Transforming Textuality: Porphyry, Eusebius, and Late Ancient
Tables of Contents

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TRANSFORMING TEXTUALITY: PORPHYRY, EUSEBIUS, AND LATE ANTIQUE TABLES OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT Late Antiquity witnessed a revolution in textuality. Numerous new technologies transformed the practices through which readers accessed written knowledge. Editors reconfigured existing works in order to facilitate new modes of access and new possibilities of knowledge. Despite recent investigations of late ancient knowing, tables of contents have been neglected. Addressing this lacuna, I analyze two examples from the early fourth century: Porphyry of Tyre’s outline of the Enneads in his Life of Plotinus and Eusebius of Caesarea’s Gospel canons. Using tables of contents, Porphyry and Eusebius reconfigured inherited corpora; their creative interventions generate and constrain possibilities of reading—sometimes in ways which run against the grain of the assembled material. I thus argue that Porphyry and Eusebius employed tables of contents to structure textual knowledge—and readers’ access to it—by embracing the dual possibilities of order and creativity in order to offer new texts to their readers. This dual function—of affording structure and inviting creative use—was significant in the construction of composite works which characterized much late ancient intellectual production. The examples of Porphyry and Eusebius illuminate broader late ancient practices of collecting and cataloguing textual knowledge.

KEYWORDS Porphyry of Tyre, Eusebius of Caesarea, Enneads, Gospels, Tables of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

Late Antiquity witnessed a revolution in textuality. The emerging prominence of the codex format is but the most famous of the bibliographic

1. I am grateful to Matthew Crawford, Joseph Howley, Jennifer Knust, Mark Letteney, Blake Leyerle, David Lincicum, Candida Moss, Andrew Riggins, and an anonymous reviewer for their generous feedback. Previous forms of this argument were presented at the XVIII. International Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford and at the Notre Dame Workshop on Book History and Early Christianity. The article is much improved by the insights of both audiences.

transformations that occurred in the third and fourth centuries CE. Editors reconfigured existing works using numerous new technologies that transformed the practices by which readers accessed written knowledge. These editorial labors are the focus of the present contribution. Among the emerging technologies of the period was one that present-day readers often take for granted: the table of contents. Modern familiarity with the table of contents has obscured awareness of its power to transform reading. In this article, I focus on two fourth-century projects that used tables of contents to reconfigure existing texts. These editorial interventions exerted a dramatic effect, still underestimated, on the reception of two influential textual corpora: the Enneads attributed to the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus and the four Gospels of the New Testament.

In recent years, several scholars have highlighted the ancient table of contents as a powerful literary device. The few Latin tables of contents from the first and second centuries CE, especially those in Pliny’s Natural History and Aulus Gellius’ Attic Nights, have enjoyed well-deserved attention. Nonetheless, tables of contents have not been incorporated into conversations about late ancient knowing. This pattern of neglect continues a longstanding


emphasis on authors. Scholars focus on authorial tables of contents—like those of Pliny or Gellius—while later editorial interventions are overlooked or dismissed as derivative. Ignoring such tables of contents is part of a larger tendency to devalue textual curation, late ancient and otherwise. This neglect is peculiar because, as a number of scholars have emphasized, distinctive developments in the organization of knowledge characterized Late Antiquity.

In this article, I argue that tables of contents illuminate broader late ancient practices of collecting and cataloguing textual knowledge. The table of contents provides a category by which to analyze the construction of two composite works from the early fourth century: Porphyry of Tyre’s *Enneads* and Eusebius of Caesarea’s fourfold Gospel. As a number of scholars have recently emphasized, late ancient thinkers of varied philosophical and theological commitments occupied overlapping social and intellectual milieux. Here I extend these illuminating comparisons by demonstrating how both Porphyry and Eusebius used tables of contents to generate new networks of meaning within inherited texts. In what follows, I analyze both the editors’ stated rationales for their interventions

5. Riggsby and Howley both focus on authorial tables of contents in the first and second centuries CE. Genette similarly focuses on features that he attributes to an “author” or their agents (Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation, trans. Jane E. Lewin [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997]).


8. In their monograph, Grafton and Williams focus on similarities between Porphyry as editor of Plotinus’ corpus and Pamphilus and Eusebius as editors of Origen’s corpus, but do not employ the table of contents as a framework for comparison. Schott’s discussion of how Porphyry and Eusebius...
and how these tables of contents facilitated readers’ use of the assembled texts. Both figures transformed existing corpora (Plotinus’ Nachlass, the four Gospels). Using tables of contents, they embraced the dual possibilities of order and creativity in order to offer new texts and new modes of reading. While the significance of these late ancient editorial interventions remains underestimated, both projects had an enduring impact on reading and knowledge.

2. TABLES OF CONTENTS, ANCIENT AND MODERN

The familiar devices known as tables of contents possess a peculiar power to afford and to constrain possibilities of reading, a capacity rendered all the more potent by readers’ tendency to overlook them.9 Before turning to ancient texts, then, I discuss modern tables of contents. This, in turn, requires a few words about the heuristic categories that I employ. Categories are analogies; they draw attention to certain similarities at the expense of other features. To assign something to a category is thus to make an argument that item X is relevantly similar (i.e., adjudicated with respect to some context-specific set of criteria) to other items (say, Y and Z) that have been grouped together in that same category. Hence, category claims are a species of analogy. Categorization makes shared features and patterns of use visible, despite differences between ancient and modern phenomena. Ancient editorial interventions differed from their modern corollaries, and the table of contents is no exception.10 Approaching late ancient paratexts as tables of contents is


10. Ancient bibliographic phenomena such as πίνακες and κεφάλαια intersect with the category of “table of contents” that I employ here. Πίνακες describe a bibliography or a catalogue rather than a table of contents; the use of the term to describe a prefatory paratext emerges only later. While πίνακες participate in the organization of knowledge, they do not imply a unified work or an internal structure. As strange as it might seem to present-day readers, κεφάλαια, or chapter titles, did not require a prefatory list of such κεφάλαια (cf. Schröder, Titel und Text, 99–105)—and thus did not always entail a “table of contents” as such. For the absence of the “table of contents” as a distinct named phenomenon in Latin, see Riggby, “Guides to the Wor(l)d.” Doody argues at length that modern tables of contents and ancient phenomena differ substantially. For this reason, Doody is skeptical that one should refer to an ancient “table of contents” at all. She instead describes Pliny’s guide to his Natural History with his own terminology as a summarium (cf. Nat. Hist. praef. 33; Doody, Pliny’s Encyclopedia, 92–131).
thus a heuristic anachronism. Nonetheless, the category of the table of contents emphasizes formal and functional similarities that illuminate the influential late ancient projects of Porphyry and Eusebius.

