REVIEWS

Francesca Romana Nocchi, Tecniche teatrali e formazione dell’oratore in Quintiliano (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 316), Berlin-Boston: de Gruyter, 2013. 232 pp. ISBN: 9783110324464

Nell’ambito dell’ormai consolidata tradizione di studi sui rapporti tra attività oratorie e arte teatrale questo libro si colloca con una sua specificità, che ne fa uno strumento non trascurabile per l’approfondimento della problematica.

Si tratta di “un’indagine linguistica e storico-letteraria” che, incentrata in particolare sul capitolo quintilianeo dedicato alla docenza del comœdus (1, 11, 1–14), mira a ricostruirne “la tradizione [...] attraverso il vaglio delle fonti letterarie, epigrafiche e papirologiche”, e a “precisare quale sia stato il reale influsso delle tecniche recitative sulla formazione dell’oratore” (p. VII).

La trattazione si articola in una Introduzione (pp. 1–6) e in sei densi capitoli, due dei quali, il terzo e il sesto, costituiscono la rielaborazione di altrettanti contributi precedentemente pubblicati. Quest’ultima circostanza, tuttavia, non porta alcun nocumento all’organicità del volume, che si presenta come una ricerca articolata ma unitaria, nella quale “i riferimenti all’arte scenica sono [...] ripartiti in rapporto alle diverse fasi di apprendimento, [...] nella convinzione che Quintiliano avesse in mente un progetto didattico ben preciso per un loro proficuo impiego” (p. 1).

Il primo capitolo (pp. 7–25) prende in esame le Intersezioni fra teatro e oratoria prima di Quintiliano: da Aristotele, che per primo riconosce gli stretti rapporti fra tecnica oratoria e ὑπόκρισις scenica – ma con una posizione scettica nei confronti della componente psicagogica – a Demostene, per il quale è lecito supporre una fase di formazione presso uno o più attori, al “rapporto controverso” (p. 18) che fra le due arti si realizza in ambiente romano. La prevenzione verso la tecnica psicagogica e la condanna della histrionum levis ars non impediscono a Roma la stima e la frequentazione reciproca di attori e oratori (condivisibili le notazioni sul possibile “ruolo educativo” di Roscio nei confronti di Cicerone: pp. 22–23 e n. 46), e le “reciproche e necessarie relazioni” che si instaurano fra le due arti (p. 24) stimolano l’esigenza di una teorizzazione.

Su questi fondamenti si sviluppano i successivi capitoli, riguardanti l’elaborazione di Quintiliano. Il secondo, Didattica della voce (pp. 27–94), disegna il curriculum dell’apprendista oratore dalla formazione prescolare
al paedagogium e al ludus primi magistri, alla scuola del grammaticus, alla docenza del comeodus e al completamento didattico presso il retore; il quarto, Sermo corporis (pp. 117–148), riguarda l’actio, ancora una volta nei rapporti con il teatro, ma con riferimenti anche ad altre esperienze, come la preparazione ginnica presso i palaestrici, in particolare presso quelli specializzati nella chironomia; il quinto (pp.149–181) prende in esame due figure retoriche, Prospopopea e etopea, particolarmente connesse con la gestualità. Il terzo e il sesto capitolo (Imago est animi voltus: la maschera fra teatro e oratoria, pp. 95–115; Lettura di Menandro alla scuola del grammaticus, pp. 183–200) – già editi separatamente, come sopra detto (rispettivamente in Rationes rerum 1 (2013): 165–199 e in Segno e testo 10 (2012): 107–138) – integrano la trattazione con la discussione di due rilevanti problemi solo apparentemente marginali.

Chiudono il volume una ricchissima Bibliografia (pp. 201–218) e una serie di preziosi indici: Indice dei loci notevoli (pp. 218–224); Indice dei nomi e delle cose notevoli (pp. 225–228); Indice degli autori moderni (pp. 229–232).

la persuasione del pubblico” (p. 120). Di qui, da un canto, l’insistenza sulla necessità di ricondurre l’actio a un ambito didattico che garantisca una corretta tecnica di utilizzazione del linguaggio gestuale, dall’altro l’ ‘apertura’ ai gusti del pubblico e il tentativo di recuperare un versante disciplinare che il disinteresse degli oratori aveva lasciato agli attori. Anche in questo caso si rivela illuminante il richiamo a Cicerone e alla sua polemica contrapposizione tra gli oratori veritatis actores e gli attori imitatores veritatis (de orat. 3, 214): è da lui che Quintiliano trae spunti e idee per la sua sistematica indagine sulle differenze tra le due artes e sui criteri di utilizzazione, da parte dell’oratore, delle tecniche utilizzate nella prassi teatrale.

