

Valerianus' inscription may also bear on the question whether Mesopotamia was made a province in A.D. 195 after Severus' first Parthian war, or in A.D. 198 after his second Parthian war. The first prefect of the province is known to have been Subatianus Aquila. Had Aquila been in office in A.D. 195, one would expect him, rather than Valerianus, to have commanded the army in his province. Mesopotamia thus seems to have become a province only after the second Parthian war.<sup>27</sup> As for Valerianus himself, he may have become procurator of Syria Palaestina and prefect of Mesopotamia at any time thereafter, for the title *Antoniniana*, given to *legio VI Ferrata* on our inscription, can date to the reign of Septimius Severus as well as to that of Caracalla.<sup>28</sup>

His command over the last phase of the Mesopotamian campaign proves that Valerianus was one of Septimius Severus' most trusted field commanders in A.D. 195. There should surely be no doubt that the Valerianus of our inscription, and the Valerianus who according to Cassius Dio (74. 7. 1–8) decided the battle of the Cilician Gates in A.D. 194, are one and the same man.<sup>29</sup>

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27. See D. L. Kennedy, "Ti. Claudius Subatianus Aquila, 'First Prefect of Mesopotamia'," *ZPE* 36 (1979): 255–62; see also Magioncalda, "Testimonianze."

28. B. Lörincz, "Zur Datierung des Beinamens Antoniniana bei Truppenkörpern," *ZPE* 48 (1982): 142–48. Contra, J. Fitz, *Honoric Titles of Roman Military Units* (Budapest, 1983), p. 34.

29. For the identity: E. Birley, "Septimius Severus and the Roman Army," esp. p. 66, n. 24; A. Birley, *Septimius Severus*, p. 178. Contra, Fitz, "La carrière," and Pflaum, *Supplément*, p. 77, n. 1. If Valerianus was indeed *praepositus equitum gentium peregrinarum* (line 7, on the analogy of *AE* 1956, 124), he must have proved himself as a fine cavalry commander at the time he was *praefectus alae Campagonum*. A. J. Graham, "Septimius Severus and His Generals," in *War and Society*, ed. M. R. D. Foor (London, 1973), pp. 255–75 and 336–45, shows how Septimius Severus, for political reasons, constantly switched his commanders. This explains very well why Valerianus is not mentioned during the main phase of the first Parthian war.

### THE THIRD REGNAL YEAR OF EPARCHIUS AVITUS

In the year A.D. 455, after the murder of Petronius Maximus and the Vandal sack of Rome, the Gallic senator Eparchius Avitus, with Visigothic support, was able to be recognized as emperor in the west.<sup>1</sup> But Avitus soon met opposition from the master of soldiers Ricimer and the count of domestics Majorian and in 456 had to flee back to Gaul.<sup>2</sup> Later in the same year he returned to Italy; but deprived of the aid of the Visigoths, who were otherwise occupied in Spain, he was defeated in mid-October at Placentia.<sup>3</sup> This much of the story, at least, is certain, but a good deal of mystery surrounds Avitus' fate after his defeat. Some

1. Acclamation: Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 7. 572–95; Hyd. *Chron.* 163; Isid. *Hist. Goth.* 31; Fredegar. 2. 54; *MGH:AA*, 9:304, 490–92, 663, 11:157, 186, 232; Theoph. *Chron.* 5948 (de Boor 1.109); and R. Mathisen, "Avitus, Italy and the East in A.D. 455–456," *Byzantion* 51 (1981): 232–47. Gothic support: Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 7. 519–21; Hyd. *Chron.* 183; Joh. Ant. frag. 202 (*FHG* 4:616).

2. Opposition: Joh. Ant. frag. 202 (*FHG* 4:616). Return to Gaul: Hyd. *Chron.* 177, and see also H. Rutherford, *Sidonius Apollinaris: L'homme politique, l'écrivain, l'évêque* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1938), p. 11; O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr.* (Stuttgart, 1919), p. 402; and C. E. Stevens, *Sidonius Apollinaris and His Age* (Oxford, 1933), p. 38.

3. Visigoths: Hyd. *Chron.* 170–83. Avitus' defeat: nn. 4, 6, 7 below.

historians suppose that he was killed almost immediately, others conclude that he did not die until 457, and most simply hedge.<sup>4</sup> The problem, as always, lies with the sources, although not in their paucity—there are at least twelve of them—but in their nature: they are very brief and sometimes apparently contradictory.<sup>5</sup>

Based upon their content, moreover, the sources for Avitus' fall can be divided into two groups: those which do discuss Avitus' death and those which do not. The former group includes three fifth- and sixth-century Gallo-Spanish sources (Hydatius, *The Gallic Chronicle of 511*, and Gregory of Tours) and one seventh-century Byzantine source (John of Antioch).<sup>6</sup> Only two of these sources, both fairly lengthy and both late (Gregory and John), discuss any of the events leading up to Avitus' death. On the basis of their similar provenances, the first three of these henceforth will be referred to as the "Gallo-Spanish" group; this should not be taken to imply, however, that they all are descended from a single tradition; for, if anything, it would appear that rather the opposite is the case.