The table of contents is an example of what Gérard Genette has called the “paratext.” Like prefaces, section headings, epigraphs, and indices, a table of contents functions as a “threshold of interpretation.” It mediates between text and reader. Even if a paratext is formally peripheral, it guides the reader’s experience of the text. Genette’s image of the “threshold” (seuil) is fitting: tables of contents facilitate a reader’s entry into a text, enabling them to encounter that text in new ways.

Modern tables of contents adopt various forms. In romance languages, for example, a table of contents typically appears at the end of a printed volume; in English or German, it acts as a prefatory map to orient the reader to the text ahead. Some tables of contents are extensive, even painfully so. They elaborate subheadings and even sub-subheadings or—in a manner often associated with older print—include extensive descriptions.

Regardless of its location or extent, a table of contents maps a text. It depicts a system of textual segmentation, combining and separating blocks of material into distinct units. A table of contents also indicates a structure for (reading) the assembled material. Joseph Howley and Andrew Riggsby both make intrinsic to their definitions the idea that contents are listed “in the order of their appearance in the book,” but I suggest that it is more helpful to


12. On the language of the “paratext,” see Genette, Paratexts; on paratexts in general, see Genette’s introduction (1–15) and on the table of contents, see 316–18. Patrick Andrist offers a typology that applies Genette’s concept of the paratext to Greek manuscripts: “Toward a Definition of Paratexts and Paratextuality: The Case of Ancient Greek Manuscripts,” in Bible as Notepad: Tracing Annotations and Annotation Practices in Late Antique and Medieval Biblical Manuscripts, ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Marilena Maniaci (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 130–50. Working from the perspective of manuscript codicology rather than that of printed books, Andrist avoids Genette’s focus on the author. Andrist defines the paratext as a “piece of content which distinguishes itself from other pieces of content on the basis of its subordinate position in the greater scheme of the overarching book project” (137).


say that a table of contents maps the structure of a text (not necessarily its sequence). Most importantly, a table of contents constitutes the disparate components of the text as a coherent whole by mapping their place in a larger framework.

Readers matter, too. A table of contents, as Genette observed, is “a zone of transaction.” It works insofar as it invites use. A table of contents affords particular practices. For example, I often do not read books straight through. Instead, I employ tables of contents to identify relevant material. Even when approaching a book that I intend to read in full, I begin by skimming the table of contents and index, followed by reading the introduction and conclusion (found with the table of contents) and then the individual chapters (not always in order). Numerous scholars have focused on how tables of contents facilitate such nonlinear reading. Other readers might approach tables of contents and academic monographs differently, but this anecdotally introduces the options that a table of contents affords to readers. Even so, the table of contents requires readers’ cooperation. A reader can ignore a table of contents—flip past it and begin reading at chapter one. A table of contents can even be removed in subsequent manuscripts or printed editions.

17. For present-day readers, the table of contents requires no introduction; as Riggsby argues, however, tables of contents were sufficiently unfamiliar in Roman antiquity as to require introduction (“Guides to the Wor(l)d”). This essay is more extensive than the parallel discussion in his subsequent monograph (Mosaics, 22–29). Howley suggests instead that instructions were a characteristic component of the table of contents as a genre, but this still reflects readers’ need for orientation (Gellius and Roman Reading Culture, 54–55).
19. For similar reflection on how readers interact with tables of contents, see Howley, “Tables of Contents,” 67.
20. Joseph Howley notes that Aulus Gellius’ table of contents for his Attic Nights was omitted in a 1550 edition printed at Lyon and was replaced with a “ransom note,” explaining that the table of contents...
Use and features intersect. A more granular table of contents affords greater possibilities for selective navigation. If, on the other hand, a book’s table of contents includes only titles for, say, five chapters, this nudges the reader toward approaching its text in larger units. Many readers, moreover, have experienced the annoyance of chapter titles that exist primarily as a concession to convention, but which do not communicate the content of the chapter. These frustrate nonlinear reading altogether. To find what you want, you must read the whole book.

As historically and culturally contingent artifacts, tables of contents guide readers in varied ways. In what follows, I examine the textual structures and the practices of reading that emerge from Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus* and Eusebius’ Gospel canons in order to demonstrate how tables of contents were used to reshape knowledge in Late Antiquity.

