NEVILLE (L.) **Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 322, illus. £61.99. 9781107039988.
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Byzantine historiography is often associated with monks writing chronicles in dusty monasteries or with fawning courtiers composing obscure and self-aggrandising historiography in a classicizing vein. Even within the field of Byzantine studies, such prejudiced and wildly outdated ideas about Byzantine historiography still linger. But thanks to Leonora Neville's *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing*, there is now an efficient means to put an end, once and for all, to such beliefs and instead take this important tradition seriously. With the aim of making 'the riches of medieval histories written in Greek easily accessible to anyone who may be interested' (1), this is a useful book for classicists and western medievalists, students as well as scholars. Thanks to its clear and unbiased presentation of sources and studies, it is also very helpful for Byzantinists: it offers practical guidelines for teaching and studying Byzantine historical sources, and at the same time it clarifies some of the issues still under debate and engages with the scholarly speculation that has come to mark the field.

The thorough introduction thus sets out to clarify, first of all, 'the self-understanding of the inhabitants of the medieval Roman Empire as Romans' (5). Neville underlines how this needs to be taken seriously by modern scholars, some of whom seem to think that Christianity made the Byzantines delusional as regards their own identity. It goes without saying that Christianity brought about crucial change in some ways, but it did not 'sever the political entity of the Roman Empire into two segments in the mind of its inhabitants' (5). Another essential clarification regards the tendency of modern historians to cite 'reasonable guess[es] … as fact' (1), leading to misconceptions of how much the extant sources actually tell. Such assumptions often relate to the authors of chronicles and histories, whose texts are used to reconstruct their respective authors' personalities and lives, of which usually next to nothing is known. Neville offers relevant critique of and an important alternative to that approach, describing her own book as 'a dry martini to [Warren] Treadgold's cream sherry' (3).

The focus in Neville's guide is accordingly on texts rather than on authors, and it also moves away from the old distinction between (annalistic) chronicles and (narrative) histories by including texts that 'call themselves' histories or chronicles or 'clearly look like such' (4). This also means that texts like, for instance, John Kaminiates' letter on the capture of Thessaloniki (an eyewitness account of the Arab siege of 904) is included (Chapter 14), together with more famous works like the *Chronicle* of Theophanes (early ninth century), the *Alexiad* of Anna Komnene (12th century) and the *History* of Michael Kritovoulos (15th century). In total, the guide presents 52 historical texts written between AD 600 and 1490, leaving out the period that used to be seen as Early Byzantine but is now usually termed Late Antiquity. This means that the guide starts with Theophylakt Simokatta (seventh century) and ends with Laonikos Chalkokondyles (after 1453), 'because the fall of Constantinople was one of many things that gradually altered the intellectual and cultural landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean' (4–5). The rationale behind these choices, presented and discussed in the introduction (especially 8–16), is given in relation to the research history that has led up to common definitions and divisions as regards time and form.

Since the focus is on historical texts, Neville underlines the linguistic, literary and performative aspects of historical writing: issues like language, linguistic register and style, rhetoric, settings and audiences have a given place in her discussion of Byzantine historiography, as do entertaining aspects of (some) histories and their narrative qualities as gripping or engaging works (especially 19–20). This may seem self-evident to some readers, but it still cannot be taken for granted in Byzantine studies and is therefore

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particularly useful in this context. To allow a discussion of these texts to take into account their 'form, scope and aesthetic sensibility' (11) is perhaps not pioneering, but nonetheless still surprisingly uncommon among modern historians of Byzantium.

It is not easy to write guides or introductions without becoming superficial, but Neville certainly can. In addition to the present guide to historiography, she has also recently written the first introduction to *Byzantine Gender* (Amsterdam 2019), an excellent book that approaches the topic in a similar way: engaging with recurring scholarly prejudices to move on to a more modern and nuanced understanding of important topics. By devoting the final chapter of her guide to Laonikos Chalkokondyles, an avid imitator of Herodotus, she shows how the Graeco-Roman tradition offers meaning rather than a straightjacket to Byzantine historiography. Neville makes it seem effortless (just another dry martini), but this book is quite an accomplishment.

Ingela Nilsson
Uppsala University
Email: ingela.nilsson@lingfil.uu.se

NEWMYER (S.T.) (ed.) **Plutarch's Three Treatises on Animals: A Translation with Introductions and Commentary** (Routledge Classical Translations). London and New York NY: Routledge, 2021. Pp. xvi + 188. £36.99. 9780203703182.
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This book offers a new English translation with commentary of four works from Plutarch's *Moralia*, focused on animal virtues, intelligence and the ethics of eating meat. *De sollertia animalium* (*On the Cleverness of Animals*, henceforth *S.*) is a combination of a philosophical dialogue and a rhetorical competition; *Bruta animalia ratione uti* (*On the Use of Reason by Animals*, henceforth *B.*), or *Gryllus*, is a satirical dialogue between Odysseus and a talking pig advancing compelling arguments; and *De esu carnium* (*On Eating Meat*, henceforth *E.1* and *E.2*) is the common title of two consecutive short orations with strong condemnatory and emotional tones.

Stephen Newmyer's book begins with a preface detailing its methodology, aims and connection to prior editions. Following this, each of the four translated works is presented with an introduction summarizing its content and related scholarly debate, and complemented by clarificatory endnotes. Worthy of appreciation is the inclusion of an analytical index at the end of the book.

Newmyer's version, more legible than the dated, if still accurate, Loeb translation by W.C. Helmbold (*Plutarch's* Moralia, vol. 12 (Cambridge MA and London 1957)), targets not just 'classical scholars', but also 'Greek-less' readers of ancient philosophy, history of ideas and ethics (xii–iv). It is the culmination of Newmyer's three-decade commitment to Plutarch's zoopsychology and moral views on animals, which has been marked by such substantial contributions as *Animals, Rights and Reason in Plutarch and Modern Ethics* (New York NY and London 2006) and *Animals in Greek and Roman Thought: A Sourcebook* (London and New York NY 2011). Here, as in these previous works, a central aspect of Newmyer's approach is to reveal the correspondences between Plutarch's viewpoints, arguments, methodology and rhetoric in matters of animal cognition and vegetarianism and those of today's animal rights advocates and cognitive ethologists. In this new book, this operation is carried out selectively (rather than exhaustively) through the introductions to individual translations and several endnotes to specific passages.

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