Il ruolo del comoedus nella formazione del futuro oratore (pp. 42–75, 95–115), la sua qualificazione professionale, i compiti, le finalità e gli strumenti utilizzati nella sua docenza (come, poi, in quella del retore: pp. 76–86) sono analizzati e definiti con attenzione; e ben individuate appaiono (pp. 49–52) le ragioni della preferenza per l’attore comico come cultore di pronuntiatio rispetto all’interesse ciceroniano per la vox tragoeorum (de orat. 1, 128): l’esempio della commedia, considerata da Quintiliano più credibile in quanto più vicina alla realtà, può permettere di “correggere la degenerazione ormai dilagante” dell’oratoria (p. 52).


At first glance, the word “rhetoric” in the title of Katherine Acheson’s *Visual Rhetoric and Early Modern English Literature* is a red herring; the book seldom mentions rhetoric explicitly, and does relatively little work with Renaissance or contemporary rhetorical theory. Instead, it focuses on the ways in which various modes of visual representation in the sixteenth and seventeenth century enabled or facilitated certain types of “brainwork,” or “habituated thought, perception trained by exposure, active engagement, repetition, and extension,” and how these types of brainwork condition the literature of the period (2). It is in this engagement with brainwork, however, that *Visual Rhetoric* takes up questions that are inherently rhetorical in nature. Acheson’s work can be understood as an investigation into the relationship between conventions of visual representation (visual rhetorics) and frameworks for the communication of human experience (cognitive rhetorics) in 16th and 17th century literature.

Acheson’s method and central thesis are thoroughly historicist. Each chapter begins with an extensive discussion of a particular mode of visual representation current in the English Renaissance – beginning with military and horticultural diagrams, and moving through dichotomous tables, frontispieces and illustrations in manuals on drawing and writing, and ending by considering various modes of visually and textually representing animals. The historicizing work is supplemented and strengthened by the inclusion of reproduced examples of each mode being discussed. Acheson’s dedication to providing thick historical context is consistent and productive, and this consistency allows the work to display a considerable sensitivity to variations within and differences across modes of visual representation.

The first chapter is a particularly strong example of a productive and novel historicism. It considers shifting subject positions in Andrew Marvell’s *Upon Appleton House* as they relate to the subject positions created and posited by military and horticultural diagrams common in the renaissance, modes of visual encoding which render intelligible the perspective of the speaker in Marvell’s famous poem. The analysis in this chapter allows the peculiar mixture of perspectives demonstrated in Marvell’s work and analyzed in the diagrams to serve as an excellent textual lens that not only elucidates a famously complex poem but does so in a way that gears in nicely with existing scholarship.

The second chapter discusses dichotomous tables, especially those published as genealogical guides to bibles and the ways in which they
“powerfully instantiate central concepts of Protestant theology” (60), namely those having to do with the necessary and predetermined relationship between God, Adam, and Christ. The chapter discusses three ways in which the cognitive rhetoric of the dichotomous table structures and is interrogated by Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. And while the reading in this chapter is more expansive than in the first, it is also less complete – although an incomplete reading of *Paradise Lost* is a mark of honest intellectual engagement rather than a deficiency of method.

The third chapter discusses the visual components of manuals on drawing alongside the representation of artists and writing in manuals on writing, arguing that the visual rhetoric of drawing manuals connects art with artifice, equipment, and scientific modes of knowing. In doing so, those diagrams on art exclude writing from participating in the realm of the scientific and artificial. Acheson goes on to argue that exactly this exclusion is turned to writing’s benefit in order to strengthen the traditional ekphrastic conclusion – that poetry is superior to painting – in Marvell’s “Last Instructions,” emphasizing the ways in which Marvell has adapted a traditional genre to deal with contemporary issues surrounding the relationship between painting and art.

