

**G**erd Wolfgang Weber. *Mythos und Geschichte: Essays zur Geschichtsmythologie Skandinaviens in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*. Introduction by Margaret Clunies Ross. Hesperides: Letterature e Culture Occidentali, vol. 11. Trieste: Edizioni Parnaso, 2001. 196 pages.

**M**ichael Dallapiazza, Olaf Hansen, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, and Yvonne S. Bonnetain, editors. *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber*. Hesperides: Letterature e Culture Occidentali, vol. 12. Trieste: Edizioni Parnaso, 2000. 487 pages.

Gerd Wolfgang Weber (1942–1998) was one of the most influential recent scholars of Old Norse, and his early death was a great misfortune for the field. Although it is no compensation either for the personal loss of a dear colleague or the intellectual loss of what he might have accomplished had he been granted a longer life, yet there is some consolation in seeing the renewed focus on his ideas that these two volumes represent.

*Mythos und Geschichte* reprints six of Weber's essays. "Irreligiosität und Heldenzeitalter: Zum Mythencharakter der altisländischen Literatur" (15–41), "Siðaskipti: Das religionsgeschichtliche Modell Snorri Sturlusons in Edda und Heimskringla" (83–97), and "Intellegere historiam: Typological Perspectives of Nordic Prehistory (in Snorri, Saxo, Widukind and Others)" (99–144) were groundbreaking achievements that profoundly changed our understanding of Old Norse literature. Not only did Weber's insights illuminate the specific texts he discussed, they also turned out to be relevant to a wide range of other works, providing a framework within which and against which everything from mytho-heroic sagas to manuscript compilations could be read. "Snorri Sturlusons Verhältnis zu seinen Quellen und sein Mythos-Begriff" (43–82) and "Saint Óláfr's Sword: Einarr Skúlason's

*Geisli* and Its Trondheim Performance AD 1153—a Turning Point in Norweco-Icelandic Scaldic Poetry" (145–51) are fine examples of Weber's scholarship: solidly researched and interesting to read. The volume concludes with the rich combination of political analysis and art history that is "Nordische Vorzeit als chiliastische Zukunft: 'Nordisches Erbe' und zyklisches Geschichtsbild in Skandinavien und Deutschland um 1800—und später" (153–96). (The bibliography that appears in the table of contents is the list of works cited in this last essay.) Margaret Clunies Ross provides an introduction that is both personal and scholarly; it is particularly valuable for discussing some of Weber's important work that was not included in this volume, as well as those that were. As helpful as this introduction is, readers seeking a comprehensive overview of Weber's thought should turn to her contribution to the *Gedenkschrift* for Weber, *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber*.

In addition to an introductory appreciation of Weber's life and work, the *Gedenkschrift* contains nineteen papers on Old Norse literature, three on runes, two on medieval Icelandic phonology and semantics, two on Old English literature, one on medieval German literature, and eight on topics ranging from the interpretation of Aristotelian concepts in fourteenth- and nineteenth-century Sweden to American philosophy. It also contains "Avskjed" (241), a poem by **Randi Agnete Hartner** about the sympathetic sorrow felt by those close to a dying man. The ten papers on Old Norse prose genres form the thematic core of the volume, but there are also four papers dealing with myth and ritual, and two papers each on skaldic and eddic poetry. Margaret Clunies Ross's contribution, as mentioned above, reviews the elements of Weber's approach to medieval Scandinavian literature and describes how they have been continued and refined by other scholars.

