

SOME LATIN AUTHORS FROM THE GREEK EAST¹1. THE *PATRIA* OF PRISCIAN

A

In a discussion of the spread of Latin in ancient Palestine it has been argued that, apart from Westerners like Jerome who settled in the province and a number of translators from Greek into Latin and from Latin into Greek, three Latin authors whose works are extant may have been, with various degrees of probability, natives of the country. These are Commodian of Gaza, arguably the earliest extant Christian Latin poet; Eutropius, the author of a *breviarium* of Roman history, who apparently hailed from Caesarea; and the anonymous author of the *Descriptio totius mundi et gentium*, who certainly was a native of the Syro-Palestinian region, and conceivably of one of the Palestinian cities.² Here I wish to discuss another case, which seems to me characteristic of the reluctance of scholars to admit that Latin, and Latin authors, were more prevalent in the East than is usually acknowledged. In fact, it may be not misleading to assert that the invariably adduced exceptions of Ammianus Marcellinus and Claudian as Latin writers from the East are exceptions by virtue of the quality of their work rather than by its very existence.

By far our most important extant author on Latin grammar is Priscian, whose *Institutio de arte grammatica* occupies the second and part of the third volume of Keil's *Grammatici Latini* (= *GLK*), with his minor works in prose printed in what remains of the third volume. Unfortunately, very little is known about the life and circumstances of this highly influential author. His time is established by his extant poetic encomium on Anastasius I (491–518),³ as well as by his being a contemporary of Cassiodorus; the latter also refers to his position in Constantinople,⁴ a city often described as a Latin island in the East.⁵ This fact is also mentioned at the beginning of the various MSS of the *ars*: *Priscianus Caesariensis doctor urbis Romae Constantino-*

¹ A very early German version of this paper was delivered at the 8th International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics in Eichstätt and at the University of Vienna; one more, resembling the present version, at Yale. I am grateful to all audiences and participants in the ensuing discussions. Special thanks are due to Deborah Gera for reading and commenting on this article; the remaining faults are mine.

² J. Geiger, 'How much Latin in Greek Palestine?', in H. Rosèn (ed.), *Aspects of Latin. Papers from the Seventh International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics, Jerusalem, April 1993* (Innsbruck, 1996), pp. 39–57.

³ There are two modern editions and studies: A. Chauvot, *Procopé de Gaza, Priscien de Caesaraie. Panégyriques de l'Empereur Anastase Ier, Textes traduits et commentés, Antiquitas 35* (Bonn, 1986); P. Coyne, *Priscian of Caesarea's De laude Anastasii Imperatoris, Transl., Comm., Introd.* (Lewiston etc., 1991).

⁴ Cassiodorus, *de orthographia* 1.13, *GLK* 7.207: *ex Prisciano grammatico qui nostro tempore doctor Constantinopoli fuit*.

⁵ L. Hahn, 'Zum Gebrauch der lateinischen Sprache in Konstantinopel', *Festgabe . . . Schanz* (Würzburg, 1912), pp. 173–84; B. Hemmerdinger, 'Les lettres latines à Constantinople jusqu'à Justinien', *Byz. Forsch.* 1 (= *Polychordia, Festschrift F. Dölger*) (1966), 174–8 and bibliography quoted in Coyne (n. 3), p. 32, n. 34; H. Petersmann, 'Vulgärlateinisches aus Byzanz', in C.W. Müller, K. Sier, J. Werner (edd.), *Zum Umgang mit fremden Sprachen in der griechisch-römischen Antike, Palingenesia 36* (1992), 219–31.

politanae and *Priscianus Caesariensis grammaticus*.⁶ The information of the MSS that he is a Caesarean is supported by subscripts of his pupil Theodorus⁷ and by a later reference from Paul the Deacon.⁸ Whatever can be speculated—legitimately or otherwise—about his connections in Constantinople⁹ does not shed any light on the other solid biographical fact concerning him. So what should we make of his being a Caesarean?

Although at the time of Priscian three cities were called by that name—in Cappadocia, in Palestine, and in Mauretania¹⁰—in modern scholarship it is time and again taken for granted, or asserted (seldom with any qualification),¹¹ and very rarely argued in some manner,¹² that Priscian was a Westerner, from Caesarea in Mauretania. What seems to have been a single dissenting voice apparently remained just that—namely an oral presentation which was never published in a printed version.¹³ The validity of this *communis opinio* will be questioned in what follows.

Those who try to justify their view in any way tend to invoke the authority of Niebuhr,¹⁴ though it is perhaps of more than passing interest to note that the reluctance to consider Caesarea in Palestine as the birthplace of the grammarian goes back at least to the eleventh century (see B, below). While Niebuhr acknowledged the Eastern provenance of such Latin authors as Claudian and Ammianus Marcellinus, he insisted that the days of Anastasius I were different from those of Theodosius the Great and his sons—by the time of Priscian a Latin author must needs be a Westerner. Though this is an *a priori* assumption rather than an argument, it will be discussed in some detail in the following. Niebuhr adds two supporting arguments. The first is that

⁶ These are the readings of the Caroliruhensis and the Sangallensis, respectively, according to Keil's apparatus criticus. However, well over 700 codices of the author seem to be known. For lists of Priscian's MSS see M. Gibson, 'Priscian, "Institutiones Grammaticae": A handlist of manuscripts', *Scriptorium* 26 (1972), 105–24 with the review of G. Ballaira, *A&R* 19 (1974), 189–93; id., *Per il catalogo dei codici di Prisciano* (Torino, 1982), expanding the earlier list of M. Passalacqua, *I codici di Prisciano* (Roma, 1978).