The final chapter discusses multiple modes of representing animals in late seventeenth century literature – from the natural historical and anatomical to the fabular – and how animals are included, evaluated, and problematized by Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko*. Similarly to the previous chapter, the visual rhetoric of the diagrams becomes an opportunity to discuss the brainwork it enables, and the relationship of representation to science is folded into the discussion and used to enrich the chapter’s textual understanding of Behn’s early novel, arguing in a fairly generous reading of the titular character’s animal-like qualities that *Oroonoko’s* use of the conventions of fables is central to the text’s engagement with political critique.

Ultimately, Acheson’s commitment to specific and occasionally narrow historicism is simultaneously her work’s greatest strength and its major limiting factor. While the readings are elegant and convincing locally, and the historical work is virtually unimpeachable, the book does relatively little work towards connecting the insights of its individual chapters into any larger concerns about Renaissance brainwork. Similarly, the book seems to engage with contemporary criticism relatively narrowly at points, responding to individual pieces or opinions rather than dealing with larger currents in early modern studies. The themes dealt with in the book would dovetail nicely with current interest in the ecological, phenomenology, or the underpinnings of cognition itself, but this wider engagement is mostly lacking.

Thankfully, however, Acheson does provide interesting analysis of cognitive processes without resorting to the all-too-frequent inclusion of a thin veneer of neurological language; the work is similarly free of breathless mentions of mirror neurons, the Penfield homunculus, or neuroplasticity. Instead, Acheson’s *Visual Rhetoric and Early Modern English Literature* provides four excellent pieces of historicist work coupled with illuminating
readings of major sixteenth and seventeenth century works. The book is also an excellent jumping-off point for future research, and Acheson’s specific insights relating to the four particular modes of brainwork the book deals with and the work’s broader project of finding productive cross-modal correspondences will certainly be productive for many working in the Renaissance.

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Recently I was looking at an early 15th-century manuscript copy of a 14th-century Greek “synopsis of rhetoric” in the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Christian Walz, in the preface to his 1832 edition of this text, says that he has not seen the Vienna manuscript, but cites an 18th century scholar who cites a 17th century scholar who has (Walz vol. 3, pp. 465–466). It occurred to me that I might have been the first person since the 17th century to actually open the Vienna manuscript and read it. True or false, there’s a certain romanticism in such experience, and a certain pleasure: the intrepid academic, decoder of texts, historian and rhetorician, paddles alone upriver past ruins and jungles, armed with machete, flashlight, and a pencil sharpener, into the world that time forgot. Heureka; I have found it; houtos ekeinos; this is that.

Thus I am happy with both books on review here. Both offer new perspective(s) on an insufficiently studied part of rhetoric’s ancient history—four fifths of it, in fact: the roughly eight centuries from the Hellenistic age to the end of the ancient world. Both books, moreover, offer a case well-grounded in the available evidence and delivered in a (mostly) clear, accessible style. In short they have many virtues, and are a pleasure to read.

Let’s paddle upriver a little way. I’ll start with Kremmydas and Tempest.

1. Hellenistic Oratory and the Myth of Decline

At stake throughout this volume is the pervasive myth that rhetoric, or more precisely oratory (rhetorical performance), “declined” in the Hellenistic age, the period conventionally dated from the death of Alexander (in 322 BCE) to the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium by the soon-to-be emperor Augustus (in 31 BCE). The myth presumes that
“rhetoric” is the art of practical civic discourse embodied in the speeches of the fourth-century Attic Orators, especially Demosthenes, and that it flourishes in democratic polities and languishes under autocratic rule. There are no preserved examples of Hellenistic oratory, which prompts an inference that little or nothing worth preserving was produced. Rhetoric (says the myth) had lost its civic role and was reduced to “merely” epideictic and literary functions for most of the next three centuries.

