>35</sup> Braunmüller 1983a, 1984, and 1986 (especially pp. 59–62).

<sup>36</sup> Oskar Brenner, 'Der traktat der Upsala-Edda "af setningu hattalykils"', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 21 (1888), 272–80; Eugen Mogk, 'Untersuchungen zur Snorra-Edda. I. Der sogenannte zweite grammatische traktat der Snorra-Edda', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 22 (1889), 129–67, also published as Eugen Mogk, *Der sogenannte zweite grammatische traktat der Snorra-Edda: Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung*, Habilitationsschrift, Philosophische Fakultät, Universität Leipzig (Halle: Buchdruckerei des Waisenhauses, 1889).

<sup>37</sup> '(lediglich als) eine rein orthographische Abhandlung'; Braunmüller 1983b, p. 56, and 1986, p. 77.

<sup>38</sup> Compare *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise*, ed. by Raschellà, p. 10. Braunmüller's position has been supported by Thomas Krömmelbein (Krömmelbein 1992, p. 117). In this connection, it may perhaps be mentioned that a fully positive evaluation of Raschellà's analysis of the *SGT* was expressed by another eminent reviewer, Einar Haugen (Haugen 1984). A substantial contribution to the discussion about the nature and the aim of the *SGT* has also been given by Kristján Árnason in his review of Raschellà's work (1984).

Braunmüller certainly was no less so then and still is today, judging from his latest writings on this matter.<sup>39</sup> I am now willing to acknowledge that some insight into the distribution and combination of *letters* (rather than 'sounds') may have been inspired in the author of the *SGT* by his knowledge — maybe by his creative experience, too — of skaldic versification; but I still hold the firm conviction that the treatise was written *chiefly* with the purpose of reordering Icelandic writing and, after a long period of orthographic inconsistency and inadequacy, making it conform to the general phonological situation of his times. The other possible achievements of the treatise are most probably the unwitting, though remarkable, consequence of its author's diligent orthographic concern and keen linguistic observation.

Besides Braunmüller's investigations and some reviews of Raschellà's edition of the *SGT*, only one more study, an article by the Italian scholar Lucio Melazzo, seems to have been specifically devoted to this treatise in the period under consideration.<sup>40</sup> Melazzo attempts to identify the possible sources of the opening section of the treatise, concerned with a classification of the different kinds of sounds and voices occurring in nature, which is most likely a reiteration of a rather widespread proposition found in Latin grammatical literature. He quotes, compares, and meticulously comments on a number of passages taken from the works of classical and medieval authors (mostly grammarians) where this subject is dealt with, confirming some basic results achieved by Raschellà<sup>41</sup> and adding some new suggestions. Regrettably, his treatment ends, after an extensive discussion of the Latin texts, with no concrete attempt at establishing the actual degree of dependence of this passage in the *SGT* on one or the other of the texts mentioned in the article.

To complete the survey of research work on the *SGT*, another study should be included which is devoted to the two diagrams on letters (a circular and a rectangular figure) found in one of the two manuscripts containing the treatise, the Codex Upsaliensis. This investigation, carried out by the present writer, is included in a co-authored article focussing on the 'critical edition of images'.<sup>42</sup> The issue whether and to what extent illustrative figures — occurring especially in

<sup>39</sup> I am referring to Braunmüller's article from 1998, mentioned above, and to another work of his (Braunmüller 1995) which will be discussed later.

<sup>40</sup> Melazzo 1985.

<sup>41</sup> *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise*, pp. 107–14.

<sup>42</sup> Busani / Raschellà 2001. The figures in the *SGT* are discussed at pp. 227–37 and represented in the plates at the end of the volume.

manuscripts of technical and scientific concern — are capable of being ‘normalized’ and, if need be, emended to make them consonant with the verbal text referring to them is raised.

After a period of virtual stagnation of more than half a century, research on *The Third Grammatical Treatise* has slowly come to new life beginning in the middle of the 1980s and, at a steady increase, has been especially intensified from the early 1990s, so much so that we can now speak of a veritable rebirth of interest in this treatise, the importance of which has long been obscured by the strong emphasis laid by scholars on the *FiGT* and *SGT* in the second half of the last century. On the other hand, it was hardly conceivable that the major — with regard to both the extensiveness and variety of topics dealt with — *OIGT* would continue to be neglected any longer. As a matter of fact, many a scholar of Old Norse has expressed, in recent years, the urgent need for new critical editions and in-depth investigations of the *ThGT*, especially with regard to its treatment of skaldic verse and its relationship to Latin literary rhetoric.<sup>43</sup> Certainly, this is a lack that the *ThGT* shares with the *FoGT*, which immediately follows it in Codex Wormianus of Snorri’s *Edda* as a sort of continuation and completion of its second part. Therefore it is no coincidence that some recent studies devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical background, both native and Latinate, of the medieval Icelandic *ars poetica* tackle the question, discussing the two treatises in conjunction.<sup>44</sup> We shall return to this topic, however, after considering a series of studies which have the *ThGT* as their central subject.

