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Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World: Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross (review)

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index too. It might also have been helpful to present the Biblical citations separately from the patristic citations; as it stands, the Biblical citations are hard to notice in the full list.

Given the highly technical nature of this work, the English translation can hardly be intended to be read sequentially. Instead, it should serve as a reference book for students (and other researchers) who have little or no Latin, or who find the Lombard's Latin too technical to read easily. It is undoubtedly much more approachable and accessible than the Latin original. But with the footnotes generally limited to the brief identification of Peter Lombard's sources, the reader will need to go elsewhere to study the significance of particular theological debates and positions. Similarly, there are no notes on the translation of specific words, which tends to conceal the complexity of some of the original Latin terminology. The introductions are largely a summary of the contents of each book, rather than an account of the historical significance of its arguments, though the introduction to Book 1 does also contain an account of the life and significance of its author. Within these limitations, the translation is readable and clear. When it is eventually completed with Book 4, it will be a valuable introductory resource, especially for courses in medieval theology.

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Quinn, Judy, Kate Heslop, and Tarrin Wills, eds, *Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World: Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross* (Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe 18), Turnhout, Brepols, 2007; hardcover; pp. xiv, 456; 7 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. €80.00; ISBN 9782503525808.

Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World is another excellent volume from Brepols Publishers dealing with issues involving the Norse world/Viking Age. The volume comprises twenty essays divided into five sections: 'Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Old Norse Literature', 'Old Norse Myth and Society', 'Oral Traditions in Performance and Text', 'Vernacular and Latin Theories of Language', and 'Prolonged Traditions'.

As is to be expected from an edited work dedicated to Margaret Clunies Ross, the majority of the contributors focus on literary aspects of the sagas

and skaldic poetry emanating from Iceland. Perhaps the best of these is Gísli Sigurðsson's essay that challenges the existing orthodoxy and argues that the sagas were built upon a shared narrative tradition and represent 'an unbroken memory in an oral tradition reaching from the times they describe up to the time they were put into writing' (p. 204). Other notable contributions include John Lindow's consideration of the attributes of the dwarfs in relation to poetry, Vésteinn Ólason's examination of *Njáls saga* to show that although it includes elements of fantasy and exaggeration it was a response to the realities outside the text, and Diana Whaley's use of Þjóðólfr's *Magnúsflokkur* to suggest a supplementary model of analysis for skaldic encomia.

There are also a number of excellent essays not primarily concerned with the literature of medieval Iceland. Stefan Brink uses place-name evidence as a guide to the worship of different Norse gods, demonstrating that such worship was regional, and his list of theophoric place names in Scandinavia is sure to prove very useful to many scholars. Also of note are Jens Peter Schjødt's examination of pagan Norse ritual, especially that which is associated with Óðinn, M. J. Driscoll's account of the Icelandic version of the life of the fifteenth-century Albanian hero known as Skanderberg, and Kari Ellen Gade's appraisal of the use of Ælfric's vernacular grammar in Iceland.

Learning and Understanding in the Old Norse World is a varied and fitting tribute to Margaret Clunies Ross, and the bibliography of her published works which concludes this volume, including important contributions to Australian Aboriginal studies, demonstrates the considerable influence she has had.

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Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, *Commentary on the Rule of St Benedict* (Cistercian Studies Series 212), trans. David Barry, Kalamazoo, Cistercian Publications, 2007; paperback; pp. v, 568; R.R.P. US\$49.95; ISBN 9780879072124.

Smaragdus was one of the more significant Western monks of the earlier ninth century. Abbot of the imperial abbey of Castellio (later moved to Saint-Mihiel, near Verdun) and an envoy of both Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, he appears to have been closely associated with the efforts of Benedict of Aniane to reform monasticism in the Empire. Smaragdus was a prolific author, whose detailed commentary on the *Rule of Saint Benedict* was written as part of this