### 3. PORPHYRY OF TYRE AND HIS ENNEADS

Around the year 300 CE, Porphyry of Tyre (*ca.* 232 – *ca.* 304) began to edit the diffuse writings of his teacher Plotinus (*ca.* 204/5 – 270).¹ Porphyry prefaced the resulting collection, known as the *Enneads*, with his *On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books* (Περὶ τοῦ Πλωτίνου βιοῦ καὶ τῆς τοξέως τῶν βιβλίων αὐτοῦ = *Plot.*).²

Porphyry’s *Plot.* is a biography (βίος). It is also a bibliography, describing Plotinus’ works and their place in his corpus. While the list of books was prepared by a later editor—Porphyry—rather than by Plotinus himself, this combination of bibliography and biography parallels the autobibliography practiced by Galen in his *My Own Books* (Περὶ τῶν ἰδίων βιβλίων, *De libris propriis*) and *The Order of My Own Books* (Περὶ τῆς τοξέως τῶν ἰδίων βιβλίων, *De ordine librorum suorum*)³ and, later, by Augustine in his

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³ For both, see the Budé edition and notes of Véronique Boudon-Millot, ed., *Galien, t. I: Introduction générale, Sur l’ordre de ses propres livres, Sur ses propres livres, Que l’excellent médecin est...*
Retractationes. Even closer parallels to this combination of βίος and bibliography appear in the Euthalian prologue to the Pauline letters, which likely derives from fourth-century Caesarea Maritima,²⁴ and in Possidius of Calama’s Vita Augustini.²⁵ Eusebius speaks of bibliographic lists (πίνακες) accompanying his (now lost) Vita Pamphili—a tribute to Pamphilus’ enormous bibliographic labors, although these πίνακες listed the contents of Pamphilus’ library (“the library of Origen and the other ecclesiastical writers,” τῆς [...] τῶν τε Ωριγένους καὶ τῶν άλλων ἐκκλησιαστικῶν συγγραφέων βιβλιοθήκης, Hist. eccl. 6.32.3; cf. Jerome, Ruf. 2.22) rather than listing Pamphilus’ own oeuvre.²⁶

As Richard Valantasis memorably describes the work, Plotin. was designed as a “marketing device” for Porphyry’s edition of Plotinus’ works.²⁷ In it, Porphyry claimed that Plotinus had appointed him as his literary executor (§§7, 24).²⁸ In addition to offering a biography of Plotinus, Porphyry described his

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²⁸. The opening story of Plotinus’ portrait is used to justify this project; cf. Schott, “Plotinus’s Portrait.” In addition to the biography proper, Porphyry offers a history of scholarship, situating Plotinus’ work in its broader philosophical context.
own editorial process and the materials with which he began. As Porphyry recounts,

Επεί δὲ αὐτὸς τὴν διάταξιν καὶ τὴν διόρθωσιν τῶν βιβλίων ποιεῖσθαι ἠμῖν ἐπέτρεψεν, ἕγδὲ δὲ κακευῖν ἱοντι ὑπερχύμνην καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἑταῖροις ἑπηγευλάμην πούσσαι τοῦτο, πρῶτον μὲν τὰ βιβλία οὐ κατὰ χρόνους ἐάσαι φύρδην ἐκδεδομένα ἐδικαίωσα, μηχανώνοις δὲ Ἀπολλόδωρον τὸν Ἀθηναίου καὶ Ἀνδρόνικον τὸν Περιπατητικόν, ὅσο νὲν Ἐπίχαρμον τὸν κωμῳδιογράφον εἰς δέκα τόμους φέρων συνήγαγεν, ὁ δὲ τὰ Αριστοτέλους καὶ Θεοφράστου εἰς πραγματείας διείλε τὰς οἰκείας ὑποθέσεις εἰς ταύτων συναγαγόν· οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἑγὼ νῦ ὄντα ἔχων τὰ τοῦ Πλωτίνου βιβλία διείλον μὲν εἰς ἐς ἐννεάδας τῇ τελειώτητι τοῦ ἐς ἄριθμοῦ καὶ ταῖς ἐννεάσιν ἁσμένως ἐπιτυχών, ἐκάστῃ δὲ ἐννεάδι τὰ οἰκεία φέρων συνεφόρησα δοὺς καὶ ταξίν πρώτην τοῖς ἔλαφροτέροις προβλήμασιν. [...] Τὰ μὲν οὖν βιβλία εἰς ἐς ἐννεάδας τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον κατετάξαμεν τέσσαρα καὶ πεντήκοντα ὄντα.

[Plotinus] turned over to us [i.e., Porphyry] the task of arranging and correcting his books, and I promised him while he was alive that I would do this, and gave assignments to his other associates too. So I decided first of all not to leave his books confusedly [φύρδην] in the chronological order of their publication. In this I followed the example of Apollodorus of Athens and Andronicus the Peripatetic: the former collected the works of Epicharmus the comic poet in ten volumes; the latter divided the works of Aristotle and Theophrastus into treatises, bringing related themes together. For my part, I hit on the pleasing idea of dividing the fifty-four books of Plotinus into six ‘enneads’—groups of nine multiplied by the perfect number six. I collected related topics together in each ennead, putting the less weighty questions first in the final order. [...] This, then, is how we arranged Plotinus’ fifty-four books in six enneads. (Plot. §24, §26 [Gerson, modified])

Porphyry’s multifaceted editorial intervention included several practices that were common when preparing material for publication. He supplied titles (ἐπιγραφαί, §§4 and 16), punctuation (στιγματά, §26), headings (κεφάλαια, §26; cf. §§4 and 20), argumenta (ἐπιχειρήματα, §26), and commentary


30. Porphyry notes that he had designed the argumenta (ἐπιχειρήματα)—or at least some of them—earlier in his career when still using an edition of Plotinus’ works arranged in chronological order, while he devised the headings (κεφάλαια) for the Enneads edition (Plot. §26; cf. Kalligas, “Life
Porphyry’s titles sometimes replaced existing ones that Plotinus used for the treatises. The titles of *Enn. 1.1; 1.7–8; 2.2; 2.6; 2.8; 3.8; 4.1; 4.3–5; 5.5;* and *6.8 as listed in *Plot.* §§4–6 seem to reflect the titles of the earlier edition; they differ from Porphyry’s *Enneads* edition, as reflected in the table of contents at *Plot.* §§24–26 and in the titles that circulate with the treatises themselves. Porphyry corrected (διορθώσεις, §24; διορθούν, §26) the text; perhaps as a justification for his changes, Porphyry describes the poor style, illegibility, and fragmentation of Plotinus’ treatises (cf. §§8, 13, 17, and 20). Finally—and more unusually—Porphyry rearranged the treatises into a newly ordered whole (διάταξις, §24; κατάτασσειν, §26; in contrast with the prior φύρδην, §24), mapped with a table of contents. This final contribution will be the focus of our discussion here.

