

particular (*Ep.* 2.22), C.'s translation rectifies a mistake in Callu's, correctly interpreting 'maturus partus' as 'timely birth' rather than 'premature birth' and offering full commentary on the implications of this translation (pp. 214–15).

The lion's share of the book pertains to the historical commentary (290 pages against 50 pages of text and translation and 49 pages of introduction). The commentary offers an immense wealth of information on every possible aspect touched upon by the letters. By his own admission, C. occasionally engages in 'discussions that may appear pedantic and verbose' (p. 11), since they do not offer a definitive solution to a given problem, but offer an overview of the different positions in the debate. Such detail could—and occasionally does—lead to the dispersal of information throughout the massive body of the commentary, but C. seems aware of the problem and is usually successful in the organization of the material, which can be easily accessed with the help of the index. Arguably the best example of C.'s organizational skills is the discussion of the much debated question of the chronology of Flavianus' career, which is presented as a digression in the commentary (pp. 165–9). Although ultimately endorsing the chronology proposed by Callu among others, C. presents the different points of view with fairness and usefully summarizes the various solutions in a table at the end of the digression.

In summary, this is a commentary impressive in erudition and sophisticated in presentation. The wealth of information it provides makes it an indispensable tool not only for scholars of Symmachus, but for all scholars of late antiquity.

Cornell University

CRISTIANA SOGNO

AVITUS

D. SHANZER, I. WOOD: *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose. Translated with an Introduction and Notes.* (Translated Texts for Historians 38.) Pp. xxii + 450, maps. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002. Paper, £14.95. ISBN: 0-85323-588-0.

Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood bring extensive knowledge of the late Roman and early medieval periods to this translation project on the letters of Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus, bishop of Vienne in Gaul, together with two of his theological treatises in epistolary form and two homilies. In the early sixth century the kingdom of the Burgundians was living out its final years before absorption into the Merovingian kingdom. Its leaders lived amid intricate political relationships with other Germanic nations and both halves of the Roman empire. Rivalry between Catholic and Arian bishops contributed to tenuous relationships within and beyond the kingdom's borders. In this complex environment, secular and ecclesiastical leaders negotiated by letter across time and space. In Avitus' own day, Ruricius, bishop of Limoges, celebrated letter-writing as a way to achieve presence in absence (p. 59). Avitus, too, sought through letters to achieve a virtual presence for himself or the sovereign in whose name he dutifully wrote.

Avitus' is a working correspondence, where manner as well as message is important in the extreme. Observation of protocol in his aristocratic Latin-based culture meant preference for allusive speech, convoluted phrasing, and care about what should be left unsaid—'coded communication', as the translators rightly call it. That makes understanding the letters difficult; but the translators' detailed knowledge of the

elements of the culture, Roman and Germanic, orthodox and factional Christian, makes them reliable guides into text and context.

The book presents the letters under twenty-four headings, including theological disputations, festal pieces, and groups of letters addressed to the same person. The arrangement exchanges a doubtful chronology for a topical order, as with the assembly of four letters concerning the Laurentian schism, numbered 9, 46A, 47, and 48 in the standard edition. Addressees include the Burgundian kings Gundobad and his son Sigismund, the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius, Clovis, king of the Franks, Popes Hormisdas and Symmachus, Patriarch Timotheos of Constantinople, a patriarch of Jerusalem, and various bishops, noblemen, and kinsmen.

The letters have historical significance. As advisor to two kings, Avitus presented the Burgundian court to world leaders. The relationship of minor rulers like Gundobad and Sigismund with the Byzantine and Roman Emperors was complicated by religious affiliation and political strategy as rulers vied for advantage (p. 26). As a Catholic bishop, Avitus defended orthodoxy against Eutychian, Arian, Laurentian, and Pelagian perspectives. He managed practical issues that arose in his jurisdiction. He eventually won the religious loyalty of the secular leaders. One of the most studied and debated letters in the collection contains the earliest reference to the baptism of Clovis (p. 46). It is important not principally for dating that event, but for illuminating the conflicting loyalties as Arian and Catholic clergy interacted with the monarch.

The translators resist claiming unwarranted importance for the letters, however, and even note ‘disappointing’ qualities, such as randomness of topic, infrequent reference to daily life or literature, and absence of letters to or from women (pp. 65–70). Despite the translators’ awareness of the culture’s preference for allusive and inflated language, they criticize the verbal excess, as when they describe Letter 32 as ‘one of Avitus’ more flowery, saccharine, and supine friendship letters’ (p. 241).

In addition to a general introduction on historical context, textual transmission, and literary aspects, the book presents individual letters with detailed introductions and notes identifying events and persons. Many details are the discoveries of the translators’ distinguished scholarship.

