side-by-side with generally pro-Nicene sentiments (pp. 10–15). Such attitudes persisted into the early years of Gratian's reign (pp. 37–48). For this period M. agrees with (e.g.) D. H. Williams and N. McLynn in minimizing the influence of Ambrose over the emperor (pp. 20–37). Indeed, M. argues that Ambrose's ascendancy over Gratian was never complete, even in the later years of the reign (pp. 68–78). To be sure, Ambrose was able to bully the bishops assembled for the council of Aquileia in 381, but his influence over officials at court was much less secure. It is telling, for instance, that the Spanish Priscillianists, seeking to defend themselves against charges of heresy, achieved an audience with Gratian even after they had been rebuffed by Ambrose (pp. 70–1). In general, M. sees the adoption of pro-Nicene policies by the eastern emperor Theodosius after 379 as being the most important stimulus for a change in Gratian's conduct towards the church (pp. 49–59).

M. similarly minimizes Ambrose's rôle in the development of Gratian's measures against paganism. He argues instead that the emperor developed a consistent policy that amounted to 'a sort of laicisation' of the Christian empire *vis-à-vis* those responsibilities towards traditional cults that it had inherited from pagan emperors (p. 91). For M., this was the agenda that underpinned Gratian's repudiation of the title *pontifex maximus*, his withdrawal of state funding for the cults of Rome, and his removal of the altar of Victory from the senate house (pp. 82–99). Moreover, M. suggests (against the *communis opinio* outlined above that Gratian's hardline measures against paganism and heresy emerged only later in his reign) that the rejection of the pontificate may have occurred as early as 376 (pp. 88–9). This requires him to argue that the use of the title in Ausonius' *Gratiarum actio* of 379 should not be understood in a technical sense (pp. 86–7). I imagine that I will not be the only reader who will find it difficult to agree with this argument.

M.'s study is useful, not least in that it re-emphasizes the arguments of Williams and McLynn that Ambrose's account of his dealings with emperors cannot be taken at face value. There can be no disguising the fact that what M. has written is essentially a long article (beefed up by extensive quotations from the sources in the footnotes). Nevertheless, its presentation as a monograph should have called for at least a bibliography, if not also an index. As it is, the footnotes are numbered in a single continuous sequence, and the reader gets no help other than 'cit.' for direction to works already cited. Similarly, abbreviations abound, but there is no list of them, or even an indication of which conventions have been adopted. Much perplexity and flicking back and forth ensues.

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PROCOPIAN POLEMICS

A. KALDELLIS: *Procopius of Caesarea. Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*. Pp. x + 305. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. Cased, US$49.95, £35. ISBN: 0-8122-3787-0.

In 1999 K. announced that 'a phase of transformative debate' in the study of Byzantine historiography had opened (*GRBS* 38: 295), to which enterprise the

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current work makes a further polemical contribution. The main target is inevitably Averil Cameron, in view of her pre-eminence in Procopian scholarship, but Cyril Mango is also in the firing-line over his 'Distorting Mirror' approach to Byzantine texts, and others, myself included, have walk-on rôles. I have, in fact, some sympathy for K.'s general objective, which is to argue for a positive view of Procopius as an interesting and intelligent writer whose works repay sensitive investigation. I do not, though, accept many aspects of K.'s argument about Procopius' pedigree and intentions, share his assessment of Procopius as the greatest thinker of the Justinianic age (p. 168), or have great confidence in his analyses of supposed hidden meanings in Procopius.

Readers must beware on various counts. First, the volume is not a general study of Procopius along the lines of those by J. A. S. Evans (1972) or Averil Cameron (1985) but five interlocking specific studies of classicizing historiography, the anecdotes in the early chapters of *Wars* I, the impact of Plato on Procopius, Justinianic tyranny, and Procopius' use of *tyche* and the significance of this for his religious affiliations. Secondly, there is a tendency for the argument to anticipate later unproven hypotheses: thus discussion of anecdotes (Chapter 2) assumes they must have an overarching significance because Procopius has philosophical inclinations, his allegiance to Plato is bolstered by the belief that he was not a Christian and was writing in the first instance for a small group of educated non-Christians (pp. 116–17), while a significant aspect of Procopius' religion is deferred to a later study (p. 167). Thirdly, K. justifies his ability to advance radical interpretations by claiming special insight through knowledge of Platonic philosophy and classical historiography denied to readers approaching Procopius with a narrower training.

