



University
of Glasgow

Xenophontos, S. (2018) J. Beneker and C. A. Gibson, eds. and trans., *The Rhetorical Exercises of Nikephoros Basilakes: Progymnasmata from Twelfth-Century Byzantium*. (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 43.) Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2016. *Speculum*, 93(3), pp. 792-793. [Book Review]

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/164672/>

Deposited on: 3 July 2018

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

simple and singular argument, and produces a deeply satisfying book. Some readers may miss a sense of closure here, or long for a more uniform and traditional coverage of a clearly defined corpus of texts—as the book’s title indeed seems to announce. This, however, would amount to ignoring the critical sophistication and intellectual elegance of this study, which deserves to be recognized as a major, lasting contribution to the historical study of the cultural, linguistic, and literary legacy of Anglo-French conflicts and relations, stretching from premodern Europe into the present.

MARCO NIEVERGELT, University of Warwick

JEFFREY BENEKER and CRAIG A. GIBSON, eds. and trans., *The Rhetorical Exercises of Nikephoros Basilakes: “Progymnasmata” from Twelfth-Century Byzantium*. (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 43.) Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. xxii, 394. \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0-674-66024-3. doi:10.1086/698473

This volume is a significant addition to the translations of Byzantine texts that make up the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library series. Its primary importance lies in the fact that it makes the collection of rhetorical exercises (*progymnasmata*) by Nikephoros Basilakes accessible in English for the first time, thereby opening up avenues for more in-depth research on Basilakes himself and the intellectual culture of his age.

The book is prefaced by a concise account of Basilakes’s life and public career (including his scholarly output), which is followed by a useful section on the educational nature and the content of *progymnasmata* depending on the type or subject (for example, *mythos*, *diegema*, *chreia*, and *encomium*). The discussion is supported by the most representative publications on the topic (although Antonio Garzya’s “Precisazioni sul processo di Niceforo Basilace”, *Byzantion* 40 [1970]: 309–16, a specialized study on Basilakes’s public role, might have been worth consulting and citing), and readers can conveniently avail themselves of an informative overview of the history of the genre and Basilakes’s contribution to it. As the authors rightly bring out (xii–xiii), one of the collection’s most intriguing features is the inclusion of both biblical and mythological characters and themes, and in this regard the reader (particularly the non-expert one) might have benefited from a slightly longer discussion about the dynamics of this combination, whether any conscious or allusive interplay seems to be at work, and, if so, the implications this might have had in the pedagogical or religious context in which Basilakes operated. As a scholar interested in the reception of the classical tradition in Byzantium myself, I have always considered Basilakes (alongside some other leading Komnenian scholars, such as John Tzetzes) an especially productive case-study, and I therefore wonder whether a dedicated section on his engagement with pagan models (only passingly referenced on p. xvii) might have offered stimulating material for further exploration. That said, the treatment of the collection’s classroom context in particular is appropriately set out, and, overall, the introduction constitutes a good starting point for anyone interested in getting a glimpse of the man and his work.

In line with standard practice in this series, this volume prints the original Greek in parallel with the English translation, inviting the reader to crosscheck passages at their own discretion. In some cases, Beneker and Gibson have revised the critical editions by Wolfram Hörandner (1981) and Adriana Pignani (1983), providing a handy list of their editorial interventions appended to the translation (335–38). There is no doubt that they offer an improved version of the text; but it is not entirely clear why *πρωτοῦ* (Pignani 32.39), a form perfectly permissible in Byzantine texts around Basilakes’s time (see, for example, Michael Italikos, *Or.* 2, Gautier 69.27, and Basilakes’s oeuvre itself, *Or.* B3, Garzya 57, 18–19), should be standardized to *πρὸ τοῦ* (*Ethopoeia* 3.5, 158). This remark should not be construed as a criticism of the edi-

Speculum 93/3 (July 2018)

tion. It is merely a heads-up for any modern editor faced with the peculiarities of Byzantine textual situations, including problems that Beneker and Gibson have successfully surmounted. (For a discussion, see Michael Jeffreys, "Textual Criticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John F. Haldon, and Robin Cormack [2008], 86–94.)

Moving on to the translation, there is little room for questioning its soundness; it brilliantly captures Basilakes's individual style as well as the intricacies of his rhetorical skills. Any alternative renderings likely to be put forward are a matter of preference and mostly pertain to locutions that could have reflected the Greek wording more closely. To give just one such example, in Fable 2.1 (4) perhaps a more exact translation for "εἰς τε (*sic*) ποδῶν ἀγωνίαν καὶ τάχους φιλοτιμίαν οὐκ ἄχαρις" would have been "that was quite pleasant both for a running contest and a show/display of speed." Two changes have been introduced here. The replacement of "running" for "ποδῶν ἀγωνίαν" with "running contest" better conveys the notion of athletic exercise and the anguish (*ἀγωνία*) experienced in such competitive circumstances. This choice is consistent with the ensuing "τάχους φιλοτιμίαν," which also ties in with a contest setting, hence the need, I believe, to link the two phrases with the "both . . . and" construction already featuring in the Greek text.

Overall, the volume's presentation is meticulous. However, there are one or two glaring inconsistencies in the citation of bibliographical items. For example, Robert Browning's "The Patriarchal School in Constantinople in the Twelfth Century" (*Byzantion* 32 [1962]: 167–202) is cited in full in note 1 of the introduction but does not appear in the bibliography at the end of the volume. This runs counter to the treatment of most of the references, which are given in a slightly abbreviated form in the notes and then expanded in full in the bibliography. I was unable to detect any pattern that would explain this apparent anomaly; a clarification on the authors' part might have been pertinent. Furthermore, a publication that, according to the authors' own testimony, affected their translation of Narration 4 (Sophia Xenophontos, "Resorting to Rare Sources of Antiquity: Nikephoros Basilakes and the Popularity of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* in Twelfth-Century Byzantium," *Parekbolai* 4 [2014]: 1–12) has not been included in the bibliography.

The notes to the translation are very lucid and rich in comparable passages from Christian and secular literature, providing readers with useful summaries of lesser-known stories and events as appropriate. The notes also include references to the titles of particular exercises as preserved in certain manuscripts. Finally, the "Concordance of Exercise Numbers" that precedes the diligently composed index reaffirms the scholarly quality of this highly readable volume.

SOPHIA XENOPHONTOS, University of Glasgow

NICHOLAS BENNETT, *Lincolnshire Parish Clergy, c. 1214–1968: A Biographical Register. Part II: The Deaneries of Beltisloe and Bolingbroke*. (Publications of the Lincoln Record Society 105.) Woodbridge, UK: Boydell for The Lincoln Record Society, 2016. Pp. xxxi, 518; 16 black-and-white plates and 2 maps. \$70. ISBN: 978-1-910653-00-5. doi:10.1086/698667

For over a century, the Lincoln Record Society has been publishing records relating not only to the county of Lincoln but also to the much larger diocese of which, in the Middle Ages, the county only constituted about one-fifth. While the medieval diocese can claim England's earliest and most extensive surviving episcopal registers, its size (some 1,900 parishes) renders those registers so large that publication of them in extenso would be an enormous undertaking. As a result, only some selections have been published for the period 1300–1540, and most of those by Bennett. For the Society to publish instead lists of incumbents confined to their county, together with ancillary biographical information drawn from wills, cartularies, parish

Speculum 93/3 (July 2018)