Porphyry engaged the question of order in a complex way. *Plot.* offers not one but two lists of Plotinus’ works. Both reflect Porphyry’s decisions to combine or segment individual treatises. First, Porphyry narrated the order in which the treatises were written (or, at least, roughly their sequence of composition), divided into three periods (§§4–6). He ascribed different

(ὑπομνήματα, §26) to guide readers of Plotinus’ texts. Porphyry’s titles sometimes replaced existing ones that Plotinus used for the treatises. The titles of *Enn. 1.1; 1.7–8; 2.2; 2.6; 2.8; 3.8; 4.1; 4.3–5; 5.5;* and *6.8 as listed in *Plot.* §§4–6 seem to reflect the titles of the earlier edition; they differ from Porphyry’s *Enneads* edition, as reflected in the table of contents at *Plot.* §§24–26 and in the titles that circulate with the treatises themselves. Porphyry corrected (διορθώσεις, §24; διορθούν, §26) the text; perhaps as a justification for his changes, Porphyry describes the poor style, illegibility, and fragmentation of Plotinus’ treatises (cf. §§8, 13, 17, and 20). Finally—and more unusually—Porphyry rearranged the treatises into a newly ordered whole (διάταξις, §24; κατάτασσειν, §26; in contrast with the prior φύρδην, §24), mapped with a table of contents. This final contribution will be the focus of our discussion here.

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of Plotinus, “92). This passage suggests that the *Enneads* are the result of a long process of editorial engagement with the Plotinian corpus.


32. Remnants of the headings and arguments for *Enn.* 4.4 remain at the conclusion of the medieval introduction to the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle* (Kalligas, “Life of Plotinus,” 92). (Note that, despite its title, the *Theology of Aristotle* is actually an Arabic version corresponding to parts of *Enneads 4–6.* Dawn LaValle Norman, *The Aesthetics of Hope in Late Greek Imperial Literature: Methodios of Olympus’ Symposium and the Crisis of the Third Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 30–31, notes that Porphyry created reading aids for other texts as well. Porphyry’s varied interventions in the Plotinian corpus are consistent with the creation of an ἐξόσος, an edition—even though, as Porphyry himself acknowledged, Plotinus’ treatises had already been published (ἐκδοσίν, §24). While copious scholarship focuses on ἐξόσος in Hellenistic Alexandrian scholarship (most recently Francesca Schironi, *The Best of the Grammarians: Aristarchus of Samothrace on the Iliad* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018]), scholarship on Late Antiquity is more limited. The best discussion of these practices in Late Antiquity is that of Grafton and Williams, *Christianity.*


34. Valantasis asserts that Porphyry was editing “notes,” but this does not have any basis in Porphyry’s presentation of the matter or in the state of the text (“Life of Plotinus,” 30). Porphyry refers to the prior “publication” (ἐκδοσίν) of Plotinus’ *βιβλία* in *Plot.* §24 (cf. §4). Kalligas (“Life of Plotinus,” 6) sees Porphyry’s description of Plotinus’ writing habits as a “digression,” overlooking its rhetorical significance in justifying Porphyry’s editorial project. Traces of Porphyry’s διορθώσεις are visible through comparison of the *Enneads* with the Plotinian fragments preserved by Eusebius.

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degrees of intellectual vigor to these different stages of Plotinus’ intellectual career. (Naturally, Plotinus was at the height of his powers when Porphyry was with him [§6].) Second, Porphyry surveyed the arrangement of the Enneads, the sequence that results from his editorial project (§§24–26). The order of composition appears in the body of the βίος ("On the Life of Plotinus"), while the table of contents for the Ennead-arrangement comes at the end of the biography in a section which corresponds to the second half of the work’s title, “On the Order of His Books.”

While the material in the Enneads derives substantially from Plotinus, the Enneads as a work was Porphyry’s invention. This is not to diminish Plotinus’ philosophical legacy, but rather to emphasize that, from the fourth century onward, Plotinus’ writings were encountered in a form fundamentally reconfigured by Porphyry’s editorial activity. Historians of philosophy seldom attend to how Porphyry’s editorial activity shaped Plotinus’ treatises. Yet it was Porphyry who arranged Plotinus’ treatises into six groups of nine, six “enneads.” To accomplish this, Porphyry employed creative measures. He did not begin with exactly fifty-four treatises, and reached this number by combining and dividing the material at his disposal. Porphyry obliquely acknowledged this in §24, when he informed the reader that he had

35. The transition between biography and bibliography, reflected in the title On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books, occurs with the phrase τοιοῦτος μὴν οὖν ἢ Πλοτίνου ἡμῶν ἡμετέραι βίος (“Such is our account of the life of Plotinus”) at the beginning of §24.

36. Scholars have, in general, treated Porphyry (and his chronological list of treatises in Plot. §§4–6) as a transparent window to Plotinus; they ignore how he changes the texts that reach him. Comparative tables of sequence are a commonplace in scholarship on the Enneads. Pierre Hadot recommended the chronological order of Plot. §§4–6 as the appropriate sequence for reading Plotinus (Plotinus, or, the Simplicity of Vision, trans. Michael Chase [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1963]], 121–27). The editions of Kirchhoff and Harder dispensed with the Ennead arrangement altogether, as did the recent Flammarion edition of Plotinus (not an "Enneads"), edited by J.-F. Pradeau and Luc Brisson (2002–2019), which published annotated translations of 54 treatises in (Porphyry’s) chronological order. The recent English translation of Gerson et al., Enneads, 8–9, includes a comparative table of sequences. These attempts to recreate the “original” sequence of treatises nonetheless retain Porphyry’s combination and division of treatises, as well as his interventions into the texts themselves.

