

BRUNCVÍK'S STRUGGLE WITH THE MONSTERS: THE HENRY THE LION LEGEND AMONG THE SLAVS

Winfried Baumann

Adoptions of epic German material by the Czechs and Russians represent a salient phenomenon in the intricate relationship between West and East. One of the prime examples of the translated prose literature with fantastic content is the Czech and Russian Bruncvík which ultimately goes back to the legend of Henry the Lion. The present contribution attempts to trace the arsenal of monsters presented in the Slavic versions in the natural history books of the Middle Ages. It pinpoints the principal source material for the Czech version (Albertus Magnus, Thomas of Chantimpré, Isidore of Seville, Gervase of Tilbury, Honorius of Autun, Lucidarius), and draws on the pertinent research of the French medievalist Claude Lecouteux (Paris, Sorbone) to fertilize the discipline of Bohemian studies. The results are a contribution to the international field of "dracology" and also shed light on the natural history knowledge of the anonymous Czech author — who according to Jaroslav Kolár probably dates back to the 14th century.