

REVIEW–DISCUSSION

AN ITALIAN EDITION OF THE *AGRICOLA*

Sergio Audano, *Tacito: Agricola*. *Classici greci e latini*. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Rusconi Libri, 2017. Pp. cxvi + 151. Paperback, €11.00. ISBN 978-88-18-03198-0.

Sergio Audano offers us an exciting, bilingual edition of the *Agricola* with a generous introduction, translation into Italian, and copious endnotes that serve as a commentary. The volume seems to be aimed primarily at a general, though perhaps somewhat informed, Italian readership, but the notes will make the text accessible even to those with little background knowledge on the subject matter. This edition will thus serve as useful introduction to Tacitus and to one of his ‘minor’ works, and is especially welcome for bringing this particular text to the attention of a general audience. But this volume will also be profitable to Classics graduate students and specialists on Tacitus: although Audano advances an ‘orthodox’ rather than a revisionist view of the text, his introduction avoids repeating general information about Tacitus easily found elsewhere, and offers instead several focused readings that are genuinely thought-provoking and that illuminate the text in surprising and interesting ways.¹ Moreover, his engagement with Italian scholarship will serve as a useful entry point for all those interested in Tacitus wishing to look outside Anglo-American research.

The introduction, which is eighty-seven pages in length, can roughly be divided into four units: general prefatory remarks, including notes on Tacitus’ life; the text as both a reflection and analysis of ideology and imperialism; the relationship between the *Agricola* and consolatory literature; and the reception of this text in Renaissance Italy.

The first section, ‘Agricola Between Biography and *Exemplum*’ (‘Agricola tra biografia ed *exemplum*’), begins with an emphasis on Tacitus’ stylistic and substantive excellence and influence, with a powerful description of his singular prose. Audano’s approach is underpinned by the view that Tacitus’ work

¹ By ‘orthodox’ I mean here the *communis opinio*—that this text is a straightforward praise of Agricola. I offer some alternative interpretative possibilities below. Amongst Audano’s refreshing focal points are Tacitus’ relationship to, and reworking of, Ciceronian and Senecan consolatory literature; Tacitus’ representation of Agricola’s bereavement; Tacitus’ reflections on the meaning and significance of mortality and immortality; and a handful of ‘case studies’ in reception, which can serve as a starting point for those interested in Tacitism in general and the reception of Agricola in particular.

explains the inner workings of imperial power not only of the Roman age but for all time, and that the *Agricola*, though brief, is a conceptual ‘laboratory’ in which all of Tacitus’ political and moral reflections are articulated (9).

In the second section, ‘Tacitus’ Life’ (‘La Vita’), Audano rightly reminds us that we know precious little about our subject. He draws from both primary and secondary scholarship to present a succinct and uncontroversial portrait of the historian, for example, offering his putative dates of birth, *cursus honorum*, and so on (10–13). At the outset, however, Audano will also maintain that despite the fact that Tacitus had held religious posts, his outlook is secular rather than ‘spiritual’ or ‘religious’ (referred throughout as a ‘prospettiva’ or ‘mentalità laica’)—a loaded claim to which I will return below.

The third section, ‘The *Agricola* between Literature and Ideology’ (‘L’*Agricola* tra letteratura e ideologia’), highlights and discusses the literary and ideological qualities of the text. Audano, following Syme, emphasises the generic complexity of the *Agricola*—that it is a text that defies any overarching categorisation (17–18), and that Tacitus draws from, adapts, and bends various modes, including historiography, *elogium*, *laudatio*, and *exitus* literature to suit his rhetorical purposes (24–5).² For Audano, Tacitus is not nostalgic about the past and accepts the necessity of the imperial system as having no credible alternatives, but nevertheless sees the importance in ‘symbolic’ figures like Agricola, who can take on exemplary significance for contemporaries (21).³ Thus this text goes beyond its overt memorialistic function to serve a pragmatic purpose (25–6), and the figure of Agricola offers a model for moderate action: an injunction to be ethical but not inflexible (28–9).

While Audano is right to point to the generic complexity of the *Agricola*,⁴ his claims about the pragmatic function of this text are especially interesting. Scholars have argued for a wide variety of ‘ulterior’ or ‘deeper’ purposes for the *Agricola* that go beyond a memorialistic or exemplary function, i.e., beyond simply immortalising the author’s father-in-law or teaching contemporaries how to be ‘good men under bad *principes*’. Arguably the most popular of these is that the text is an implicit apology by Tacitus for his own participation in the previous regime’s crimes.⁵ But Audano seems to be suggesting that Tacitus

² Audano cites the Italian translation of Syme. Obviously this decision is not objectionable given that the work is aimed at an Italian market, but it does make it difficult for international readers to track Audano’s references and might limit its utility for foreign researchers.

