

BOOK REVIEW

Tacitus, Agricola. Edited by A.J. WOODMAN with C.S. KRAUS. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. xiii + 358. Paper, \$36.99. ISBN 978-0-521-70029-0.

The present volume is the latest in a long line of editions published in Great Britain over more than a century. It follows, as a direct descendant, the predecessors by Henry Furneaux in 1898, its updating by J.G.C. Anderson in 1922, and its complete reworking by R.M. Ogilvie and Sir Ian Richmond in 1967. But colleagues in other countries also worked on this significant first publication by Tacitus. I have on my shelf an edition by Giovanni Forni (Rome 1962), a *Kommentar* without text by Heinz Heubner (Göttingen 1984), and a Text and (German) translation, with brief commentary, by Rudolf Till (Berlin 1988). The last two, together, would make a very useful, expansive, edition; Forni's work is particularly strong on military matters (see his *Esercito e Marina di Roma Antica. Raccolta di Contributi* (Stuttgart 1992)). The edition by Ogilvie and Richmond remains very useful for the archaeological information and interpretation by Sir Ian Richmond, who was the first Professor of the Archaeology of the Roman Empire at Oxford. The volume under review does not offer a great deal on the archaeology of Roman Britain.

Let me state at the outset that the present volume is by far the largest, most detailed, and incisively learned edition of the *Agricola* which I have ever seen. It appears in the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics series (the green and yellow volumes), and hence is intended for both scholar and student. It is the third Tacitus volume in this series which I now possess; the first two were on books one and two of the *Histories*, edited, respectively, by Cynthia Damon (2003) and Rhiannon Ash (2007). The physical size of these volumes grew between the times of their publication, from about 7¼ by about 5 inches to 8½ by 5½ inches. In volumes of some four hundred pages in length that is a considerable increase in available space. The Latin text of *Histories* 2 is about one and a half times longer than that of the *Agricola*, but the lengths of the commentaries are much more

comparable, with the former about 15% longer than the latter. I emphasize this point because Woodman's commentary is very detailed, very extensive, and very dense. It would have to be an extraordinary undergraduate who could plow through and digest all the information; indeed, many graduate students would find much of it beyond their ken and understanding. As it turned out, C.S. Kraus was unable to contribute much to the collaboration. The commentary on 10–12 is her work.

I wish now to focus upon chapters 1–3 and chapter 30. With the first triad, I shall compare lengths of treatment of four other commentaries with Woodman's. My numbers are approximately correct, and there will be variances in page and typeface size. Woodman has one and a half pages of text and 28 of commentary. Furneaux-Anderson has two pages and ten, Ogilvie-Richmond two pages and fifteen, Forni (who has text and commentary on the same page) a total of eleven, and Heubner, without text, nine of commentary. It is clear that what Woodman has offered his readers is a major scholarly commentary.

Chapter 30 ends, in almost every text in existence, with the famous indictment of Rome's imperial policy in Calgacus' speech before the battle of Mons Graupius, *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*. In a dozen or so texts and translations which I have been able to check, these words are at the end of the paragraph. Woodman chooses to place it at the beginning of the next paragraph. This seems to me quite wrong, for it loses much of its impact when moved from the culminating position, without any pause, in the chieftain's indictment.

Using Erich Koestermann's Teubner text of 1957, which may be considered as an exemplar of modern scholarship, I compared Woodman's paragraphing. There is a vast difference; Woodman has some twenty transitions different from Koestermann's. Josef Delz's subsequent Teubner text (1983) has one difference from its predecessor. R.M. Ogilvie's Oxford Classical Text (1975) follows Koestermann's practice precisely, as did nine other texts and translations which I was able to compare. Has Woodman's divergence from the customary text improved understanding for the reader? I doubt it; I do not think it an improvement. And in some instances the printed page presents a peculiar aspect, when a line or two are removed from the preceding text of a chapter of which it/they are a part.

Other readers may disagree with me. We will all agree, I am sure, that Woodman has produced one of the major commentaries on Tacitus, from which all readers will learn a great deal. He offers learned discussions on style, rhetoric and its change over time, Tacitus' relationship to predecessors, and on the gen-

eral status of Roman historiography. His comments on Velleius Paterculus are particularly valuable. The spirit of Tacitus will surely approve – and applaud.

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