linked, and since Euphorion badly needs a competent editor, would M. be well advised to turn his talents next in this direction?

All Souls College, Oxford J. L. LIGHTFOOT

A HELLENIST IN LATE-ANTIQUE APHRODITO

J.-L. FOURNET: *Hellénisme dans l'Égypte du VI^e siècle. La bibliothèque et l'oeuvre de Dioscore d'Aphrodité*, 2 vols. Pp. 734, 77 pls. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1999. Paper. ISBN: 2-7247-0237-9.

This lavish book, a watershed in recent revaluation of 'possibly the worst poet of antiquity', would justly have delighted its subject, Dioscorus of Aphrodito (mid-sixth century A.D.), local dignitary, official, poet, and owner of the Cairo Menander codex. Early editors of his archive (discovered in 1905 at Kum Isqaw in Upper Egypt) were overwhelmed by the poor technical quality of D.'s verses. But a broader historical perspective now acknowledges the unique riches of this material and appreciates that understanding of late-antique culture is limited indeed if confined to the literary output of an unrepresentative élite. Leslie MacCoull's *Dioscorus of Aphrodito and his World* (Berkeley, 1988) recognizes (Chapter II) that the Coptic bureaucratic documents must be studied in conjunction with D.'s Greek writings. Fournet's objective, more circumscribed yet more fundamental, is presentation of D.'s poems and other Greek literary texts, and their evaluation in the context of the whole archive.

The texts (pp. 7–237) are three new/partially edited items from D.'s library—an *Iliad*, a volume of *Scholia Minora* on the *Iliad*, and a set of verbal conjugation tables; in addition (pp. 239–665) fifty-two autograph poems are entirely re-edited. Each document is meticulously presented, with discussion of location and state of the various fragments—those in Cairo have survived much better than those released to the antique markets (e.g. *P. Strasb. gr.* inv. 2454, conjugation of ποιῶ: plate XXXIV), identification of the hands, significance and range of marginal signs, reconstruction of the original volume, relation to other exemplars, detailed technical commentary, seventy-seven monochrome full-page plates, and excellent indices. Impressive in itself, this work underpins F.'s concluding cultural profile of Dioscorus (pp. 669–90).

The *Iliad* is in a late fifth/early sixth-century hand, subsequently retouched; fragments survive from Books 2 (frequently represented in papyri), 10, and 11. F. proposes a two-volume edition (like the OCT). The text has a unique system of punctuation and accentuation, the latter added by later hands, the former designed to aid close textual study, manifest in Books 10–11, which have been collated with another edition. The codex was much used, its various students leaving their marks.

The scholia, written in documentary cursive at the turn of the fourth/fifth centuries, were used for 200 years and likewise annotated and re-inked by later hands, none certainly D.'s own. Fragments from Books 2 and 18–20 are preserved in Cairo, and from 4–5 (Diomedes' *aristeia* was much studied, as often) in Strasburg, a rich haul among papyri of this text, of which fifty-seven exemplars are known, but only eight postdate the fourth/fifth centuries. D.'s copy has unique abridgements and contamination between the glossographical tradition of the *Scholia Minora* and the

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more learned mythographical and exegetical *Scholia Maiora*, including an allusion to Aristarchus (18.570).

The conjugation tables, for πoιῶ, βoῶ, and χρυσῶ, are written by two cursive hands on the reverse of legal documents (one Coptic, the rest Greek) in D.'s own hand. F. groups the nine surviving fragments into four dossiers: the first is the most complete, from a codex which originally contained all three conjugations in this the standard order of late antiquity. The remaining three are more fragmentary, the final one three separate extracts rather than different fragments of a single exercise, but all are notable for their accuracy by comparison with eighteen other known papyri of verbal conjugations. These too are late exemplars: the recto documents give a *terminus post quem* of 563 (D. was probably dead by 585). F. is characteristically cautious about their place in D.'s dossier, but his hypothesis that these are exercises written to D.'s dictation, perhaps by his children, is attractive.

D.'s poems are all rhetorical and occasional—petitions (often preceded by an encomium), encomia, birthday-poems, epithalamia, five prose salutations culminating in trimeters, one anacreontic, *ethopoeiae*, and other exercises. D. follows contemporary practice in prefacing hexameters with an iambic prologue, but increases the balance of trimeters to hexameters to up to fifty per cent, the hexameters reiterating the iambic themes (cf. Paul Sil., *Descr.* 934–58), prefaces trimeters with prose, and favours tragic vocabulary as much as comic. His trimeter encomia are unique in the sixth century, important precursors to George of Pisidia. F. believes the poems were sent to the honorand rather than publicly performed—hence the scarcity of fair copies (for which D. appears to have reversed his normal practice of *transversa charta* orientation: pp. 243–5).

F.'s fundamental thesis (pp. 317–43) is that D.'s poetry cannot be separated from his documentary archive: the poems are entirely functional, composed to strengthen associated prose petitions. They date from two periods of crisis and dislocation in D.'s life, in Constantinople (A.D. 548–551) and Antinoopolis (A.D. 565/6–570/3). They supplement prosopographical information about the powerful local dynasties who administered the Thebaid, and illuminate social values—military prowess commends dukes, but literary accomplishment and Christian euergetism lesser officials. D.'s extensive self-plagiarism is partly accounted for by the limited circles addressed (pp. 291–316). D. has no interest in poetry as a literary activity: apart from the *progymnasmata* (probably a teaching tool), his output is confined to the context of his documentary petitions. It is therefore misguided to judge him against literary writers.

F.'s concluding study (pp. 669–90) views the Dioscorus archive as a whole. D.'s scant collection is a working library, classical texts studied and annotated, passages copied by D. for their literary or historical interest (e.g. *P. Cairo Masp.* III 67295, literary letters, petition: p. 671), others composed or compiled as teaching tools. In D.'s world literature is valued for its practical utility, and men of literature rewarded for their talents with administrative positions in which their cultural skills can be exercised. F.'s final challenge is to the traditional divide between documentary and literary papyri.

King's College London MARY WHITBY

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