³ This too is the *communis opinio*—that for Tacitus, the principate was by now a necessary evil: see, e.g., Syme (1958) 408–19; Classen (1988).

⁴ On generic complexity, see Liebeschuetz (1966); Haynes (2006); Whitmarsh (2006), Sailor (2008) 116; Woodman–Kraus (2014) 1–2.

⁵ Syme (1958) 24–6, 121; Bastomsky (1985); Hedrick (2000) 169; Haynes (2006); Sailor (2008) 7off.

also offers an apology on behalf of Nerva and Trajan, since they too were senators and active political and military agents under Domitian, and they too, like Agricola and like Tacitus, chose to accommodate and collaborate with the previous regime.

Audano does not elaborate here or in the notes on the implications of this possibility, although they are far-reaching and can profoundly inflect our interpretations of this text.⁶ At the very least, the stance that the *Agricola* indeed offers a defence of the new emperors complicates our understanding of this text's sincerity and motives. This view, for example, allows for a reading in which Tacitus cynically exploits (or, to put it neutrally, instrumentalises) the memory of his father-in-law to score political points with Nerva and Trajan by issuing a powerful—but implicit—defence of *their* own complicity in the previous regime's wickedness. The text's status as an attempt at genuine social and political reconciliation in the aftermath of repressive trauma might then be underpinned by pressing political pressures or objectives. Such a view would then also compel us to reassess Tacitus' charged use of first-person plurals in his public confession of guilt in the prologue and epilogue, since the force of these verbs may be to anticipate and defuse accusations of the complicity of the new regime with the old by asserting that 'we all'—*everyone*—had blood on their hands.⁷ In any case, if this text *is* calculated to flatter the new emperors and bolster their position, we must then reassess the entire presentation of Agricola himself since this too may have been moulded to suit the lives and careers of the new *principes*.

Here and elsewhere, Audano does not seriously entertain cynical, subversive, or darker readings of this text. This is not unusual: although some scholars have now begun to see some troubling ambiguities that may point to a less than wholesome picture of the *laudandus*, of Nerva and Trajan, or of Roman imperialism, it is safe to say that the vast majority of our colleagues see this text for what it purports to be: an eternalisation of Agricola as a positive *exemplum* and reaffirmation of the benevolent reign of Nerva and Trajan.

⁶ His endnotes on the prologue at 91–4 focus on items such as Agricola's ethical exemplarity and Tacitus' interest in the tension between the principate and liberty. Although Audano will argue that Tacitus appropriates the 'slogans' of the new regime (94), he does not explore the dynamics or ultimate objectives of such an appropriation. As for the epilogue, his endnote at 149 only argues that Tacitus 'projects' the moral qualities of his father-in-law onto the future emperor, and this serves as a model in the construction of a new ruling class.

⁷ Thus phrases such as 'our hands led Helvidius to prison' (*mox nostrae duxere Helvidium in carcerem manus*, 45.1) or 'Senecio soaked us with his innocent blood' (*nos innocenti sanguine Senecio perfudit*, 45.1). Note that on this reading, the phrase 'our breaths were written down against us' (*suspīria nostra subscriberentur*, 45.2) places Nerva and Trajan in the weak, vulnerable, and potentially fatal position that other senators were in, and thus emphasises that they too were victims of the regime.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile for us to interrogate our own assumptions about what such a text may be doing, and to seriously entertain exegetic possibilities that may seem to us surprising or counterintuitive. For example, Audano spotlights the tension between the *raison d'être* of the text—the need for an *exemplum* like Agricola—with the text's assertion that the age of Nerva and Trajan is blessed and happy.⁸ But if this text is not merely an enshrinement of the memory of a family member and is indeed exemplary in nature, what possible purpose might it have in a political context that apparently lacks the repression and immorality and curtailing of glory of the previous tyrant? Audano suggests that despite Tacitus' adoption of party 'slogans', he views the happy reigns of Nerva and Trajan as temporary (86), after which Rome will return to imperial business as usual. This is a plausible, if not elegant, solution, but is necessarily speculative. Nor does it resolve other problematic phrases or cruxes, such as Tacitus' use of identical language to describe Agricola and Domitian, or the role Agricola plays in introducing Roman urban decadence to a space that is imagined to be morally uncorrupted.⁹