37. Porphyry describes his six-by-nine arrangement as a “pleasing” (ἀσμένως, §24) idea; he created it apparently from a love of symmetry and numerological elegance (in keeping with the Neopythagorean numerological proclivities of Neoplatonism, cf. Plot. §24). George Boys-Stones (Gerson et al., Enneads, 1) calls this six-by-nine arrangement “idiosyncratic.” Compare Eusebius’ choice of ten as a structuring number for his canons (below).

38. That Porphyry did not have access to the whole of Plotinus’ corpus or chose not to include all of Plotinus’ treatises is suggested by the fact that the Plotinian passage included by Eusebius at Praep. ev. 11.17.1–10 does not appear in the Enneads at all.
followed the example of “Andronicus the Peripatetic [who] later divided the works of Aristotle and Theophrastus into treatises, bringing related topics (ὑποθέσεις) together.” Porphyry divided several treatises in order to reach the desired number. A single treatise, “On the Kinds of Being,” became three parts (Enn. 6.1–3). Likewise Enn. 3.2–3; 4.3–5; 6.1–3; and 6.4–5 were each once one treatise, now broken into two or three parts, and named separately. In other cases, Porphyry scattered part-treatises around the collection. For example, the material that present-day scholars know as Enn. 3.8; 5.8; 5.5; and 2.9 was once a single treatise in the order that I have listed. Porphyry also did the opposite. To create Enn. 3.9, he combined several shorter treatises, based on only a broad thematic unity. Porphyry is the one who created the work that he named the Enneads. Until it was organized into a collection of six “nines,” Plotinus’ Nachlass was not the Enneads at all.

Porphyry’s editorial project was forged in the fires of debate. He was not the first to publish Plotinus’ works. Porphyry’s fellow student Eustochius, the physician who attended Plotinus in his final illness, may have published an edition of Plotinus’ works. A number of Plotinus’ treatises also circulated in forms mediated by another student, Amelius. The force of the argument in


40. As another example, the treatise known as Enn. 4.7 was available to Eusebius in at least two books (Praep. ev. 15.10.1–9; 15.22.1–67); cf. Paul Kalligas, “Traces of Longinus’ Library in Eusebius’ Praeparatio Evangelica,” Classical Quarterly 51 (2001): 584–98 at 587–88.


42. Luc Brisson, “Amélius: sa vie, son oeuvre, sa doctrine, son style,” Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II.36.2 (1987): 806–9 (following Henry, Études Plotiniennes, I: Les états du texte de Plotin, 30), argued that it was Plotinus’ student Amelius, and not Eustochius, who organized this chronological collection of Plotinian treatises. Porphyry’s account in Plot. suggests that Amelius had been responsible for the copying and distribution of Plotinus’ works prior to Porphyry’s arrival in Rome and continued to do so afterward. Perhaps in a sharp-ELbowed attempt to make room for his own competing edition, Porphyry repeatedly denigrated Amelius’ intellect (cf. Plot. §§19–20). Cf.
this article does not depend on either Eustochius or Amelius as the one who prepared the edition against which Porphyry set his own; the vital point is that Porphyry contends that his order is preferable to at least one existing arrangement of Plotinus’ corpus.\textsuperscript{43} Porphyry’s project has effaced the work of his predecessor or predecessors, but traces of an alternate edition are preserved in Eusebius’ \textit{Praeparatio evangelica}, exhibiting differences in contents, text, book divisions, and titles. Porphyry himself contrasts his \textit{Enneads} with an existing edition arranged in chronological order. As he states in §24, he “decided not to leave [Plotinus’] books confusedly in the chronological order of their publication” (πρῶτον μὲν τὰ βιβλία οὐ κατὰ χρόνους ἔσται φύρδην ἐκδηδομένα ἐδικαίωσα, Gerson trans. modified).\textsuperscript{44} Nonetheless, by including a chronological list of treatises, Porphyry implicitly conceded an alternate sequence.

Porphyry’s own order, reinforced by the way he divided the material and structured the table of contents, constituted a philosophical curriculum.\textsuperscript{45} Porphyry’s three-part scheme—moving from ethics to physics to theology—fits into broader late ancient debates about the best way to organize Platonic philosophy and pedagogy, with a particularly Plotinian twist (cf. Porphyry’s discussion of each ennead in §§24–26).\textsuperscript{46} The initial three enneads were about ethics and physics. The final three enneads were about theology, and

\begin{itemize}
\item Schott adopts the maximalist position that both Amelius and Eustochius published editions (“Living Like a Christian,” 268).
\item The term φύρδην (“confusedly,” “in utter confusion”) is not reflected in the Gerson translation. The evidence does not permit confidence that the contents of the two editions (Porphyry’s and the one he sought to replace) were altogether the same, and indeed the evidence from Eusebius’ \textit{Praep. ev.} suggests otherwise.
\item As Schott writes, Porphyry “edited Plotinus’ lectures into a Platonic course of study” (“Living Like a Christian,” 268; cf. Kalligas, “Life of Plotinus,” 5).
\end{itemize}
addressed the three Plotinian divine hypostases in rising order. The fourth and fifth enneads were about the Soul and the Intellect, respectively, and the sixth and final ennead was about the Good. These three groups (Enn. 1–3, 4–5, 6) correspond to Porphyry’s division of the material into three codices (σωμάτια, §§25–26). In this sense, Porphyry both contrasts his approach to the Plotinian corpus with Eustochius’ or Amelius’ chronological order, and makes an argument for the best way to study (Plotinian) philosophy that maps onto broader debates about the division of philosophical knowledge.

In Plot., Porphyry presented his own approach as the best way to read Plotinus. In §§24–26, he described the logic of the Ennead-structure and sometimes even explained why particular treatises belonged where he had placed them. For example, Porphyry described why he had placed (ἐτάξασεν) the treatise On Our Allotted Daemon (Enn. 3.4) in the third ennead. It belongs here “because it deals with matters concerning [daemon] in general, and the question is related to those he addresses concerning the birth of human beings” (ὅτι καθόλου θεωρεῖται τὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔστι τὸ πρόβλημα καὶ παρὰ τοῖς τὰ κατὰ τὰς γενέσεις τῶν ἄνθρωπων σκέπτομένοις, §25; cf. §10). This ennead as a whole is devoted to physics, including matters of embryology and daemonology. Organizing daemonology as part of physics rather than theology was a matter of some dispute among third-century Platonists.

