

but he did not necessarily live in Barcelona or Switzerland.

One early suspect was a Dalmatian Franciscan friar, Luka Jelić (1863–1922), who was proficient in Latin and interested in the Vinland Problem, but Kirsten A. Seaver has recently argued that we should regard the German priest Josef Fischer, S.J. (1858–1944), as a more likely candidate (“The ‘Vinland Map’: Who Made It, and Why? New Light on an Old Controversy,” *The Map Collector* 70 [1995]: 32–40; “The Mystery of the ‘Vinland Map’ Manuscript Volume,” *The Map Collector* 74 [1996]: 24–29; “The Vinland Map: A \$3,500 Duckling That Became a \$25,000,000 Swan,” *Mercator’s World* 2, no. 2 [March/April 1997]: 42–47). Fischer was proficient in Latin and knew much about medieval maps and also about the Vinland problem, so he could certainly have forged the map, but the evidence against him is hardly more conclusive than the evidence against Luka Jelić. To me it seems more likely that the forger was an American who had some contacts with the Scandinavian-American community and was familiar with the strange modern Midwestern mythology surrounding Leifr Eiríksson and the Kensington Stone. He might have been a Yale man, but he could have studied elsewhere, at the University of Minnesota or Saint Olaf College, for instance.

However that may be, we can safely conclude that the so-called Vinland Map has no value for the discussion about the discovery of America. It may be of great value for the study of the Mongols and early missionary expeditions to Asia, and contain other unsolved mysteries, but the part of the map containing Vinland may now be disregarded by serious medievalists.

Lars Lönnroth

Susanne Kramarz-Bein, editor. *Hansische Literaturbeziehungen: Das Beispiel der Þiðreks saga und verwandter Literatur*. *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 14. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996. 339 pages.

Someone with a bibliographical penchant will eventually write a (perhaps largely statistical) study of how the collaborative volume came to replace the single-author survey in the latter part of the twentieth century. That trend is clearly called for by increasing specialization and growing bibliographical pressures. It has gone hand in hand with the popularity of theme conferences over the last twenty years and has provided a welcome opportunity for closer cooperation among colleagues in particular subfields. The present volume is an excellent example of the trend. It grows out of a symposium with the same title that was held in Bonn on November 19–21, 1992.

Þiðreks saga, which had not received much scholarly attention for several decades, came back into fashion about ten years ago. The 1992 symposium therefore afforded a good opportunity to take stock and suggest new directions. The conference volume assembles fourteen papers of overall high quality, subdivided into five sections. The fullest section (six papers) deals with particular problems in *Þiðreks saga*, whereas the remaining eight papers, symmetrically grouped in four subsections of two each, are contextual or tangential in nature. The first subsection provides a large literary context by Alois Wolf and a similarly broad historical background piece by Thomas Behrmann. Wolf, with his characteristic encompassing view of medieval letters, explores the growth of the “long form” in medieval narrative and the question of whether the long form in Scandinavia is merely parallel or perhaps in some sense conditioned by literary developments elsewhere in Europe. He does not subscribe to Clover’s tracing of interlace structure in the Icelandic kings’ sagas and family sagas but locates a similar esthetic in the Norwegian version of *Þiðreks saga*. That

does not, to his mind, exclude the possibility that a saga such as *Njáls saga* participates in a general European protraction of narrative dimensions, although in an independent Icelandic form. Another substantial portion of the paper is devoted to an interesting study of feudal impulses in the literary biographies of Norwegian kings beginning with Haraldr hárfagri. The tensions between king and “vassal,” especially in *Egils saga*, might in some way be connected with the feudal themes in the *chansons de geste*. The same type of thinking is shown to play over into concepts of land and nation and the equation of land with the ruler.

Thomas Behrmann devotes a very informative and fully documented essay to the contacts between Norway and Germany in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The first part deals with trade relations and the gradual displacement of the North Sea triangle trade in the Rhineland, Norway, and England by the Hanseatic dominance centered in Lübeck after the middle of the thirteenth century. Of interest to students of *Þiðreks saga* is Behrmann’s comment (35) that the mention of sourcemen from Soest, Bremen, and Münster is more likely to signal the earlier period than the later one. The last direct contact between Soest and a Scandinavian ruler (the Danish king) dates from 1232. At some point between 1232 and 1281 such contacts began to be mediated through Lübeck. The remainder of the paper deals with the direct and indirect evidence of political contacts between King Hákon Hákonarson and Emperor Frederick II. Behrmann’s historical survey is a valuable supplement to the literary studies that form the body of the volume.