Two new critical editions of the *ThGT*, or of one of its parts,<sup>45</sup> have appeared, during this period, shortly after one another: one is by Thomas Krömmelbein and the other by Tarrin Wills, the latter being an unpublished doctoral dissertation.<sup>46</sup> The former may not properly be defined a *new* edition, inasmuch as it presents the text of Björn M. Ólsen’s 1884 edition of the treatise practically unchanged. It is accompanied by a short introduction, a parallel German translation (the first of

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Clunies Ross 2005, pp. 234–35.

<sup>44</sup> I am referring in particular to the extensive monographs of Guðrún Nordal (2001) and Margaret Clunies Ross (2005), which will be discussed below.

<sup>45</sup> As is well known, the treatise — composed by Óláfr Þórðarson hvítaskáld, Snorri Sturluson’s nephew — consists of two distinct sections, traditionally known by the names of *Málfræðinnar grundvöllr* ‘The Foundation of Grammar’ and *Málskrúðsfræði* ‘The Science of Language Ornamentation’, respectively.

<sup>46</sup> Krömmelbein 1998; Wills 2001.

its kind), and some essential explanatory notes. Wills’s work is an extensive study and a critical edition of the first, properly ‘grammatical’, part of the treatise (*Málfræðinnar grundvöllr*), which also includes facsimiles and transcription of its four extant manuscript witnesses. It also provides the first complete English translation of this text. Wills’s concern in the introductory section of his work and in the commentary is predominantly directed to establishing the role of *Málfræðinnar grundvöllr* in the context of the history of writing and, in particular, of early runological studies in Scandinavia. It will be noticed, among other things, that a new *complete* critical edition of the *ThGT* — or at least of its second part — equipped with a detailed commentary is still lacking.

The value of the *ThGT* or, more exactly, of its second part (*Málskrúðsfræði*), as a theoretical work on skaldic verse-making has been the object of careful examination in works by Margaret Clunies Ross and Judy Quinn. The former, firstly in a monograph devoted to the discussion of Snorri’s conception of a vernacular *ars poetica* as emerging from *Skáldskaparmál*,<sup>47</sup> and then in a recently published volume presenting a general view of Old Norse (mainly skaldic) poetry,<sup>48</sup> points out the close connections between Óláfr’s treatise and Snorri’s poetological work. Clunies Ross’s main point is that, although Óláfr derived some of his basic views about skaldic poetics as well as part of his technical vocabulary from Snorri, his idea of the nature and the function of poetry’s figurative language was considerably different from that of his uncle and more in keeping with Latin rhetorical tradition, especially as represented in Donatus’s *Ars maior*. The partially diverging attitude of the two authors towards vernacular poetry is actually corroborated by a comparative analysis of the technical terminology used by each of them, which clearly brings out Óláfr’s greater dependence on Latin models.<sup>49</sup> These very arguments are resumed and discussed in a broader context by Clunies Ross in her recent *History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, where Óláfr’s work is examined in parallel to the *FoGT*. The wide-ranging scope of her analysis also brings Clunies Ross to include Snorri’s writings on Norse poetics, together with the twelfth-century *Háttalykill*, in the category of ‘grammatical’ works in the broadest sense of the term, to such an extent as to subsume and discuss all of them under the common headings ‘The Icelandic grammatical tradition’ and ‘The grammatical literature’.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Clunies Ross 1987.

<sup>48</sup> Clunies Ross 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Clunies Ross 1987, esp. pp. 25–30, 34–38, and 69–77.

<sup>50</sup> Clunies Ross 2005, pp. 150–56 and 208–09.