⁷ GLK 2.191–2, 2.451, 2.597, 3.208–9.

⁸ Paul. Diac., *Hist. Lang.* 1.25.

⁹ See M. Salamon, 'Priscianus und sein Schülerkreis in Konstantinopel', *Philologus* 123 (1979), 91–6; G. Ballaira, *Prisciano e i suoi amici* (Torino, 1989). Priscian's connections with the Western aristocrat Symmachus do not necessarily relate to a life lived mostly in Constantinople.

¹⁰ As well as a number of other, lesser towns; for a survey of these, see e.g. P. Leveau, *Caesarea de Maurétanie. Une ville romaine et ses campagnes*, *Collection de l'École Française de Rome* 70 (Rome, 1984), 17–19.

¹¹ Among works of reference R. Helm, *RE* 44 (1954), s.v. no. 1, 2328; Schanz-Hosius 4.2 (1920), 222; *PLRE* II, s.v. no. 2; R. H. Robins, *OCD*³ s.v.; among others e.g. L. Jeep, 'Priscianus', *Philologus* 67 (1908), 12–51 at 18; A. Momigliano, 'Gli Anicii e la storiografia latina del VI secolo d.C.', *Entretiens Hardt* 4 (Vandoeuvres/Genève, 1956), 247–76 at 260; M. Glück, *Priscians Partiones und ihre Stellung in der spätantiken Schule*, *Spudasmata* 12 (Hildesheim, 1967), 53; H. Petersmann, 'Die Urbanisierung des römischen Reiches im Lichte der lateinischen Sprache', *Gymnasium* 96 (1989), 406–428 at 411; A. Dihle, *Die griechische und lateinische Literatur der Kaiserzeit* (München, 1989), 451; Hahn (n. 5), p. 174; Chauvot (n. 3), pp. xii, 92; Salamon (n. 9); R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley etc., 1988), pp. 146–8, n. 126; Leveau (n. 10), p. 109; T. W. Potter, *Towns in Late Antiquity: Iol Caesarea and its Context* (Sheffield, 1995), p. 19. I have not specially listed those among the above who pile hypothesis on assumption and assert that Priscian, a Catholic, had to leave Africa because of religious persecution. Needless to say, there is no shred of evidence for this.

¹² Ballaira (n. 9), pp. 17–19.

¹³ Coyne (n. 3), p. 6 refers to a paper on 'Priscian and the West' delivered by Marie Taylor Davis at the Byzantine Studies Conference, Chicago 1982. I could not discover a written version of the paper and failed in my efforts to establish contact with Ms Davis, who appears to have anticipated some of my arguments.

¹⁴ B. G. Niebuhr, *CSHB* I (Bonn, 1829), p. xxxiv.

Priscian refers to Latin speakers in the first-person plural and opposes them to *illi*, Greek speakers; however, it is only to be expected that the author of a Latin grammatical work, whatever his provenance, will express himself in such a manner.¹⁵ The second supporting argument consists of the tentative assumption that the praise of Anastasius' munificence to Western refugees in the *Panegyricus* refers to the panegyrist's own fate. But there can be little doubt that the reasoning behind Niebuhr's assertion is the conviction that a Latin grammarian and versifier must necessarily hail from a Latin-speaking province. It is bad enough to have such exceptions as Claudian and Ammianus Marcellinus; there certainly is no call to add to their number.

Caesarea in Cappadocia, a city of diminished importance with no known connections with Latin culture, may be left out of the discussion.¹⁶ On the other hand it will be worthwhile to examine the contrasting claims of the two other cities in some detail. Caesarea in Mauretania, though its Latin credentials are not to be doubted, does not seem to have been much of a literary centre. In fact, the latest and most thorough study of the town can enumerate, in a brief discussion of its literary culture,¹⁷ only two bishops, and, of course, Priscian himself. These were Emeritus, whose involvement in the Donatist controversy presupposes an acquaintance with the subtleties of Latin theological phraseology, and Clemens, mentioned in the correspondence of Symmachus.¹⁸

On the other hand Palestinian Caesarea, despite its Eastern location, has not a few Latin connections. In 71, in the aftermath of the Jewish War, the city was raised to the status of a colony and started coining with the legend COL(ONIA) PRIMA FL(AVIA) AUG(USTA) CAES(ARIENSIS).¹⁹ Already about a generation later it was the home of a Latin orator,²⁰ and of course as the seat of the governor of the province some Latin influences could only be expected. We do not know at what date the Caesarean Law School—a school devoted to the study of Latin legal texts—started operating, but it seems to have been in full swing under Justinian, the time of Priscian's activity.²¹ So much for the difference between the times of Theodosius and his sons and that of Justinian. There also exists some evidence for Caesarean students at the great Law School of Beirut. Finally the fourth-century historian Eutropius and his translator Paeanius, as well as the Church historians Eusebius and his translator and continuator Gelasius may be invoked as evidence for the translation and composition of Latin literature in Caesarea.²² If Priscian was a native of this city his

¹⁵ One may adduce here Rufinus of Antioch, to be discussed at the end of this paper. His text is very short and consists, in the main, of quotations of classical authors and earlier grammarians. Twice he refers to Greeks in the third person: *GLK* 6.567.6 *de ambitu sive circuito, quem Greci periodon dicunt* and *GLK* 6.573.23 *apud Graecos* (reproducing a list of writers on rhetorical rhythm).

¹⁶ For a survey see A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford, 1971²), pp. 183–90.

