eve of the Persian expedition aims at propitiating the traditional gods of the Roman State, among whom specifically Cybele, “a valuable friend for an Emperor who hoped to see a pagan restoration” (178). S. also writes well on Julian’s dislike of Christianity, which differs considerably from Porphyry’s cool criticism and stems from his “deep hatred for Christian thought and practice” (207). The emphasis is, however, on the latter aspect. S. pays disappointingly little attention to Ammianus Marcellinus’ ‘romanized’ portrait of Julian. Surely, Res Gestae 22.5.1 is not “a single ... remark” (184) about Julian’s ‘conversion’: 21.2.4 a quo iam pridie occulte desciverat is a significant piece of information too. More could be said—indeed has been said—about Julian’s conviction that Aratus’ Δίκη had returned during his reign (22.10.6) than S. notes on p. 43. The elogium in 25.4 deserved to have been taken into account in the argument.

Such complaints do not entail a negative judgement of S.’s achievement. His analyses and conclusions are a worthwhile addition to Bouffartigue’s detailed description of the sources and limits of Julian’s education and erudition.

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Themistius (ca. 317-388) was one of the most powerful spokesmen of Greek paganism which in the fourth century endeavoured to safeguard its social position and cultural patrimony against triumphant Christendom. A study of this important philosopher and politician is therefore relevant to an accurate understanding of Late Antiquity. John Vanderspoel provides a well-knit biography of Themistius, and also sheds light on his historical context.

In the introduction the author points out that Themistius must be considered a philosopher in politics, whose ideals principally originated from Plato and Aristotle. The subsequent chapters are devoted to a reconstruction of Themistius’ career. First, his youth, education and teaching activities are described. Next, the political situation in Constantinople is sketched. Having thus outlined the cultural and social background, Vanderspoel focuses on Themis-
tius’ relations with the successive emperors. Many quotations and summaries of his speeches as well as references to contemporary authors, such as Libanius, Julian and Ammianus Marcellinus, illustrate and vivify the account of Themistius’ life in the metropolis which he promoted as ‘a second Rome’. In the epilogue, Vanderspoel evaluates Themistius’ role, arguing that he was a humanitarian representative of Constantinople’s elite. Finally, some interesting appendices are added: Vanderspoel enumerates the complete works of Themistius, depicts his attitude towards contemporary sophists and philosophers, and suggests that the Rišālat, extant in Arabic, is a translation of Themistius’ Panegyric of Julian, or of an epitome of that speech. The last appendix offers a chronological survey of the speeches. The study is closed by a secondary bibliography and an index.

Although Vanderspoel’s historical narrative is carefully underpinned, his book displays some faults. First, his interpretations and conclusions are sometimes inexact or premature. Vanderspoel thinks that Themistius attacked in the proem of his Protrepticus to the Citizens of Nicomedia\(^1\) three pursuits that drew people from “rational philosophy”: rhetoric, Christianity and Iamblichan theurgy (p. 27; p. 43-44). In fact, his arguments\(^2\) are not convincing. Surely, the ‘Assyrian song’ which bewitches the audience might refer to Christian psalmody, as D. Pétail\(^3\) supposed; but it is not evident why Themistius would complain about the influence of Christianity in a speech that was obviously addressed to Greek pagans. As to the alleged criticism of Iamblichus, it should be noticed that the Neoplatonic philosopher had died at least a decade before Themistius wrote his Protr. Nic. Moreover, neither the passage of the Protr. Nic. nor any other ancient text proves Vanderspoel’s hypothesis according to which Iamblichus was born in Chalcis ad Libanum, and in consequence it is improbable that Themistius was criticizing Iamblichus’ mysticism. The meaning of Themistius’ words becomes clear if one observes that the first paragraph pivots upon the opposition between the sophistic and the philosophical way of speaking. The philosophical orator connects his own situation with that of Socrates, who had to compete with Gorgias and Prodicus. Seeing this implicit σύγκρισις, one must conclude that Themistius’ rivals were contemporary sophists. The antithetic structure of the sentence on which Vanderspoel bases his interpretation comprises two members, introduced by μὲν and δὲ, and thus shows that Themistius distinguished only two groups of competitors: those who sang