ent in a book devoted to diversity and he suggests that his chapters be taken as a series of experiments. But there is no need for modesty. The essay is an appropriate vehicle for mythological interpretations, although the number of first-rate essays in the field is rather small. This book assembles four excellent ones that are at once independent of each other but still linked by a common point of view. All are characterized by revealing comparisons and clearly formulated distinctions. It is no mean feat to extract a plausible ideology for *Vafþrúðnismál* or to extract a typology from the many faces of Loki. McKinnell carries off these experiments with great acuity, and his book will do much to revitalize the study of Norse mythology.

Theodore M. Andersson

Ross Samson, editor. *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*. Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1991. 254 pages.

These twenty-one essays stem from a seminar, "New Perspectives on Viking Studies," held in Glasgow in 1988, and are grouped under the headings "Literacy" (1–17), "Gender and Sexual Relations" (19–83), "Exchange and Society" (85–133), "Political and Social Power" (135–88), and "Ancient Ethnicity and Modern Nationalism" (189–219).

Section 1, "Literacy," opens with "Sponsors, Writers, and Readers of Early Norse Literature" (3–10) by Lars Lönnroth, who fine-tunes earlier statements on Latin and vernacular literacy, sponsorship, and access to sources. Here he outlines a vision not of "two separate literatures or literary production systems, one clerical and one secular, but rather . . . overlapping and peacefully coexisting cultures jointly promoted by the Church and secular chieftains, one dominated by native oral tradition, the runic alphabet, Old Norse feud stories, Eddic and skaldic poetry, the other dominated by the Latin alphabet, clerical education, and foreign literary genres" (10). For this reviewer, the dynamic engagement of Icelandic clergy in secular matters, furthered by a non-celibate priesthood and bishops elected by landholders, suggests that the "overlap" was in the very same agents acting in both arenas, although one would stop short of ascribing translations from Latin to the chieftains.

In "The Icelandic Sagas as Totemic Artefacts" (11–20) E. Paul Durrenberger examines Icelandic family sagas as closed, self-referential systems in which everything is explained not as the consequence of linear causality but, as in myth, simply as the way things are and always have been. Durrenberger would see in "the writing of sagas . . . an attempt to interpret contemporary events and situations in the thirteenth century in terms of an image of an unchanging society, and to indicate the differences between the contemporary realities and the culturally assumed stasis" (14). But in the matter of stasis, I would contend that the ambivalent relationship in the family sagas of

Icelanders to Norwegian royal favours and gifts, few of which work in Iceland for the communal good or measure up to local criteria of responsible utility, is a thematically weighty proleptic device, signalling change. Like the simpler dreams and portents affecting individual destinies, it transfers back to the Saga Age the dynamics of the subsequent Age of the Sturlungs. Only in the end, after feud has run its course, do the family sagas show these nefarious effects as successfully contained within the early Icelandic community, even though quite different outcomes were being experienced in the era of their composition, with local issues of landholding and feud now inflated to territorial and dynastic dimensions.

The second section, "Gender and Sexual Relations," is the largest of the collection. The first contribution, "Marriage Exchange and Social Structure" by Torben A. Vestergaard, is a textbook application of elementary and complex kinship theory to the Norse pantheon, viewing the couple-forming outcome as an expression of reciprocity. A nuanced picture emerges, where patrilinearity is in the foreground but cognatic descent is always available as an expedient in matters of influence-brokering, succession, and claims to land. When circuits of reciprocity break down, when movement becomes exclusively linear (as in hypergamy, women marrying upward) so that advantage accrues to the gods, the inherent force breaks from the circle of moderated exchange with destructive results. "Thus," according to Vestergaard, "what happened to the world at the end of the Golden Age was that the closed overall structure of generalised reciprocity fell apart because of broken obligations of reciprocity, leaving the world with an open structure troubled by greed; timeless cyclic harmony gave way to time, history and then eventually the end of the world: Ragnarok" (30). But Vestergaard fails to note that Golden Ages are always *a priori* lost, and such ostensible statements on origins harness causality (the storylines of myth) to provide a rationale for the imperfect world we all know. I cannot then concur with his conclusion that "Scandinavian mythology *mourns* the loss of an overall, harmonious structure of reciprocity" (32, my emphasis). Indeed, the very idea of "harmony," either in a remote past or *in illo tempore,* the dimension of myth, is open to doubt.

