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◆ recensions

Jost GIPPERT, Caroline MACÉ, ed., **The Multilingual Physiologus. Studies in the Oldest Greek Recension and its Translations**. Turnhout, Brepols Publishers n.v. (coll. “Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia”, 84), 2021, XXIV plates, 661 p.

The *Physiologus* (ὁ φυσιολόγος) is a collection of allegorical and moralized beast tales, at times incorporating plants, stones and the fantastic. This book addresses the oldest Greek recension of the *Physiologus* and subsequent translations into Latin, Ethiopic, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian and Old Slavonic. It offers a better understanding of how it was spread from Alexandria in the 3rd century CE to regions throughout the Byzantine Empire, Latin West, Middle East, Ethiopia, the South Slavs of the Balkans, the Caucasus and other lost translations. It enjoyed similar popularity to the late Medieval work, *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus DE VORAGINE.

Many of the translations spawned further translations, some with augmentations, in particular the initial Latin version supplemented in *Origines* by ISADORE (*b-Isadore*) and the reworked versions *Dicta Chrysostomi* and *Physiologus Theobaldi*. From the Latin came the versions in Old High German, Middle High German, Old English and Middle English, Old French and Old Italian. With the exception of the Old Norse and Old English,¹ all exhibit a reworking based on the *b-Isadore* version.²

This book offers the latest in critical multilingual history of the earliest Greek *Physiologus* and translations and makes the case for a comparative approach to achieve real progress, similar to what SBORDONE accomplished when he identified the three main Greek recensions which he referred to as *redactio prima*, *redactio byzantina* and *redactio pseudo-Basiliana*. MACÉ refers to these as the three different ‘recensions’ instead of the Latin term *redactio* used by SBORDONE. MACÉ argues that over time, as a *Gebrauchstext*, the *Physiologus* underwent an evolution and transformation not only in its original language but also in every iteration in the various languages. The ancient translations both in Latin and in Christian oriental languages offer a roadmap to the earliest stages of the tradition. What is offered in this book are provisional new editions to two chapters out of 48, *On the Pelican* and *On the Panther*, underscoring the daunting task awaiting scholars on future edits of this desideratum.

Part I presents a critical analysis of the manuscript tradition and past scholarship in the featured languages and a critique of these traditions. Part II highlights current critical editions focusing namely on two aforementioned chapters, in every language covered in Part I. These include interpretative essays in order to contextualize them for the reader to gain a better perspective as to when these texts were created. New critical editions of the ancient translations have brought about a reas-

1. See Svanhildur ÓSKARSDÓTTIR, “Uncanny beasts”, in Matthew James DRISCOLL, Svanhildur ÓSKARSDÓTTIR, ed., *66 Manuscripts from the Arnarnaganaean Collection*, Copenhagen, Reykjavík, The Arnarnaganaean Institute, Department of Nordic Research, University of Copenhagen ; The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies ; Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2015.

2. It would be interesting in future studies of the *Multilingual Physiologus* to incorporate the work by Colin Peter MACKENZIE, *Vernacular psychologies in Old Norse-Icelandic and Old English* (2014).

assessment of the history of the Greek text exposing a Southern-Italian branch, while related, exhibits sufficient differences to the prototype, ultimately distinguishing two very old redactions *Phys. Gr. α* and *Phys. Gr. β*, the former translated into Latin (*Phys. Lat. γ*), Armenian (*Phys. Arm. α*) and Syriac (*Phys. Syr. α*), the latter translated into Latin (*Phys. Lat. x*), Ethiopic (*Phys. Eth. β*), Syriac (*Phys. Syr. β*), Arabic (*Phys. Arab. α*) and Old Slavonic (*Phys. Slav. α*). MACÉ concludes that some of these translations possibly date back to the 5th or 6th century and in some cases even earlier. Thus, these two redactions must be edited separately.

This study underscores the need for further research on related topics such as recensions and revisions of the *Physiologus* in Slavonic translation³ ; an alignment that demonstrates a trajectory of the manuscript tradition of the earliest Latin translations ; whether provisional stemmatological parameters based on a circumscribed sample of texts will hold when studying a larger sample ; if some manuscripts attributed to a particular version could possibly display subtle deviations intimating a different or hybrid provenance ; correlations between the first Greek text to later Greek recensions including the Byzantine recensions ; development of the Western tradition in both Latin and the vernacular languages — are just a few topics of considerations for future studies of the *Physiologus* tradition.

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Will KYNES, éd., **The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible**. New York, Oxford University Press, 2021, XXII-683 p.

Plusieurs collectifs *Oxford Handbook* ont été produits récemment pour explorer des aspects importants des études bibliques. En particulier, en 2019, sortait *The Writings of the Hebrew Bible*, qui traite d'un regroupement de livres bibliques similaires à celui-ci (livres de la sagesse/autres écrits) et plusieurs auteurs se retrouvent dans les deux ouvrages. Cela dit, ce volume sur la littérature de la sagesse est bienvenu du fait du débat important sur cette catégorie en études bibliques.

James Crenshaw écrivait déjà en 1976 que la littérature de la sagesse n'est qu'un miroir du chercheur qui peint son propre portrait⁴. Le cœur du problème vient de l'ambiguïté entre la sagesse comme thématique développée par les textes bibliques et la catégorie « littérature de la sagesse » qui a été développée par les exégètes modernes. La catégorie de textes bibliques sapientiaux est devenue très difficile à définir et à délimiter. Le directeur de ce collectif, Will Kynes, a même publié une excellente monographie signalant la mort de la littérature de la sagesse comme catégorie fixe pour privilégier l'étude de liens intertextuels entre les divers textes bibliques traitant de thématiques sapientielles⁵.

Parmi les problèmes de la littérature de la sagesse comme catégorie, l'introduction note 1) l'absence d'auteurs anciens juifs ou chrétiens qui traitent des livres des Proverbes, de Job et de Qohélet ensemble en les associant à la sagesse et 2) que cette catégorisation a regroupé des livres et passa-

3. Twenty extant copies of South Slavonic appeared in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as three separate Middle Bulgarian translations from various Greek translations. We know of two such translations from Russian medieval literature. See Anna STOYKOVA, *Fiziologūt v južnoslavjanskite literaturi*, Sofija, Bŭlgarskata akademija na naukite, 1994.

4. James L. CRENSHAW, « Prolegomenon », dans ID., dir., *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, New York, Ktav, 1976, p. 1-60.

5. Will KYNES, *An Obituary for « Wisdom Literature ». The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019.