The non-medieval-Scandinavian essays can be treated quite briefly. In "Åxel Oxenstierna: Eine politische Biographie; Vorgeschichte" (55–60), **Günter Barudio** offers some reflections on the background of his forthcoming political biography of

the Swedish statesman Axel Oxenstierna. In "Ritterromane als Jugendlektüre im Mittelalter: Thomasin von Zirklaria und Hugo von Trimberg" (121–28), **Michael Dallapiazza** compares the judgments rendered on courtly (especially Arthurian) literature by the authors of two Middle High German texts intended for the edification of the young. In "Le conoscenze mediche nell'Inghilterra anglosassone: Il ruolo del mondo carolingio" (129–46), **Maria A. D'Aronco** identifies the figures in the dedication illumination in BL Cotton Vitellius C. III (fol. 11v), an Old English translation of the *Herbarium Apulei*, as Marcus Agrippa and Antonius Musa. In "Die Äpfel der Idun" (157–67), **Else Ebel** explores the editorial agenda of the early-nineteenth-century journal *Iduna*, published by the Swedish literary association Götiska förbundet. In "The Invention of the Viking Horned Helmet" (199–208), **Roberta Frank** investigates the origins of the modern notion that Vikings wore horned helmets. In "Philosophy, Poiesis, Literary Skepticism" (209–222), **Olaf Hansen** addresses the question of what is meant by "an" or "the" American philosophy and the extent to which this question is related to the problem of poiesis and literary skepticism. In "Redazione E (Peterborough) della *Cronaca sassone*: Appunti stilistici" (307–22), **Gloria Corsi Mercatanti** discusses the modulations into didactic or homiletic style that she detects in the E redaction of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and its continuations. In "Griechische Mythen in der bildenden Kunst des Dritten Reiches: Tradition—Faschismus—Widerstand" (391–419), **Udo Reinhardt** presents the first two sections of a five-part essay on Greek myth in the plastic arts of the Third Reich, covering the topics of Greek myth as a medium of political propaganda and Greek myth in the sculpture of the Third Reich. In "Strindbergs *Till Damaskus I* und die 'schwedische Krankheit' der deutschen Literatur" (435–49), **Hans Schottmann** examines how Strindberg's *Till Damaskus I* became understood against the background of German Expressionism. In "Inversionens stemme i Ewalds nattefragmenter" (451–60), **Peer E. Sørensen** analyzes "Fragment" and "Aftenen: Et Fragment" by the eighteenth-century Danish poet Johannes Ewald. Bridging the

chronological gap between the Middle Ages and later periods is **Mats Malm's** "Christian Saints and Romantic Æsir: On Two Swedish Adaptations of Aristotle's *Poetics*" (265–79), which describes the interpretations of Aristotelian concepts found in the works of Master Mathias (one of the Swedish redactors of St. Birgitta's *Revelations*) and C. J. L. Almqvist (a nineteenth-century writer of the Gothic/Romantic school).

Old Icelandic linguistics is represented by two studies. In "Vowel Change in Thirteenth-Century Icelandic: A First-Hand Witness" (383–89), **Fabrizio D. Raschellà** uses the statements about diphthongs made by Óláfr Þórðarson in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* in order to support Jón Helgason's analysis of the internal rhymes in skaldic stanzas from a related passage of the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise*, which showed that the opposition between /ø/ and /æ/ was still operative at that time but was becoming more unstable. In "Una denominazione per 'cielo' in norreno (*hlýrn*, *hlýrnir*)" (293–306), **Marcello Meli** argues that the probably neuter form *hlýrn* and the masculine singular form *hlýrnir* are both synonyms of *himinn* 'heaven' and that *hlýrn* is the older form meaning 'day or night sky', while *hlýrnir* arose later with the connotation 'firmament of fixed stars'. More speculatively, he suggests that the Norse names for the nine heavens refer to the states of the sky at different times of the year (e.g., *vindbláinn* would be the gray sky of autumn, *andlangr* would be the brief daylight at the winter solstice, and so on).