By addressing the alternate (chronological) sequence, however, Porphyry preserved it for the reader. One thus finds two tables of contents, reflecting different organizational schemes and in undeniable conflict with one

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47. Porphyry’s decision to arrange the material in codices is striking. While Christians had adopted the codex for many uses by this time, scrolls were still the format of choice for elite textuality and were how Plotinus had apparently composed his works (Plot. §4). Before Porphyry, Iamblichus had arranged Pythagorean texts into an encyclopedia in two codices, with four and five books respectively (Clark, “City of Books,” 136, citing Dominic O’Meara, Pythagoras Revised: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 31). This apparently included a table of contents, although it is no longer preserved. Compare also Augustine’s instructions about how to bind Civ. in order to maintain its sense and structure (Ep. 1A [Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 47: iii–iv] to Firmus; cf. Clark, “City of Books,” 121). Augustine did not, however, create a table of contents for Civ., despite his attention to the material and conceptual structure of the whole.

48. Arthur H. Armstrong concludes that “one of [Porphyry’s] main purposes in writing [Plot.] was to explain, and perhaps to justify against actual or possible criticism, the principles which governed his edition” (Plotinus [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989], 1:ix).

another: one for the present collection and one for an alternate approach. Porphyry’s table of contents for the *Enneads*, moreover, enables other kinds of nonlinear access, unconstrained by either of these two sequences. One can look up a particular treatise by title. In a philosophical curriculum, of course, this makes sense. A student might not always be starting from the beginning.\footnote{50}

Plotinus presents Plotinus’ body of occasional treatises as “the *Enneads,*” a unified work with a title and a coherent structure.\footnote{51} It defines what is “in” and what is “out” of the Plotinian corpus, effectively stabilizing that corpus for subsequent manuscript transmission.\footnote{52} As part of the composite work known as the *Enneads*, Porphyry offers a bibliography that introduces the collected texts and maps their physical disposition into three codices. In this way, *Plot.* offers a table of contents that shows the *Enneads* are, in fact, “nines” as their name indicates. Porphyry’s table of contents and arrangement were durable, shaping how people encountered Plotinus’ philosophical legacy in manuscript and print.\footnote{53}

My analysis of Porphyry’s *Plot.* illustrates three things. First, Porphyry’s table of contents is not neutral (as if that were possible).\footnote{54} Rather, it is part of an inventive pedagogical reconfiguration of Plotinus’ philosophical corpus. Second, this table of contents contests alternate arrangements of the same material (such as Eustochius’ or Amelius’) and yet also facilitates multiple routes of reading. Third, and most importantly, this table of contents is far more than a finding aid. Using a table of contents, Porphyry constructs a diffuse collection into a coherent whole. The table of contents is an integral component of Porphyry’s pedagogical project, introducing Plotinus’ life and philosophy in order to guide a particular reading of the *Enneads* as a whole.

\footnote{50. This final affordance may seem mundane, but it should not be overlooked, since it makes it possible to enter the *Ennead*-structure at any point.}

\footnote{51. On the power of a table of contents to articulate a work as a single whole, see Riggsby, “Guides to the Wor[ll]d”; Bodel, “Pliny’s Letters,” 33.}

\footnote{52. The six-by-nine arrangement functions as a checksum in manuscript transmission. Cf. Kalligas, “Life of Plotinus,” 89.}

\footnote{53. This is true even though Porphyry’s table of contents is often occluded by modern maps of the Plotinian corpus. Editors of *Plot.* replace incipits with the numbers (*enhead* and tract) of the treatise. The Gerson translation simply omits the list of treatises from *Plot.* §§24–26.}

\footnote{54. For the observation that a table of contents can create order, I am indebted to Andrew Riggsby (“Guides to the Wor[ll]d”); for the broader argument that Romans frequently used information technology to constitute new arrangements of material rather than to represent existing phenomena, see Riggsby, *Mosaics*, esp. 121–22 and 212–13.}
4. EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA AND HIS GOSPELS

A second project from the early fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea’s (ca. 260 – 339/40 CE) fourfold Gospel, similarly employed a table of contents to facilitate complex possibilities of reading. Eusebius divided the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John into numbered sections, coordinated with a set of ten reference tables (“canons,” κανόνες) placed at the beginning of a Gospel codex. Eusebius described his system in a prefatory letter to an otherwise unknown Carpianus:

Ἀμμώνιος μὲν ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεύς πολλὴν ὡς εἰκός φιλοσοφίαν καὶ σπουδὴν εἰσαγγελχως τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων ἡμῖν καταλέλοιπεν εὐαγγέλιον, τῷ κατὰ Ματθαίου τὰς ὁμοφώνους τῶν λοιπῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν περικοπάς παραθέτει, ὡς εἰκός ἄνιγκς συμβῆναι τὸν τῆς ἀκολούθιας εἰρμὸν τῶν τριῶν διαφαράθην ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀναγνώσεως ἢν δὲ σωζομένου καὶ τοῦ τῶν λοιπῶν δὴ ὅλου σώματός τε καὶ εἰρμοῦ εἰθέναι ἐχόμεν τοὺς οἰκείους ἐκάστῳ εὐαγγελιστῷ τόπους, ἐν οἷς κατὰ τῶν αὐτῶν ἡνεχθηκαν φιλαλήθως εἰπεῖν, ἐκ τοῦ πονήματος τοῦ προειρημένου ἀνδρὸς εὐλθρώς ἀφορμὰς καθ´ ἐτέραν μέθοδον καθαρίας δέκα τὸν ἄριθμόν διεχαραξά σοι τοὺς ὑποτεταγμένους.

