This is the second volume in the fledgling series Ancient Texts in Translation that is being published under the editorial supervision of Roger Pearse. Mischa Hooker, Department of Classics, Augustana College, is the translator of this work. Here he presents fresh translations of Origen’s homilies on Ezekiel, the earliest continuous exegesis of this book in the Christian tradition. Origen (185–ca. 254) delivered his sermons on Ezekiel in Caesarea Maritima, likely between 239 and 242 CE (Marcel Borret, S.J., Origène: Homélies sur Ézéchiel, SC 352 [Paris: Cerf, 1989], 15). The fourteen homilies survive intact (though no doubt with some modification) in Jerome’s Latin rendering, which was probably produced in Constantinople in 379–381 (Borret, 19). With the exception of Theodoret’s commentary on Ezekiel, later commentaries on this book in the Greek East survive only as scattered fragments in the exegetical catenae (Apollinaris of Laodicea, Theodore of Mopseustia, and Polychronius of Apamaea). Origen’s exegetical works on Ezekiel are, then, of paramount importance for the student of the reception history of this book.

Hooker’s translation was completed when Thomas Scheck’s translation of these homilies appeared in the series Ancient Christian Writers (Paulist, 2010). While the duplication of effort was unforeseen and unfortunate, Hooker takes Scheck’s labors into consideration and indicates differences between their respective translations in his notes (xii). In my estimation, the most significant contribution of the volume here under review is the
inclusion of Origen’s surviving Greek exegetical fragments on Ezekiel. These fragments, published according to the sequence of the biblical text, are drawn from the original Greek homilies, Origen’s twenty-five volume commentary on Ezekiel, and his scholia on that book. These excerpts survive mostly in a Byzantine catena, and Hooker provides a lucid orientation to this catena, the manuscripts that transmit it, and the various editions of these Origenian fragments (401–10). This material has never been rendered into English, and the publication of these fragments should be considered a major accomplishment. Nor do the Greek fragments form a slender piece of this volume: the homilies appear on pages 4–397, while the Greek fragments are on pages 414–705. Hooker collated an eleventh-century manuscript, Ottobonianus graecus 452 against the existing print materials, thereby providing new variants, in some cases correcting editions, expanding upon existing fragments (e.g., 3:2), and also printing for the first time three entirely new fragments attributed to Origen (4:13d; 16:13b; 30:13). The volume concludes (709–23) with an onomasticon from the margin of Vaticanus graecus 2125 that might have come from Origen’s commentary on Ezekiel.

The translation of these fragments will, I hope, encourage scholars to pursue a deeper engagement with Origen’s exegetical oeuvre and the reception history of Ezekiel. There is much interesting material here: an extended symbolic analysis of the prophet eating a scroll, with hints about the scroll’s mysterious protological doctrines (3:2); reflection on Jesus’s suffering (4:4; 4:9a–b) and on God’s relationship to evil (5:8a–b); the corrective intent of divine punishment (7:10); two main senses of “Lord” (kyrios) (8:1); the cult of Adonis and the “mythical theology” that surrounded it (8:14); readings from Symmachus, Theodotion, and Aquila (9:2); Origen’s conversations with Hebrew scholars about traditional Jewish teachings surrounding the letter tau (9:4); the psychological character of prophetic visions (10:1); reservations about reincarnation (14:13a); prophetic ecstasy (16:2–3a); the heterodox practice of tearing up the “clothes” of Scripture into discrete parts and stitching them together improperly—reminiscent of Irenaeus’s image of a mosaic of a king rearranged into an animal (Haer. 1.8) (16:16); the threefold symbolism of Jerusalem (of knowledge, of the holy church, and of virtue) (17:12b); a clear distinction between the letter and spirit of the law (20:25); a symbolic interpretation of the fall of the ruler of Tyre that proved contentious to subsequent “Antiochene” readers such as the aforementioned Polychronius, the brother of Theodore of Mopsuestia (405–6 n. 19) (28:13); the capability of biblical narratives to symbolize past events, including the drama of the preexistent realm (29:2); and references to two of his text-critical sigla: the asterisk (7:27a) and the obelus (32:17).

The confusions surrounding authorial lemmas in the catenae are notorious, and thus not all of the fragments that have been attributed to Origen and printed in this volume are, in fact, from him. Yet even if some fragments are not authentic, a sizeable number certainly
are (410–12). Hooker and Pearse occasionally voice doubts about authenticity (e.g., at 4:16; 7:17–18a) but properly opt for a maximalist presentation, allowing subsequent scholars to vet for themselves the Origenian character of these fragments.

Another strength of this volume is that it provides Origen’s texts in their ancient languages alongside a facing English translation. This makes the volume particularly useful for students and scholars. For the Latin homilies, the critical edition by W. A. Baehrens (GCS 33) was reprinted, with occasional reference to Marcel Borret’s notes in his reprint edition in SC 352. The text for the Greek fragments comes primarily from Charles Delarue’s edition (1733), as well as additional fragments published subsequently by Angelo Mai, Jean-Baptiste-François Pitra, Joseph Ziegler, Lawrence Vianès, and the select reediting of a handful of fragments in Baehrens’s edition. The reader will find all these works listed on the bibliography (725).

The Greek and Latin texts of the editions are printed, less their apparatuses. The main exception is the recording of the alternate readings provided by Ottobonianus graecus 452 for the Greek fragments. The notes that annotate the translation record biblical references, key Greek and Latin terms, cross-references between the homilies and the Greek fragments, between the Greek fragments and Jerome’s own commentary on Ezekiel, and brief glosses on difficult passages. The translation is readable and reliable, and where there are confusions or difficulties, Hooker transparently acknowledges them in his notes. My one wish is that readers would find in this volume an introduction, even if only brief, to Origen and his exegetical work on Ezekiel. This information can be cobbled together from existing reference works and studies, but it would have been useful to include some discussion in this book.

This is a very minor quibble. Hooker and Pearse are to be congratulated for making a significant contribution to Origenian studies and advancing research into the reception history of Ezekiel.