Elsewhere I have argued against the “decline” story, mostly on probabilistic and definitional grounds (Rhetoric & Poetics in Antiquity, Oxford 2000, ch. 3). One can make epideictic/panegyric discourse the paradigmatic (“central,” “primary”) form of rhetoric, as do Chaim Perelman and Kenneth Burke, in which case “rhetoric” seems to have enjoyed a great flourishing in the Hellenistic age. But even if we define rhetoric as the art of the Attic Orators, the fact is that it continued to play an important civic role. Law-courts continued to be busy, city councils continued to meet, kings and governors engaged in deliberative discourse with their advisors (if they were wise), inter-city diplomacy involved embassies and large amounts of written correspondence and chanceries to manage it, and so on. The needs of empire created jobs in the imperial bureaucracy, for which a rhetorical education was required, and there were municipally sponsored (“public”) as well as independent (“private”) schools to serve the need in cities large and small, as can be seen in the papyrus fragments of boys’ rhetorical exercises found at Oxyrhynchus and other provincial towns in Hellenistic Egypt. Schools of rhetoric multiplied and thrived. There were significant advances too in rhetorical theory, notably Theophrastus on style and Hermagoras on stasis, as well as advances in grammatical analysis at the Library of Alexandria. As the saying goes, moreover, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence: the now-lost speeches of the Hellenistic orators who were famous in their day were published and circulated all around the Mediterranean (Thornton p. 22); and the loss of Theophrastus’ and Hermagoras’ writings is clearly no argument against their worth. It is gratifying, then, to see the old “decline” myth refuted at length and in detail.

Hellenistic Oratory divides its fourteen chapters into three thematic sections. The first and longest (6 chapters) is devoted to the rhetorical-theoretical conceptions implied in literary representations of oratory. John Thornton’s leadoff essay, for example, examines the speeches described in Polybius’ Histories, with an eye to the types of speeches that Polybius recognizes. These include deliberative speeches (demegoriai), exhortations (parakleseis)—“especially those addressed by generals to their troops before the battle” (p. 23)—and ambassadorial speeches (presbeutikoi logoi). These may well have been taught in schools. I note, for example, that Hibeh Papyrus 1.15, an early Hellenistic artifact (circa 260 BCE), contains what appears to be a student’s declamation exercise, and it is a paraklesis: word of Alexander’s death has come, and the general Leosthenes exhorts the Athenians to join him in rebellion against their Macedonian overlords. As Thornton argues, Hellenistic portrayals of oratory testify to “its persistent vitality, its practical efficacy, and the debate it aroused” as an object of critical attention (p. 22), and that
vitality is an index, too, of the continued (if modified) activity of courts, councils, and assemblies.

The rest of Part I develops this position in different ways. For example, Michael Edwards’ piece on Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ critical treatment of Isaeus (the reputed precursor and teacher of Demosthenes) and the notion of *deinotes* (forcefulness) demonstrates the existence of an ongoing critical discussion through the Hellenistic age. The next four chapters explore the knowledge and impact of rhetorical *techne* (art) in Hellenistic poetry and drama: Eleni Volonaki considers the speeches of Jason in Apollonius of Rhodes’ *Argonautica*, Gunther Martin the rhetoric of encomium and invective in Theocritus’ *Idylls*, Cristopher Carey the speeches in Menander’s comedies, and Edith Hall the on-stage performance of Herodas’ *Mimiamb* 2 — a satiric mime (popular sketch-comedy) in which a brothel-keeper suits a ship-captain for assault and the theft of one of his girls, in a parodic version of judicial speech. Taken together, the samples examined in these four chapters reveal not only a sophisticated use of the rhetorical *techne* taught in schools and handbooks, but also an expectation of a similar sophistication in the audiences for whom the poets, orators, and others wrote. As Hall points out (p. 113), one must be deeply familiar with the principles of judicial rhetoric and the famous orators (who are echoed in almost every line) to get the jokes in Herodas.

Part II consists of just three chapters (two of which are fairly long), devoted to the relationship between rhetoric as taught in school and rhetoric as actually practiced in civic assemblies. Christos Kremmydas examines rhetorical papyri from the period for evidence of the main occasions, genres, and stylistic practices for rhetorical performance, and concludes with a discussion of the continuing prestige of Attic models, as exemplified in the “speech of Leosthenes” mentioned above. Turning to epigraphical evidence, Lene Rubinstein examines the case of ambassadorial speech-performances and their reception as recorded in inscriptions, and shows that ambassadors faced a complex task of delivering the message (or, more broadly, the position) they were charged with while sustaining a state of friendship between the two cities. The oral performance was much more than a formality. Rounding out Part II, Angelos Chaniotis’ chapter also turns to epigraphical evidence, the narrations included in decree-inscriptions, for information about “commemorative” oratorical performance, and its relation to historiography and other literary genres. But perhaps most memorable is Chaniotis’ frame for that analysis: an ambassadorial speech delivered at Athens in 88 BCE, described by Posidonius as a “theatrical” spectacle to which everyone, “men, women, and children,” came running as soon as they got word of the performance (pp. 202–203; Posidonius fr. 247 Theiler). This illuminating anecdote connects well with Rubinstein’s account of ambassadorial performances.