The other eight sources discuss only Avitus' fate prior to his death, mentioning one or more of the following: the battle of Placentia, Avitus' defeat, his capture, his deposition, and his ordination as bishop of—or perhaps only at—Placentia.<sup>7</sup> Do these sources, one might ask, have any other similarities, beyond their shared failure to discuss Avitus' death, which would connect them to each other? For one thing, the four sources of this group which discuss Avitus' defeat and capture also agree in making Ricimer alone responsible: Majorian only appears as a participant in the deposition.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, these eight sources also have a decidedly Italian flavor: four were written in Italy, and two more have been identified as having used the Italian chronographic tradition.<sup>9</sup>

4. Those who associate Avitus' death with his defeat include, e.g., C. E. Stevens, *Sidonius*, p. 38, n. 4, who, like Rutherford (*Sidonius*, p. 11, n. 31), also reports that Avitus may have died of plague; but this report is based on an erroneous Greek reading. Others claim he died "soon afterwards": e.g., J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1 (repr. New York, 1958), p. 328; A. Loyer, *Recherches historiques sur les panégyriques de Sidoine Apollinaire* (Paris, 1942), p. 59; J. Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2: A.D. 395–527 (Cambridge, 1980), p. 198; and T. Hodgkin, *Italy and Her Invaders*, vol. 2 (repr. New York, 1967), p. 395 (within a year). For the chronological separation of Avitus' deposition from his death, see O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* 6 (Stuttgart, 1920), p. 335, and "Eparchius Avitus," *RE* 2 (1890): 2397; and E. Stein, *Geschichte des spätromischen Reiches* (Vienna, 1928), pp. 550–51 (also available in trans. by J.-R. Palanque [Paris, 1959], 1:575–76). Both attribute Avitus' death to starvation or to murder. Among the few who suggest a date of 457 (based on Hydatius alone) are C. Courtois, "Auteurs et scribes: Remarques sur la chronique d'Hydace," *Byzantion* 21 (1951): 23–54, at p. 35; and Tranoy (below, n. 10), 2:108.

5. On the problems of some of the sources for Avitus' reign, see R. Mathisen, "Sidonius on the Reign of Avitus: A Study in Political Prudence," *TAPA* 109 (1979): 165–71.

6. See Hyd. *Chron.* 183; *Chron. Gall. a. 511* (MGH:AA, 9:664); Greg. Tur. *H.F.* 2. 11; and Joh. Ant. frag. 202 (FHG 4:616).

7. The eight include *Fast. vind. prior.* 580 and *Auct. prosp. haun.*, s.a. 456 (both MGH:AA, 9:304); *Auct. ad ed. a. 455* (MGH:AA, 9:492); Cass. *Chron.* 1266 (MGH:AA, 11:157); Mar. Avit. *Chron.*, s.a. 456 (MGH:AA, 11:232); Vict. Tonn. *Chron.*, s.a. 456 (MGH:AA, 11:186); Jord. *Get.* 240; and Theoph. *Chron.* 5948 (de Boor 1. 109). *PLRE* 2:198 mistakenly cites John of Antioch as a source for Avitus' ordination.

8. Ricimer: *Fast. vind. prior.*, *Auct. prosp. haun.*, Vict. Tonn., and Theophanes. Marius Aviticensis (MGH:AA, 11:232) is the only Latin source to give Majorian a specific role in Avitus' deposition, noting "deiectus est Avitus imperator a Maioriano et Recemere Placentia." And only Ricimer is said, by Victor Tonnennensis, to have been involved in Avitus' ordination (MGH:AA, 11:186).

9. In Italy: *Fast. vind. prior.*, *Auct. prosp. haun.*, *Auct. ad ed. a. 455*, Cass. *Chron.*; Italian-based: Jordanes and Mar. Avit. For discussion, see Mommsen, MGH:AA, 9:251–67; for these sources, see also

The most noteworthy similarity among these sources is their treatment of Avitus' fall: all discuss his defeat or deposition, but none mentions his death. One might wish to consider why this might have been the case. Did any or all of the authors of these eight passages know about Avitus' death but simply choose to omit it in order to save space? This might have occurred in a few instances, but can one really believe that all eight would have omitted some brief mention of the logical result (Avitus' death) of what had gone before (his defeat and deposition)? This hardly seems likely. Indeed, the failure to mention Avitus' death is so striking that one might wish to assert that most, if not all, of these sources do reflect some common source or tradition in their discussion of Avitus' fall. For this reason, even though some of them are not Italian in origin, I shall for the sake of convenience henceforth refer to them as representing the "Italian tradition."