But to this point we will come back later. A similar position has been maintained by Judy Quinn in an article on the development of scholarly descriptions of skaldic technique in Iceland between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries.<sup>51</sup> After outlining the main features and different aims of the three cardinal works of medieval Icelandic poetics — *Háttalykill*, *Háttatal*, and *Skáldskaparmál* — and their mutual relations, the author proceeds to a comparative analysis of Snorri's poetological writings and Óláfr's rhetorical treatise, the latter being similar in content to the former but conceived with partially different pedagogical intentions. Quinn argues that a considerable number of poetic concepts and terms used by Óláfr are directly drawn from Snorri's works (especially from *Háttatal*) and that Snorri was the first to apply them and to give them a formal description. Her basic assumption, however, is that, although all of the works mentioned 'draw from a rich source of vernacular nomenclature', some of the concepts expressed by these terms do not appear to have been 'definitively fixed' in skaldic tradition.<sup>52</sup> Finally, Quinn dwells at some length on the Prologue to the four GTs in Codex Wormianus, observing that this text, presumably written by the same person who compiled the manuscript in the mid-fourteenth century, clearly testifies to the transition from a predominantly oral to an essentially literary, that is, book-based, practice of skaldic art, founded on Christian ideology. This fact seems to be corroborated, among other things, by the coinage of a new term, *eddu list*, used by contemporary authors to refer to Snorri's (and other scholars') literary elaboration of ancient native poetry.

Owing to the presence of the many, for the most part anonymous, skaldic verses used by Óláfr to exemplify and substantiate his treatment of rhetorical figures, the *ThGT* is, of course, also an eminent source of Old Norse-Icelandic poetry. It is precisely from this perspective that it has been studied by, among others, Gísli Sigurðsson, in an article aiming at defining the status of oral poetry in mid-thirteenth-century Iceland.<sup>53</sup> Through a close scrutiny of all the verses contained in the treatise and a classification according to their (known or presumable) origin, Gísli arrives at the result that most of the Icelandic verses quoted by Óláfr (the authors of which are known from either Óláfr's information or other sources) belong to skaldic oral tradition and were composed by poets native

<sup>51</sup> Quinn 1994.

<sup>52</sup> Quinn 1994, p. 86.

<sup>53</sup> Gísli Sigurðsson 2000. An earlier, Icelandic version of this article was published in the preprints of the Ninth International Saga Conference, held in Akureyri in 1994.

to the west of Iceland, that is, from the same district as Óláfr and his family, the Sturlungar.<sup>54</sup>

The most popular and frequent subject of investigation concerning the *ThGT* in the last twenty years or so, however, has undoubtedly been the study of its connections with Latin grammatical tradition and, particularly, the search for its possible sources in Latin grammatical works. This is admittedly no surprise considering its numerous and manifold references, both explicit and implicit, to the doctrines of classical and medieval grammarians and rhetoricians.

An early attempt at defining the position of the OI treatises on rhetorical grammar — that is, Óláfr's *Málskrúðsfræði* and the *FoGT* — in the context of medieval works on Icelandic poetics and their relations with Latin rhetoric is to be found in an article by Peter Foote from 1982 (reprinted with a postscript in a collection of writings by the same author in 1984), where the influence exerted by the Latin tradition, especially of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is confronted with the original contributions of the Icelandic scholars.<sup>55</sup>

Three years after Foote's study, an article was published by Federico Albano Leoni, bearing the witty yet meaningful title 'Donato in Thule', in which the soundness of Óláfr's exemplification and explanation of the Latin rhetorical figures as described in Donatus's *Ars maior* (the only source expressly mentioned by Óláfr) by means of skaldic verses is tested, focussing on the chapter on tropes and metaphors.<sup>56</sup> The result of the enquiry is that, while some figures (such as *periphrasis*, *allegoria*, and *hyperbole*) are illustrated and described correctly, that is, in full conformity with Donatus's teaching, others (such as *antonomasia*, *epitheton*, and *metaphora*) are less so or are misinterpreted entirely, and that the incongruence is all the more marked and insoluble where the two poetic traditions and sensitivities are more divergent. Albano Leoni concludes therefore by observing that the occasional incompleteness and imperfection of Óláfr's rendering of the Donatian tenets is due to the remarkable distance between the two traditions, that of classical poetry, of a basically Aristotelian matrix, and that of skaldic versification, which has in Snorri its most distinguished theorist.

The relations of the *ThGT* with, on the one hand, Latin grammatical-rhetorical tradition and, on the other hand, an Old Norse-Icelandic theory of vernacular

<sup>54</sup> It may be useful to mention, in this connection, that a paper on the anonymous verses in the *ThGT* was recently presented by Tarrin Wills at the Thirteenth International Conference (Durham and York, 6–12 August 2006) and published in the conference preprints.

<sup>55</sup> Foote 1984 (1982).