Part III consists of five chapters devoted to the Roman reception of Hellenistic rhetoric and oratory: J. G. F. Powell on the famous “embassy of the three philosophers” to Rome in 155 BCE; Jula Wildberger on pre-imperial Stoic rhetoric; Gesine Manauld on the rhetoric of the speeches in Roman drama; Kathryn Tempest on Cicero’s *Pro Marcello* as an example
of Hellenistic oratory; and Stanley Porter on the influence of Hellenistic oratory (and/or rhetoric) on Paul of Tarsus. The aggregate effect is similar to that of Parts I and II, and extends and confirms the general argument.

The picture here is one of considerable vitality, adaptability, relevance, and effectiveness, not decline or decadence; and it comes through perhaps most clearly in Powell’s chapter, which makes the key points that the Greek cities routinely sent philosophers (and sophists) on embassies, and that they were chosen for their “more than ordinary gifts and accomplishments” in argumentation and public speaking (pp. 222–225). The practice reflects an assumption that such abilities are essential to the business of an embassy, and that the ambassador’s role is fundamentally to deliberate and negotiate, chiefly through symbouleutic (“advisory”) and demegoric (“public”) discourse.

Complaints? Just two. Or one. In the Works Cited list my name is misspelled as “G. Walker” (Geoffrey?). Not a big deal, but I wish the editors had gotten it right. More seriously, here and there one finds a tacit assumption that rhetoric is a genre, essentially oratory, and that (in consequence) the “rhetoric” in, say, poetry is found in the speeches of the characters but not in the poem as a whole. Of course the strategy of looking at literary representations of oratory is valid where no actual examples have survived; but it also invites a subtle drift toward the fundamental mistake of dividing discourse into “rhetorical” and “non-rhetorical” kinds. I will return to this point presently. Let us now turn our boat toward Cribiore.

2. **Libanius the Sophist, and What He Really Thought**

Raffaella Cribiore has been doing for rhetoric in late antiquity what *Hellenistic Oratory* does for rhetoric in the Hellenistic age — across a series of books (and articles) focused on Greco-Roman education, she has provided a revised/corrected perspective and a thicker, more detailed, better contextualized description of rhetoric as a teaching art. *Libanius the Sophist* more or less picks up from where her previous book, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* (2007), left off. Having culled information from Libanius’ 1,544 letters, 64 orations, and other sources about the inner workings of his school and his career as the municipally subsidized “Sophist of Antioch,” Cribiore now turns to what those sources reveal about him as a political and social actor.

Basically *Libanius the Sophist* offers a deeper look into what Libanius thought of the triumphant Christian empire all around him. A couple of questions are at stake. First, there is “Edward Gibbon’s depiction of Libanius as a ‘recluse student,’ deaf to contemporary issues” and living in a fantasy world where the Trojan War is recent news and Demosthenes still speaks (p. 3). Libanius’ actual speeches on civic issues in Antioch and his letters to the emperor Julian show him clearly to be politically engaged; nevertheless the Gibbonesque judgment still circulates in modern views of Libanius and of late-antique rhetoric in general (i.e., as in decline). The second question has to do with Libanius’ sincerity: in his letters he sometimes is friendly
to people whom he smears with invective and insult in his orations. Can Libanius be believed? What did he really think, especially of students and colleagues who were Christians? I am not sure how exigent these issues are, at least for rhetoricians, though I acknowledge that for historians of late antiquity Libanius’ morality and truthfulness may be an issue, if Gibbon still has their ear. The fact that Libanius was the teacher of John Chrysostom (and other Christians), and seems to have been on friendly terms with Gregory Nazianzos and Gregory of Nyssa while remaining openly pagan, settles it for me.