It would appear, then, that there was more than one version of Avitus' end: it is difficult to believe that the division between those sources which do and those which do not discuss Avitus' death is merely a fortuitous result of the jejune nature of the chronicles. It is the sources of the "Gallo-Spanish" group, moreover, which have created much of the modern confusion over the circumstances surrounding Avitus' defeat, deposition, and death: it should therefore be worthwhile to discuss them in some detail.

The only extant contemporary source for Avitus' fall is the chronicle of the Spanish bishop Hydatius.<sup>10</sup> He has nothing to say about it, however, except for the laconic statement at *Chronicle* 183, "caret imperio Gothorum promisso destitutus auxilio, caret et vita." This has led some to suppose that Avitus must have been deposed and lost his life at about the same time, that is, in 456, even though such a conclusion means impugning or denying the reliability of some of the other sources.<sup>11</sup> One such source is the *Gallie Chronicle of 511*, which is a bit more specific: it asserts that in 457 "Marcianus obiit et Avitus occisus est a Maioriano comite domesticorum Placentiae" (*MGH:AA*, 9:664).<sup>12</sup> A much later, but still valuable, source is Gregory of Tours, who wrote of Avitus' fall in the late sixth century. Now Gregory, like Avitus, was an Arvernian noble, a coincidence which suggests that his account, which does not appear elsewhere, might reflect local tradition about Avitus' death.<sup>13</sup> And Gregory places the

R. Cessi, "I 'Fasti Vindobonenses,'" *Archivio Muratoriano* 17-18 (1916): 295-405, and "Prosper Continuatio Hauniensis," *ibid.* 22 (1922): 587-641. Unfortunately, the extant bits of the so-called *Ravenna Chronicle* do not cover the years 455-56; see B. Bischoff and W. Koehler, "Eine illustrierte Ausgabe der spätantiken ravennater Annalen," *Medieval Studies in Honor of A. Kingsley Porter*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), pp. 125-38, and relevant sections of Agnell, *Lib. pont. eccl. rav.* (*MGH: Scr. rer. lang.*).

10. There are editions of Hydatius by T. Mommsen in *MGH:AA*, 11:1-36, and A. Tranoy, *Hydace: Chronique*, Sources chrétiennes 218 (text) and 219 (commentary) (Paris, 1974). Hydatius also has been studied by S. Muhlberger, "Prosper, Hydatius and the Chronicle of 452: Three Chronicles and their Significance for Fifth-Century Historiography" (Ph.D. diss., Toronto, 1981) and by Courtois, "Auteurs." For other possible contemporary allusions to Avitus' fall, see Mathisen, "Sidonius," *passim*.

11. See n. 4 above.

12. A ninth-century source, Paul. Diac. *H.R.* 15. 1 (*MGH:AA*, 2:207), gives a similar location, noting "exempto quoque in Italia humanis rebus Avito." For possible textual problems in the *Gallie Chronicle*, see M. Miller, "The Last British Entry in the 'Gallie Chronicles,'" *Britannia* 9 (1978): 315-18; for refutation, see S. Muhlberger, "The Gallie Chronicle of 452 and its Authority for British Events," *Britannia* 14 (1983): 23-33.

13. For the suggestion, see Hodgkin, *Italy*, pp. 395, 397, and note also P. Allard, "Sidoine Apollinaire sous les règnes d'Avitus et de Majorien," *Revue des questions historiques* 83 (1908): 438, n. 1.

blame for Avitus' fall directly upon the Roman senate, reporting that (*H.F.* 2. 11)

a senatoribus proiectus, apud Placentiam urbem episcopus ordinatur. conperto autem, quod adhuc indignans senatus vita eum privare vellit, basilicam sancti Iuliani Arverni martyris cum multis muneribus expetivit. sed impleto in itinere vitae cursu, obiit, delatusque ad Brivatensem vicum, ad pedes antedicti martyris est sepultus.<sup>14</sup>

The most detailed account of Avitus' death, however, is found (of all places) in the work of an early seventh-century Byzantine writer, John of Antioch (frag. 202: *FHG* 4:616).<sup>15</sup> According to this source,

[Avitus] dismissed the Goths whom he had brought as his guard . . . [his actions] created unrest in the city, and both Majorian and Ricimer, freed from their fear of the Goths, openly rebelled, with the result that [Avitus], fearing both civil disorders and the hostilities of the Vandals, departed from Rome and took the road (τῆς . . . ὁδοῦ) to Gaul. And attacking (ἐπιθέμενοι) him on the road (τὴν ὁδόν), Majorian and Ricimer compelled (κατηνάγκασαν) him, with him renouncing (ἀπαγορεύοντα) the rule and having removed (ἀποδυσάμενον) the imperial regalia, to flee into a sacred precinct. Then, those with Majorian did not lift the siege until, afflicted by hunger, [Avitus] departed this life . . . but some say that he was strangled.

