

## BOOK REVIEW

The *Annals of Tacitus: Book 11*. Edited by S. J. V. MALLOCH. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xxi + 538. Hardcover, \$150.00. ISBN 978-1-107-01110-6.

Malloch has produced an edition and commentary as wide-ranging and intellectually stimulating as his chosen text. Book 11 of Tacitus' *Annals* provides a challenging interpretive puzzle; the surviving text opens *in mediis rebus* with the trial of D. Valerius Asiaticus, proceeds with external affairs in Armenia, Parthia, and Germany, various facets of Claudius' principate, including his censorship, his additions to the Latin alphabet, and his admission of the *primores Galliae* to the Roman senate, and culminates with Messalina's downfall. In addition to textual explication, Malloch includes an evaluation of Tacitus' presentation of Claudius and historical analysis of his principate that extends beyond 47-48 CE.

Malloch assumes general knowledge of Tacitus and the *Annals*, limiting his introduction to a summary of the content and structure of *Annals* 11, an overview of Tacitus' views on Claudius, and a history of the manuscripts. Book 11 depends on a single manuscript, the second Medicean (M). The *apparatus criticus* shows that Malloch adopts alternate readings from the 34 *recentiores* primarily to correct clear spelling mistakes and to resolve grammatical impossibilities. Delving into the commentary is rewarding, as Malloch outlines issues in M, tackles conjectures, evaluates the possibilities through analogical relationships with other texts, gives relevant *TLL* references, and justifies his conclusions; standout notes include *statuit* (7.4), *inuadit* (8.3), and *qui...perissent* (23.4).

Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries aim to offer complete accounts of historical matters pertaining to the text, and Malloch does not disappoint. The episodic nature of *Annals* 11 necessitates individual introductions to each section. Historical events receive background information and comparison with Dio especially. The introduction to the affairs in the East is the most extensive (pages, 114-131). Repetition is unavoidable, but conclusions are sometimes buried within the notes (e.g. Malloch's final thoughts on the *Lex Cincia* appear within the note on *ad dena sestertia* at 7.4).

Historical essays and interpretation are balanced with issues of grammar and language, and Malloch incorporates statistics and *TLL* entries copiously to understand nuances of Tacitus' style. Statistical analysis of stylistic preferences aligns Tacitus with Sallust over Livy (e.g. the placement of *igitur* at 5.3). *TLL* entries allow Malloch to make pointed observations on the development of the Latin language and innovative word usages (e.g. the development of *incertum an* at 18.3, and the debate over particular denotations of *nobilis*, *nobilitas*, and *nouitas* based on 28.1). He shows continuity with the past, paying homage to other authors of the series (F. D. R. Goodyear on *Annals* 1 and 2, and A. J. Woodman and R. H. Martin on *Annals* 3); for example, Goodyear is cited for the metaphorical uses of *percurrere* at 3.1 and *induere* at 7.2, and Woodman and Martin are drawn upon for language used to report rumors (e.g. *quidam...tradidere* at 4.2). Gibbon is also favored, and quoted on the importance of the praetorian guards (pages 430-431).

Two episodes in *Annals* 11 are central to the analysis of Tacitus' presentation of Claudius and his principate: Claudius' admission of the *primores Galliae* to the Roman senate, and the fall of Messalina. The year 48 CE opens with Claudius' speech, which Malloch contends, "demonstrates more sophistication and acuity" than the one the emperor actually delivered (page 7). Verbal allusions to Livy and comparisons with the Lyon tablet (*ILS* 212, included as an Appendix) lead to the conclusion that Tacitus approved of the measure (pages 338-342).

Messalina's fall encompasses one third of the surviving narrative (11.26-38). Malloch provides an outline and background, and focuses on elements of comedy and satire over tragedy (pages 392-398). Claudius becomes a "character in Messalina's story" (page 407); in a narrative characterized by irony and paradox, the reactions of the household and Claudius' freedmen take precedence. Messalina's dramatic entrances and exits are central to Tacitus' negative portrayal; her departure in a rubbish-cart neatly illustrates her overturned fortunes (*atque...praeualebat*, 32.3). Malloch cites confluences of language between Tacitus and the *Octavia* (e.g. *miseræ* at *Annals* 11.37.2 and *misera* at *Octavia* 329); given his other textual comparisons, one might have expected a more thorough engagement. Rhetorical devices heighten the drama of Messalina's murder: the *uariatio* of *nonnulla spe et aliquando ira* "reinforces Messalina's emotional instability" (37.1), whereas the poetic *fusam humi* "evokes death and helplessness...and emotional intensity" (37.3). Von Stackelberg would have been useful for the analysis

of Messalina's spatial interactions throughout the book, and her final death in the garden.<sup>1</sup>

In evaluating Tacitus' Claudius, Malloch emphasizes Claudius' marginalization, but also suggests a less hostile view of Claudius stemming from his conduct in foreign affairs. Nevertheless, Tacitus "rarely lets Claudius escape the defining features of his portrait. Moments in which he is allowed to display competence are undermined by criticism or isolated: they throw into sharper relief, rather than adjust, the wider hostile picture" (page 9). The commentary consistently reflects this view; for example, in introducing the *Ludi Saeculares*, Malloch bypasses Claudius to argue that Tacitus' primary interest is to provide a context for Nero's entrance into the *Annals* (page 175). In all, Malloch does not rewrite Tacitus' negative portrayal of Claudius, but offers insight into moments where Tacitus juxtaposes positive actions with negative implications or results.

When Tacitus divulges the history of the quaestorship, Malloch finds an invitation to look "backwards and forwards in his own narrative, and beyond to other historical traditions" (317). In his commentary, Malloch has achieved a similar synthesis. There are moments when the author could have been more succinct, but such indulgences hardly detract from the strength of the work. Scholars interested in Roman history, Tacitus, and the Claudian principate will reap many rewards from close examination of this commentary, and, I imagine, will return to Malloch often and discover something new with every foray into his pages.

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<sup>1</sup> K. T. von Stackelberg, "Performative Space and Garden Transgressions in Tacitus' Death of Messalina," *AJP* 130.4 (2009) 595-624.