¹⁷ Leveau (n. 10), pp. 109–10. For bilingualism in Africa in the High Empire, see G. Sandy, *The Greek World of Apuleius. Apuleius and the Second Sophistic*, *Mnem. Suppl.* 174 (Leiden etc., 1997), 9–12.

¹⁸ M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet in her Belles-Lettres edition of Ampelius (Paris, 1993), pp. xx–xxiv, as well as in 'Le Liber Memorialis de L. Ampelius', *ANRW* 2.34.3 (1997), 230–32 conjectures that the author under consideration hailed from Mauretanian Caesarea.

¹⁹ L. Kadman, *The Coins of Caesarea Maritima* (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, 1957), pp. 46–7.

²⁰ *CIL* III 12082 = *ILS* 7206: *M. Flavium Agrippam pontif. Iviral. Col. I Fl. Aug. Caesareae oratorem, ex dec. dec. pec. publ.*

²¹ *Const. omnem* 7: *audivimus etiam in Alexandria splendidissima civitate et in Caesariensium et in aliis quosdam imperitos homines devagare et doctrinam discipulis adulterinam trahere.*

²² Geiger (n. 2), pp. 48–51.

accomplishment in Latin would hardly raise an eyebrow. And, without entering into a discussion of Caesarea as a centre of Greek learning, some perspective may be provided by the reminder that Procopius, a younger contemporary of Priscian, was a citizen of Palestinian Caesarea. It is also pertinent to mention here that Palestinian Caesarea could be referred to, in Constantinople and at the time of Priscian, without a distinguishing epithet.²³

Once it is acknowledged that Priscian's *patria* cannot be determined by *a priori* considerations there remains the search for clues in his text. First, languages. Priscian's bilingualism points, in all probability, to his education in both Greek and Latin,²⁴ a fact that can be supported by his translation of the *Progymnasmata* of Hermogenes²⁵ and of the *Periegesis* of Dionysius.²⁶ (I must concede, however, that it is an open question whether this bilingualism should be construed as favouring an Eastern provenance.) Priscian's scant allusions to Semitic languages—almost all biblical names²⁷—can probably be put down to his Christianity (otherwise not very much in evidence²⁸) rather than to ties to speakers of Hebrew and Aramaic.

Two passages, however, deserve a brief treatment. In *Inst.* 5.11, *GLK* 2.147 Priscian quotes as examples for barbarian nouns in *-ul* the names of the Numidian town Suthul and the river Muthul, and goes on to say that *lingua Poenorum, quae Chaldaeae vel Hebraeae similis est et Syrae, non habeat genus neutrum*. The geographical names could come to a grammarian from Sallust (*Iug.* 37.3, 38.2, 48.3), a writer, as would be expected, much quoted by him, as easily as from personal acquaintance. However, the comment seems to indicate that the writer is more familiar with Hebrew and Aramaic/Syriac than with Punic, since it is by means of the former that the latter is explained. The second passage also involves Sallust, *Inst.* 14.41, *GLK* 3.46.27: '*ultra* praepositio apud Sallustium in Iugurthino: Maurique vanum genus, ut alia Africae, contendebant, antipodas ultra Aethiopiam cultu Persarum iustos et egregios agere. Though not found in our texts of the *Bellum Iugurthinum* it seems not to be doubted that the quotation is genuine Sallust.²⁹ The reference to an often quoted author need not imply a special interest in African ethnography.

It has been mentioned that Niebuhr believed that the praise of Anastasius' munificence to Western refugees can be taken as a pointer to Priscian's *patria*. On the other hand, his praise of the rebuilding of cities with their walls and harbours³⁰ is rightly interpreted as a direct indication of Anastasius' reconstruction of Palestinian Caes-

²³ *Const. omnem* 7 (quoted n. 21); cf. also *Dig.* 50.15.8.7 (Paulus); *Cod.Iust.* 2.3.30 (a. 531); *CTh* 2.33.1.

²⁴ See Coyne (n. 3), pp. 6 and 31, n. 28 with references (the date of Luscher's dissertation should be 1911); add Ernestus Mueller, *De auctoritate et origine exemplorum orationis solutae Graecorum quae Priscianus contulit* (Diss. Königsberg, 1911); Glück (n. 11), pp. 55–60, 161–2.

²⁵ Printed in *GLK* 3.430ff; Hermogenes in *Rhetores Graeci* (Rabe), 6.1ff.

²⁶ Both printed in *GGM* 2.103–76 and 190–9. The only reference in the poem to Palestine, ll. 910–12, is translated literally at *GGM* 2.197, so that it does not betray local attachments, if any.

²⁷ See *Inst.* 5.10–12, 5.6.22, *GLK* 2.147–8, 2.214.

²⁸ Kaster (n. 11), p. 348, n. 126, adduces *GLK* 2.238 and *De laude Anast.* 211 (Joseph in Egypt), on which see Coyne (n. 3), pp. 153–5 with further references.

²⁹ Keil's apparatus adduces Non. 416.28 for the same quotation. Maurenbrecher counts this as no. 3 among *Fragmenta dubia vel falsa*, and believes that the original place of the passage was in the ethnographic discussion in *Iug.* 18–19 (where the text differed from our tradition) rather than in the *Historiae*. Priscian may have erred in the ascription, a commonplace error for an ancient writer quoting from memory.

