

MICHAELIS PSELLI *Orationes hagiographicae*. Ed. Elizabeth A. Fisher, Teubner, Stuttgart-Leipzig 1994. xvii, 355 p. ISBN 3-8154-1665-5. DEM 138.

MICHAELIS PSELLI *Orationes panegyricae*. Ed. George T. Dennis, Teubner, Stuttgart-Leipzig 1994. xvi, 214 p. ISBN 3-8154-1666-3. DEM 120.

MICHAELIS PSELLI *Orationes forenses et acta*. Ed. George T. Dennis. Teubner, Stuttgart-Leipzig 1994. xviii, 199 p. ISBN 3-8154-1667-1. DEM 96.

From the re-editing work of the extant writings of Michael Psellus, which was initiated by prof. L.G. Westerink, have been issued this year already three volumes.

Elisabeth A. Fisher has collected and re-edited the texts of Psellus which can be categorized mainly as homiletics, ecclesiastical orations, which were meant to be delivered as part of the liturgy in certain days of the liturgical year (annunciation Day 25th March, Good Friday, the day of John the Baptist 29th Aug., the day of St. Michael 8th Oct., the memorial days of St. Auxentius and Simeon Metaphrastes). Text n. 4 differs totally from that category, being an *ekphrasis* of a miracle which happened in the Blachernai 1075. The writings are to be found in 26 manuscripts, which can be dated from the 12th century to the 15th century. One reason for such an amount could be that the name of Michael Psellus was already in the twelfth century taken as an example of high literary style and so had become a didactic paradigm in rhetorical education.

So might be the case also with the "secular" oratory of Psellus. The 21 extant speeches edited by George T. Dennis, which can be categorized as panegyric oratory, can be found also in a number of different manuscripts. The speeches represent rather well the application of the rules of classical epideictical genres for different occasions in the Byzantine court; *prosfonesis*, *demegoria*, and *syntakterios*. All different types of the same genres meant to be delivered in different ceremonial occasions. This, of course, demands from the historian different ways of approach, if he wants to understand them in another way than has been usually done, i.e. as empty Byzantine court-rhetoric. The panegyric genre was a literary concept that covered a wide and profound oratorical practice, *rhetoric in action*.

The other edition of George T. Dennis, *orationes forenses et acta*, reintroduces long ago edited judicial speeches of Psellus, and at the same time raises a question concerning the fate of forensic oratory, which has been maintained to have been dead since the late antiquity. There is one speech of accusation and two apologies. The other texts of the edition, *acta*, are three *chrysobulloi* of emperors drawn up by Psellus, and two judicial texts, *hypomnemata*, reference records of judicial scrutinies.

It would be most desirable that through these editions of the rhetorical works of Michael Psellus, the research on Byzantine oratory, until quite recently a neglected branch of studies, would get a good start, not only as a literary and stylistic study, but also as a socio-historical study: oratory seen as a social and political instrument of formal and ceremonial communication between different levels of Byzantine society.