Now, this version does have some interesting things in common with the Gallo-Spanish traditions: the loss of Visigothic aid reported by Hydatius; the seeking of sanctuary mentioned by Gregory; the murder by Majorian alone mentioned in the *Gallic Chronicle*; and one other interesting, even if only fortuitous, similarity: John's account concludes with the statement, "For Avitus, this was the end of his life and his rule," which recalls the words of Hydatius.<sup>16</sup> All these elements suggest, at least, that John had access to a Gallo-Spanish source and was not entirely dependent upon the Italian tradition.<sup>17</sup>

As it stands, however, John's version also has some striking omissions and inconsistencies. For one thing, John fails to mention Avitus' return to Gaul in 456, which is known from the report of Avitus' envoy Hesychius to Theoderic in Spain (*Hyd. Chron.* 177 "Avitum de Italia ad Gallias Arelate successisse"). Now, John's account can be literally true only if Avitus returned from Rome to Arles (*Hydatius*), came back to Rome, and then (according to the account of John), faced with opposition from Ricimer and Majorian, retreated yet again toward Gaul, only to be defeated at Placentia.<sup>18</sup> How likely is it that such a sequence of

14. Stevens, *Sidonius*, p. 38, n. 4, denies Gregory's account altogether, calling it "strange" that he has been "so readily accepted." For a similar view, see Bury, *Roman Empire*, p. 328.

15. On John's value for fifth-century history, see C. D. Gordon, *The Age of Attila* (Ann Arbor, 1966), p. 193, and p. 116 for a translation of the fragment (the translation reverses John's order for Avitus' deposition and taking of sanctuary). The chronicle in fact appears to have been written by two men, working in the seventh and tenth centuries. For John, see also n. 17 below.

16. Loyer, *Recherches*, p. 59, n. 4, mistakenly claims that John and the *Gallic Chronicle* implicate Ricimer as well in Avitus' death; for Majorian's role, see Rutherford, *Sidonius*, p. 11.

17. Indeed, John's sources may have included one or more of the Arvernian ambassadors to the court at Constantinople during the 580s: see Greg. Tur. *H.F.* 4. 40 and Fredegar. 3. 64, 4. 5. Müller, *FHG* 4:616, notes that John's data "aliunde non nota sunt," and several scholars (including A. Köcher, *De Iohannis Antiocheni aetate, fontibus, auctoritate* [Bonn, 1871], pp. 34–37; Bury, *Roman Empire*, p. 328; and R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire* [Liverpool, 1981], pp. 67, 114) assert that John's source was Priscus; Blockley also suggests that there was an "intermediate chronicler."

18. This is in fact the view of Hodgkin, *Italy*, pp. 393–94.

events actually occurred? One might begin by considering John's statement that Ricimer and Majorian rebelled *before* Avitus left Rome, and that as a result of this Avitus departed when he was faced with both the hostility of the Vandals and civil disorders: note in particular that John does not say that Majorian and Ricimer actually expelled Avitus themselves. Now recall that Gregory of Tours asserts that Avitus was "a senatoribus proiectus": the statement sounds very much like John's "civil disorders" and suggests that both sources are in fact referring to the same withdrawal from Rome. One might then ask where Majorian and Ricimer were at the time. The whereabouts of Ricimer, at least, is given by Hydatius, who in his entry immediately preceding (*Chron.* 176) had noted Avitus' report to Theoderic that Ricimer had defeated the Vandals at sea "per Avitum," that is, in Avitus' name, showing that there had yet been no breach between them.

Hydatius' very next entry, moreover, gives the report of Hesychius which tells not only of Avitus' withdrawal to Arles, but also of yet another Roman victory over the Vandals, this time on Corsica (one must assume that this is not a doublet of the report in the previous entry). Presumably these two events were roughly contemporaneous. Now, if John is to be believed in his claim that Avitus fled from Rome because he feared the Vandals, one would suppose that he fled before he received news of this Roman victory; and it may well be this thrust at Corsica to which John was referring. Such an interpretation, however, indicates once again that Hydatius and John are discussing the same withdrawal from Rome: for the Corsican victory which, according to Hydatius, occurred at the same time as Avitus' withdrawal to Arles would also have occurred shortly after the retreat from Rome mentioned by John. It is therefore consistent with all three sources (Hydatius, Gregory, and John) to conclude that Avitus made but a single attested withdrawal from Rome.<sup>19</sup>

The sequence of events may now be reconstructed. While Majorian and Ricimer were away from Rome (John), the latter defeated the Vandals at sea (Hydatius), and he and Majorian thereafter rebelled against Avitus (John). Back in Rome, the Gallic emperor was also faced with more immediate threats of civic disorder (John and Gregory) and a Vandal attack (John); he realized that he hardly could cope with a full-scale military revolt as well, and as a result he retreated to Gaul. He subsequently was defeated at Placentia after his return from Arles, not (as John claims) immediately after his departure from Rome. Either John has abbreviated his account (and indeed, his clumsy repetition of the word ὁδός could suggest an ellipsis at this point), or he did not even know of the return to Gaul.