<sup>56</sup> Albano Leoni 1985–86.

poetry, especially as represented in Snorri's writings, have also been investigated in works by Carlo Santini, Elena Gurevich, Mats Malm, and Rolf Stavnem. The first mentioned scholar discusses, among other things, Óláfr's treatment of some *vitia* (in particular, *acyrologia* and *amphibologia*) adopting an approach which is very similar to that of his fellow countryman Albano Leoni, yet extending the comparison to other Latin grammarians besides Donatus.<sup>57</sup> Along much the same lines is Elena Gurevich's study of Óláfr's exemplification of *macrologia*.<sup>58</sup> Mats Malm and Rolf Stavnem, on the other hand, have broached the complex task of defining the proper value of the term *sannkenning* by comparing the definitions and the examples given of this figure in Óláfr's treatise and Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal*, as well as in relation to the Latin tropes *metaphora* and *epitheton*, to which, according to Óláfr, it is supposed to correspond.<sup>59</sup> Malm's thesis is that *sannkenning* represents for both Óláfr and Snorri a subtype of *kenning* (on a par with *við(r)kenning*, mentioned in *Skáldskaparmál*), and that, contrary to what has often been maintained, Óláfr's exposition of *kenningar* is substantially coherent with respect to both Snorri's statements and the Latin concepts of *metaphora* and *epitheton*. Though sharing some of Malm's points, Stavnem maintains that Óláfr contradicts Snorri as well as parts of his own work, and that the passage in *Málskrúðsfræði* in which *sannkenning* is exemplified by means of definitions of men and gods is probably corrupt and therefore could be emended, for example into *mannkenning*, as some previous scholars have suggested.

There can be little doubt, however, that the most substantial contributions to the research on the Latinate background of the *ThGT* in its entirety have been made by Valeria Micillo.<sup>60</sup> The important and largely innovative results she has gradually achieved in this field in a period of about ten years are summarized and further defined in a forthcoming study which I have been allowed to utilize for the purpose of this article.<sup>61</sup> In particular, Micillo has been able to pinpoint some significant correspondences between the *ThGT* and the writings of some Irish — or, more exactly, Hiberno-Latin — grammarians who were active in Carolingian centres during the ninth century, as well as with twelfth-century commentaries

<sup>57</sup> Santini 1994, esp. pp. 42–44.

<sup>58</sup> Gurevich 2000.

<sup>59</sup> Malm 1990; Stavnem 2003.

<sup>60</sup> Micillo 1993, 1995, 1999, and 2000 pp. 621–22.

<sup>61</sup> A preliminary version of the study referred to was presented by Micillo in a paper delivered at the Twelfth International Saga Conference (Bonn) in 2003 but not included in the conference preprints.

on Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* and, with regard to the introductory section of the treatise (concerned with a classification of sounds), with the works of some thirteenth-century logicians. Among the first-mentioned writings, the Donatus commentaries by Sedulius Scottus, Murethach, and the anonymous *Ars Laurehamensis* are of particular relevance to the second part of the treatise, while the first part seems to be influenced at some points by the *Summa super Priscianum* of the French grammarian Petrus Helias. As for the opening section, Micillo argues that, besides echoes of Petrus Hispanus's *Summulae logicales* and Roger Bacon's *Summulae dialectices* (already pointed out in works by Fabrizio D. Raschella and Tarrin Wills), a dependence on the medieval tradition of the *arbor Porphyriana* (so called after the third-century Greek philosopher Porphyrius) is observable. From the above considerations Micillo infers that the author of the *ThGT* did not draw his material directly from Priscian's and Donatus's works, but rather from some of their later commentaries as well as from treatises on logic written by or connected with authors of his time, which he may possibly have reworked and supplemented with some of his own contributions. As is to be expected, the overall influence of Latin grammar is also observable in the technical vocabulary used by the author of the treatise, which in this regard appears to be the most dependent of the OIGTs on Latin models. In 1994, Micillo devoted an entire article to this aspect, comparing the grammatical terms used by Óláfr Þórðarson not only to the corresponding Latin nomenclature, but also to the grammatical terminology documented in other Germanic languages, especially in the *Latin Grammar* of the Anglo-Saxon abbot Ælfric of Eynsham.<sup>62</sup>

In connection with the technical terminology of the *ThGT*, mention must also be made of a study by Kristján Árnason concerning the use and the actual meaning of the term *hljóðs grein* used by Óláfr as an equivalent of Latin *accentus* or *tenor*, which corresponds to the modern concept of 'tonal accent' or 'pitch'.<sup>63</sup> The question is treated by Kristján in conjunction with Snorri's use of the term *grein* in *Háttatal*, yet for our purposes we may limit ourselves to considering only the former. The word in question is obviously used by Óláfr to refer to the distinction — proper to ancient Greek but automatically adopted by Latin grammarians — among acute, grave, and circumflex accents, yet Óláfr's exemplification is made, as is his habit, by means of Icelandic words and even instances of skaldic verses. The issue raised by Kristján is therefore whether Óláfr's statements about the

<sup>62</sup> Micillo 1994.

