Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library

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CHRISTIAN NOVELS FROM THE MENOLOGION OF SYMEON METAPHRASTES
Edited and translated by Stratis Papaioannou

Created in the tenth century, most likely as an imperial commission, the Menologion is a collection of rewritings of saints’ lives originally intended to be read at services for Christian feast days. Yet Symeon Metaphrastes’s stories also abound in transgression and violence, punishment and redemption, love and miracles. They resemble Greek novels of the first centuries of the Common Era, highlighting intense emotions and focusing on desire, both sacred and profane.

Symeon Metaphrastes was celebrated for rescuing martyrdom accounts and saints’ biographies that otherwise may have been lost. His Menologion, among the most important Byzantine works, represents the culmination of a well-established tradition of Greek Christian storytelling. A landmark of Byzantine religious and literary culture, the Menologion was revered for centuries—copied in hundreds of manuscripts, recited publicly, and adapted into other medieval languages. This edition presents the first English translation of six Christian novels excerpted from Symeon’s text, all of them featuring women who defy social expectations.

POEMS
Venantius Fortunatus
Edited and translated by Michael Roberts

The eleven books of poetry by Venantius Fortunatus include well-loved hymns, figure poems, epigrams on miracles, and elegies in the voices of abandoned or exiled women. The sixth-century poet began his career in northern Italy before moving to Gaul, where he wrote for the remainder of his life—praising kings and elites of the Merovingian dynasty and describing the natural scenery and society of his adopted homeland during the transition from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages. In his lively and inventive style, Fortunatus also addressed verses to religious figures such as his patron Gregory of Tours and to holy women such as Radegund, founder of the Convent of the Holy Cross in Poitiers, and Agnes, the Convent’s first abbess. Fortunatus’s imaginative metaphors and wry, self-mocking humor ensure his place in the canon of Christian Latin poets. This volume presents for the first time in English translation all of his poetry, apart from a single long saint’s life in verse.

THE LIFE OF SAINT NEILOS OF ROSSANO
Edited and translated by Raymond L. Capra, Ines A. Murzaku, Douglas J. Milewski

The Life of Saint Neilos of Rossano is a masterpiece of historically accurate Italo-Greek monastic literature. Neilos, who died in 1004, vividly exemplifies the preoccupations of Greek monks in southern Italy under the Byzantine Empire. A restless search for a permanent residence, ascetic mortification of the body, and pursuit by enemies are among the concerns this text shares with biographies of other saints from the region. Like many of his peers, Neilos lived in both hermitages and monasteries, torn between the competing conventions of solitude and community. The Life of Neilos offers a snapshot of a distinctive time when Greek and Latin monasticism coexisted, a world that vanished after the schism between the churches of Rome and Constantinople in 1054. This is the first English translation, with a newly revised Greek text.
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MEDIEVAL LATIN LIVES OF MUHAMMAD
Edited and translated by Julian Yolles • Jessica Weiss
Throughout the Middle Ages, Christians wrote about Islam and the life of Muhammad. These stories, ranging from the humorous to the vitriolic, both informed and warned audiences about what was regarded as a schismatic form of Christianity. Medieval Latin Lives of Muhammad covers nearly five centuries of Christian writings on the prophet, including accounts from the farthest-flung reaches of medieval Europe, the Iberian Peninsula and the Byzantine Empire. Over time, authors portrayed Muhammad in many guises, among them: Theophanes’s influential ninth-century chronicle describing the prophet as the heretical leader of a Jewish conspiracy; Embrico of Mainz’s eleventh-century depiction of Muhammad as a former slave who is manipulated by a magician into performing unholy deeds; and Walter of Compiègne’s twelfth-century presentation of the founder of Islam as a likable but tricky serf ambitiously seeking upward mobility.

The prose, verse, and epistolary texts in Medieval Latin Lives of Muhammad help trace the persistence of old clichés as well as the evolution of new attitudes toward Islam and its prophet in Western culture. This volume brings together a highly varied and fascinating set of Latin narratives and polemics never before translated into English.

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