Here I should note that Libanius the Sophist began as a lecture series delivered at Cornell University in 2010. That fact explains some things. First of all, the (original) audience is necessarily more general than one composed of specialists in Cribiore’s field, and the underlying lecture-address to an intelligent general audience still is present in the book. This has certain effects. For example, the book is structured in a way that appeals to the romance of scholarly investigation: the solitary scholar enters the archive, peels away centuries of accumulated error, decodes the text, and solves the riddle, which in this case is the question(s) of Libanius’ engagement with the issues of his day and his real opinions and sincerity. Cribiore in effect invites the audience to come along with her on this journey of discovery.

The problem is how to assess what any text means, especially when there are apparent contradictions, as in Libanius’ invectives against people his letters address as friends. I do not think that anyone who studies rhetoric, and ancient rhetoric especially, will need much explanation on this point. But Cribiore’s general audience does. Thus much of the first two chapters (of four) is taken up with discussions of genre and reception theory. Different genres entail different norms and expectations; the meanings of words depend on context and addressee. Invective in certain kinds of speeches is conventional and expected, and does not mean what the same invectives would mean in, say, a letter. And so on. Cribiore very deliberately exposes her methods and her theoretical assumptions, and in ways appropriate to her lecture-audience, producing an introduction to the pleasures of scholarship and the romance of studying late antiquity. But I think that most readers of Rhetorica will find the discussion pretty basic.

More problematic is Cribiore’s distinction between “rhetoric” and “reality,” which is made explicit in the title of chapter 1: “Rhetoric and the Distortion of Reality.” Rhetoric necessarily shapes and thus distorts our perception of reality, so that we need to look through or past it to get to the facts. This position is related, too, to thinking of rhetoric as a genre or distinguishing “rhetorical” genres from “nonrhetorical.” For example, Cribiore discusses what she calls the “less rhetorical style” of Libanius’ narration in his Autobiography (pp. 42–43). From rhetoric’s perspective, the style could be described as “historical” or “plain,” but such a style could never be described as non- or less-rhetorical. Nor can (or should) we speak of getting to the undistorted truth once we have identified the “rhetorical” parts and appropriately discounted them.
In chapters 3 and 4 Cribiore works through the question(s) of Libanius’ opinions of paganism and Christianity in his letters and speeches, showing convincingly that Libanius held a moderate cultural-conservative position that enabled him to genuinely be friends with Christians as well as pagans — which, after all, one would expect from a rhetorician who grasps the value of argumentum in utramque partem not only as a method of debate but also as a way of life, an ethic for a civilized, humane society.

Despite these criticisms I do in fact like this book. I particularly like its refutation of the Gibbonesque judgment on Libanius, and its portrait of rhetoric in late antiquity as very much still alive and doing practical civic as well as cultural work (see in particular p. 36). In a sense this book is a sort of appendix to The School of Libanius, which I think remains the most important of Cribiore’s books for rhetoricians and historians of rhetoric.

Different readers of this journal will want to read both Libanius the Sophist and Hellenistic Oratory for different reasons, and your responses likely will differ from mine, depending on your scholarly interests and orientation. Bottom line, these books give us a closer, better description of rhetoric in the Hellenistic age and late antiquity, and belong on the rhetorician’s bookshelf.

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Midway through the introduction to Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium, Vessela Valiavitcharska sets forth the book’s aim, which is to “make a step toward contributing to” an understanding of “the argumentative and emotional effects of discourse, and of the mental habits involved in its production” (p. 12). That professed goal, enfolded in prepositions and couched in the incremental language of a step—and a single step at that—is modest. And while the framing of the book, and for that matter, Valiavitcharska herself, exude modesty, the rigor, disciplinary reach, and sheer brilliance of her study calls for less modest account. That is where I come in.

In addition to its intrinsic value of reclaiming the Old Church Slavic homily tradition for rhetorical study, Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium joins at least three rising trends in rhetorical studies. The first two are burgeoning interests in 1) Byzantine rhetoric and 2) the recovery of pre-modern classroom practices. Thomas Conley and Jeffrey Walker have both pointed out the importance of Byzantine rhetoric and have done much to dismantle assumptions that this period presents merely a redaction of classical texts and teaching. Scholars in the U.S. (David Fleming, Raffaella Cribiore, Marjorie Curry Woods, Martin Camargo) and Europe (Manfred Kraus, Ruth Webb,
María Violeta Pérez Custodio) have revived an interest in the *progymnasmata* and have developed new methods for identifying and extrapolating classroom practices from extant artifacts. Vialiavtcharska both makes use of those methods and extends them. These two contexts together mean that there ought to be a broad, interdisciplinary readership for *Rhythm and Rhetoric in Byzantium*.