K.'s exploitation of his classical pedigree is problematic. Thus, in launching his argument for an esoteric reading of *Wars*, K. considers P.'s introductory defence of the importance of his topic. Unfortunately, his discussion of the comparison of Homeric and contemporary archers fails to mention both Procopius' opening assertion that those who wish to make inferences truthfully will think this way (1.1.6) and the equally strong conclusion that even a fixation on the superiority of ancient times will not prevent the deduction that contemporary deeds are most notable (1.1.16). Such omissions may be fortuitous, but they are relevant to appreciation of K.'s argument which contradicts these explicit statements. Another early passage for esoteric analysis is where K. discusses (pp. 49–50) the linguistic parallel between the Thucydidean speech in which Corinthian ambassadors referred to the Athenian talent for devising and implementing plans (Thuc. 1.70.2) and Procopius' reference to Justinian's similar abilities (*Wars* 3.9.25), in the light of a comparable formulation in the *Secret History* (8.26). At first sight K.'s interpretation of this as a subtle attack on Justinian might convince, but, as K. admits, Procopius omits the single most critical word in Thucydides, 'innovators'; alert readers might supply this for themselves, but those who knew their Thucydides well enough to remember this omission and share K.'s inferences would also be aware that the part of the Corinthian description borrowed by Procopius was in fact highly complimentary of qualities which the Athenians themselves valued (see Simon Hornblower's comments ad loc., *Thucydides Commentary I*, p. 140) and which the Corinthians probably hoped their indecisive Spartan audience would emulate to an extent. The reference is more nuanced than K. has admitted. The omission or substitution of a key word is also relevant to the analysis of Theodora's 'burial-shroud' advice to Justinian during the Nika Riot (pp. 36–7): Theodora acknowledges that she is repeating 'an old saying' (*Wars* 1.24.37), but by substituting 'kingship', *basileia*, for the tyranny in the classical

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antecedents, the implications of the advice are changed. The possible source passages, in Isocrates, Diodorus, or Plutarch, are unlikely to have been widely remembered and the linguistic change may well have passed unnoticed. A highly educated reader might have grasped what Procopius had done, but an assessment of the intellectual message of Thomas More's *Utopia*, which K. quotes with approval (p. 116), is equally applicable to Procopius—an author must ensure that his work's message is not dependent on knowledge beyond the reach of most of his audience. Far from having a sequence of passages where Procopius' carefully hidden readings are revealed, K.'s readers have a number of interpretative challenges in order to verify, or more often unpick, the argument. K.'s list of coincidences (p. 55) has benefited from over-interpretation and distortion.

To treat other matters more briefly, similar care needs to be applied to the assertion that Procopius was a philosopher with a good knowledge of Plato. The Persian anecdotes in *Wars* I certainly present an ideal image of international relations through the story of Arcadius' faith in Yazdgard to contrast with current distrust (Chapter 3), but the notion that Procopius wanted to depict Persian royal decline through the sequence of constitutions in Plato *Republic* 8 entails selective emphasis of both the alleged source and the end product: thus, quite apart from the need to omit Plato's democratic stage as inappropriate for Persia, we find the bellicose Peroz compared to Plato's oligarchy, which lacked the capacity to fight any sort of war (*Republic* 551d). It would be surprising if Procopius did not have some knowledge of Plato, but its impact on his writing is overstated (pp. 5, 38); if Procopius was such an intense Platonic disciple who placed philosophy at the heart of his narrative (p. 9), it is strange that he expounded a theory of *tyche* whose lack of philosophical profundity is acknowledged (p. 220) and ignored the story about the Athenian philosophers' journey to Persia which Agathias subsequently retailed (pp. 101–6). Discussion of Procopius' religion depends in part on his alleged philosophical commitment, in part on K.'s contentious argument about the beliefs of Agathias (*Byzantion*, 1999), and in part on the alleged incompatibility of his views on chance with orthodox Christianity. Only the last is substantial, and K. accords it an important discussion. Again it is essential to verify all paraphrases and interpretations. I remain unconvinced that Procopius was not a Christian who struggled, like the more profound Augustine and the lesser Theophylact, with the issues of predestination and God's purpose in permitting spectacular misfortunes: some lack of consistency in the resulting formulation is not surprising.

What then remains of the book? Byzantinists may well be put off by the inaccurate criticism of their general literary interests and abilities (p. 13), and military and cultural historians (p. 15) should not be misled by this imprecise example of textual analysis. The assertion that modern academics scorn rhetoric (p. 38) suggests ignorance of much important late-antique scholarship over the past twenty years. The general thesis of esoteric rhetoric and allusive intertextuality is too elastic to provide a robust basis for interpreting Procopius, and begs questions about connections between the *Wars* and *Secret History*, both in Procopius' authorial conception and in the minds of possible readers. But students of late antique historiography, and more broadly of intellectual culture, should still reflect on K.'s arguments from a sensibly critical stance. I will place this book on reading lists, but with clear health warnings.

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