Runes and runic inscriptions from Orkney, Germany, and Sweden are discussed in three studies. In "Runic Tradition in Orkney: From Orphir to the Belsair Guest House" (43–54), **Michael P. Barnes** reviews twenty-two runic inscriptions found in Orkney (excluding Maeshowe) and considers factors such as the use of twig runes, the presence or lack of context, and Scandinavian parallels in his assessment of whether the fragmentary inscriptions are medieval or modern. Twig runes also figure in the contribution of **Ernst Erich Metzner**, who in "Exemplarisches vom Untermain zur karolingerzeitlichen Kenntnis älteren Geheimrunen-Gebrauchs" (323–38) proposes

that the *E*-like sign on border stones and the coat of arms of Dörnigheim is actually the twig rune for **p**, /th/, the initial sound of the Old High German form of *Dörnigheim* 'abode of Thuringians'. Similarly, the sign like a left-tilted *Z* on the coat of arms of Rüsselsheim and the boundary stones of Markwald is the twig rune for **f**, /f/, the initial sound of Fünf-Dorf-Mark, the name of the region in which Rüsselsheim is located. In "The Bällsta-Inscriptions and Old Norse Literary History" (223–39), **Joseph Harris** supports the position of Jón Helgason that **i grati** on the second stone means "in a lament" and argues in some detail that the larger sense of the inscription is that the widow will have her husband commemorated with an elegy and that she will not necessarily compose it herself. Harris also suggests reading **uan** as *uf (h)ann*, *OI of hann* [about him], and raises the possibility that the two stones and the thingstead intended as memorials by the sons of the deceased might be newer practices here found side by side with the older, simpler customs of the widow's generation.

In addition to Harris's contribution to the ongoing debate concerning women and Germanic elegy, the field of Old Norse poetry is served by four essays on skaldic and eddic poems. In "Knútr in Poetry and History" (243–56), **Judith Jesch** analyzes the surviving fragments of the *Knútsdrápa* composed by Hallvarðr Háreksblei in terms of its original situation of utterance (i.e., its recital to the king by the poet, in the presence of the court). On the basis of the verses' internal structure, the logical sequence of the events described, the verb tenses, and the diction, she makes a convincing argument that the order of fragments should be 1/2, 3, 5/4, 6, 7, 8 (the refrain), an order that is nearly the same as that proposed by Finnur Jónsson. In "'Flygr qrn yfir': Til strofe 59 i *Völuspá*" (339–46), the late **Preben Meulengracht Sørensen**, another eminent scholar sorely missed by his colleagues, offers a lyrical close reading of stanza 59 of *Völuspá*, in which the eagle flies over the renewed earth risen green from the sea, in support of his argument that the poem is the product of a gifted individual who yet relies on oral tradition. In "*Draumkvædet* og *Voluspá*: To visjonsdikt fra nordisk middelalder"

(461–70), **Gro Steinsland** compares *Völuspá* and *Draumkvædet* in order to determine the larger changes in mentality that took place in Scandinavia during the transition from paganism to Christianity. Whereas *Völuspá* is characterized by a collective perspective, a polytheistic universe, a focus on cosmology, and a female visionary who journeys through time, *Draumkvædet* is characterized by an individualistic perspective, a concern with individual sin and salvation, a folk version of Christianity, and a male visionary who journeys through space. In "'Setbergs kveða sitja'" (483–87), **Vésteinn Ólason** interprets a half stanza by Eilífr Goðrúnarson (quoted in the *Skáldskaparmál* of *Snorra Edda* to exemplify kennings for Christ) as a baptismal one. Citing a variety of biblical passages that refer to spiritual waters and rocks, he argues that *setbergs Urðar brunnr* is a kenning for the well of life springing from the rock that is Christ, but that it was easier for a new convert to portray Christ the king as residing by this well of the rock rather than being the rock in a spiritual sense.