Another problem with John is that he has both Majorian and Ricimer involved in the attack upon Avitus throughout, whereas the Italian tradition attributes Avitus' defeat at Placentia to Ricimer alone; indeed, only one other source even mentions that Majorian was involved in the deposition.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, John is not altogether clear on the chronology of (1) Avitus' conflicts with Majorian and Ricimer and (2) his deposition: for if taken literally, John's

19. This is the conclusion, presented without comment, of Stevens, *Sidonius*, pp. 37–38; Stein, *Geschichte*, p. 550; Seeck, *Geschichte*, p. 334; and Tranoy, *Hydace*, 2:107. See also n. 2 above.

20. See n. 8 above.

sequence of verb-tenses has Avitus being besieged after, rather than before, he was deposed. Finally, although the harassment of Avitus before his deposition is understandable, why would Majorian have continued to press him even after he had resigned his office?

Something, therefore, seems very wrong with John when he is interpreted in the context of the current orthodoxy; and historians hitherto have either ignored the problems or been forced to manipulate his chronology.<sup>21</sup> It may well be that John conflated several accounts of these events, including the Italian tradition, which only discussed Avitus' defeat (by Ricimer) and deposition (by Ricimer and, it seems, Majorian), and the Gallo-Spanish versions, which discussed the circumstances of his death (involving Majorian alone). If this were the case, John would have been attempting to do no more than what many modern historians have done with essentially the same evidence.

One now can offer a reconstruction, part fact and part hypothesis, which will clarify the circumstances surrounding Avitus' fall. After Avitus withdrew to Arles, Ricimer returned to Italy in open revolt against him. It is known that on 17 September Ricimer defeated and killed Avitus' partisan Remistus at Ravenna (*MGH:AA*, 9:304); Avitus, of course, was unable to help because he had not yet returned from Gaul. After he finally did so he was defeated and captured by Ricimer alone in mid-October. Where was Majorian at the time? It may be that he had remained at sea to forestall any further raids by the Vandals; and if so, he would have been the one who defeated the Vandals on Corsica. He would only have been able to return to Italy with the approach of the *mare clausum* and the end of any Vandal threat for that year, and he could have arrived at Placentia just in time to assist in Avitus' deposition and consecration as bishop.<sup>22</sup> At some later time, Avitus decided to attempt to return home (Gregory); but while he was on the road to Gaul, and perhaps just after he left Placentia, he was attacked by Majorian (John), who may have expected just such a move, and was forced to take refuge in a church (John, suggested by Gregory). Here he either starved to death, or, in a weakened state, was strangled on the orders of Majorian (John, *Gallic Chronicle*), who in either case would then have been directly responsible for his death.

Such a reconstruction, however, even though it does make some of the sources more consistent with one another, still leaves much to be desired. For one thing, it lacks a chronological framework: did Avitus' death occur almost immediately after his deposition, as some suppose, or some time later?<sup>23</sup> Moreover, if this reconstruction is to be convincing, it must be placed in a historical context which explains (1) why Avitus would have tried to return to Gaul in the first place and (2) why Majorian, who otherwise is always portrayed as a lenient ruler, would have responded so harshly.<sup>24</sup>

21. Bury, *Roman Empire*, p. 328, like others, depends solely on John and fails to note Avitus' return to Gaul at all. For chronological rearrangement, see Gordon, *Age of Attila*, p. 116.

22. Sea travel customarily stopped as of early November; see E. de Saint-Denis, "Mare clausum," *REA* 25 (1947): 196–214. Anticipating the onset of bad weather, Vandal raiders would have left for home early enough to allow Majorian to get to Placentia just after the battle.

