pronounce whose name is enough to reveal philosophy's topmost peak', but such cases are few. P. rightly takes a critical approach to the Teubner text, with changes (often rejection of emendations) justified in the footnotes. Decisions are judicious, though sometimes tricky (e.g. *Dem. Const.* 19b ἡμετέρας/ὑμετέρας).

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TRANSLATED TEXTS FROM LATE ANTIQUITY

A. F. NORMAN: *Antioch as a Centre of Hellenic Culture as Observed by Libanius*. (Translated Texts for Historians, 34.) Pp. xxii + 198, map. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000. Paper, £9.95. ISBN: 0-85323-595-3.

M. EDWARDS: *Neoplatonic Saints. The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students*. (Translated Texts for Historians, 35.) Pp. lx + 150, maps. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000. Paper, £9.95. ISBN: 0-85323-615-1.

M. WHITBY: *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*. (Translated Texts for Historians, 33.) Pp. lxiii + 390, maps. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000. Paper, £9.95. ISBN: 0-85323-605-4.

F. R. TROMBLEY, J. W. WATT: *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite*. (Translated Texts for Historians, 32.) Pp. lv + 170, maps. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000. Paper, £9.95. ISBN: 0-85323-585-6.

After delivering a lecture, I was once asked, 'Do you give all your papers in the personal voice?' From the professor's tone I gathered that this was a bad thing. He declared that he would rather die than write or speak about himself. It is a good thing for those of us who like to be entertained that ancient writers were more open about themselves. These four volumes give a remarkable insight into the views and values of late antiquity. *The Translated Texts for Historians* needs no eulogy as every late antique and early medieval student is vastly grateful for this series, which gradually is making swathes of rather inaccessible literature more widely available, not simply by translating, or sometimes retranslating, them but also by providing the historical and literary background to the texts.

The general introduction of the Libanius volume and the introductory remarks to each speech are lucid and concise, yet extremely informative. After reading the speeches themselves, one understands the circumspect nature of the title, since although Antioch is a focus, we also learn a great deal of what life was like for Libanius. His voice comes through very clearly and it is disturbingly unhappy in places. At the end of *On the Magical Practices* we hear him complain that no one cares about him and that the city, which is so magnificently praised in the first speech of this volume, has no regard for her famous son, but rather wishes him dead (p. 131). It is

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https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/52.1.15 Published online by Cambridge University Press

also an angry voice full of reproach (and abuse: 'dog-face' p. 137, 'you filthy beast' p. 142) for his students, who paid him no attention, showed him no loyalty (p. 90), and called him suicidal (p. 139).

Another depressed individual is Porphyry, the author of the *Life of Plotinus*. We discover this when Porphyry is praising his subject for his insight into other people's characters. He relates how Plotinus, realizing that he, Porphyry, was contemplating suicide, came to him and told him he was suffering from an illness and should go abroad. Porphyry tells us that he followed his master's advice and went to Sicily, and was cured of his depression. (He adds miserably that this meant that from then on he was separated from Plotinus.) The *Life of Proclus* by Marinus is less striking in its revelations but has some nice observations, such as the fact that Proclus' virtue was proved by his zeal for mathematics (p. 63). Perhaps in the style of Plotinus' own difficult works, Edwards's introduction does not take the most obvious route, starting as it does with a condensed account of Plato's theory of forms and Aristotle's response, then proceeding to Pythagoras, Plutarch, and Philostratus. The puzzled reader has to wait until p. xxiv to meet Plotinus, while Porphyry is not introduced until p. xxx. The blurb on the back tells us that the introduction is intended as a beginner's guide to Neoplatonism (I fear I need an idiot's guide) and as a survey of ancient biographical writing, which it certainly is not. In his bibliography, E. includes his own article from the volume *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, edd. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 52–71, on the life of Plotinus, but omits Gillian Clark's equally useful one from the same volume (pp. 29–51). The notes alone, however, make this indispensable for any student of late antique biography, history, or philosophy.