Those literary studies begin with Edith Marold’s paper on the structure of “Velentsþátr.” It is in some sense a close application of Alois Wolf’s more general weighing of interlace patterning and *chanson de geste* thematics. After a careful analysis of the structure, tending to show a deliberate design rather than a loose concatenation of anecdotes, Marold distills the theme of a true and accomplished servant cheated of his reward by a faithless lord but finally triumphant. She postulates a Low German *Spielmannslied* as the most probable source and

compares the structure of the tale both to the vassal/king theme in the *Íslendinga þættir* and to Clover’s tracing of interlace technique. These models are somewhat remote from Low German minstrel practice, and Marold finally settles on the *chansons de geste*, in which the rebellious vassal is conspicuous. If *Þiðreks saga* is a Norwegian composition, Marold proposes the same transmission route that produced *Karlamagnús saga*. If it is North German, she proposes oral intermediaries, with *Herzog Ernst* as an illustration of how such *chanson de geste* matter could filter into North Germany at a relatively early date.

One of the motifs in “Velentsþátr” that has generally been viewed as nonintegral in the overall design of the story is the episode in which King Niðungr obliges Velent’s brother Egill to shoot an apple from the head of his three-year-old son. This is the point of departure for Hans-Peter Naumann’s essay, which reviews the sources and some of the difficulties pertaining to the “Tell legend.” It focuses particularly on the cover of the Franks Casket, with the runic legend “Ægili” next to a figure who appears to be standing in some sort of a building and is fitting an arrow to his bow. Naumann’s attention focuses particularly on a small figure in the lower center of the pictorial complex, bent forward with left hand touching a prominent shock of hair standing on end. With some discussion of the iconographic background, Naumann suggests the possibility that this figure depicts Egill’s son the moment after his father’s arrow has carried off the apple, leaving his son to make a gesture to reassure himself that no injury has been inflicted.

More directly concerned with *Þiðreks saga* and of more general significance is Heinrich Beck’s “*Þiðreks saga* als Gegenwartsdichtung?” Beck notes Nordal’s division of the sagas into *samtidssagaer*, *fortidssagaer*, and *oldtidssagaer*, and points out that *Þiðreks saga* cannot be classified in these terms because it synchronizes events from legendary prehistory with near-contemporary events in the twelfth century (campaigns against the Slavs on the eastern frontier of Germany). Time in *Þiðreks saga* is thus a variable quantity. At the same time, space undergoes similar shifts, notably in the

transfer of the destruction of the Burgundians from Hungary (Etzelnburc) to Saxony (Soest). Beck poses the question of whether this mutability is random or planned, and he opts for the latter assumption. He connects the shift from Hungary to Saxony with contemporary politics, specifically with the momentous struggle between the Hohenstaufen and Welf parties. The move northward is therefore a deliberate reaction to the prior legendary form (as represented by the *Nibelungenlied*) and is designed to promote Saxon (Welf) interests. This hypothesis seems solid enough to make the question mark in Beck's title quite superfluous.

Both pleasant and profitable is Gert Kreutzer's inventory of the comic effects in *Þiðreks saga*. He operates in general with the categories of character and situation comedy, although he concedes that they easily run together. Thematically he isolates the areas of human frailty (e.g., cowardice, vanity, pretensions, greed, envy) and sexuality. The latter is illustrated particularly from the bridal-quest and associated stories, for example Apollonius disguised as the great whore Heppa or Róðólfr's proxy wooing of Ósantrix's daughter in plain sight of a prior suitor. A prime example is Þéttleifr's wooing of Sigurðr's daughter, which, however, sorts under the heading of "Intertextual Humor" in Kreutzer's treatment because it so clearly echoes fabliau patterns and the courtly parody in Condwîrâmûr's nocturnal visit to Parzival. (Kreutzer does not, however, capitalize on this material to draw conclusions about the Continental and Scandinavian affiliations of *Þiðreks saga*.) In general Kreutzer notes a steady balance between the serious and the comic, leading him to associate the text with Bakhtin's "polyphonic novel," without implying that *Þiðreks saga* is "popular" literature, that is, an enterprise apart from the courtly ambitions of King Hákon's court.

Ulrike Sprenger's paper addresses the serious rather than the comic overtones of the text, specifically the problem of Þiðrekr's *superbia*, which in some versions condemns him to a final descent into hell. In a close reading of the text, particularly the Battle of Gronsport, compared to the version in the *Rabenschlacht*, she moderates the idea of

superbia, which seems not to be characteristic of Þiðrekr overall and is confined to his last-minute participation in the burning of a monastery. Other sections of the narrative reveal moments of guilt, despair, and even Job-like lamentation. The underlying concept of Þiðrekr's character is therefore likely to owe more to a popular-heroic version than to ecclesiastical condemnation.

