Expositio Notarum ed. by A. C. Dionisotti (review)

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2021) has discussed the development of urban plazas after the third century CE. An important article by Grig (2013) has sketched, at a general level, how profoundly the scholarly understanding of the late antique city has changed since the turn of the millennium. Many of these publications understand the late antique city in roughly similar terms as the editors of this book do, and it would have been great had the individual chapters of this volume, including the introduction and the concluding remarks, engaged with this body of scholarship a bit more in depth: rather than taking a position in a debate between two equal camps, it seems that this volume operates on the side of the current status quo, adding a series of case studies from underexplored localities that underpin the idea that the debate has moved far beyond the traditional (Liebeschützian) picture of widespread urban decline (compare Grig 2013, 555–57).

Finally, the volume looks really nice, and the articles are well-referenced; but some readers may feel that some of the images are printed a bit small, and it is a bit inconvenient that some of the maps and images are printed at the end of the volume rather than with the chapter text, where the reader needs them. This reviewer also feels that the texts of some of the chapters could have been edited a bit more intensively. All in all, however, this volume includes a really interesting set of case studies that both individually and taken together can be of great use to the scholarly community.

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Expositio Notarum

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This book begins with a manuscript that presents a mystery. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Add. C.144 is a miscellany of late antique and early medieval grammatical and metrical treatises, a "mass Latin-salvaging project" (71) produced in central Italy in the eleventh century. On folios 114v to 132r, the scribe has copied a peculiar collection of Latin glosses entitled *Expositio Notarum* (*EN*). It comprises a series of around 1800 Latin keywords (*lemmata*) with explanations of their meaning ranging from single-word synonyms to discursive comments on their etymology and morphology. Most early medieval glossaries identify their textual sources or give them away by following the alphabetical or grammatical order of the text they are glossing, but this one is elusive. Taken together, the Latin keywords of the *EN* do not derive from any known literary or historical text from Roman antiquity.

In the introduction to this study, we follow Dionisotti as she unravels the mystery of the source of this enigmatic collection of Latin glosses. The title of the work provides a valuable clue that the glossary is an explication of "notes" (*notae*), but what kind of notes? While chasing down some of the more unusual Latin terms (for example, *plausile*, *intolerat*, and *disdonat*), instruments of reference led Dionisotti time and again to the only other early medieval source that preserved the same rare words: the *Commentarii Notarum Tironianarum* (*CNT*), a dictionary of about 13,000 symbols of Roman shorthand (that is, Tironian notes) with their Latin equivalents. According to Isidore of Seville, Cicero's freedman scribe M. Tullius Tiro devised this system to facilitate the rapid transcription of oral information. Later generations of scribes expanded the list with new symbols. There is evidence for the use of Tironian notes throughout Late Antiquity in pagan and Christian contexts. The system retained its currency in the early Middle Ages; sixteen manuscripts of the *CNT* survive from the Carolingian period. As Dionisotti argues, the *EN* is a series of glosses on the meaning of Latin terms found in a handbook of Tironian notes similar to the Carolingian exemplar of the *CNT* (but likely predating it), with which it shares around 1,100 *lemmata* in common (about 61% of its contents).

With this mystery solved, Dionisotti spends the rest of the introduction explaining the context and character of the *EN*. Unlike the *CMT*, which may have been produced as early as the second century but grew over time as it incorporated elements that dated from the early Middle Ages, including Christian terminology, the *EN* seems to be a gloss on a "thoroughly classical" set of vocabulary that "reflects the Republic and the early, but not later, Empire" (18). As Dionisotti notes, "the Ciceronian backdrop to the whole is unmistakable" (23). Its companion text was most likely a Roman manual for Latin shorthand that would later inform the *CNT*. Internal evidence suggests that the *EN* itself was compiled in the first decades of the fifth century by a teacher living in North Africa and working in a secular context, one of the thousands who taught students shorthand to prepare them for positions as *notarii* in the Roman imperial administration. Like its lost companion, the *EN* comprises a list of Latin words organized by morphological similiarity or, more seldomly, by topics like family relations, political offices, and agriculture. While the *EN* survives in only a single manuscript from the eleventh century, Dionisotti demonstrates that many alphabetized Latin glossaries from the early Middle Ages borrowed substantial portions of the content from it. She devotes almost half of the introduction to generous examples of these borrowings (40–71).

The meat of the volume (79–369) is Dionisotti's edition of the Latin *lemmata* in the *EN* with their definitions, as well as cross-references to examples of the words in question in *CNT* and other early Latin glossaries. She also supplies editorial commentary on the meaning and forms of the words themselves. While highly technical, this material is a veritable treasure trove of Latin terminology viewed through the lens of a fifth-century teacher. Dionisotti has included several robust appendices (370–624) to make this material more accessible for linguists interested in tracking down verbal features like noun and adjective termination or examples of particular kinds

of words, like pronouns or prepositions (Appendix II). She has also provided helpful concordances that allow readers to compare the contents of the *EN* with other glossaries (Appendix III) and the CNT (Appendix IV). There are likewise useful indices of proper names, Greek words, and "words condemned by the expositor as not Latin" (554).

With its combination of historical deduction and textual criticism, this study is a very satisfying piece of detective work that introduces us to an unusual survivor from Roman antiquity. Although the *EN* is "unprepossessing as a continuous read" (1), it evokes with clarity a world of late antique erudition, in which teachers were sometimes at pains to explain to their students antiquated Latin terms, some of which no longer accorded with contemporary usage (over 100 *lemmata* carry the emphatic warnings *nihil est* or *Latinum non est*). With a self-deprecating tone and a breezy style of writing, Dionisotti wears her vast erudition lightly as she charts the trajectory of the *EN* from fifth-century North Africa to eleventh-century Italy and explains its place in the history of early medieval glossaries. Scholars and students of the Latin language, late ancient education, and the tradition of Roman tachygraphy will find much to contemplate in this exemplary edition and commentary.