The story of Baldr's death is treated in two of the four papers dealing with Old Norse myth and ritual. In the intriguing "'En er þetta sá Loki Laufeyjarson, þá líkaði honum illa, er Baldr sakaði ekki'" (73–87), **Yvonne S. Bonnetain** draws on the evidence of bracteates to argue that Baldr's death was a deliberately sacrificial one engineered by Óðinn, for which Loki was the scapegoat. In "'Sú íþrótt, er þér kallið skáldskapr': Magia, poesia e *translatio artium* nella mitografia norrena del XIII secolo" (89–109), **Adele Cipolla** surveys the uses of the term *íþróttir* [skills, arts] and discusses the relationship of these skills to the language of poetry. This wide-ranging essay also touches on runes and the magic associated with the game of *tafl*. In "Kosmogonische Mythen in der *Húsdrápa* des Úlfr Uggason" (281–92), **Edith Marold** examines the argument between Heimdallr and Loki described in one of the surviving stanzas of *Húsdrápa* and suggests a link between this myth and that of Þórr's fishing for the *Miðgarðsormr*, which is the subject of another stanza of the poem. Using the evidence of creation myths from other cultures, she argues that both Scandinavian myths are variations of a

myth in which the project of the creator-god is affected for the worse by the action of a helper figure. In “Balder og Høt—om guder, helte og initiationsritualer” (421–33), **Jens Peter Schjødt** discusses Jan de Vries’s analysis of the myth of Baldr’s death and criticizes the inconsistency of interpretation, the lack of discussion of the structure of initiation rituals, the unsupportable double identifications of Óðinn with Hqðr and Váli with Baldr, and the questionable interpretation of Loki. Schjødt then presents his own reading of the story of Hqtr and Bqðvarr bjarki from *Hrólfs saga kraka* as an example of how to integrate both structure and symbolism into a methodologically sound reconstruction of a pre-Christian initiation ritual. An initiation ritual is characterized by four elements: the subject’s status is irreversibly raised; the subject is separated from his previous milieu, symbolically enters another world, and is reintegrated into the normal world with a new way of life; the new way of life is characterized by the possession of a certain knowledge or abilities connected with the otherworld and acquired in the course of the ritual; and the relationship between this world and the otherworld, or between the subject’s way of life before and after the ritual, is expressed through a series of semantic contrasting pairs. Schjødt shows how *Hrólfs saga kraka* contains these elements but also warns that the text is not a technical account of an actual ritual.

A number of revisions to the received version of Old Norse literary history are made in the contributions dealing with the Old Norse prose genres. In “Exoticism in Early Iceland” (19–28), **Theodore M. Andersson** corrects Sigurður Nordal’s view of a linear progression of the Icelandic interest in “the exotic” (i.e., the legendary history of the lands east of Iceland). Andersson concludes that exoticism never disappeared from Icelandic literature but was particularly strong at the beginning, lingered in *Morkinskinna*, the *Vinland sagas*, and the sagas of the skalds, and then reasserted itself when the Icelandic Commonwealth came to an end. In the persuasive “How Can We Use Medieval Historiography?” (29–42), **Sverre Bagge** draws on *De bello Saxonico*, *Vita Heinrici Quarti*, *Heimskringla*, *Sverris*

*saga*, *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, and *Njáls saga* to argue for the utility of medieval historiography as a source of information about the attitudes or mentalities of the times and societies in which they were composed. He discusses some aspects of the sagas’ relationship to historical reality, pointing out that the author of *Sverris saga* would not have admitted that Sverrir was an unpopular king, and the author of *Hákonar saga* would have invented a positive account of Hákon’s tactical skill and personal performance in battle if those qualities were important to his audience. Bagge concludes that although knowledge of literary and rhetorical factors is important to our understanding of the sagas, these issues are not in opposition to a historical or social analysis of the same texts. In “War Snorri Sturluson ein Euhemerist?” (61–71), **Heinrich Beck** offers a thought-provoking reexamination of the nature of Snorri Sturluson’s euhemerism and argues that insofar as Snorri explains that the heathen gods were in reality men, he is using one element of euhemerism, but insofar as he is not dismissing paganism as a delusion worked by demons or rationalizing it as the misleading of the gullible by the powerful, he is not employing euhemerism for its customary purpose. Rather, Snorri sets paganism in a relationship of partial analogy to Christianity and confers upon this period of Scandinavian history its own intrinsic value. In the excellent “Pour l’étude des traditions relatives à l’enterrement du roi Hálfðan le Noir (147–56), **François-Xavier Dillmann** argues that the accounts of the dismemberment of King Hálfðan’s corpse must be seen in the light of his status in the history of the Norwegian royal dynasty, namely as the first ruler of what turned out to be an enduring realm. In dividing his body amongst themselves, the chieftains of the provinces united by Hálfðan are symbolically consolidating the kingdom. Moreover, this foundational act repeats pagan cosmogony, for Ymir’s body was dismembered to create the world. In “Ex oriente lux: Zum Problem theologischer Sinngebung in der *Heiðarvíga saga*” (169–86), **Uwe Ebel** criticises Bjarni Guðnason’s Christian interpretation of *Heiðarvíga saga* in the most strongly worded, unsparing terms. Apart from the