Ammonius the Alexandrian, exerting great industry and zeal—as is fitting—has left us the “Gospel through four.” He juxtaposed the corresponding sections of the other evangelists alongside Matthew’s Gospel, with the unavoidable result that the coherent sequence of the other three was destroyed insofar as concerns the web of reading. But in order that, by the content and sequence of the remaining Gospels being preserved throughout, you would still be able to know the proper places of each evangelist, in which they were compelled by love of truth to say similar things, I have adopted the raw material from the work of the aforementioned man, but have inscribed the ten canons that are attached for you below by a different method.56


56. Epistle to Carpianus, ll. 3–14.
Eusebius contrasted his project with the work of a certain Ammonius who had arranged other Gospels alongside Matthew. As Eusebius objected in his Letter to Carpianus, Ammonius had destroyed “the coherent sequence” (τὸν τῆς ἀκολουθίας εἰρμόν) of the other Gospels. While Matthew remained intact, what should a reader do if they instead wished to read Mark or Luke or John with its parallels? While Porphyry had divided and rearranged Plotinian material to produce the Enneads—in order to facilitate the right reading, as he saw it, of Plotinus’ corpus—Eusebius resisted such invasive measures. Eusebius divided the Gospels into numbered sections, but he used the canons to juxtapose Gospel material while leaving Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in their original sequences. One can still read each individual Gospel in order if one so desires. The difference between Eusebius and Porphyry here is of degree rather than kind; Porphyry, after all, preserved in a different way the existing sequence that he encountered.

Eusebius coordinated the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as one fourfold Gospel. Like the list of treatises in Porphyry’s Plot., the Eusebian canons are not simply a finding aid or a list of chapters.

57. I take this figure to be Ammonius Saccas (d. ca. 242), teacher of both Origen (Porphyry apud Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 6.19.6–7) and Plotinus, which points to a shared intellectual milieu. For a recent articulation of this position, see Digeser, Threat, 23–71. Arguing for two Origens and two Ammonii, see Mark J. Edwards, “One Origen or Two? The Status Questionis,” Symbolæ Odenæs (2015): 1–23. On Ammonius’ Gospel, see Jerome, Vir. ill. 55.2; cf. William L. Petersen, Tatian’s Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 32–33; Crawford, Eusebian Canon Tables, ch. 2; Coogan, Eusebius the Evangelist, ch. 3.

58. Eusebius differs from Porphyry in another important way: We lack evidence that Eusebius engaged in διόρθωσις to correct errors or produce a new and improved Gospel text. Eusebius undertook such labors for other texts (especially in conjunction with Pamphilus) but not for the Gospels. On Eusebius as a corrector, see Grafton and Williams, Christianity, 184–85; Jennifer Knust and Tommy Wasserman, To Cast the First Stone: The Transmission of a Gospel Story (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 182–83 and 122–34. Compare Origen’s stated reluctance to undertake a tabular comparison of the Gospels (Comm. Matt. 15.14).

canons offer their own argument about the order and unity of the Gospels. The section numbers represent Gospel passages; thus, the canons represent the entire fourfold Gospel—and not only selected themes or features—on just a couple of pages. Every section of the text, as represented by its number, appears in the canons. The canons express the completeness of the fourfold Gospel. Later in the fourth century, for example, Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403) used the Gospel sections to represent the total content of the fourfold Gospel:

τέσσαρα εἰσὶν ἑναγγέλια κεφαλαίων χιλίων ἑκατὸν ἕξικοντα δύο καὶ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἐως τέλους ἐλάλησεν ὁ υἱὸς καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ πατήρ καὶ οὐδαμοῦ εἶπεν. ἐκτισά με ὁ πατήρ μου, οὔτε ὁ πατήρ ἐκτίσε μου υἱόν ἢ ἐκτισά τὸν υἱόν μου.

There are four Gospels, of 1162 chapters [that is, Eusebian sections], and from beginning to end, the Son speaks, and the Father to him, and nowhere did he say, “My Father created me,” nor did the Father say: “I created for myself a Son” or “I created my Son.”

Epiphanius’ christological argument is not central here. More significant is his use of the Eusebian system to symbolize a fourfold Gospel whole.

Eusebius facilitated multiple routes of reading through the Gospels. Using the section numbers and reference tables, one can move back and forth between Gospels, following the different narratives through their various intersections with one another. This explicit cross-referentiality means that Eusebius’ project is even more generative than Porphyry’s. By mapping an enormous number of potential routes between Gospels, Eusebius contests what he sees as Ammonius’ reductively linear approach. Many readers over time have employed the sections and canons to read Eusebius’ fourfold

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60. Just as Porphyry structured the Enneads numerically, Eusebius’ ten canons may reflect a Pythagorean appreciation for ten’s perfection (cf. Eusebius, Laud. Const. 6:5). This was first suggested by Nordenfalk, Kanontafeln, 29.

Gospel as a single elaborate web. The Eusebian apparatus was durable, transmitted in thousands of manuscripts and more than a dozen languages from the fourth century to the present.


As a table of contents, the Eusebian canons resemble Porphyry’s Plot in significant ways. First, Eusebius, like Porphyry, mapped a composite work. Second, both figures contested prior attempts to structure their material. Porphyry challenged Eustochius’ or Amelius’ treatment of Plotinus and offered his own arrangement; Eusebius objected to Ammonius’ configuration of the Gospels and created his own system. In terms of reception, the editorial projects of Porphyry and Eusebius were wildly more successful than those of the predecessors whom they contest. (As a result, evidence for reconstructing the work of those predecessors remains limited.) Third, Eusebius’ canons—his table of contents—were central to his intervention.

62. For discussion of such use, see Crawford, Eusebian Canon Tables, chs. 4–7; Coogan, Eusebius the Evangelist, ch. 5.
Through the canons, Eusebius mapped the fourfold Gospel: he structured the text, connected passages, and invited nonlinear reading.