<sup>63</sup> Kristján Árnason 1984.

presence of different pitch types in Icelandic proceed from a mere adaptation of his Latin sources, as is currently believed, or may bear witness to the actual existence, in medieval Icelandic, of a tonal accent of the same kind as is found in some modern Scandinavian languages. Unfortunately, Óláfr's argumentation in this regard is, as clearly pointed out by the author, far from perspicuous and coherent, and no conclusive assessment of his thought seems possible. Therefore, after much discussion and speculation, the question raised by Kristján remains open; or, better, the presence of distinctive tonal accents in medieval Icelandic appears theoretically possible and tenable but not safely demonstrable.

From what has been observed so far, it appears that the *ThGT* is clearly a valuable source not only for the history of Icelandic literature and culture, but also for linguistic evidence in the broadest sense of the term. From the latter perspective it has also been investigated by the present writer with reference to a passage, contained in the chapter on the attributes of the letters (which also includes a comparison between the Latin and the runic alphabet), in which a statement is made about the properties of the 'diphthongs' in both Latin and Norse (*i norrænu*).<sup>64</sup> In doing this, the author of the treatise observes that in Norse the diphthong is found, among other things, for reasons of euphony (*fyrr hljóðfegrð*), which happens, for example, in words like *lækr* and *ægr*, and this 'because it seems to sound better than [when the same words are pronounced] *lækr* and *ægr*' (*þvíat fegra þykkir hljóða heldr en lækr, ægr*). Leaving aside any speculation about the alleged euphonic properties of a 'diphthong' (or, for that matter, of any other speech sound), what we learn from this statement by Óláfr is that, in his time, the 'diphthong' (in reality, a long vowel) found in these words could be pronounced in two different ways, that is, [æ:] or [æ:], and that the first pronunciation was, according to him, to be preferred because it sounded more correct or more agreeable. Put into terms of diachronic phonology, the phenomenon referred to by Óláfr shows that the vowel in question was undergoing a change, and that two variants — an earlier ([æ:]) and a more recent one ([æ:]) — coexisted at that time. In other words, Raschellà concludes, we have here an outright confirmation of an important phonological change that took place in mid-thirteenth-century Icelandic, which, beyond Óláfr's direct witness, is only to be inferred from manuscript evidence.

Finally, two studies concerning the chapters of the *ThGT* on the runic vis-à-vis the Latin alphabet should be mentioned. The first one, by Karin Fjellhammer

<sup>64</sup> Raschellà 2000. It is useful to note that the term 'diphthong' (*MS diptongus*) is used by the author of the treatise chiefly with reference to writing, that is, with the meaning of 'digraph' or 'ligature'.

Seim, is closely related to the investigations of Jan Ragnar Hagland referred to above among the works on the *FiGT*.<sup>65</sup> In discussing the function of the futhark in the teaching of reading and writing in late medieval Norway in the light of some fourteenth-century archaeological finds apparently containing runic spelling exercises (*runesyllabariar*), Seim briefly considers the comparative evidence provided by the *ThGT*, focussing her attention on the so-called 'sentence of king Valdemar', a pedagogical device representing all the letters (both simple and compound) of the Norse futhark in a single meaningful utterance. Seim argues that this sentence, along with the relevant commentary provided by the author of the treatise, can in fact be viewed as falling within the category of these spelling exercises and therefore can be understood to provide the rudiments of runic (and, indirectly, also Latin) literacy. The second of the studies referred to is an article by Fabrizio D. Raschellà devoted to an overall discussion of the chapters of the *ThGT* on runic letters and to a definition of the grapheme inventory according to the information supplied by the author of the treatise, as well as to an assessment of the phonemic values of the runic symbols involved.<sup>66</sup>

Although it has also suffered a long period of negligence, *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise* has unfortunately not yet seen the same revival of interest experienced in recent years by its younger and more famous companion. As a matter of fact, if exception is made of some fleeting mentions in works generically concerned with skaldic poetry or with OI learned literature, it may be said that this far-from-contemptible piece of work has been virtually ignored in published scholarship since the first — and so far only — critical edition and commentary by Björn M. Ólsen from 1884.<sup>67</sup> But, thankfully, it now seems that things are going to change.

