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**Review Essay: Baum, Wilhelm. *Rudolf IV. der Stifter. Seine Welt und seine Zeit***

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action and static description; second, and most interestingly, the narrative is replete with proverbial expressions and curious minutiae of daily life. Details concerning clothing and armor, food and meals, social customs including expected courtesies and etiquette, the treatment of guests, and the care of horses, though usually nonfunctional in the story, intrigue the modern reader as they enliven the work.

In the introduction the translators state their hope that this book will "stimulate critical study of the work," a work which, in this reviewer's opinion, should assume a more notable place in the Arthurian canon. Arthur and Corbett summarize: "As an imaginative poem filled with scenes of medieval life, as a lively exponent of the Arthurian genre, or as the reflection of the aristocratic mentality of the landed classes in thirteenth-century France, *The Knight of the Two Swords* simply deserves to be better known; a reading of it will amply repay the curious student, the literary scholar, and the lover of medieval culture."

Judith Barban  
Winthrop University

Baum, Wilhelm. *Rudolf IV. der Stifter. Seine Welt und seine Zeit*. Styria, Graz-Cologne-Vienna, 1996. 399 pp., 58 illustrations. DM 58.

After having published his monograph on the Tyrolean Duchess Margarete Maultausch in 1994, Wilhelm Baum here presents a new historical biography, this time of the Hapsburgian Duke Rudolf IV (1358-1365). Traditional historiography has not paid enough attention to this personality, although Rudolf played quite a significant role in the arena of fourteenth-century international politics. Rudolf's conflicts with Emperor Charles IV and the development of the Hapsburgian empire were the focus of his brief rulership.

In a way *Rudolf IV* does not invite much commentary because it is basically a cut-and-dry biographical monograph. It consists of the following chapters: (1) the beginning of Rudolf's political career; (2) the *privilegium maius* and the conflicts between Rudolf IV and Charles IV; (3) the development of an "Austrian State"; (4) Rudolf's relationship with Italy, his acquisition of Tyrol, and his death. At the end we find extensive bibliographies of the primary and secondary sources, endnotes, a time table, Rudolf's itinerary, and a register of persons and locations.

It needs to be mentioned that Rudolf died as a twenty-six-year-old man and yet seems to have realized a number of significant political goals. Although, or rather perhaps because, he was Charles IV's son-in-law, he strongly competed against him in many respects. He also strove to consolidate the Hapsburgian territory, even though the concept "state" still might be an anachronism in this context.

Baum's monograph consists primarily of a relatively complete compilation of historical dates and analyses of events and actions taken by individual personalities as reported in the various chronicles. The author does not attempt to contextualize the historical figure of Rudolf IV, does not pursue any other agenda but to outline Rudolf's life "as it was," and does not include any socio-historical, cultural, religious, or ideological aspects which would have illuminated the political significance of this ruler. In his introduction Baum openly admits: "In einer Zeit, in der es Mode ist, das Individuum als Resultat der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse zu betrachten, schreckten manche Historiker offensichtlich vor der schwierigen Aufgabe zurück, das Genie zu würdigen, das sich nicht auf soziologische Weise erklären läßt" (7; In a time when it is no longer fashionable to consider the individuum as the result of social conditions, many a historian has shrunk back from honoring the genius which cannot be explained with reference to sociological criteria). This leads the author to a curious form of glorification of the ruler as might have been typical and even expected in nineteenth-century historiography, whereas many modern types of questions which could have been addressed to this personality are simply ignored.

Nevertheless, Baum succeeds in establishing a lively image of Rudolf IV based on the many contemporary sources (chronicles) and literary texts. Baum's particular interest rests on Rudolf's activities as founder, such as of the Viennese university in 1356, and as patron of architectural projects, such as his support for the expansion of the Vienna Stephan's Cathedral. Another area that receives particular attention is Rudolf's acquisition of Tyrol for the House of Hapsburg. At the book's end Baum even discusses, to some extent at least, fundamental aspects of Rudolf's economic policy. This refers to social-economic legislature pertaining to taxation and the banning of the guilds in Vienna.

Altogether, Baum provides an extensive, though primarily fact-oriented biographical sketch of Rudolf IV. He also briefly passes review of the relevant research literature, without, however, taking a critical stance. Baum sees his task as that of a collector and writer who puts

together the various quotes lifted from the wide range of sources relevant for Rudolf's biography. In this sense we must praise Baum for his solid biographical work, although it strikes me as strange that such a book, very representative of Rankean historiography, could have been written and published in the late 1990s.

The illustrations reflecting Rudolf's life are excellent and strongly enrich the otherwise slightly dry biography.

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Bjork, Robert E., and John D. Niles, eds. *A Beowulf Handbook*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1997. 466 pp., illustrations. \$60.00.

The past few years have seen a rising sense of self-consciousness on the part of Anglo-Saxonists, sparked, perhaps, by the anxious realization that as the twentieth century comes to its end, the value of Old English studies can no longer be taken for granted. This self-consciousness has in turn spawned a number of investigations into the history and sociology of the discipline: Allen Frantzen's *Desire for Origins* (1990) undertakes an exploration of the ideological and social factors motivating the study of Old English in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; E. G. Stanley's *In the Foreground: Beowulf* (1994) begins with a lengthy survey of past criticism of the poem; a new Critical Heritage volume on *Beowulf* is in preparation; the 1997 conference of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists (ISAS) had as its theme "Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Twentieth Century: Retrospect and Prospect." One of the most recent and useful products of this scholarly self-examination is Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles's *A Beowulf Handbook*.

The *Handbook* is designed "to accommodate the needs of a broad audience" of both specialists and nonspecialists (Preface). Although professional Anglo-Saxonists are likely to be the book's primary readers, it will be particularly useful to graduate students beginning serious study of the poem and to scholars whose major field of inquiry lies outside of Anglo-Saxon studies but who need a grounding in the critical literature concerning *Beowulf* for teaching or research. The great virtue of this book is that it organizes and categorizes the enormous mass of *Beowulf* scholarship in a manner that is, for the most part, intelligent and easy to use. Eighteen essays by well-known Anglo-Saxonists cover every aspect of