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JOHANNES SCOTUS ERIUGENA, *PERIPHYSEON: THE DIVISION OF NATURE*, TRANS. I. P. SHELDON-WILLIAMS; REV. JOHN J. O'MEARA

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with leprous or menstruating women; thus the "poisonous female"); and venereal disease. The authors control their material and contribute significantly to the understanding of medieval thought as well as societal attitudes towards sexual relationships.

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JOHANNES SCOTUS ERIUGENA, *Periphyseon: The Division of Nature*, trans. I. P. Sheldon-Williams; rev. John J. O'Meara. (Cahiers d'études médiévales, cahier spécial 3.) Montreal: Bellarmin; Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987. Paper. Pp. 719. Can \$65.

This is the first complete translation into English of the *Periphyseon* (c. 867) of John Scottus Eriugena, Myra Uhlfelder having produced a substantial partial translation for the Library of Liberal Arts (Indianapolis, 1976). The late I. P. Sheldon-Williams translated the whole work as part of his project of editing, but by the time of his death only two volumes had been published by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, and a third volume was in press (subsequently published in 1981). J. J. O'Meara has now edited Sheldon-Williams's draft translation for books 4 and 5 and has collected the translations of the first three books into one volume.

By any standards the *Periphyseon* is one of the greatest philosophical works of the Middle Ages. It brings together into a synthesis the thought of Greek East and Latin West. Eriugena attempted in a masterly way to fit Greek concepts such as *theophania*, *theōria*, and *theōsis* (frequent in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus, and Dionysius) into the more literal realism of Augustine. Eriugena's *Periphyseon* is absolutely crucial for the dissemination of the Dionysian understanding of the absolute transcendence of God above all being (and nonbeing) as well as for an extremely optimistic anthropology in which human nature rivals the angelic for its privileged place in the hierarchical order. The availability of the full five books in translation is to be warmly welcomed.

Concerning the translation itself, Sheldon-Williams had an intuitive feel for the intricacies of Eriugena's thought processes, and his translation tries very carefully to reflect the structure of Eriugena's thought, in contrast to the more colloquial, less formal translation of Uhlfelder. Thus for the Eriugenian formula *ea quae sunt et ea quae non sunt*, Uhlfelder translates "what has and does not have being," whereas Sheldon-Williams renders it as "those that are and those that are not."

But there are some troubling passages. In book 4.772a Eriugena is speaking about the manner in which man as the divine image resembles God; the Migne text which Sheldon-Williams is translating refers to *humana substitutio*. Uhlfelder (p. 269, n. 59) is uncomfortable with the word *substitutio* and suggests — without offering any evidence — that the text should read *humana substantia*. Sheldon-Williams accepts *substitutio* and translates it as "human replica," which O'Meara leaves unchanged. As a matter of fact, the term *substitutio* had a technical meaning for Eriugena and is already found in several places in his *De divina praedestinatione* (for example, 386b). It would be more loyal to Eriugena's metaphysics to translate it here as "stand-in" or some phrase which preserves the notion that human nature has the same essence as the divine nature but in a lesser degree, rather than that it is an imitation or replica. Eriugena used *substitutio*, *substantia*, and *subsistentia* for translating the Dionysian terms *hypostasis*, *hypostatēs*, and *hyparchis*. (See Edouard Jeuneau, *Homélie sur le Prologue de*

Jean, Sources Chrétiennes 151 [Paris, 1969], p. 334.) In this case neither published translation is satisfactory.

At 4.768a Eriugena speaks of the trinity of human nature (mind, skill, and discipline) as *a seipsa formari*, with the *a* being omitted in some manuscripts. Sheldon-Williams curiously translates this as "formed by one another" (p. 413), whereas Uhlfelder is, I believe, more accurate to the philosophical sense when she renders it as "formed by itself" (p. 239). Eriugena is saying that he would believe that human nature creates itself if it were not that Catholic doctrine taught otherwise. Here Uhlfelder preserves Eriugena's radical meaning better than Sheldon-Williams. Overall the translation is most welcome. One final quibble, the book cover inaccurately refers to J. J. O'Meara as the translator rather than as editor.

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MARY COKER JOSLIN, *The Heard Word, a Moralized History: The Genesis Section of the "Histoire ancienne" in a Text from Saint-Jean d'Acre*. (Romance Monographs, 45.) University, Miss.: Romance Monographs, 1986. Pp. 357. \$45.

More than one hundred years after Paul Meyers announced that he had discovered the *Histoire ancienne*, and perhaps on the principle that "Li hom ne vit c'une sole ore," Mary Coker Joslin has chosen to offer not a critical edition based on the more than sixty-eight surviving manuscripts, but a transcript of the Genesis section of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 20125, "basically as it is found." In addition, however, she invokes five other manuscripts to supply omissions, correct scribal errors, and clarify clearly corrupt readings. The results give considerable pleasure for several reasons, not the least of which is that the publishers have gone to the expense of providing readable type and generous margins.

The text itself, composed by an anonymous author for Roger IV, chatelain of Lille (d. 1230), offers a striking example of the medieval fondness for mixing genres. More biblical paraphrase than history (as the later parts of the *Histoire ancienne* are more romance than history), the verse prologue and nine verse moralizations satisfy the criteria for prosimetrum, even if Joslin is correct in describing the verse as "more a functional device than . . . poetry." Although the sections of the *Histoire ancienne* that deal with Greece and Rome are often derived from vernacular sources, Latin *auctores*, principally Josephus and Peter Comestor, provide the bulk of the sources for Roger's historian, as Joslin demonstrates in the fifty pages of notes and variants that she provides.

Since later scribes removed the oral paraphernalia found in the earlier manuscripts, Joslin's decision to transcribe the Genesis section of a manuscript as early as that of Paris 20125 allows us to watch Roger's historian attempt either to deal with the problem of addressing a live audience or to simulate the presence of such an audience. The voice that moves through the text, then, is that of an attentive preacher, who asks questions of his audience, provides a sentence in Latin, then solicitously translates it, expresses a fastidious embarrassment in declining to explain sodomy, and makes certain that his listeners understand that multiple births are serial and not simultaneous. Amplifying, moralizing, questioning, and answering, the voice of the narrator attempts to connect biblical narrative more frequently with the lives of his readers or listeners than with abstract theological schemes.

All of these activities are carried out in an appealing style; as Joslin demonstrates, the author's self-conscious concern with patterns of doublets and triplets helps to