provides plenty of food for thought regarding early-modern Italy and hopefully will stimulate more research into how the Italian states confronted their relative political and economic decline.

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Maps, Myths, and Men: The Story of the Vinland Map. By Kirsten A. Seaver (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2004) 480 pp. $65.00 cloth $24.95 paper

Few artifacts are as controversial as the Vinland Map (VM), a late medieval world map, which, if genuine, would contain the earliest known graphic representation of America. Today, the majority of experts views the map as a modern fake. The VM is named after its most unique feature, “Vinlanda insula,” in the northwestern Atlantic, supposedly depicting the tenth- and eleventh-century discoveries of the Norse west of Greenland, as told in Icelandic Sagas and other sources. In 1959, Yale purchased the VM bound with a genuine medieval manuscript—“The Tartar Relation,” a short treatise discussing the Mongols. The VM was kept secret until 1965, when Yale announced its existence and published a lavish volume of reproductions and learned essays, The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation (VMTR). The VM, so the experts argued, was created c. 1440, probably during the Council of Basel, and was a merging of long-preserved Icelandic geographical knowledge and contemporary European world maps.

The VM’s authenticity immediately came under attack from scholars and scientists, and the lively, often acerbic, debate that developed continues. In Maps, Myths and Men, Seaver soberly presents the case against the VM, based on her extensive research and on four decades of scholarship. Seaver, the VM’s most thorough and outspoken critic in recent years, painstakingly examines the literary, cartographic, codicological, palaeographic, and chemical evidence, challenging one by one the assumptions and conclusions that brought Yale and the authors of VMTR to view the map as authentic.

Following a rather clipped introductory chapter, Seaver presents an overview of Norse history, with emphasis on medieval life in the Greenland settlements and its mysterious decline. This overview is a condensed version of Seaver’s The Frozen Echo (Stanford, 1996), albeit not condensed enough; the discussion is bogged by archaeological disputes of which the relevance to the VM is not always clear. Regarding Norse voyages and mapping Seaver convincingly argues that the Norse did not

communicate their experiential knowledge and were not known to have drawn maps themselves.

The following chapters (3 through 5), arguably the best of the nine, describe the shady provenance (that is, none) of the VM and the even shadier process that led to its authentication and purchase by Yale. Seaver presents a prosopographical study of dealers, curators, and experts, on both sides of the Atlantic, based on her findings in internal British Library files, and, remarkably, on interviews with some of the people involved. Seaver then discusses the VM’s physical attributes, unavoidably considering the VM’s ink in microscopic detail.

Chapters 7 through 8 provide a cartographic and literary analysis of the VM, driven primarily by a negation of VMTR arguments rather than by a positive reconstruction of sources and traditions. Seaver’s major line of attack is to demonstrate the various inconsistencies of the VM with her understanding of the Norse worldview, thereby eliminating the merging of genuine geographical traditions in Basel as a possibility. Seaver shows that one slip on the VM—the joint, rather than separate, sailing of Leif and Bjarni to Vinland—is traceable to a 1765 treatise, which in her view proves “beyond any doubt” the map’s modern origin. Yet doubt remains, because even if claims in VMTR about the flow of Norse knowledge to Europe are overstretched, the idea that the VM was a fifteenth-century misunderstanding of this knowledge—an option that Seaver does not consider—cannot be ruled out. Although Seaver shows no mercy to historians who pronounce on the basis of scant evidence, she forgets this useful maxim in the final chapter, in which she proposes Joseph Fischer, S.J. (1858–1944), as the VM’s creator. Fischer, Seaver argues, created the VM to display the global reach of the Church and its crucial part in audacious Norse navigations as scholarly protest against Nazi adoration of the Norse and hostility to the Catholic Church. Seaver is to be commended for providing a short biography of the renowned historian of cartography, but, overall, the constant heaping of one tenuous hypothesis over another shaky piece of evidence is not in line with the author’s normal sharpness.

Maps, Myths, and Men suffers from a few structural and stylistic problems, such as confusing repetitions and oblique statements whose meaning is fully explained only later in the text. Most importantly, Seaver consistently refrains from wrapping the discussion in a way that evaluates her numerous refutations according to their relative importance. In such a highly technical and complex study, which, so it seems, aims to stand as definitive, these are regrettable faults.

Defenders of the VM will now need to work extremely hard to repel Seaver’s mighty and sophisticated attack on its authenticity. Even if the last word has yet to be said—parchment DNA testing, computer analysis of scripts, and archival findings possibly shedding more light on this debate—the large cluster of oddities around this fading manuscript is troubling. Seaver has produced, on the one hand, an exemplary interdisciplinary study, ranging over extraordinarily diverse periods and cultures,
as well as methods and areas of expertise. As such, it will stand for a long
time as the principal source of information on the VM and the history of
the debate. On the other hand, some readers may be disappointed by the
book’s narrow focus on the question of authenticity, with no real at-
ttempt to reflect more broadly on the Western tradition of forgery, on
documentary culture, on the mesmerizing power of maps in the con-
struction of national myths, and on modern American quests for ori-
gins.\textsuperscript{2} It is perhaps another sign that, alas, the quarrel over the Vinland
Map needs to mature even longer.

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\textit{Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars’ Deportation and Return}. By Greta
Lynn Uehling (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 333 pp. $79.95
cloth $26.95 paper

This book is strongly interdisciplinary, combining elements of tradi-
tional documentary history, oral history, literary theory, and even art
history. It focuses on how the Crimean Tatars have constructed collec-
tive transgenerational memories of their homeland, their forced removal
from it, and their struggle to return to it. Uehling examines how the
Crimean Tatars have fashioned and used these memories as instruments
to maintain their national cohesion in exile and mobilize politically in
both Uzbekistan and Crimea. Comprised of both personal reminisces
and stories heard from older relatives, these memories take the form of
oral narratives that have been honed into their current forms by many
re-tellings. Uehling interrogates these oral narratives of the Crimean
Tatars to determine how these intertwined strands of perception have
informed the views and actions of this nationality in modern times.

The introduction is heavy on anthropological jargon, making refer-
ce to a large number of theorists. This attempt to fit the work into the
larger field of anthropology obscures what are fairly simple concepts, the
most important of which is that collective memories are constructed to
serve particular political ends. Anybody with even minimal exposure to
such terminology and theories would have difficulty making much sense
out of it. Fortunately, the subsequent chapters of the book are both
much clearer and much more substantial.

The first chapter, based upon secondary sources, is an exemplary
concise history of the Crimean Tatars from their origins to the present
time. It covers all of the important issues of Crimean Tatar history in a
straight historical narrative. But the following chapters really shine.
Uehling makes extensive use of oral accounts by Crimean Tatars of their
recent history, a definitely underexploited resource in regard to Eurasia.

\textsuperscript{2} See most recently, with particular reference to cartography, Alfred Hiatt, \textit{The Making of