Margaret Clunies Ross's essay, "Pseudo-Procreation Myths in Old Norse: An Anthropological Approach" (35–44) is a radical reinterpretation of familiar elements of Old Norse cosmography. Clunies Ross identifies pseudo-procreation in the mythological ascription of natural female powers to male creator deities (36). Natural procreation by females ends only in natural death; spiritual procreation — of males by males — gives enduring life and is the ordering principle for society and culture. Yet the female, like the giant and troll a reflex of the Other, is the locus of inchoate power. Clunies Ross concludes: "The Old Norse myth of the origin of the gods acknowledges the essential importance of the giant and feminine, while asserting the social and cultural superiority of the patriline of Æsir" (42).

In "Some Aspects of Christianisation in Central Sweden" (45–52) Anne-Sofie Gräslund considers the evidence of rune-stones and calls attention to the mutual support between missionary activity and coalescing royal authority. One of the new religion's chief attractions was the practical model of effective organization that it offered political leaders. The author also considers the appeal of the new faith to women, noting that the erection of rune-stones, on which women's names are relatively frequent, coincides with the period of most intense contact between the two belief systems. Again we have evidence of "creative chafing" elsewhere documented in the early northern Middle Ages.

Successive appropriations of the image of Viking Age women for social ends by the Swedish bourgeoisie in the period 1850 to 1920 are considered by Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh. She notes how stereotyped thinking on gender inserted itself into the scholarly agenda of archaeology ("The Swedish Image of Viking Women: Stereotype, Generalisation and Beyond" [53–64]).

In "Women, Kinship, and the Basis of Power in the Norwegian Viking Age" (65–74), Liv Helga Dommasnes interprets the quality of grave-goods as indicative of some women's high social status. One cannot, however, dismiss the possibility that a

woman is not being recognized for her inherent worth but only as a leader's wife or the representative of an important family with which he allied himself. Typical of Dommasnes's projection of evidence is the following: "Perhaps the men's absence [on military expeditions] paved the way for women's economic power, for they had to take over full responsibility for what went on at home, which may be reflected in the growing percentage of female graves during the Viking period" (67). Yet it is a long jump from legal possession through inheritance of an Icelandic *goðord* to its practical exercise and the "full religious authority" (71) assumed to be inherent in this function in the pagan period.

In the same vein Anne Stalsberg argues on the basis of small folding scales found among female grave-goods that women were active commercial agents ("Women as Actors in North European Viking Age Trade" [75–88]). She paints the attractive picture of the astute wife minding the shop and scales in Rus emporia along the Volga while her husband is away on business in the Slavic outback. While this scene cannot be rejected out of hand, one might suggest that the scales, rather like the keys borne in life as insignia of authority, may in fact be symbols of effective management and economy in large households, the judicious weighing and allocation of resources, and do not indicate regular occupation in money matters. In its attempt to fill in blank chapters of women's history, the article, like others in the volume, overvalues archaeological evidence that might expose various occupations and functions as less monolithically male than the viricentric discourse of extant sources would have us believe.

The essays contained in the third section, under the heading "Exchange and Society," are introduced by the editor Ross Samson in the first of his two contributions, "Economic Anthropology and Vikings" (87–96). For authors of this section dealing with transfers of various kinds, the canonical texts are Marcel Mauss's "Essai sur le don" (*L'Année sociologique* 1 [1923–24]: 30–186) and Aron Gurevič's "Wealth and Gift-Bestowal Among the Ancient Scandinavians" (*Scandinavica* 7 [1968]: 126–38). Against this older picture of equilibrium as an objective or outcome, I would call attention to recent theoretical advances in the study of gift-exchange that emphasize social inequalities, coercive giving and receiving, and subtle but stressful imbalances, along with the important if often only ideal category of "inalienable possessions." But often lacking in the contributions of this section is an awareness of the exploitative potential and coercive effects of social distinctions.

Elisabeth Vestergaard's "Gift-Giving, Hoarding, and Outdoings" (97–104) is, in terms of theoretical exposition, the most stimulating piece in this section. In examples from myth, wisdom literature, and mytho-heroic saga she finds a similarly consequential "disintegration of social communication — that is, exchange according to the norms of society" (101), leading to the collapse of the community. Her discussion of the asocial nature of outdoing, straying from the moderated norm, is of particular interest and recalls the Icelandic family sagas' praise of *hóf* 'moderation' as the socially most effective ethical stance.