Otto Gschwantler's paper intersects in a number of ways with Sprenger's. He too addresses matters of consistency and the relationship of the final episodes to the text as a whole. He outlines a steady rise in Þiðrekr's personal development from youth to maturity, a rise that is broken only at the very end when Þiðrekr, like other characters in the saga, succumbs to a sort of moral debility in old age. The finale, in which Þiðrekr is called away from his bath to hunt a stag, leaps on a mysterious black horse, and disappears forever, is compared with chronicle and folktale sources. Gschwantler locates the episode specifically in the context of the famous San Zeno inscription and stories in which an avid hunter places his addiction ahead of salvation. It is a feature of these stories that the hunter's fate is not eternal perdition but an extended purgation with ultimate forgiveness. Gschwantler ruminates on the possibility that the open conclusion of the story may be a saga equivalent of purgatory, but we may also wonder whether the doctrine of purgatory was well enough established by the end of the twelfth century to gain foothold in German or Scandinavian popular traditions.

The following two contributions by Heiko Uecker and Susanne Kramarz-Bein attempt to place the *Þiðreks saga* in its specific Norse context. Uecker operates more at the micro-level of language and style, Kramarz-Bein more at the macro-level of narrative form. Uecker detects a hodgepodge of Norse and foreign features, for example in the treatment of names, some preserved in their original southern form and some Nordicized. This mixture is reflected in a mixed consciousness of German and Norse legendary versions. Along the way Uecker notes name correspondences with the *riddarasögur* and suggests that the borrowing, usually assumed to be from *Þiðreks saga*,

could have gone in the opposite direction. Of considerable interest are Uecker's examples of native Norse and foreign syntax, a topic that, as the author urges, assuredly deserves more attention. Some descriptive formulas and narrative motifs have native parallels, but the inflated numbers are surely a residue of foreign chronicle style. Indeed, Uecker suggests that the prose form of the compilation may reflect the general shift toward prose after 1200 as the medium of "historical truth." In short, he detects behind the amalgam a highly diversified linguistic, stylistic, and cultural matrix in Bergen.

Kramarz-Bein shares Uecker's belief in Bergen as the home of *Þiðreks saga* and locates the appropriate compositional analogy in *Karlamagnús saga*. The structural similarity lies in the narrative trajectory from youth to apogee (the assembling of twelve companions or twelve peers) and death, but in both cases the underlying structure is beset by contradictions and doublets because of heterogeneous source material and editorial uncertainties. On the whole, *Þiðreks saga* reveals a more consistent construction. In the culminating order of twelve *félagar* (*Þiðreks saga*) or twelve *jafningjar* (*Karlamagnús saga* — with a typological background in the twelve apostles) Kramarz-Bein is inclined to give the latter precedence. A further analogy is drawn between Heimir's *moniage* in *Þiðreks saga* and the story of Vilhjálmr korneis in branch IX (B) of *Karlamagnús saga*, again with the priority given the latter. To this section is appended a full discussion of the problems inherent in the identification of Wadincusan in *Þiðreks saga* with the monastery of Wedinghausen near Soest. Despite some palpable differences between these saga compositions (203–4) Kramarz-Bein is finally inclined to see *Karlamagnús saga* as a significant model and concludes with the suggestion that the idealized visions of an inner court circle may have been devised to honor King Hákon.

Although studies of *Þiðreks saga* and the *Nibelungenlied* have traditionally been joined at the hip, Peter Göhler's paper on the *Hort* problem in the latter is the only one in the volume to have no bearing on the saga, even in terms of cultural context. This is in part because the author does not

believe that parallel transmissions have anything useful to contribute to the study of the *Nibelungenlied*. He therefore opts for a purely new critical reading in addressing the crux of Kriemhild's last-minute demand for Siegfried's treasure. Although he considers insistence on narrative consistency to be a modern foible and alien to a medieval text, he nonetheless participates in the tradition of critical rationalization to the extent of "explaining" the *Hortforderung* as an epic enrichment of the poem.