The *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius, which narrates events from 428 to 592, is an important source for any study of the fifth and sixth century, preserving evidence not found elsewhere and containing a detailed account of the Council of Chalcedon, as well as the curious abolition of the equally curious tax, the *Chrysargyron*. The author also adds personal details—partly to verify his account, but also to keep the reader's attention. For instance, he says that he himself saw the shrivelled head of Symeon the Stylite, which he tells us still had most of its teeth, except for those which had been forcibly removed by the pious, presumably after Symeon had died. (For a similarly ghoulish experience the modern reader may visit Oliver Plunkett's head in Drogheda.) He says specifically that it is from his family that he knows about Aurelian, the deacon of Epiphania (Evagrius' home town), who had to give Severus the bishop of Antioch his deposition. Whitby comments that documents of deposition had to be presented in person and so could endanger their bearer. Aurelian, understandably then, was rather anxious about his task and so dressed up as a woman, 'acting coyly and primly', and pretended to make a supplication to the bishop while actually handing him his deposition and then rushing off. Aurelian's imaginative efforts were in vain as Severus took no notice and remained in his see (p. 178).

For the student of historiography, Evagrius is fascinating in his comments on previous historians, discussing the works of Zosimus ('one of those from the accursed and foul worship of the Hellenes', p. 186) and Procopius, among others. While describing the plague of Antioch he mentions the one described by Thucydides. Evagrius tells us that he himself also caught the disease and survived, although many of his family and friends did not (p. 231). He is gruesome on the symptoms and adds the remarkable detail that the disease plagued the city for 52 years (p. 232). W.'s introduction and notes are informative, clear, and learned.

Perhaps because Syriac scholars are used to addressing a readership utterly ignorant

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of their field of study, the introduction to *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* (which also has the title A *Historical Narrative of the Period of Distress which Occurred in Edessa, Amid, and all Mesopotamia*) is a model of how to engage non-specialists in one's field. This earliest extant work of Syriac historiography is preserved only in a single manuscript and only as a section of a larger work. It was once thought that Joshua the Stylite was the author because this name was mentioned in a note on the manuscript, but it is argued that this refers only to the scribe. The work covers a much shorter period than Evagrius, from 494 to 506, and there is a substantial prologue where the author says he is writing the history because the abbot Sergius asked him to create a memorial of all the punishment suffered for the sins committed. This is an accurate description of the work, which is a catalogue of disasters: people go blind, buildings and sometimes whole cities collapse, locusts descend and ravage, starving people resort to cannibalism, there are earthquakes, eclipses, upside-down rainbows, and a goose who lays an egg which is not golden but inscribed with Greek letters, saying 'the Romans will conquer'.

Thanks to these new translations, the voices from the late antique past often seem more alive than those of today.

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GREEK ALCHEMISTS

A. COLINET (ed., trans.): *Les alchimistes grecs. Tome X: L'Anonyme de Zuretti ou l'Art divin et sacré de la Chrysopée par un Anonyme* (Collection des Universités de France publiée sous le patronage de l'Association Guillaume Budé). Pp. cxvi + 438. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2000. Cased, €82.32. ISBN: 2-251-00478-5.

After volumes devoted to papyri in Leyden and Stockholm (1981) and to Zosimus' *True Memoirs* (1995), *Les alchimistes grecs* receives its third instalment. This text, first edited by C. O. Zuretti in *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs* (*CMAG* VII, 1930), is the longest known Greek alchemical work, consisting of a complete and systematic treatise carefully compiled by a Greek from southern Italy. It offers both a synthesis of alchemical knowledge in A.D. 1300 and evidence for the cultural and linguistic fusion which flourished at Naples in the Angevin period.

This new edition is preceded by an Introduction which analyses in detail the work's historical aspects and methodological principles. After describing the historical context, Colinet tackles questions of manuscripts, sources, and language. The principal manuscript, *Vaticanus gr.* 1134 (R), comparable in its importance to the famous Venice alchemical manuscript which belonged to Bessarion (*Marcianus gr.* 299), was written at Oppido in Calabria in 1377/8. The anonymous author's main sources were basically Latin and Arabo-Latin, including works of Roger Bacon (*Speculum Secretorum*, *Breve breviarium*, and *Liber experimentorum*), the *De perfecto magisterio* ascribed to Aristotle, the *Semita recta* ascribed to Albert the Great, and the *Seventy* books in Arabic ascribed to Jabir. There are also frequent references to ancient Greek alchemists and some to accounts whose source cannot be identified.

The language of the text is quite strange and represents a fascinating example of the

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