³⁰ 184–5: *Quorum [scil. populorum] prostratas recreasti funditus urbes/ Portibus et muris, undarum et tractibus altis.*

area and its harbour, a subject given some prominence in the panegyric of Procopius of Gaza.³¹ In fact, for whatever it is worth, Chauvot³² draws attention to the fact that all three examples of the Emperor's euergetism adduced by Procopius—the rebuilding of the aqueduct of Hierapolis, of the port of Caesarea in Palestine, and of the *pharos* of Alexandria—are concerned with the Orient. Priscian's mentioning an act that benefited Palestinian Caesarea in particular may just conceivably point to local pride and gratitude³³—just conceivably.

Last but not least, Priscian's teacher. Theoctistus is referred to twice in highly eulogistic terms³⁴ and he seems to have left his mark on other pupils as well.³⁵ Where did Priscian attend his lectures, in Caesarea or in Constantinople? The name obviously points to the East, and this may have been the reason for Wessner's arbitrary decision to make Constantinople, rather than Caesarea in Mauretania, the *patria* he assigns to Priscian.³⁶ In truth, we just do not know whether Priscian studied with Theoctistus in Caesarea or in Constantinople or somewhere else entirely; but if it was Caesarea, it must have been in all probability a Caesarea where Greek names were the rule.³⁷

The very inconclusiveness of the arguments discussed here—and I am not aware of the existence of any others—shows that it cannot be decided with anything approaching certitude which Caesarea was Priscian's *patria*. (I would be reluctant to contest a view that my own evaluation, according to which the scales are tipped ever so slightly in favour of Caesarea in Palestine, is due to partiality.) The methodological lesson, if needed, is clear: this case, like any other, has to be investigated in detail rather than decided according to preconceived notions.

B

The reluctance to admit to our uncertainty concerning the *patria* of Priscian predates Niebuhr by at least seven centuries. However, while at first scholars were loath to admit that the author of the most widely used Latin grammar of their day was not a native Roman, later scholars were satisfied to accept that he was born in a city of the Latin-speaking world. A *vita* attached to an eleventh-century MS of Priscian enumerates the three known Caesareae and states that he was *Romanus genere*, and that *a plerisque dubitatur* from which Caesarea hailed Priscian; *sed quidam affirmant*

³¹ Proc. Gaz., *Paneg.* 19.

³² Chauvot (n. 3), p. 159.

³³ On this issue see J. Geiger, 'Local patriotism in the hellenistic cities of Palestine', A. Kasher *et al.* (edd.), *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel* (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 141–50.

³⁴ GLK 3.231 *teste sapientissimo domino et doctore meo Theoctisto, quod in institutione artis grammaticae docet*; GLK 3.238 *doctissime attendit noster praeceptor Theoctistus, omnis eloquentiae decus, cui quicquid in me sit doctrinae post Deum imputo*.

³⁵ Ps.-Acro ad Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.97; cf. Cassiod., GLK 7.213.

³⁶ P. Wessner, *RE* 2. Reihe 5, 1704, s.v. It must have been convenient for Wessner that in the entries of the *RE* there is only a single Theoctistus—there are, however, nineteen Theoktistoi enumerated in the same volume (2028–30), needless to say all Easterners. He is followed, among others, by Ballairà (n. 9), pp. 36–7; the sole dissenting voice seems to have been that of Davis (n. 13), quoted by Coyne (n. 3), p. 6.

³⁷ Wessner (n. 36), pp. 1704–5, himself draws attention to the noticeable interest in Greek in the pseudo-Acronian scholia and favours the theory that this may derive from the pupil of Theoctistus (Ps.-Acro ad Hor. *sat.* 1.5.97), who lived among a Greek, or Graeco-Roman, populace. If so, why Constantinople rather than Palestinian Caesarea? See G. Noske, *Quaestiones Pseudoacroniae* (Diss. München, 1969), pp. 251–3 for a discussion of the Greek element in the *scholia*, conceding that the place of composition may have been Constantinople, or even Antioch (this, because of a reference at *Sat.* 2.5.65, to *Syrorum lingua*). Indeed, even Caesarea.

it was the city in Africa.³⁸ It seems³⁹ that this, or a similar notice, was the source of the short *Life* by Baptista Guarino, printed in some early-sixteenth-century editions of Priscian.⁴⁰ According to the *Life*, Priscian was a Roman by birth, though it is said that he was from Caesarea in Palestine (from among the three Caesareae enumerated). Another detail in this short life is the dating of Priscian to the time of Julian (*sub cuius fine Imperii mortuus est Hieronymus!*), no doubt a confusion with the addressee of the dedicatory letter. It is perhaps of some interest how such confusions travel and expand: the Ascensiana of 1527 adds another biographical note, *ex Raphaelis Volaterrani Anthropologiae libro xviii*, that is, from the second part of the encyclopaedic *Commentarii rerum urbanarum* of Raffaele Maffei of Volterra (1455–1522).⁴¹ It contains a number of strange assertions;⁴² the one concerning apostasy I suspect to be an additional confusion to that of Guarino concerning 'Julian':

Priscianus Caesariensis claruit Athenis, tempore Iustiniani principis. scripsit de arte grammatica ad Iulianum Cons. ad Cosroen vero Persarum regem, librum de quaestionibus naturalibus. convertit in latinum sermonem Dionysii de situ orbis carmina. habeo auctorem qui scribit hunc ab initio Christianum, deinde fidei desertorem fuisse.