Hermann Reichert is also concerned with High German legendary transmissions, but the implications for our understanding of *Þiðreks saga* are very much at the center of his investigation. He here pursues the aim of his earlier researches, that is, to problematize the source question. He shares with Uecker and Kramarz-Bein the view that *Þiðreks saga* represents an amalgam of traditions assembled in Bergen. This is a doctrine that goes back to Gustav Storm (1874), but Reichert has tried in the past to underpin it by demonstrating discrepancies in the actual manuscript transmission (*Heldensage und Rekonstruktion*, 1992). In the present paper he expresses some pessimism about the prospect of penetrating the substratum of tradition in *Þiðreks saga* and turns his attention rather to the echoes of this tradition in the High German area, for example in the *Eckenlied* and in the oral repertory of Der Marner, but also in less frequently discussed texts (e.g., the *Mären* "Der Weinschweg" and "Von dem übelen wîbe"). The gist of this useful survey is to suggest that the richness and diversity of both oral and written heroic traditions should not be oversimplified.

The remaining two contributions have no connection with *Þiðreks saga*, but they are far from the least interesting in the volume. Rudolf Simek launches a new attack on the well-worn generic analysis of *Konungs skuggsjá*, and with considerable success. Taking as his point of departure the anomalous chapter on merchants, which separates *Konungs skuggsjá* most distinctively from the *speculum regale* tradition, Simek traces the similarities to the tradition of "oikonomikoi" (treatises on domestic management) with roots in Aristotle's *Politics* and medieval survivals from Columella's *De re rustica*

and Cicero's *De officiis*. Simek took his cue from the poetic description of the winds (ed. 1848, 52–53), which is not paralleled in medieval works on the natural phenomena but is matched in the agricultural tradition (e.g., Hesiod and Columella). Simek suggests that a cross-fertilization of medieval thinking on social hierarchy and domestic arts may be at the root of the anomalous position occupied by *Konungs skuggsjá*. This represents a substantial broadening of our perspective on the book.

Similarly remote from *Piðreks saga*, but similarly instructive, is Stefanie Würth's study of *Alexanders saga*. She reviews the debate on authorship, whether *Alexanders saga* is originally a Norwegian translation or the work of Brandr Jónsson, and she is unable to find sufficient grounds to disallow Brandr. She then sketches out what we know about Brandr's life, personality, and politics, emphasizing his good relations with the Norwegian court. The remainder of the paper is concerned with Brandr's translation technique, his approximation of native style, his clear grasp and overview of Walter's original, his economies in the interest of his reading audience, his idiomatic usage, certain hints of political consciousness about Iceland's relationship to Norway, and an awareness of the contemporary issues alluded to by Walter. The sum of these observations leads the author to hypothesize that the translation is more likely to have been executed for the instruction of an Icelandic audience than for the Norwegian court. Würth writes with rare clarity and sense of direction, and her essay makes a valuable contribution to the study of translation literature.

In her capacity as editor, Susanne Kramarz-Bein provides a crisp introduction to contextualize the volume. The introduction includes summaries of the contributions, which in effect make reviews such as this one supererogatory except for publicity purposes. Finally, Kramarz-Bein deserves much credit for having done what appears to this reviewer to be a flawless job of editing a particularly complicated volume.

Theodore M. Andersson

Terry Gunnell. *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995. 440 pages.

This is a brave and engaging book. In it, the author charts a course where very few have gone before. Most prominent among that small group is Bertha Phillpotts, whose *The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1920) has hitherto been the most comprehensive treatment of the subject. In the present volume, Dr. Gunnell capably and artfully takes the reader through the tangled thicket of data on drama in early Scandinavia and provides scholars of Old Norse with their most thorough consideration of this topic to date. Reconstructions of this sort represent dangerous, and difficult, terrain, of course. One is reminded of Franz Bäumli's now famous, if overly harsh, review (*Speculum* 57 [1982]: 346–49) of Theodore Andersson's *The Legend of Brynhild* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980). There, Bäumli writes concerning Andersson's reconstruction of a Brynhild in *Sigurðarqviða in meiri*, which Andersson then assesses as "the most complete portrait, male or female, in Icelandic literature" (249), that "In view of the fact that the Brynhild of *Meiri* does not exist, this is not saying much for Icelandic literature" (349). One senses a decided parallel in this instance, since Gunnell has written a four-hundred-page book about a topic most scholars in the field have been inclined to dismiss as something that did not exist, or at least that cannot be reconstructed. Yet, like Andersson, Gunnell makes an excellent case for regaining Nordic literature's lost ground. It could be argued that Gunnell's operating definition of drama is so broad that a critic would have to be a truly committed nay-sayer to deny that *something* of this sort must have existed in early Scandinavia ("Drama", in the sense in which the word will be used in this book, has very few restrictions or limitations on its scope. It is a wide-ranging phenomenon that overlaps on one side with solo recitation and story-telling, and on several other sides with the areas of ritual, spectacle, children's games of