References of some importance to the *FoGT* in publications of the last two decades are found in two articles, one by Peter Foote and the other by David McDougall, appearing in the 1980s and in recent works by Guðrún Nordal and Margaret Clunies Ross. Foote's article has already been mentioned in connection with research on the Latinate background of the *ThGT*, and reference can be made to what has been observed above in this regard. McDougall's study is partially devoted to the interpretation of and the search for sources or analogues for the commentary to a skaldic stanza of a religious nature probably composed by the

<sup>65</sup> Seim 1991.

<sup>66</sup> Raschellà 1994.

<sup>67</sup> *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske Afhandling*, ed. by Ólsen.

author of the treatise to illustrate the rhetorical figure *homoeosis* or *homoeophasis* (MS: *emophasis*).<sup>68</sup>

In a volume devoted to the evaluation of the role of skaldic poetry in medieval Icelandic textual culture, which will be discussed shortly, Guðrún Nordal observes, among other things, that one of the most distinctive characteristics of the *FoGT* as compared to the other GTs is the frequent resort of its author to religious verse to exemplify the rhetorical figures described in his work. This fact implies a cultural background to this text notably different from that of the century older *ThGT* — of which it is, in a sense, the direct continuation — and is perfectly in keeping with its putative provenance in a monastic centre (possibly Þingeyrar).<sup>69</sup>

Careful consideration has also been given to the *FoGT* by Margaret Clunies Ross, who, in her extensive 2005 monograph on Old Norse poetry and poetics plainly ascribes to it the same status as the *ThGT* as a plentiful and valuable source of skaldic poetry and of theorization about poetic composition. She further points out that, in spite of its overall adherence to its chief Latin sources (Alexander of Villedieu's *Doctrinale* and Eberhard of Béthune's *Graecismus*), the *FoGT* displays more than a few original features and, above all, that it represents a first-rate source for our knowledge of late skaldic poetry, especially of Christian verse. Among the aspects which would profit from an extensive and in-depth study of the *FoGT*, Clunies Ross points out the close connection of the author with an ecclesiastical milieu and with Christian teaching in fourteenth-century Iceland, as well as his interest in facts, both past and contemporary, of Scandinavian history and politics.<sup>70</sup>

Lastly, I wish to add that, while I was attending to the final draft of this article, I was told that a doctoral thesis — which I did not have the opportunity to see in time — reportedly including an Italian translation and a commentary of the *FoGT* was submitted in 2004 at the University of Palermo by a young scholar by the name of Michele Longo,<sup>71</sup> who also informed me that an article of his, concerning an instance of contamination between skaldic and Latin rhetorical tradition, was about to appear.

<sup>68</sup> McDougall 1988, pp. 477–82. A preliminary version of this article was presented at the Sixth International Saga Conference (Helsingør) in 1985 but not published in the conference preprints.

<sup>69</sup> Guðrún Nordal 2001, p. 88.

<sup>70</sup> Clunies Ross 2005, esp. pp. 202–05.

<sup>71</sup> Michele Longo, 'Il Quarto Trattato Grammaticale islandese: Testo, traduzione e commento' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Università di Palermo, 2004).