23. See n. 4 above.

24. For Majorian's conciliatory policy toward Gauls in particular, see R. Mathisen, "Resistance and Reconciliation: Majorian and the Gallic Aristocracy after the Fall of Avitus," *Francia* 7 (1979): 597–627;

Perhaps the best way to try to unravel the real or apparent inconsistencies in the sources is merely to accept their claims at face value and see where that leads. Now, as already noted, the *Chronica gallica* of 511 places Avitus' murder by Majorian specifically in the year 457. Most modern writers have simply ignored this date, even though the *Chronicle* is not only a Gallic but in particular a southern Gallic source.<sup>25</sup> But if it were accepted, Avitus' death would be dated very closely indeed, for the *Gallic Chronicle* not only places Avitus' death between the death of Marcian and the accession of Leo, it also refers to Majorian as the count of the domestics. Now, it appears that Marcian died on 27 January 457, Leo was acclaimed on 7 February, and Majorian was promoted to master of soldiers on 28 February.<sup>26</sup> The *Gallic Chronicle*, therefore, suggests that Avitus died in late January or early February of 457. Furthermore, Hydatius, the only contemporary source, also indicates that Avitus died in 457, viz., "tertio anno posteaquam . . . factus fuerat imperator"; and his very next entry (184) reports the death of Marcian. So once again Avitus' death is placed very early in 457, and the date of the *Gallic Chronicle* is confirmed: Avitus died at about the same time as Marcian, in late January or early February of 457.

But Hydatius, as noted above, is also one of the main causes of the confusion, for he states (*Chron.* 183) that at this time (viz., in 457) Avitus "lost the rule and lost his life as well." And the a priori assumption that Avitus was universally regarded as no longer emperor after October of 456 has resulted in the conclusion that Hydatius' date for Avitus' death, and by implication that of the *Gallic Chronicle* also, must be suspect.<sup>27</sup> To complicate matters all the more, in his paragraph headings Hydatius specifically gives Avitus not two but three regnal years (viz., years "I"[165], "II"[175], and "III"[183], i.e., 455, 456, and 457). Now, this study does not propose to discuss the problems of Hydatian chronology in general; but it should be noted that Hydatius here does violate what seems to be his usual practice of assigning only one regnal year to any given calendar year, for the regnal years Valentinian XXXI, Avitus I, II, and III, and Majorian I and II cover only the years 455–58. Courtois seems to have proposed the best solution, splitting 455 between Valentinian XXXI and Avitus I, and 457 between Avitus III and Majorian I.<sup>28</sup>

Hydatius, therefore, still explicitly recognized Avitus as emperor in 457 in not one but two places. Again, one would think that such a bald claim

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for his policy toward senators in general, recall his conventional reassurance "nemo delationes metuat" (*Nov. Maj.* 1).

25. For the provenance of the *Gallic Chronicle* of 511, see Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 9:626–28. Modern writers: see n. 4 above.

26. Marcian: B. Croke, "The Date and Circumstances of Marcian's Decease, A.D. 457," *Byzantion* 48 (1978): 5–9. Leo: Seeck, *Regesten*, p. 403. Majorian: *Fast. vind. prior.* 582 (*MGH:AA*, 9:305). Also on 28 February Ricimer was promoted to patrician (*ibid.*). It is suggested by *PLRE* 2:703 and 2:943 that these promotions were approved by the eastern emperor, "whether Marcian or Leo." If such were the case, it would indicate that he had recognized the *fait accompli* of Avitus' deposition (although he still would have been unaware of his death). But it is equally likely, as suggested by T. D. Barnes, "Late Roman Prosopography: Between Theodosius and Justinian," *Phoenix* 37 (1983): 268, that the two had simply usurped the titles.

27. This despite the fact that an inscription from Rome dated 1 November 456, over two weeks after his defeat, still recognized Avitus as consul, if not as emperor (De Rossi, *ICUR* no. 796, p. 346).

28. See Courtois, "Auteurs," pp. 35, 44–45, 53.

would be worthy of further investigation, but hitherto no one has seen it as anything other than an error of this isolated Galician bishop.<sup>29</sup> But was Hydatius, in fact, as poorly informed about the events of Avitus' reign as that conclusion assumes? The contents of his chronicle would hardly suggest so, for of his entries numbered 163 through 183 no fewer than nine (eleven, if one includes those with Avitus' regnal years) concern Avitus. Indeed, in addition to being the only contemporary source, Hydatius is also the most detailed and voluminous source for Avitus' reign. And the reason why Hydatius would have been so well informed on the affairs of the Gallic emperor is not difficult to discover, for Avitus' allies the Visigoths were operating at this time in Hydatius' own neighborhood (*Chron.* 173–83) and were in regular diplomatic contact with Avitus, whose envoys' reports found their way into Hydatius' chronicle (170, 177).

