After her substantial study on “The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch” (2007), Raffaella Cribiore (henceforth Cr.) now presents what on the blurb is called “the fullest intellectual portrait yet of this remarkable figure”. The first section of the Introduction announces her intention to correct traditional perceptions of Libanius (4: “the deceiving sophist, the flatterer, the opportunist, the enemy of the Christians, and finally, the man who had lost contact with reality”). She stresses the diversity of Libanius’ vast extant work and the need to put it into its proper context. In the following subsection on the “Survival and Reception of Libanius” (10-17), however, some assertions are questionable, e.g. that the church historian Socrates of Constantinople “repeatedly expresses his admiration for Libanius” (11). In \textit{HE} 3.23 Socrates makes it quite clear that he regards Libanius as a flatterer of Julian who only preferred Julian’s anti-Christian writings to those of Porphyry because Julian was the ruling emperor and Porphyry was not (3.23.3-6), and in other passages he records which Christian bishops-to-be were pupils of Libanius without expressing any admiration for the sophist. Neither does Socrates anywhere in his work seem to “question the steadfastness of Libanius’s paganism” (12). Furthermore, even though Cr. acknowledges the authenticity debate surrounding the alleged epistolary exchange between Libanius and Basil, she believes that this “correspondence (genuine or not) testifies to a courteous relationship…” (13)—but how can it do this if it is a forgery?\textsuperscript{1} She also rightly mentions that Libanius became a figure of “later Christian tradition… even [in] the Latin West” (14), but how this happened does not become clear in her account,\textsuperscript{2} because she apparently does not know the most pertinent Greek text that was translated into Latin in Carolingian times: the \textit{Vita Basilii} ascribed to (but not in fact written by) bishop

\textsuperscript{1} Apparently she does not know a recent contribution to this debate, which tries to show that this correspondence is a later fake: Nesselrath, H.-G. 2010. \textit{Libanio e Basilio di Cesarea: un dialogo interreligioso?}, Adamantius 16, 338-352.

\textsuperscript{2} “No doubt the epistolary exchange between Libanius and Basil inspired the medieval storytellers” (16)—but we have no evidence that those Greek texts were at all known to these people.
Amphilochius of Iconium.—The last sections of the Introduction present an overview of “The Oeuvre of Libanius” and a “Synopsis of Chapters” (20-24).

The first two main chapters deal with the topics announced in the first half of the subtitle, “Rhetoric” and “Reality”. In “Rhetoric and the Distortion of Reality” (25-75), Cr. looks first at the letters (27-35), making a good case that letters and orations are “texts of fundamentally different natures that convey disparate meanings and address different audiences” (35). Turning to the speeches, she stresses their variegated nature, pointing out that epideictic ones are less frequent in this oeuvre than is usually thought (36) and that rather many of them deal with real-life issues of Libanius’ times. Cr. then focuses on the picture of Libanius’ life as it emerges from his *Autobiography* and his letters respectively (38-54), discussing various instances in which the *Autobiography* gives a ‘modified’ picture compared to that of the letters (see, e.g., 45-47, 53-54). Hereafter she considers the biographical traditions to which Libanius might have been indebted (54-75), discussing but ultimately rejecting the possibility that Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius* might have been a model (56-58). She reaches a similar verdict after discussing possible relations of Libanius’ work with Neoplatonist biographical writings (58-60). She then turns to Athanasius’ *Life of Antony* and considers whether Libanius’ *Autobiography* might have been directly influenced by it (61-75). To prove this, she first tries to fit Libanius’ text “into the context of the ‘life of the holy man’” (61), arguing that Libanius needed the figure of the goddess Tychē “to claim investiture as a holy man under her auspices” (ibid.). One of her arguments for bringing the *Life of Antony* into contact with Libanius is that Evagrius, the Latin translator of Athanasius’ text, was a pupil in Libanius’ school and was supported several times by Libanius before he became a Christian priest (63-66); I do not find this argument particularly convincing, nor the considerations presented subsequently. In her “Outline of the *Vita Antonii*” (71-72), Cr. tries to establish several parallels between that text and Libanius’ *Autobiography*, but she also concedes that “Athanasius’s and Libanius’s texts present certain common elements that come from the writers’ similar cultural upbringing” (72); apart from that, she does not get beyond assumptions and suggestions (e.g., “I propose that he would not have neglected to read a pertinent text…only because it celebrated a Christian monk”, 74; “in Athanasius’s text the sophist could find much that could help him shape the narrative of his own life”, ibid.). I regard her case as not proven.

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3 On the importance of this text for Libanius’ appearance in the West, see Nesselrath, H.-G. 2012. *Libanios: Zeuge einer schwindenden Welt* (Stuttgart), 126-127.