Clearly, the wish to know about the life of such an important author was in inverse proportion to the available evidence. Thus it was only to be expected that before long somebody came up with an attempt at a fully fledged biography of the grammarian. It was to be part of a biographical series: Andre Thevet, *Les vrais pourtraits et vies des hommes illustres, Grecz, Latins, et Payens, recueillez de leur tableaux, livres, medalles antiques, et Modernes* (Paris, 1584). The nature of the work and its context may best be appreciated by quoting the rather elaborate title-page of the English version:

The Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romans, compared together, by that Grave Learned Philosopher & Historiographer Plutarch of Chaeronea. Translated out of Greek into French, by James Amiot Abbot of Bellozane, Bishop of Auxerre, one of the Kings Privy Counsel, and Great Almner of France. With the Lives of Hannibal & Scipio African; Translated out of Latin into French, by Charles del Escluse, And out of French into English, by Sir Thomas North Knight. Hereunto are added the Lives of Epaminondas, of Philip of Macedon, of Dionysius the Elder, Tyrant of Sicilia, of Augustus Caesar, of Plutarch, and of Seneca: with the Lives of Nine other Excellent Chieftains of Warre: Collected out of Aemilius Probus,⁴³ by S.G.S. and Englished by the aforesaid Translator. And now also in this Edition are further added, the Lives of Twenty Selected Eminent Persons, of Ancient and latter times; Translated out of the work of that famous Historiographer to the King of France and Poland; Andrew Thevet. To which, for clearer Explanation and Emendation of the former Translation (in several places) are subjoynd Notes and Explications upon Plutarch's Lives; Collected out of Xylander, Cruserus, Henry Stephanus and Others; with the Synchronisms and Contemporary Persons with Them; Shewing the several Ages in which They lived. (London, 1657)

The Lives added by Thevet were those of

Constantine the Great, Archimedes, a Philosopher of Greece, Diogenes the Grecian

³⁸ H. Hagen, *Anecdota Helvetica, GLK Suppl.* (Leipzig, 1870), clxviii.

³⁹ Cf. M. Gibson, 'The collected works of Priscian: the printed editions 1470–1859', *Studi medievali* s. 3, 18 (1972), 249–260.

⁴⁰ The editions of Francini, Florence 1525; the Aldina, Venice 1527; the Ascensiana, Paris 1527. None of the *incunabula* I was able to inspect contains a biographical note.

⁴¹ (Roma, 1506), p. cclix.

⁴² The one about the book on Natural Questions is a confusion with Priscianus Lydus, one of the philosophers who left for Persia in 531 and whose *Solutiones earum de quibus dubitavit Chosroes Persarum rex* is extant, see W. Ensslin, *RE* xlv.2348, s.v. Priscianus no. 9.

⁴³ Viz. Cornelius Nepos.

Philosopher, Constantine Paleologus, Caesar Flavius Iustinianus, Aristotle the Stagiritian philosopher, Homer the Grecian Poet, Sapho the Lesbian Poet, Saladin the Sultan of Egypt, Edward prince of Wales,⁴⁴ Charlemain or Charles the Great, King of France, and Emperor of Rome, Tamberlain Emperor of the Tartars, Priscian the Caesarean Grammarian, Artemisia the Wife of Mausolus King of Caria, or Halicarnassus in Greece, Marcus Terentius Varro, Hismael Sophi King of Persia, Georg Castriot called Scanderbeg Prince of Epire, Tamombeus the Last Sultan of Aegypt, Atabalipa King of Peru, John Guttemberg a Moguntian, Inventor of the Art of Printing.

I shall conclude with quoting from this *Life* the passage pertinent to our quest (p. 49):

As to the place of Priscians birth, divers have strangely mistaken themselves, in saying that he was born in Caesarea, although several grave and credible Authors do testifie that he was born at Rome; and amongst the rest, Baptispa [*sic*] Guarinus of Verona hath most elegantly proved (!) it. That which caused the mistake was, because Priscian intitles himself of Caesarea, and whereby some believed that Caesarea was his place of birth; but it was for another reason that he was called a Caesarean, viz. because he had perfected most of his studies at Caesarea, and had gained a marvellous reputation in that place; insomuch that he rather chose to be called by the name of the place where he had studied, than by the name of his Native Country. . . . the said City was far inferior indeed unto Rome (which at that time was the chief City of the whole world) and this Caesarea was but a mean Town in Palestin [*sic*] built by Herodes . . .

(I imagine that the mention of Herod, firmly associated in all minds with the Slaughter of the Innocents, was meant to detract from whatever prestige the town may have had.⁴⁵)

Our scholarly standards have no doubt risen enormously since the sixteenth century; but sometimes we still succumb to the temptations of preconceived notions or of wishful thinking.

2. A PRECURSOR OF CLAUDIAN?

Claudian and Ammianus Marcellinus are invoked, time and again, as the exceptions to the rule that Latin literature was produced in the Latin-speaking provinces of the Roman Empire.⁴⁶ But were they unique, even in Egypt and Antioch?

That Claudian was not isolated in Egypt in his knowledge of Latin was demonstrated over thirty years ago in an important paper by Cameron,⁴⁷ who further discussed the intellectual setting in his book on Claudian.⁴⁸ He has shown that many of the 'wandering poets' of the fourth and fifth centuries in Egypt knew Latin, which was their second language, just as it was Claudian's.⁴⁹

Other poetical connections between Egypt and Latin shall earn here only a brief

⁴⁴ Viz. the Black Prince.

⁴⁵ The story of Priscian's reputation may be of some interest; one may remember that Dante, *Inf.* 15.109 puts him among the sodomites.

⁴⁶ Another important author for whom an Eastern provenance has been claimed is Macrobius, see most recently B. Rochette, *Le latin dans le monde grec. Recherches sur la diffusion de la langue et des lettres latines dans les provinces hellénophones de l'Empire romain*, Collection Latomus 233 (Bruxelles, 1997), p. 59, n. 51.