specifics of Ebel's objections, the inclusion of his essay is worthy of attention on another level, because it demonstrates that, even though one of Weber's major contributions to the study of Old Norse literature was to show how some nondidactic literary products of Christian Scandinavia relied on basic elements of Christian theology, Christian interpretations of individual texts must still be established on a case-by-case basis. In "Pseudo-Turpin in the North—Forty Years On" (187–97), **Peter Foote** revisits his studies of the Icelandic translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* and agrees with Constance Hieatt's later argument that the Latin source was much closer to the text of Codex Callixtinus than to texts of Mandach's "C" class. He further argues that the manuscript of *Karlamagnús saga* that served as the source of the fifteenth-century Danish abridgement known as *Karl Magnus' Krønike* and the manuscript that served as the source of the fifteenth-century Icelandic *Rollantsrímur af Ferakutsbardaga* were both derived from the same subarchetype of the *Pseudo-Turpin*, so that the source of the Danish work was likely an Icelandic manuscript exported to Norway in the fourteenth century. In "The Baptist and the Saint: Oddr Snorrason's View of the Two King Olavs" (257–64), **Lars Lönnroth** makes the interesting and plausible suggestion that Oddr Snorrason's use of typology in his vita of Óláfr Tryggvason was a deliberate mechanism for rehabilitating the reputation of this king, who was portrayed in a very negative way by Adam of Bremen. As the earliest and most reliable story about the baptism of Óláfr Haraldsson locates this event in Rouen after Óláfr Tryggvason's death, it may be that the story that Óláfr Tryggvason held Óláfr Haraldsson at the boy's baptism was simply a bald-faced invention on Oddr's part. In "Óðinn gegen Freyr: Elemente heidnischer Religion in der *Víga-Glúms saga*" (347–65), another valuable contribution to the festschrift, **Richard North** offers extensive and persuasive evidence that *Víga-Glúms saga* was developed in four stages. He focuses particularly on the revisions of the second author, which seem to include the many references to Óðinn, the wordplay jokes, several new episodes, and the relocation of

some of the verses. North further suggests that this author was Sighvatr Sturluson, an identification he promises will be argued in detail in a forthcoming publication. In "Erik Ivarsson of Trondheim: Archbishop in Exile in Absalon's Lund 1190–1202" (367–81), **Ólafía Einarsdóttir** surveys the literary traces of Archbishop Eiríkr's twelve-year stay with Archbishop Absalon in an unusual and insightful exercise in synchronic literary history. Her account of the interactions of people rather than of texts forcefully drives home the reality of just how much literary activity was in progress during those years, not to mention the reality of the personal connections between so many of the authors. We thus learn that Saxo Grammaticus was Absalon's clerk during the years when Eiríkr was in Lund, that the Icelandic abbot Karl Jónsson attended the feast that Bishop Páll of Skálholt gave on his return to Iceland after a year of traveling back and forth between King Sverrir in Norway and the two archbishops in Denmark, and that Archbishop Eiríkr's father, Bishop Ívarr of Trondheim, was one of the witnesses on whom Eiríkr Oddsson relies for his account of the death of Sigurðr slembir. In "In the Scriptorium of *Sturlunga's* Compiler" (471–82), **Úlfar Bragason** analyzes the functions of *Haukdæla þáttr* and *Geirmundar þáttr heljarskinns* within the *Sturlunga saga* compilation and argues that they are representative of an aristocratic rather than clerical worldview. The compilation as a whole reflects the Icelandic ruling class's attempt to understand its new situation after Iceland accepted Norwegian rule.