5. CONCLUSION

In this article, I have argued that the late ancient thinkers Porphyry and Eusebius employed tables of contents in novel ways to reconfigure inherited texts and to create new possibilities for readers. Both figures used tables of contents to facilitate nonlinear access and to articulate the textual unity of new composite works. The comparison demonstrates how the dominant form in which both the Enneads and the fourfold Gospel circulated was the result of fourth-century interventions.63 My analysis of Porphyry and Eusebius, moreover, invites further investigation of the late ancient transformation of textuality in which both participated.

Contrasts between these projects reflect both the differences between the two corpora and the divergent objectives of Porphyry and Eusebius. Eusebius traced intertextual connections between four Gospels, while Porphyry designed a program of philosophical instruction.64 While both projects are pedagogical, only Porphyry’s is explicitly curricular. Porphyry’s table of contents was more elegant, a six-by-nine grid. Eusebius’ 1162 sections provided exceptional granularity and a correspondingly greater opportunity for error in copying.65 While both facilitated alternate modes of reading, Eusebius offered far more possibilities (as a result of the greater number of sections) and generated more diverse routes of reading. Yet, despite their differences, Porphyry and Eusebius employed the technology of the table of contents in

63. Porphyry and Eusebius were not the only fourth-century figures to employ tables of contents. Oribasius’ influential collection of medical recipes and Charisius’ Ars grammatica also employed tables of contents. Jerome (Vir. ill. 97) describes “ordered headings” in Fortunatianus of Aquileia’s Gospel commentary (cf. Lukas J. Dorfbauer, ed., Fortunatianus Aquileiensis: Commentarii in Evangelia, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 103 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017]). Eusebius supplied tables of contents (κεϕάλαια lists) for many of his own works, although their manuscript transmission makes it difficult to discern if they were placed at the beginning of each book or all together at the beginning of a work. Such tables of contents are preserved for Praep. ev., Hist. eccl., Dem. ev., Eccl. theol., Mens., and others.

64. Aaron Johnson (Eusebius, 80) suggests that the Eusebian apparatus originated in a pedagogical context at late ancient Caesarea; cf. Coogan, Eusebius the Evangelist, ch. 1.

similar ways to construct their respective assemblages, thereby shaping particular practices of reading and particular kinds of readers.

In reading Porphyry’s and Eusebius’ projects, I have focused on three interlocking phenomena. In line with my focus on affordances and use, this argument is not only about what an editor intends or what a table of contents contains, but also about what these tables of contents enable readers to do.

First, both tables of contents generated new possibilities for reading—sometimes in ways which run against the grain of the assembled material. Porphyry and Eusebius mapped their respective works in order to produce particular structures of knowledge. The table of contents was (and is) an argument that the edited text possesses a particular, unified structure, in contrast to other approaches to the same material (Eustochius or Amelius, Ammonius). The ways of reading embedded into Porphyry’s and Eusebius’ tables of contents were both innovative and durable. In both cases, they created new possibilities of reading, encoded in paratextual and bibliographic reconfigurations that persist until the present. While often overlooked or dismissed, such creative and contestational phenomena are a significant feature of the organization of knowledge in Late Antiquity.

Second, these tables of contents invited nonlinear reading by how they mapped a text and the reader’s journey through it. These two tables of contents contested other approaches to reading. Yet while both presented an edited text in a particular sequence, they afforded multiple ways of navigating that structure rather than reducing reading to a single linear progression. In other words, they created ordered possibilities for nonlinear access. Although each table of contents offered a particular structure, each invited readers to use this arrangement in productive new ways—always within the constraints of the guiding logic of sections. Dividing texts into mappable units facilitated a “choose your own adventure” approach to reading.66 Eusebius’ and Porphyry’s contestational articulations of textual order generated multiple ways of reading and knowing their respective texts.67 The two facets, structure and creative navigation, are reflexes of one another. Even while a table of contents offers a structure that relates the parts to a unified whole,

66. On the “choose your own adventure” genre of (primarily children’s) literature and similar “ergodic” texts, in which “nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text,” see Espen J. Aarseth, Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), quoting p. 1.

67. On textual division (“fragmentation”) as part of the transformation of texts into “classics” in Late Antiquity, see Chin, Grammar and Christianity, 11–38.
it identifies constituent parts that could be read differently. A table of contents might frustrate particular forms of nonlinear access, but as a structuring system it holds out the possibility of reading otherwise. Even as the table of contents structures the assembled material, it subverts itself and that structure.

Finally, both of the figures whom I discuss in this article incorporated the interplay between ordered text and nonlinear reading into their projects. Segmentation and nonlinear access are fundamental, not accidental. At the same time, order and linear structure are essential. The intrinsic give-and-take of the table of contents becomes part of the editorial project. Both Porphyry and Eusebius engaged the complex possibilities of the table of contents. By inviting creative nonlinear reading, they harnessed the counter-possibilities of the table of contents for their own projects. Eusebius preserved four Gospels as distinct narratives and yet encouraged creative access to and between the four as a single network (ὕφος). Porphyry afforded multiple routes of reading, offering two sequences: a chronological one (Plot. §§4–6) and one for the Enneads (Plot. §§24–26). By mapping their respective works, Porphyry and Eusebius segmented these texts into constituent elements and enabled readers to combine them in new ways. For both texts, moreover, a complex and capacious history of subsequent reception demonstrates how readers utilized these tables of contents in ongoing practices of reading.

Porphyry and Eusebius reconfigured their respective assemblages using tables of contents. Both restructured received texts, disrupting their textual fabrics in order to facilitate new possibilities of reading. As part of a fourth-century transformation in textuality, Porphyry and Eusebius exploited this power of the table of contents, employing this technology both to structure and to disrupt—and, indeed, they incorporated disruption as an integral element of their projects, facilitating creative use by subsequent readers.