



Beyond the Piraeus Lion

East Norse Studies from Venice

edited by Jonathan Adams and Massimiliano Bampi

SELSKAB FOR ØSTNORDISK FILOLOGI 2017

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Jonathan Adams & Massimiliano Bampi (red.): Beyond the Piraeus Lion

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*Copenhagen & Venice,
July 2017*

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1. A VENETIAN MISCELLANY

JONATHAN ADAMS & MASSIMILIANO BAMPI

In recent years, interest in East Norse philology has grown steadily, not just in Scandinavia, but also in other countries, such as Germany, Italy, and USA. The field continues to attract new students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and several important doctoral theses on codicology, palaeography, literacy, literary trends, and language history have appeared. Projects on everything from manuscript catalogues to digitized editions have received generous funding from both the public purse and private benefactors. New digital tools, such as dictionaries, lemmatized texts, and biographies, are being developed for Old Danish and Old Swedish enabling researchers and students to approach the East Norse material in entirely new and innovative ways.

Selskab for Østnordisk Filologi · Sällskap för östnordisk filologi has also benefitted from and contributed to this renaissance and its second biennial conference organized by Massimiliano Bampi, Marina Buzzoni, and Ingela Hedström and held 18–20 November 2015 at the Università Ca' Foscari Venezia was a great success. Lectures were given by participants from nine countries and a selection of these papers have been reworked into articles for this volume, the second in the Society's publication series. The wide array of topics presented here and the variety of approaches demonstrate the richness of East Norse philology and provide inspiration and food for thought for scholars working with Old Danish and Old Swedish.

In the first section, *Palaeography, Codicology, and Editing*, Lasse Mårtensson, Anders Brun, and Fredrik Wahlberg discuss different types of digitally extracted palaeographical data and present a new method where a computer learns by itself to look for regularities in script. Patrik Åström's article presents the types of ruling found in extant medieval Swedish manuscripts and identifies one particular type as being typical of Vadstena nuns writing on parchment between *c.* 1480 and *c.* 1530. In the last contribution in this section, Henrik Williams tackles the thorny issue of normalization in editions of Old Swedish. Just why is there so much resistance to the idea of normalized editions, and is this opposition warranted?

The following section on *Manuscript Studies*, contains two articles. Dario Bullitta investigates the Old Swedish *Evangelium Nicodemi* and convincingly shows that the apocryphon was introduced to Sweden by Vadstena novices studying in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Prague towards the end of the fourteenth century. Indeed, he argues that the manuscripts of the University are probably the best place to look for sources that were used in Birgittine devotional literature. Jonathan Adams

discusses a fragment (no. 3230) in the Royal Library in Copenhagen that relates the story of a bishop murderer. He identifies the fragment as a unique translation of Étienne de Bourbon's version of the tale in his *Tractatus de diversis materiis praedicabilibus* (c. 1255).

Old Danish forms the focus of the third section, *Vocabulary and Style*. Simon Skovgaard Boeck investigates aspects of text, syntax, and word formation in Old Danish medical literature. He shows that differences depend upon the focus of the texts and also that there is internal variation in the texts by Henrik Harpestreng. In the following contribution, Marita Akhøj Nielsen uses recently lemmatized texts available at middelaldertekster.dk to investigate the chivalric vocabulary of six Old Danish romances – three of which are translated from the Old Swedish *Eufemiavisorna*, and three are independent of this tradition. She shows that vocabulary relating to an aristocratic milieu is much greater in the translated romances than in the “purely” Danish ones. However, these latter texts have a more copious vocabulary dealing with law, ethics, violence, and fighting.

In the section *Literature and Writing*, Inger Lindell casts light on the all too often overlooked subject of women and literacy. By looking at letters, charters, and diplomas, she shows that some women were able to write from the beginning of the fourteenth century, and that their number grew throughout the following centuries, especially among the nobility. Anja U. Blode writes about the episode of King Snio in the East Norse sources and focuses on the Old Danish *Annales Ryenses*. She is able to show the connections between the extant manuscripts and draw a clear line from the oldest witnesses to the early modern period. Stephen Mitchell discusses the Old Swedish poem “Mik mötte en gamul kerling”. He looks particularly at the suitability of the modern title “Trollmöte” by considering how trolls were understood and represented in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, he places the work in the context of “life's journey” literature related to the pilgrimage experience. Kim Bergqvist investigates the role of emotions in the Old Swedish courtly romances *Herr Ivan* and *Flores och Blanzeflor*. He demonstrates how the translator shaped his texts to show that courtly behaviour should be equated with moderation and self-restraint.