Given, therefore, that Hydatius was not only very knowledgeable about the events of Avitus' reign but also inclined to report them, one should at least attempt to create a reconstruction which would take his account seriously. This might be done by means of the following hypothesis. It is clear that Avitus' supporters, both Gauls and Germans, did not wish to submit once again to rule from Italy, and as a result they may have made yet another attempt to place him on the throne.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it is perhaps in this context that one should place Sidonius Apollinaris' mysterious reference to a "de capessendo diademate coniuratio Marcellana" (*Epist.* 1. 11. 6) which took place in southern Gaul, perhaps at Narbonne, in late 456 or early 457; for it may have been an attempt to place not some otherwise unknown Marcellus on the throne, but to place Avitus *back* on it.<sup>31</sup> If such were the case, it would suggest that Hydatius was right, and that as of early 457 Avitus was still recognized as emperor in Gaul, not to mention Spain, where, as later events were to show, his enthusiastic allies the Visigoths also would have had no desire to recognize rule from Rome.<sup>32</sup>

One should stress, moreover, that this reconstruction does not necessarily suppose that Avitus actually reassumed the diadem. It rather attests the hostility prevalent in Gaul and Spain at the time toward a return to rule from Italy. Indeed, another example of the same attitude is probably to be seen in Hydatius' idiosyncratic use of Avitus' consulate of 455 in his consular fasti, the only extant

29. Courtois, "Auteurs," p. 35, and Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 11:30, regard Avitus III as simply erroneous, whereas Tranoy, *Hydace*, 2:100, asserts that the years Avitus I–III do not refer to Avitus at all but to Marcian's "monarchia." But this is completely contrary to the usage of Hydatius, who in fact refers (incorrectly) to Avitus I as Marcian's fourth year (165), but correctly to Avitus III as Marcian's seventh (184). On some hitherto overlooked problems in Hydatius' chronology, see also E. A. Thompson, *Romans and Barbarians: The Decline of the Western Empire* (Madison, 1982), pp. 227–29.

30. For the Gallo-Germanic opposition to Majorian and rule from Italy after the fall of Avitus, see Mathisen, "Resistance," pp. 604–10, 618–20; and note especially Priscus frags. 27, 30 (*FHG* 4:103–4), Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 4. 11–12, 5. 571–78, 12. 3–19, and 13. 15–40; and Hyd. *Chron.* 197.

31. For *Marcellana* rather than *Marcelliana* (much less *Marcelliniana*) as the correct reading, see Mathisen, "Resistance," pp. 598–603, and Barnes, "Prosopography," p. 269. The plot must have involved someone named Marcellus, but he himself need not have been the one who planned to seize the throne: note, for example, a reference to the usurpation of Eugenius in 392 as a *coniuratio Arbogastis* (Sulp. Alex. *ap. Greg. Tur. H.F.* 2. 9).

32. For Majorian's difficulties with the Visigoths, see n. 30 above.



fasti to do so.<sup>33</sup> Hydatius also omits the consuls for 457, both easterners, but it is unclear whether he was making a statement by doing so or simply did not know who they were.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, in June of 458 an inscription of Lyons seems pointedly to have ignored Majorian's consulate and to have mentioned only that of the eastern nominee Leo.<sup>35</sup> The continued recognition of Avitus, therefore, would seem to be a manifestation not merely of a deposed emperor's attempts to recover lost dreams and revive lost causes, but of the general, pervasive feeling of discontent in the western provinces so common throughout the fifth century.<sup>36</sup>

In conclusion, if the reconstruction above explains Hydatius' anomalous reference to Avitus' third regnal year, Avitus' abortive attempt to return to Gaul, and the Marcellan conspiracy, it solves some other difficulties as well. In particular, it explains many inconsistencies, inaccuracies, or problems in the sources. With regard to chronology, for example, it indicates that Hydatius and the *Gallic Chronicle* do indeed give the correct date for Avitus' death, namely, late January or perhaps early February of 457. It also suggests that the account of John of Antioch is in fact a conflation of several sources; this could explain, for example, why John assumes that both Majorian and Ricimer took part in the battle of Placentia, whereas all the other sources mention only Ricimer. Majorian, it has been suggested, was responsible for a second attack upon Avitus in early 457 when the latter was attempting to return to Gaul, and John apparently has combined the two encounters into one. And John's failure to mention Avitus' return to Gaul, the battle of Placentia, and Avitus' ordination could indicate that he was working with only incomplete sources.

Furthermore, in the light of the reconstruction above, one can now return to the division of the sources described at the beginning of this study and attempt to explain their differing outlooks. One might suppose that an "orthodox" version of Avitus' fall was circulated by the imperial court in Italy: it would have been more concerned with the actual transfer of power and, understandably, would have desired to gloss over any part played in Avitus' death, or murder, by Majorian, who, after all, did become the next emperor and did reconcile to himself Avitus' erstwhile supporters. This version, then, would have been readily available to any chroniclers or writers making use of Italian sources. In Gaul and Spain, however, there would have been fewer restrictions on the discussion of the death of a man who would have been viewed by many as a popular hero. These considerations all recall the necessity of interpreting sources such as these in the context of the time, place, and circumstances in which they were written.