"Gift Exchange in Early Iron Age Norse Society" (105–12) by Åsa Dahlin Hauken is a welcome complement to the foregoing essay, with concrete examples in the movement of large cauldrons of Roman provenance in the Early Iron Age. Dahlin Hauken sees the prestigious gift as a facilitator for on-going relations between the parties in more practical spheres. The gift of a cauldron also provided the recipient with the means for further generosity in the form of feasts with socially cohesive effects. "Gift-exchange appears to be the best model to explain the peculiarities in the archaeologically preserved imported material, considering both the distribution and the types of object imported" (111). In "Money and Media in Viking Age Scandinavia" (113–22), Märit Gaimster charts the complex interplay of factors accompanying the introduction of a depersonalized currency (my term, not hers) — rings, then hack silver, finally coin. Over "older models which viewed economy as an independent component of society" she favours "a more political model which presents social stratification, power, and control as primary incentives" (115).

Thematically attuned is Samson's second contribution, "Fighting with Silver: Rethinking Trading, Raiding and Hoarding" (123–33). Although hoarding — taking a commodity out of circulation — is proscribed in myth ("all those who come into contact with the hoard become socially and morally defective because of their violations of social exchange obligations" [E. Vestergaard 101]), it is now generally accepted that hoards do not represent valuables buried in moments of hurried crisis, but were rather in the nature of insurance policies, contingency funds that perhaps could not otherwise be successfully invested in the immediate community.

In two essays that open the fourth section, by Carl Löfving ("Who Ruled the Region East of the Skagerrak in the Eleventh Century?" [157–68]) and by Thomas Lindkvist ("Social and Political Power in Sweden 1000–1300: Predatory Incursions, Royal Taxation, and the Formation of the Feudal State" [147–56]), socioeconomic forces are shown to play a decisive role in stabilizing and expanding royal authority. Löfving notes the following requirements for state formation: "(a) necessary information about the governmental area; (b) means to store and process this information; (c) instruments of enforcement for the permanent realisation of rulers' aspirations" (149). With fine Machiavellian understatement he observes: "A necessary qualification for a state society is, at least theoretically, a monopoly on violence in order to exercise justice" (149). These two articles are among the most detailed and richly documented in the volume, although their conclusions differ somewhat. Löfving finds less evidence for effective central power in his arena and period than Lindkvist in more northern Svealand, where discontinuity and medieval invention are more evident than a slow, continuous evolution of proto–state forms.

In "The Name of the Witch: Sagas, Sorcery, and Social Context" (157–68) Gísli Pálsson claims that "in Iceland accusations of witchcraft disappeared as a result of increased social distance, that is, with the development of increasingly asymmetrical power relations" (157). One must question, however, how narrative evidence — family sagas (íslendinga sögur) on the one hand, contemporary sagas (*Sturlunga saga*) on the other — relates to actual social conditions, when it is recognized that witchcraft is not central to the thematics of either genre and is, at best, only a plot facilitator and source of "pre-conversion colour" in the former. Legal charges of witchcraft (*galdr*) continued in Iceland into the nineteenth century. Yet it is plausible that the Age of the Sturlungs marginalized reliance on sorcery in the prosecution of dynastic feud, as Gísli argues.

John M. Hill's essay, "Hrothgar's Noble Rule: Love and the Great Legislator" (169–78) is unconvincing, because too panoptic, in adducing mythological archetypes in the analysis of later ethical and societal conceptions. With Dumézil and social tripartition providing the theoretical framework, Hill discusses Hrothgar and Beowulf under the sign of a Norse Týr with considerably expanded functional attributes. Yet evidence is decidedly slim for restoring Týr with original billing as "All-Father and Sky-King, father of gods and goddesses, legislator and war-god, heaven's guardian" (177). On a point of detail, Unferth's role is less "the venting of destructive feelings toward the would-be saviour-hero" (172) than that of the conventional doorkeeper and interpellator. On the threshold of the hall, symbol of ranked society, this type character puts the stranger at a social "square one" from which the newcomer must validate himself with accounts of past deeds and boasts of future ones.