Before going on to considering some works dealing with particular aspects and problems of more than one GT or of OIGL as a whole, I wish to comment briefly on a study — so far unique of its kind, to my knowledge — written in 1993 by Sverrir Tómasson and specifically devoted to the analysis of the Prologue to the four GTs in Codex Wormianus of Snorri's *Edda*.<sup>72</sup> Sverrir opens his article by observing that the composite character of Codex Wormianus, far from being accidental, has all the requisites of a grammatical digest, in the broadest sense of the term, closely reflecting what in antiquity and the Middle Ages was the global function of grammar, intended as 'scientia interpretandi poetas atque rhetoricos et recte scribendi loquendique ratio'.<sup>73</sup> After summing up the opinions expressed by scholars on the place of origin and the cultural environment of the manuscript, the author proceeds to a careful examination of the formal structure of the Prologue. In particular, he points out its references to contemporary works on poetic art (not explicitly mentioned in the text, where the general expressions *ný skáld* (*ok fræðimenn*) and *ýmislígar/klerklígar bæk* are used alternatively) and to an early attempt at orthographic systematization of Icelandic writing, of which no tangible evidence has come down to us: the *fyrsti lettrsháttur* 'written according to the sixteen-letter alphabet in the Nordic language (*í danskri tungu*), which Þóroddr the Rune Master and the priest Ari the Learned have set against the Latin alphabet established by Priscian', in which Sverrir Tómasson thinks he can recognize a primitive and essential form of the Latin alphabet as that used in the earliest Icelandic manuscripts. Giving a reliable interpretation of the most controversial passages of the Prologue, the author comes to the conclusion that the compiler of Codex Wormianus (who, according to common opinion, is to be identified as the author of the Prologue itself as well as of *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise*) operated with the intention of providing his contemporaries with a better understanding of the early skalds (*fornskáldin*), in order that the 'new skalds' (*ný skáld*) might conform to their teachings, much in the same way as medieval Latin grammarians treated the poets of classical antiquity. He was therefore, Sverrir further observes, a 'conservative' who was anxious to hand down *grammatica* in its original integrity, that is, as the all-inclusive study of language, literature, and style, and he conceived his work as 'a manual for poets and scholars' that needed instruction in the proper use of language.

<sup>72</sup> Sverrir Tómasson 1993.

<sup>73</sup> 'the art of interpreting the poets and the rhetoricians, and the doctrine of writing and speaking correctly'. The definition is taken from the anonymous Codex Bernensis 123, here quoted from J. J. Baebler, *Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der lateinischen Grammatik im Mittelalter* (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1885; repr. Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1971), p. 39.

As many a reader will have noticed, it is sometimes difficult to group studies on the OIGTs according to their subject matter, since some of them combine a discussion of two or more treatises. In this last section I will therefore consider some works that have not been possible to assign to one or the other of the preceding sections.

The first group of these works is concerned in particular with the presence and the influence of Latin and, more generally, classical elements in the OIGTs. This is in fact one of the most investigated aspects, which has already been considered in connection with the individual treatises, so it will not be necessary to repeat here facts and concepts to which attention has already been drawn and which are, as a rule, largely uncontroversial.

Contributions to this subject have been made by, besides the authors previously mentioned, Federico Albano Leoni and Fabrizio D. Raschellà. The former, in an article published in the proceedings of a conference of the Société pour l'Information Grammaticale,<sup>74</sup> puts particular stress on the original character of certain features observable in the *FiGT* and *SGT*, which, according to him, are likely to derive from an indigenous, pre-Latinate, grammatical tradition; in so doing, he corroborates a view shared also by other scholars.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, he maintains, against widespread consensus, that the two treatises have a practical rather than a theoretical interest for the history of linguistic thought. Raschellà has devoted a study to this general aspect of OIGL in which he examines the influence exerted on the Icelandic grammarians by authors and works of classical antiquity other than those falling within the 'technical', that is, grammatical and rhetorical, sphere.<sup>76</sup> The conclusion he arrives at is that, although medieval Icelandic grammarians shared much the same common classical background as their fellow scholars on the Continent, which they poured into their works, they typically reworked their materials and adapted them to the demands of their native cultural milieu to such an extent that singling out from their writings definite references to classical sources can often be quite problematic.

Closely connected with the study of the Latin influence on the works of the medieval Icelandic grammarians is another study by Raschellà, in which a comparative analysis of the technical vocabulary of the strictly 'grammatical' treatises, that is, the *FiGT*, the *SGT*, and the first part of the *ThGT* is carried out.<sup>77</sup> The

<sup>74</sup> Albano Leoni 1988.

<sup>75</sup> Compare, for example, Raschellà 1983, pp. 297–302.

<sup>76</sup> Raschellà 1998.

<sup>77</sup> Raschellà 2004.

general impression one gets from the results of this investigation is that, in the field of grammatical terminology, the dependence of the OIGTs on Latin models is also rather feeble and vague, in that quite a number of terms occurring in them — especially those referring to typical Icelandic features or to an unconventional linguistic analysis (as in the *FiGT* and, even more, in the *SGT*) — are either heavily altered or drawn from a native, pre-Latin grammatical tradition. It is as good as certain that an analysis of the technical vocabulary of the second part of the *ThGT* and of the *FoGT* would produce quite different results, yet it is still waiting to be done.