⁴⁷ A. Cameron, 'Wandering poets: a literary movement in Byzantine Egypt', *Historia* 14 (1965), 470–509.

⁴⁸ A. Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970); see also, for a survey, R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 231–4.

⁴⁹ Cf. Cameron (n. 48), pp. 6–7 for the conclusion that Claudian's native tongue must have been Greek; see *c.m.* 41.13–14: *Romanos bibimus primum te consule fontes! et Latiae cessit Graia Thalia togae.*

mention. As is well known, the longest extant epic from the ancient world is the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus of Panopolis; however, the question of Latin literary influences on his poetry seems to be open and perhaps in need of a more general scrutiny.⁵⁰ Thus perhaps one should also forego an enquiry into the possible Latin influences on authors like Christodorus of Coptus, Olympiodorus of Thebes, and Triphiodorus. Another case, however, is worth exploring.

Recently, an interesting possibility has been added to the list of Egyptian Latin poets. One of the most exciting new additions to the corpus of Latin literature is the discovery and publication of the hexameter poem now labelled *Alcestis Barcinonensis*. According to Marcovich, the latest editor of the papyrus text, the 'poet proves to be a rather ambitious, sophisticated, and well-versed *poeta doctus*', 'building upon the best traditions of Latin poetry'.⁵¹ Nothing of course is known about his identity, and such guesses that may be made are based solely on the text. It is worth while quoting here this editor's own conjecture: 'My guess is that the poet wanted to bring his heroine as close to *his own audience* as possible. But the point is that, by so doing, he is inadvertently revealing the region of *his own residence*. Now, in view of the provenance of the Barcelona papyrus, *Egypt* seems to be the best candidate for such a residence.' And almost inevitably, he adds: 'After all, *Alexandria* is the place where the poet Claudian will be born around 370 A.D.'⁵²

As the editor acknowledges, this is a guess—but, as shall be presently seen, an educated guess. The surmise is based on a discussion of lines 112–16, where the heroine is picking and collecting exotic plants and fragrances in preparation for her funeral pyre. These lines are taken as indicating an Eastern provenance for the poet, who imagines Alcestis picking oriental aromatic plants in Thessaly. It may be added parenthetically that for the purposes of the present investigation it is sufficient that the author of the *Alcestis Barcinonensis* may have been an Oriental, without necessarily making him an Egyptian. Be this as it may, a Latin poet taking up and giving a fresh turn and the slightest of local twists to a famous mythological theme would be a perfect example of the vitality of Latin literature in the East.

3. THE LATIN ANTIOCH OF AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS

The evidence for Latin in the Antioch of Ammianus Marcellinus⁵³ is more solid than for Claudian's Egypt or Alexandria. One might as well begin the survey with the fountainhead of all things concerning Antioch—the voluminous writings of Libanius. His ignorance of, and opposition to, Latin are well known. Thus in his *Autobiography* (3) he protests against the notion that his great-grandfather may have come from Italy—on the contrary he was a native Antiochene. The belief was based on the existence of a Latin speech by Libanius' grandfather, providing us with an example of a Latin rhetor from Antioch. Libanius bravely hides the disadvantages of being ignorant of Latin—thus, the panegyrics to Julian delivered in the city on 1 January 363 started off with a Latin one, continued with a Greek orator, and were rounded off by Libanius himself (*ibid.*, 127). One wonders how typical Libanius

⁵⁰ See N. Hopkinson, *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus*, *PCPhS Suppl* 17, esp. his intr., p. 3, and A. Hollis, 'Nonnus and hellenistic poetry' (*ibid.*), pp. 43–62 at 60, n. 16.

⁵¹ M. Marcovich, *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, *Text and Commentary*, *Mnem. Suppl.* 103 (Leiden etc., 1988), 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵³ On balance the evidence for Antioch prevails in recent discussion, see now J. F. Matthews, 'The origin of Ammian', *CQ* 44 (1994), 152–69.

may have been in not comprehending the Latin speech. Also his censure of a Roman correspondent for writing to him in Latin, though possessed of Greek education, exposes the deficiency of the rhetor.⁵⁴ Are we not entitled to imagine that the correspondent innocently presumed that Libanius must have been familiar with the language and to make the assumption that such knowledge was common?

Such an assumption is based on the social and economic conditions in Antioch. In fact it was the competition from the more practically applicable subjects, such as Latin, the law, and stenography, that made the acquisition of new pupils the more difficult.⁵⁵ However, it is not the practical advantages derived by such bilingual officials as Strategius and Antoninus⁵⁶ that will arrest our attention here, but rather the apparently accomplished practitioners of literary Latin whose connections with Antioch are manifest. First among these Latinists from Antioch is the bishop Euagrius.⁵⁷ Attested as bishop in 388 and still alive in 392, the time of the composition of Jerome's *De viris illustribus* (125), he may have been an exact contemporary of Ammianus Marcellinus. His acquaintance with Latin must have been a prime factor for sending him on embassies to Rome prior to his elevation to his see. Among his literary works Jerome mentions a Latin translation of the *Life of St Antony*—it appears that this translation, with which Augustine became acquainted in Milan in 385 (*conf.* 8.6.15) is the traditionally preserved one.⁵⁸ There exists a highly instructive additional detail which puts Euagrius' translation in a clearer light. Dom Wilmert discovered in 1914 in the archives of St Peter in Rome another Latin translation of the *Vita Antonii* ascribed to Athanasius. This is an extremely literal translation, and it is generally assumed that it was produced prior to the version of Euagrius; in fact it seems that the translation by Euagrius, which attempted to reproduce the sense of the text, very much in the manner of Jerome himself,⁵⁹ was composed in order to replace the earlier literal translation, a good measure of Euagrius' appreciation of Latin literature.⁶⁰