The English translations succeed in allowing some Avitian complexity to show through while giving accurate sense, but clearer alternatives exist in translating some theological language. Rather than ‘since she had given birth to God’ (p. 96), *id est, quae deum peperisset* is Avitus’s translation of *Theotokos* (the subjunctive a consequence of subordination). ‘Offer’ (p. 103) *offerentem* is ‘the offering one’, (Christ). ‘To the corporeal birth’ (p. 105) *corporali exortu* is ablative, ‘by the corporeal birth’. ‘A means of drawing a distinction’ (p. 114) *discretionem* is simply ‘decision’ in contrast with a fatal decree *potius. . . quam decretum*. The wordplay is in Augustine, *Conf.* 8.6.15. ‘From copies of Italy’ (p. 161) *ab Italiae exemplaribus* is seen by the translators as problematic and likely corrupt, but here *exemplar* means ‘original’. Cf. Letter 87, where *exemplar* is translated as ‘example’ (p. 255). ‘To split this solidarity’ (176) does not translate *dualitate*, ‘by a duality’. ‘Conversation’ (p. 179) *conversatio* means ‘citizenship’, ‘association’, ‘way of life’.

References to Peiper’s Latin edition accompany the translations although ‘a substantially different text lies behind’ (p. 46). Not all departures from Peiper’s edition are necessary or signalled (cf. p. 46). Peiper’s Letter 2 (end para. 6), e.g., contains a sentence which is not translated (p. 113). Also, the readings of Sirmond over Peiper are sometimes adopted without a signal, as with, for example, S.’s *qui* for Peiper’s *quod*, ‘that man especially sins’ (p. 111). Some adoptions of S. are signalled as emendations but without mention of S., such as S.’s *conceditur* for Peiper’s *concedit* (p. 210 n. 3). The

decision to use the AV to present Avitus's scriptural citations leaves some mismatches: e.g. John 8.56 (AV): 'Abraham *rejoiced* to see my day' (p. 167). Avitus has *cupivit*.

Besides listing changes to Peiper's Latin text, the appendices list and discuss the abundant honorifics in the letters. A bibliography of studies related to Avitus's letters from the late nineteenth century to the present and a general index complete the work. The book is generally free of printing errors, but *philophischen* for *philosophischen* (p. 210 n. 2), and *did* for *do* (p. 175 n. 1).

In recent decades Avitus has become better known and appreciated through studies of his eloquent poetry, doctrinal competency, and influential statesmanship. The translators are credited with much of the groundbreaking work. Their learned presentation of his letters, joining a series of excellent translations in the TTH series, will serve a wide range of disciplinary interests.

Ave Maria University

DANIEL J. NODES

VIRGILIUS MARO GRAMMATICUS

B. LÖFSTEDT (ed.): *Virgilius Maro grammaticus: Opera omnia*. (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana.) Pp. xviii + 267. Munich and Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2003. Cased, €128. ISBN: 3-598-71233-2.

It is something special to have Virgil report on his conversation with Aeneas (e.g. *epit.* 5.190 *O Virgili . . .*, 8.128 *mei Aeneae praecepti memor . . . qui ait ad me . . .*). This 'other' Virgil therefore attracts attention. Although little is known about Virgilius 'grammaticus', a possibly Jewish author from the Gallic region of the Pyrenees, he has left us a kind of parody containing strange doctrines in twelve *epitomae* and eight *epistulae*, recalling Donatus' *Ars maior* and *minor*.

To 'decode' this seventh-century grammarian—as in the title of Law's study from 1995—a reliable text is necessary, and is duly provided by L., who replaces the old Huemer edition in the Teubner series (1886), while presenting his book only as an addition to Polara's critical text (Naples, 1979). Hence L.'s reader is referred to Polara for detailed information about manuscripts. Nor does L. take the opportunity to collect helpful bibliographical data; his bibliography is cut down to the minimum. Abbreviations are explained, but even publication dates for *Corpus Christianorum* volumes are omitted, and the title of Law's article on Virgilius' fragments (1991) is suppressed. Munzi's 'Noterelle testuali' (1993) is neglected.

L. devotes himself entirely to the Latin text and its most important manuscript, the Neapolitanus (N, ninth century). Unlike his predecessors, and without explanation in his preface, he returns to N's order for both works and has—with unnecessary precision—all the numbers of N's *folia* and of two other manuscripts printed in the margin, with all the usual *incipit/explicit* formulas within the text and even in his own table of contents. They should not be omitted as in Polara's edition, but listed in the apparatus, since the author occasionally marks the endings by statements of his own (e.g. *epist.* 4.151 *scribendi hic terminus ponendus*, *epit.* 6.170 *ista sufficient. . . finis hic dabitur*; *epit.* 8.69–71 L. is misled by parts of a false distinction). More useful than the page numbers of a medieval manuscript is Polara's modern division into chapters, which is standard for references (cf. *ThLL*), yet neglected by L. As older conjectures and unfortunately also some of Polara's rejected contributions are omitted from his

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