But there is still a third exciting context for this work, one that extends its reach past classical scholars and historians of rhetoric and to scholars concerned with sensory dimensions of rhetoric, specifically those facilitating rhetoric’s sonic turn. Scholarship in rhetoric, communication, and communications have very recently seen an uptick in interest in how sound shapes thought, interaction, messages, and sociality. Scholars such as Gregory Goodale, Matthew Jordan, Joshua Gunn, Richard Graff, and Jonathan Sterne are leading the way here. This work, partly a response to what rhetoric scholar Sidney Dobrin (following Donna Haraway) calls the “tyranny of the visual,” is cutting edge. Some of it is historical, but (with the important exception of Graff) the history is usually limited to the twentieth century, mainly because of its focus on sound-recording technologies, which are relatively recent. Vialiavtcharska’s work promises to turn the heads of these scholars and their followers, to reveal to them the intricate and longstanding root system of sonic rhetoric, and to stretch the conversation about methods of sound recovery. Sonic rhetoric falls under the rubric of what scholars have taken to calling “nonrational rhetoric,” rhetorical theories that attend to bodies, emotions, movement. All of these matter for Vialiavtcharska’s study of rhythm.

With *Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium*, Vialiavtcharska walks the line of broad relevance and technical detail better than most. Her introduction, conclusion, and the individual chapter introductions all carefully contextualize the study, showing why such technical matters, well, matter to a study of movement and rhythm. Beneath the broad contributions are countless bits of insight. Chapter one brings to life the Byzantine thinker Michael Psellos in an unprecedented way as it chronicles Byzantine rhetoric’s debt to classical rhetoric, all while offering a useful introduction to the study’s key terms (e.g. hiatus and euphony). Chapter three provides an immensely helpful and painstaking documentation of rhythmic practices in the Byzantine classroom, from early to advanced stages of study. There she also finds one of the precursors for the advice (offered still today) that students read their work aloud. Chapter four examines classroom commentaries on Hermogenes, locating argumentation at the very limn between form and content. The resulting account finds enthymeme’s lean toward figurality as defining structure—that is, matters of style guide the enthymeme’s form more than syllogism, that reasoned formula attributed to classical Greece. The upshot of this liminality of argument is that meaning itself gets punted from writers and speakers to hearers. This chapter, in short, shows how emotions and bodies press into nuggets of reasoned argument.

The question chapter five poses for Slavic translations of Greek homilies—whether they worked to preserve prose rhythm as much as meaning—is as
simple as it is fascinating. Its conclusion, that these homilies do in fact retain rhythmic properties from the original Greek, is justified by the book’s most painstaking and technical analysis. I am familiar with neither the Slavic language nor the textual and translation traditions that feature in this chapter (my expertise lies with ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric, and I have recently been studying late antique and Byzantine rhetoric as well). And yet even without that knowledge base, I found the chapter remarkably readable and absorbing.

The potent assemblage of skills and methods Valiavitcharska brings to this study is especially noteworthy in this fifth chapter. The language skills alone on which Valiavitcharska must draw to perform this analysis are vast and impressive, to say nothing of the quantitative techniques and the methodology she uses to comparatively map rhythmic patterns across texts. As a result, this is the part of the book where Valiavitcharska’s training in comparative literature converges most strikingly with her training in rhetoric, making me wish that more programs were set up to prepare students to examine texts with such robust and variegated (robust because variegated) methods, some of which are discussed in detail in the book’s appendices.

Valiavitcharska also manages to keep the analysis in conversation with existing scholarship on the subject. Her critical examination of Picchio’s and Capaldo’s analyses is downright delightful (especially the account of Capaldo’s scansion of bureaucratic discourse). If the literal etymology of our Greek analysis is to loosen up (in order to better understand something), Valiavitcharska certainly does that and then some. And though any speculation about why, for example, the Slavic homilies so fastidiously replicate the rhythm of the Greek, is carefully qualified and tinged with modesty, as a whole, the book itself needs no such hedge. Valiavitcharska ought to be commended for such fine work; historians of rhetoric— aspiring and established—ought to consult it as a model.

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