Ampelius, *praefectus urbi Romae* 371–2, was probably a pagan and certainly came from Antioch.⁶¹ It goes without saying that his high office demanded a perfect

⁵⁴ Lib. *Ep.* 1036, 11.161,7; cf. P. Wolf, *Vom Schulwesen der Spätantike. Studien zu Libanius* (Baden-Baden, 1952), p. 36. Cf. also J. Matthews, *The Roman World of Ammianus* (London, 1989), p. 71 on Latin in Antioch and Libanius' insulation from it, and on John Chrysostom's acknowledging (*PG* 47.357) the advantages of Latin in the imperial administration; add, most recently, Rochette (n. 46), pp. 71f.

⁵⁵ Lib. *Or.* 43,3ff, 3.338,17; cf. the detailed discussion with many more references in Wolf (n. 54), pp. 53–5, and a resumption of the argument in id., 'Libanios' Kampf um die hellenische Bildung', in G. Fatouros and T. Krischer (edd.), *Libanios* (Darmstadt, 1983), pp. 68–83 (= *MH* 11 [1954], 231–42).

⁵⁶ Strategius Musonianus, *PLRE* 1 s.v. He was *PPO* 354–8 and according to Amm. Marc. 15.13.1 *facundia sermonis utriusque clarus*; Antoninus, *PLRE* 1 no. 4, protector c. 357/8; see on his education Amm. Marc. 18.5.7. J. W. Drijvers, 'Ammianus Marcellinus 15.13.1–2: some observations on the career and bilingualism of Strategius Musonianus', *CQ* 46 (1996), 532–7, questions the bilingualism of Strategius Musonianus, apparently wishing us to believe that *utraq̃ue lingua* may refer to either three languages or to Greek and Aramaic.

⁵⁷ Euagrius no. 4, *RE* vi (1907), 830–2 (Seeck, Juelicher).

⁵⁸ Printed beneath the Greek text *PG* 26.839–975 and *PL* 73.125–1701.

⁵⁹ Cf. Jerome, *Epist.* 57.5.

⁶⁰ G. Garitte, *Un témoin important du text de la vie de S. Antoine par S. Athanase. La version latine inédite des archives du chapitre de S. Pierre a Rome* (Brussels/Rome, 1939); H. W. F. M. Hoppenbrouwers, *La plus ancienne version latine de la vie du S. Antoine par S. Athanase. Etude de critique textuelle* (Utrecht/Nijmegen, 1960).

⁶¹ *PLRE* 1, no. 3, *PUR* 371–2. Curiously enough Matthews (n. 54), p. 467 refers to his being

command of Latin.⁶² Much more to the point, there is no serious reason to doubt that he is identical with the poet Ampelius praised by Sidonius Apollinaris (*carm.* 9.304ff.)—the context assures us that it is a Latin author, and probably a poet rather than a letter-writer:

sed ne tu mihi comparare temptes,
quos multo minor ipse plus adoro,
Paulinum Ampeliumque Symmachumque,
Messalam ingenii satis profundi etc.

This is very elevated company indeed for the Antiochene Ampelius to keep, and it makes us wonder whether Sidonius Apollinaris' praise is pure overstatement. The pretender Priscus Attalus, who apparently was Ampelius' son and seems to have been born in Asia (he is described as an Ionian), was proficient in both Greek and Latin studies.⁶³

Following the translator and bishop Euagrius and the poet and official Ampelius, we should consider the philologists Hierius and Domitius Dracontius. They were Syrians, and although not expressly attested as Antiochenes, there is a reasonable probability that they hailed from the largest and by far most important city of the province. The Syrian Hierius,⁶⁴ who taught first in Greek and later in Latin, was an *orator urbis Romae*, praised for his rhetorical skills, and the recipient of Augustine's very first book, the lost *De pulchro et apto*.⁶⁵ It seems certain that he is to be identified with the Hierius attested in the subscriptions of all MSS of the Pseudoquintilianic Declamations: *descripsi et emendavi Domitius Dracontius de codice fratris Hierii feliciter mihi et usibus meis et dis omnibus, et legi et emendavi ego Dr. cum fratre Ierio incomparabili oratore*⁶⁶ *urbis Romae in scola fori Traiani feliciter*. Thus we have killed two birds with one stone, though we still cannot tell whether the brothers Hierius and Domitius Dracontius⁶⁷ acquired their Latin already in Syria or only after settling in Rome. It may be added here, that the town of Gaza—in Syria in the wider sense of the word—employed a Latin grammaticus, who later taught at Antioch, a hundred years or so after our Hierius. By what appears to be a strange coincidence, his name, too, was Hierius.⁶⁸

But Antioch was the home of a much better attested Latin grammarian—better attested, in so far as works by him are extant. Rufinus of Antioch is the author of two works, printed in *GLK* 6.547–78: *Commentarii de metris comicorum* and *De numeris oratorum*; interestingly enough, the MS tradition combined them with the works of

among the Easterners conversant with Latin without mentioning his Antiochene provenance, attested by Amm. Marc. 28.4.3.

⁶² This would go, of course, also for Hypatius, *PUR* 378–9, according to Matthews (n. 54), pp. 15, 467 an Antiochene; however, he probably belonged to a family from Thessalonica (*PLRE* 1, no. 4), though his Antiochene connections may have been extensive.