A more rigorous methodology is found in a treatment of those on the bottom social rung. David Pelteret's essay, "Slavery in the Danelaw" (179–88), fulfils the promise of the volume's title and combines such evidence as settlement patterns in England, records of land ownership, legal terminology, and literary imagery derived from the Old English and Norse languages in contact on the day-to-day level in order to chart the likely course of slavery and subsequent manumission as elements of landowners' expansionist policy in the East Midlands.

Opening the book's final section, Inger Zachrisson's contribution, "The South Saami Culture in Archaeological Finds and West Nordic Written Sources from A.D. 800–1300" (191–99) focuses on exchanges in which the cultural insignia of the materially

and militarily superior Norsemen are transferred to the political elite of the commercially tributary Saami. These prestige items are better preserved at grave-sites than many organic Saami artifacts. Borrowing in the other direction took the form of the literary motifs of the Saami sorcerer, skier, and hunter.

Finally, from the periphery of the Viking world, two essays on the use and misuse of the past. Birgitta Linderoth Wallace ("The Vikings in North America: Myth and Reality" [207–20]) writes entertainingly of the exploitation of the Viking past in North America in a review of various frauds such as the Kensington Stone and then provides a concise update on what can be known and surmised from the Viking station at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland. Thomas S. Noonan ("The Vikings and Russia: Some New Directions and Approaches to an Old Problem" [201–6]) lays out the route that future inquiry into the Viking presence in early Russia might take, if nationalist sentiment and control of the relevant sites do not revive the Normanist controversy over the relative importance of foreign and native factors in regularizing long-distance trade through the Slavic lands and in the emergence of the early Russian state.

This volume, although marred by typographical errors and the editor's self-indulgent preface, features a single collective bibliography and a serviceable index. Cross-referencing essay to essay is rather limited, as is cross-fertilization in transforming the oral presentations for publication. Indeed, the majority of contributions seem, in terms of theoretical and factual density, historical reach, length and so on, to have progressed little beyond the state of conference papers. Despite the ambitious title of the volume, several contributions lack the requisite interdisciplinary rigour, the Icelandic family sagas, for example, still being uncritically exploited as an inventory of handy props for historical arguments. Although welcome for their diversity, few of these *Social Approaches to Viking Studies* bring us over familiar ground by a bold new route or deep into unexplored territory.

William Sayers

Sverre Bagge. *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's "Heimskringla."* Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1991. 339 Seiten.

Die *Heimskringla* des isländischen Gelehrten und Historikers Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) — so benannt von ihrem ersten Herausgeber Peringskjöld 1697 nach den beiden ersten Wörtern des Prologs *kringla heimsins* (was einem lateinischen *orbis mundi* entspricht) — hat als Geschichte der norwegischen Könige vom fiktiven trojanischen Ursprung der Dynastie in grauer Vorzeit an bis auf das Jahr 1177 (in dem *Sverris saga* anschließt, die Snorri wohl als bereits vorhandene Fortsetzung der norwegischen Königsgeschichte ansah) wie kein zweites Werk nicht zuletzt auch das neuzeitliche Bild der norwegischen Geschichte geformt, seit sie der norwegische Historiker Gerhard Schøning als Hauptquelle für seine eigene *Norges riiges historie* (1771–81) herangezogen und zusammen mit Skúli Þórðarson Thorlacius auch separat in København herausgegeben hat (1777–1826). Auch heute noch kann ihre Bedeutung für das norwegische Selbstverständnis und für die Kenntnis der frühmittelalterlichen norwegischen Geschichte gar nicht hoch genug veranschlagt werden. Dabei war es nicht zuletzt ihr ästhetischer Rang als "erzählte Geschichte", der dem positivistischen 19. und rationalistischen 20. Jahrhundert den Eindruck vermittelte, es hier mit einer von Kausalitätsdenken und rationalem Geschichtsbild getragenen "modernen" Geschichtsauffassung zu tun zu haben, was Snorris Werk von ca. 1230 in der früh- und hochmittelalterlichen europäischen Historiographie als nahezu einzigartig dastehen ließ. 750 Jahre nach Snorris Tod hat jetzt mit Sverre Bagge, Professor für Geschichte an der Universität Bergen und daselbst Leiter eines "Center for European Cultural Studies", wieder ein norwegischer Historiker eine gewichtige Neuanalyse dieser auf Island entstandenen mittelalterlichen Darstellung norwegischer Geschichte vorgelegt, die Rang und Eigenart der *Heimskringla* neu zu definieren und vor einem europäischen Hintergrund neu zu erklären und