In the final section, *Bibles and Translations*, Karl G. Johansson discusses attitudes towards St Jerome and his importance for medieval Danish and Swedish Bible translations. Jerome, as Johansson shows, was considered an authority throughout the East Norse area and his approach to translation served as a model for the Danish and Swedish Bible translators. Finally, Lars Wollin presents a method for comparing translations by using an index called TRIX and compares Reformation Bible translations with the Pentateuch Paraphrase. He makes a tantalizing – albeit tentative – suggestion that the beginning of the sixteenth century saw the start of a short-lived double tradition of Bible translations – the one Lutheran, the other Catholic.



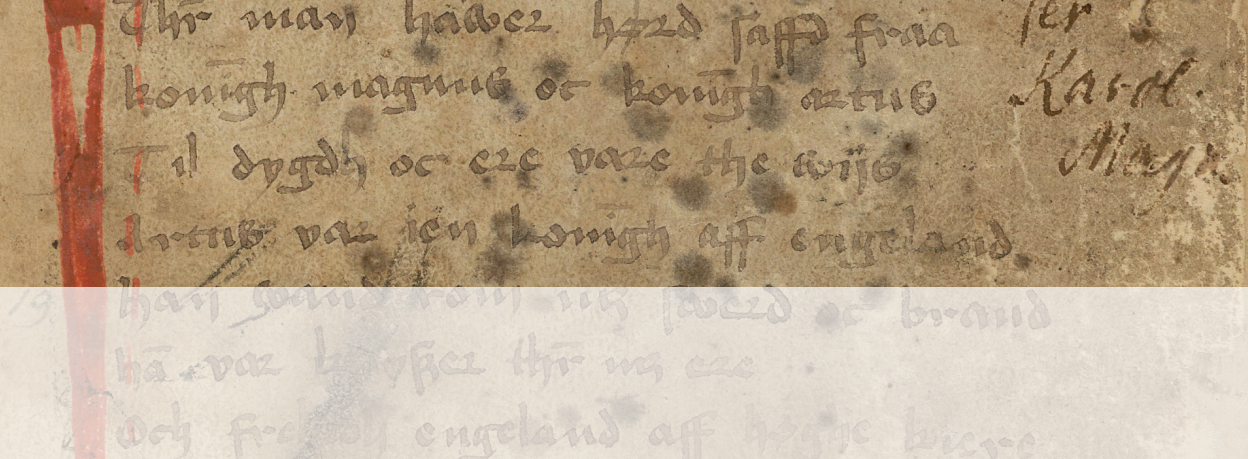
Figure 1.1. The Piraeus Lion, Arsenale, Venice. Wikipedia Commons.

Arsenale – the Venetian Arsenal – is, of course, now home to the Piraeus Lion with its famous Runic Swedish inscriptions running across its shoulders and flanks (see Figure 1.1), and thus today the city has a very visible link to the writing of the North. However, Venice is rarely referred to in East Norse material. In Old Danish, the city is not mentioned in connection with its famous canals, its colourful Murano glass, its stunning architecture, or its excellent cuisine. No, it is the benefits of Venetian soap that arouse the excitement of Danish writers:

Ffor werck Tag i potthe bremæwiin oc iiii lod oess aff holyrt oc iiii fenædiiss seffwæ
lad *thet sammen* i en reen potthe oc verm *thet sammen* oc lad *thet saa* i eth glass oc smør
thet paa for en varm ildh ther *som* verken staar (Copenhagen, Royal Library, NkS 314 b,
4°, f. E7r)

[For aches. Take one pot of brandy and four parts birthwort and four parts Venetian soap. Place them into a clean pot and warm it all through and then put it into a glass and by a warm fire rub it on where the ache is.]

Although we cannot recommend this cure, we hope that you will find this Venetian miscellany of East Norse studies as soothing, therapeutic, and restorative as the medieval Danes found Venetian soap. *Buona lettura a tutti!*



Beyond the Piraeus Lion

East Norse Studies from Venice

East Norse philology – the study of Old Danish, Old Swedish, and Old Gutnish – continues to attract scholarly attention from around the world. *Beyond the Piraeus Lion* comprises fourteen articles on a vast number of topics by researchers from Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, and the USA. They are based on a selection of the papers given at the Second International Conference for East Norse Philology held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in November 2015. The volume covers subjects ranging from codicology and material philology to text transmission and reception, from women's literacy in medieval Sweden to studies of Old Danish lexicon, and from Bible translations to Old Swedish poetics. In all, there are five sections in the volume – *Palaeography, Codicology, and Editing; Manuscript Studies; Vocabulary and Style; Literature and Writing; Bibles and Translations* – that all demonstrate the breadth and vitality of East Norse philology.

The book is the second volume published by Selskab for Østnordisk Filologi · Sällskap för östnordisk filologi, established in Uppsala in 2013.

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