Finally, the account of Gregory of Tours seems to be grounded in fact, although it can be seen to be colored by the aforementioned fifth-century orthodoxy on the one hand and by the popular piety of Gregory's own day on the other. Gregory's laying of blame upon the Italian senate and his omission of any reference to the roles of Ricimer and Majorian, for example, only reflect the Gallic rehabilitation of Majorian as of 459, and the whitewashing of his role in

33. *MGH:AA*, 9:247. Other fasti name the eastern consuls Iohannes and Varan(es).

34. On Hydatius' general ignorance of eastern events, see Thompson, *Barbarians*, pp. 144–49.

35. See A. Allmer and P. Dissard, *Musée de Lyon: Inscriptions antiques* (Lyons, 1888–94), 4, 27–29.

36. See, for example, for the late fourth and fifth centuries, Amm. 15. 5. 2; *Pan. lat.* 5. 354–58; *Expos. tot. mund. et gent.* 58; Symm. *Epist.* 4. 28; and Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 5. 354–60.

Avitus' death, especially in sources like Sidonius to which Gregory had ready access.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Gregory's tale that Avitus planned to seek sanctuary at the shrine of St. Julian at Brioude seems preposterous. But it is in fact very similar to the claim of John of Antioch that Avitus did seek sanctuary in Italy; and once one notes that Gregory himself also reports that Avitus ultimately was interred in this same shrine of St. Julian (*H.F.* 2. 11), it becomes clear how a pious, but improbable, fiction that he was seeking refuge there, rather than in Italy, could have arisen.<sup>38</sup> The "multa munera" which Gregory claims Avitus was bringing to Gaul were perhaps intended to fund another revolt and only later acquired their ecclesiastical odor. Finally, this reconstruction also explains the seemingly harsh response of the otherwise conciliatory Majorian, for a deposed emperor on his way back to Gaul to raise yet another revolt could not be allowed to proceed, especially by a man with imperial ambitions of his own.<sup>39</sup>

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37. See Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 3–5, 13, *Epist.* 1. 11, 9. 13. 4; and Mathisen, "Resistance," pp. 611–20, and "Sidonius," *passim*. For Gregory's use of Sidonius, see *H.F.* 2. 24–25, 34. 4. 12, *Vit. pat.* 3. 1.

38. On St. Julian, see P. Franchi de'Cavalieri, "S. Genesio di Arelate, S. Ferreolo di Vienna, S. Giuliano di Brivas," *Studi e Testi* 65 (1935): 203–29. On Avitus' burial, see L. Bréhier, "Un empereur romain à Brioude, Flavius Eparchius Avitus," *Almanach de Brioude* (1930): 39–55. One might even speculate that it was Majorian himself who returned Avitus' body to Gaul, perhaps in conjunction with his visits of 458–60.

39. This article has benefited from the helpful suggestions of F. M. Clover and the two anonymous referees for *CP*.

## MORE EMENDATIONS IN THE *EPITOMA METENSIS*

42–43 [sc. Cleophis] ceteros . . . amicos convocat; cohortatur, ut oppidum Alexandro dedant, mercennarii contra reclamantes impedire ac seditionem facere coeperunt. postero die Cleophis clam legatos ad Alexandrum <de> *deditione*[m] mittit oratum, uti ignosceret ipsis: vi conductorum adactos. quae fecerint se fecisse. id mercennarii suspicati de suo numero ad Alexandrum legatos miserunt oratum, uti ex oppido exire suaue exportare liceret. his utrisque quod postulaverunt concessit.

<de> *deditione*[m] Volkmann, Wagner: *deditionem* D (codex solus)  
quae fecerint se fecisse Reitzenstein: quae fecerunt referre D

So P. H. Thomas in his Teubner edition.<sup>1</sup> One stumbles, however. In point of Latin style one would expect either "legatos *de deditione* mittit"<sup>2</sup> or "legatos mittit *oratum uti ignosceret ipsis*," but not both. The fault lies with *de deditione*, which, as the passage goes, ineptly anticipates the specific appeal to Alexander,

1. *Epitoma rerum gestarum Alexandri et liber de morte eius*<sup>2</sup> (Leipzig, 1966). The other available edition (with commentary) is by O. Wagner in *Jahrb. f. cl. Phil.*, Suppl. 26 (1901): 91–167.

2. In the epitome itself compare 56 "non multis post diebus Abisares fratrem suum legatum ad Alexandrum de amicitia misit" (complete sentence). In Caesar one finds, e.g., *BGall.* 1. 27. 1 "Helvetii . . . legatos de deditione ad eum miserunt," 5. 22. 3 "Cassivellaunus . . . legatos . . . de deditione ad Caesarem mittit." No doubt Volkmann was conscious of passages like these when, in the editio princeps (1886), he corrected to *de deditione*.