Several of the contributors to the *Gedenkschrift* allude to some of Weber's key concepts in a manner appropriate to their own topics, but a systematic synthesis of Weber's thought is the subject of **Margaret Clunies Ross's** "Medieval Iceland and the European Middle Ages" (111–20). She begins with an overview of Weber's "holistic" or "hermeneutic" approach to Old Norse literature, which is characterized by the recognition of the Christian worldview subtending these texts, even when they deal with the pre-Christian period or with the secular subject of feuds. This recognition does not take the form of a superficial

search for Christian sources or allusions, but rather it identifies patterns of representation in which traditional material appears within the context of Christian history and dogma. Clunies Ross then describes the further extensions and refinements of this approach that have been developed by scholars such as Lars Lönnroth, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, Ursula Dronke, Peter Dronke, and herself. As a survey paper, this essay cannot be long enough to review the multiplicity of evidence that supports this approach, so it is unlikely to change the minds of those who may not agree with it, but it is extremely useful to have these insights—which have transformed, and continue to transform, our understanding of Old Norse literature—presented clearly and concisely.

As is to be expected with a *Gedenkschrift*, the scholarly quality of the essays varies. Among those dealing with Old Norse literature, however, the overall quality is remarkably high, whether the interest of the essay lies in the plausibility and importance of its thesis or in the thought-provoking nature of its speculations. Unfortunately, the quality of the editing leaves much to be desired (a problem also with *Mythos und Geschichte*). Typographical errors occur in the table of contents and in the running page headings as well as in the essays themselves and are far too numerous to be listed here. Also regrettable is the fact that the essays in English do not seem to have been edited by a fluent speaker of that language, for it would have been a courtesy to the nonnative speakers writing in English if the language of their contributions could have been as polished as their thinking. Regardless, we must be grateful to Edizioni Parnaso for sponsoring both this and the volume of Weber's collected essays, and especially to the *Gedenkschrift* editors for assembling so many fine contributions to Old Norse scholarship.

Elizabeth Ashman Rowe

Heinrich Beck and Else Ebel, editors. *Studien zur Isländersaga: Festschrift für Rolf Heller*. Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 24. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000. 335 pages.

Justice is not easily done to this substantial collection of nineteen article-length contributions. A comparatively detailed analytical review may provide most assistance to prospective readers, since the book itself is remarkably sparing on this front, offering no summaries or abstracts or introduction with a synthesizing account of the chapters or even brief notes about the contributors.

In what follows I shall group the chapters thematically, and, in recognition of the contributors' own acknowledgement of the honorand's abiding interest in the interpretation of sagas, I shall first discuss the chapters that centre upon saga ethics. In his "... und gut ist keines von beiden: Gedanken zur Akzeptanz der Brenna in der *Njáls saga*" (198–207), Harald Müller examines social attitudes towards the practice of "burning in." Müller points out that aside from the famous example of this motif in *Njáls saga* chapter 129, several secondary examples less noticed by commentators also occur in the saga, not to mention the numerous cases recorded in other works. Quite a few of them have the status of genuine historical events. And yet the contemporary law texts proscribed burning if, for instance, implemented against people occupying a house that was in regular inhabitation, and it must have aroused, then as now, an intrinsic repugnance. Müller locates the act on the demarcation point between law and chaos, never fully conscionable and yet unofficially available as a last resort. To enact it might have entailed a potentially dangerous acknowledgement, especially pertinent to the thirteenth-century families that in Müller's opinion were instrumental in the production of *Njáls saga*, that hostilities had crossed that demarcation and reached the level of outright warfare.

Also on the theme of warfare, Edith Marold's "Vom Umgang mit Feinden: Zur