Another group of works devoted to a particular aspect of OIGL consists of three studies, of very different scope and value, concerned with an evaluation of OIGL in the context of medieval Icelandic poetic tradition and literary culture. The first is an article by Kurt Braunmüller dealing with the position and the function of the OIGTs in relation to Snorri's *Edda*.<sup>78</sup> After pointing out the reasons that may lie at the base of a conceptual connection between Old Norse poetics (especially as represented in Snorri's works) and OIGL, and that have caused the GTs to be invariably handed down in manuscripts of the *Edda*, Braunmüller argues that the GTs should in fact be considered a theoretical completion of, and an enlightening illustration of, Snorri's work, provided by later scholars and manuscript compilers in order to make them 'more acceptable' to their contemporaries.<sup>79</sup> Accordingly, Braunmüller states that it would be appropriate always to include these writings in editions of Snorri's *Edda*, a practice that was applied by some of the earliest editors but has not been followed in more recent times.

The second work belonging to this group is represented by Stephen Tranter's contribution to the miscellaneous volume *Old Icelandic Literature and Society* edited by Margaret Clunies Ross.<sup>80</sup> The article focuses on medieval Icelandic 'artes poeticae' or, to use a more comprehensive expression occurring in Tranter's work, 'ars grammaticopoetica', under which term all of Snorri's works on vernacular poetics and the four GTs (especially the *SGT* and the second part of the *ThGT*) are subsumed. Although Tranter's effort to gather all these works in one global treatment of skaldic poetics is in itself admissible, albeit not necessarily approvable, it should be pointed out that his discussion occasionally appears confused and not fully coherent. Furthermore, one cannot but notice that, as far as his remarks

<sup>78</sup> Braunmüller 1995.

<sup>79</sup> 'akzeptabler', Braunmüller 1995, p. 241.

<sup>80</sup> Tranter 2000.

about the *SGT* are concerned, the author shows himself to be not fully acquainted with the theoretical approach and the investigative method of this text.

The group is completed by Guðrún Nordal's wide-ranging investigation of the role of skaldic poetry in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Icelandic 'textual culture'.<sup>81</sup> Since this work has already been mentioned on several occasions, it will suffice here to touch on only a few points that have not yet been treated. The issues concerning the relations of the OIGTs with skaldic verse and poetics discussed in this volume are numerous; nevertheless, Nordal's central thesis may perhaps be epitomized in the following three points:

(1) The GTs and Icelandic writing on skaldic verse-making (just like Snorri's poetological works) may be viewed as different expressions of one and the same reality, in that they testify to different perspectives of the formal study of *grammatica*;

(2) The fact that the GTs are invariably handed down in manuscripts of Snorri's *Edda* proves that OIGL was part and parcel of the theoretical discussion of vernacular poetry; and

(3) The central role of skaldic verse as a linguistic model in both poetic and grammatical treatises shows that it was 'at the heart of the textual culture and the formal education of the privileged classes' and that it 'proved the crucial link between the study of *grammatica* and the indigenous traditions in Iceland'.<sup>82</sup>

To complete the picture, mention should be made of the description of the Icelandic GTs in Karl G. Johansson's extensive investigation of the script in Codex Wormianus of Snorri's *Edda*,<sup>83</sup> which, as is well known, contains the only extant collection of these writings, to which a prologue is prefixed. In his work, which I do not hesitate to describe as exemplary, Johansson scrutinizes, among other things, the orthography of the text of the four treatises and the Prologue and conjectures about the history of their manuscript transmission. Special consideration is given to the analysis of the *SGT*, which is in fact a careful and up-to-date review of the main studies devoted to this text.<sup>84</sup>

I would like to conclude by warmly thanking Margaret Clunies Ross, the recipient of the present volume, for the zeal and the enthusiasm she has devoted in the last two decades to the study of Old Icelandic 'poetic grammar'. With her interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach she has often thrown fresh light on

<sup>81</sup> Guðrún Nordal 2001.

<sup>82</sup> Guðrún Nordal 2001, p. 115 and p. 340.

<sup>83</sup> Johansson 1997, pp. 43–59 and 201–08.

<sup>84</sup> Johansson 1997, pp. 50–55 and 205.

this fascinating and yet complex subject, opening new roads towards knowledge of the Old Norse world.

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<sup>85</sup> The following list includes, in conformity with the title of the paper, only works on OIGL published between 1983 and 2005. Works mentioned in the paper which pre-date this period are reported in the footnotes. Icelandic authors, including those having a family name, are listed according to the Icelandic alphabetical order and naming system, i.e. first name followed by patronymic and/or family name. For those works that are not mentioned in the paper and whose connection with OIGL is not evident from the title, a brief explanatory note has been added in square brackets after the bibliographical entry.



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