⁶³ *PLRE* 2, Attalus no. 2; Symm. *Ep.* 7.18.3: *lectitasse autem te in multo otio utriusque linguae auctores*. But of course the recipient of a number of letters from Symmachus (*ep.* 7.15–25) must have been expected to appreciate Latin style.

⁶⁴ *PLRE* 1, Hierius no. 5; Matthews (n. 54), p. 467.

⁶⁵ Aug. *Conf.* 4.14.21.

⁶⁶ For the emendation see *PLRE* 1, s.v. no. 5, p. 431.

⁶⁷ See *PLRE* 1, Dracontius no. 5; cf. G. Lehnert, 'Zur Textgeschichte der grösseren Pseudo-Quintilianischen Deklamationen', *RhM* 60 (1905), 154–173.

⁶⁸ *Proc. Gaza Ep.* 145; cf. Diog. Ant. *Ep.* 32 (*epistolographi gr.* [Hercher], p. 265); *PLRE* 2, no. 8; Kaster (n. 11), p. 293, n. 75.

Priscian. Rufinus is not known from any other source, and the very little that can be known about him is contained in these texts. He is said to be an Antiochian by our MSS,⁶⁹ and he claims for himself the status of a *vir clarissimus*.⁷⁰ The predecessors he uses are the fourth-century grammarians Charisius, Diomedes, Donatus, and Victorinus and the somewhat later Servius, so that one may assume that he was not much later than they; the upper limit may be the early sixth century, if indeed Priscian used him.⁷¹ Here we are on much safer ground than with Priscian: not only does the *patria* of the grammarian seem safe, there is also no indication that it is elsewhere that he taught and produced his works. A Latin grammarian of some consequence is, of course, evidence for far more than himself—in fact he may be regarded as the proverbial tip of the iceberg of Latin studies in his city.

All this does not amount, of course, to an attempt at an exhaustive investigation and collection of the available data. Such an investigation should not only spread geographically over the entire Greek-speaking East, but also take account of the papyrological and epigraphic evidence.⁷² Latin literature written by Easterners is of necessity only the very peak of familiarity with the language, the summit of an entire pyramid of ever wider layers. Some may be briefly envisioned here. Below authors and translators came a literary public of variable proficiency. This public is best perceived by means of an analysis of Latin literary papyri as well as the extant bilingual aids to the study of the language, such as bilingual texts and glossaries of Virgil.⁷³ Eastern students in the Law Schools of Constantinople and Berytus, but also the unofficial ones of Alexandria and Caesarea, may have been satisfied with limiting their Latin reading to that strictly necessary for their profession. The military and the lower grades of the administration may have got by with a very bare minimum of Latin, while others—shopkeepers, tourist-guides like the presbyter of Egeria showing her the place of the baptism of John,⁷⁴ and so on—would have had some working knowledge of useful everyday speech. Nor should we ignore the different degrees of literacy even in a second language.⁷⁵ No doubt, all these levels of familiarity with Latin are still in

⁶⁹ A = Parisinus 7496, R = Reginensis 733 as well as Voss. 33.3 of Priscian have: *Commentarium Rufini viri disertissimi grammatici Antiochenensis in metra Terentiana*.

⁷⁰ GLK 6.565.9, 6.566.6, 6.575.26 and cf. Kaster (n. 11), p. 351, n. 130.

⁷¹ Keil in GLK 6.553; PLRE 1, no. 8 would make him L IV/E V; Schanz-Hosius no. 1104, though doubtful about the use by Priscian, still put him in the fifth century. Kaster (n. 11), pp. 351–2, n. 130, is the best evaluation. His dating: 'As a Latin gramm. at Antioch, R. is perhaps more likely to belong to the fifth than to a later century, although s.VI is also possible'.

⁷² An obvious starting point are the Latin papyri from Egypt, collected in CPL. For a very useful survey of Eastern papyrological material outside Egypt, which incidentally provides a good estimate of the use of Latin (employed in about 100 documents out of 600), see H. M. Cotton, W. E. H. Cockle, and F. G. B. Millar, 'The papyrology of the Roman Near East: a survey', JRS 85 (1995), 214–35. One rather intriguing epigraphic instance worth mentioning is a six-line Greek epigram honouring Oikoumenios, the governor of Caria, praising him for mingling the Italian Muse with the mellifluous Attic one. I must confess that in the long discussion of the poem and the governor's bilingualism by Ihor Ševčenko I could not detect a definite stance as to which was, actually, the governor's first, and which his acquired, language. See I. Ševčenko, 'A late antique epigram', *Synthonon: Receuil d'études par André Grabar et un groupe de ses disciples* (Paris, 1968), pp. 29–41.

⁷³ See e.g. B. Baldwin, 'Vergil in Byzantium', *Antike und Abendland* 28 (1982), 81–93 (= *Studies on Late Roman and Byzantine History, Literature and Language* [Amsterdam, 1984], 445–57); J. Kramer, 'Der lateinisch-griechische Vergilpalimpsest aus Mailand', ZPE 111 (1996), 1–20, with previous bibliography. ⁷⁴ *Peregr. Eg.* 15.3.

⁷⁵ This is not the place to engage in a question that is now in the forefront of scholarly interest, though it may be indicated that the prevailing pessimistic view, dominated by Harris, seems to me most excessive.

need of a thorough investigation; however, the perhaps unexpectedly wide diffusion of the language even at the very top suggests that the base may have been appreciably broader than is generally believed.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

JOSEPH GEIGER
geiger@hum.huji.ac.il