'The Unmasking of Imperialism: the Speech of Calgacus' ('Lo smascheramento dell'imperialismo: il discorso di Calgaco'), is the fourth section of this introduction. Audano argues that the speech of Calgacus is a vehicle for

⁸ Tacitus says that he needed permission to write this work (*at nunc narraturo mihi uitam defuncti hominis uenia opus fuit*, *Agr.* 1.4); seems to suggest that the current moment is still hostile to excellence (*saeva et infesta virtutibus*, 1.4); and that healing takes time (3.1). All of these phrases seem to undermine Tacitus' words about a happy new age. For the delicate negotiation between the previous and new regime, see especially Sailor (2008).

⁹ There are at least four disturbing linguistic echoes that alarmingly tie Agricola to Domitian. (1) Agricola uses a combination of terror and mercy to subjugate Britain just as Domitian's henchmen combine persuasion and terror (*atque ubi satis terruerat, parcendo rursus invitamenta pacis ostentare*, 20; *magnum et incertum terrorem faceret*, 29.2 ~ *postremo non iam obscuri suadentes simul terrentesque pertraxere ad Domitianum*, 42). (2) Agricola is described as dissimulating, a mode of behaviour linked to Domitian (*sed ipsa dissimulatione famae famam auxit*, 18.6; on Domitian: *cetera utcumque facilius dissimulari, ducis boni imperatoriam uirtutem esse*, 39.2; *qui paratus simulatione, in adrogantiam compositus*, 42.2; *speciem tamen doloris animi uultu prae se tulit, securus iam odii et qui facilius dissimularet gaudium quam metum*, 43.3). The only other figure marked with this word in the text is Salvius Titianus, who is highlighted for his corruption (*et pro consule in omnem auiditatem pronus quantalibet facilitate redempturus esset mutuam dissimulationem mali*, 6.2). (3) Agricola is said to have repeatedly articulated the desire to eradicate freedom from Ireland—precisely what Domitian does for Romans (*saepe ex eo audiui legione una et modicis auxiliis debellari obtinerique Hiberniam posse; idque etiam aduersus Britanniam profuturum, si Romana ubique arma et uelut e conspectu libertas tolleretur*, 24). (4) Finally, Agricola's effect on the Caledonians is identical to that of Domitian on Rome: silence (*proximus dies faciem uictoriae latius aperuit: uastum ubique silentium, secreti colles, fumantia procul tecta, nemo exploratoribus obuius*, 38.2 ~ *quid si per quindecim annos ... ad ipsos exactae aetatis terminos per silentium uenimus?* 3.2; *frustra studia fori et ciuiliu artium decus in silentium acta, si militarem gloriam alius occuparet*, 39.2). Note that the Romans (with Agricola at their head) effectively create the emptiness Calgacus warns about (*ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*).

Tacitus to reflect on Roman imperialism (31). The discussion here includes examples of Tacitus' debts to Sallust, and Audano contrasts Calgacus with other 'barbarian' figures in whose mouths Roman authors had placed criticisms of Roman imperialism: Caesar's Critognatus and Sallust's Jugurtha and Mithridates (later on in the footnotes Audano will also adduce Livy's Hannibal). Audano argues that these latter are represented as cruel, perfidious, and thus morally flawed, and so their critiques attacking Rome are undermined by the authors (35, 127). Audano argues that Calgacus is conversely presented as lacking any such deficiency: this sets his denunciation of Rome apart from others: Tacitus' framing discourages us from discounting Calgacus on ethical grounds or dismissing his speech as hypocritical or somehow flawed.

Audano's representation of Calgacus is also in line with scholarship on this text, and most readers have seen in him a quintessential 'noble savage' and a potent, persuasive critic of Rome. Audano stresses that rather than emphasise the cultural inferiority of the enemy or place in his mouth an unremarkable speech, Tacitus allows Calgacus what is to become one of the most memorable passages in all of Latin, one which unmasks the presuppositions of Roman imperialism.

But perhaps this positive view of Calgacus also needs re-evaluation. Some scholars have noted that as rhetorically powerful and compelling and persuasive as Calgacus' speech may be, he makes a number of factual errors in his harangue.¹⁰ Perhaps this might be an authorial strategy of characterising him as a passionate speaker but imperceptive political analyst, specifically by illustrating his naïveté and failure to understand the more nuanced nature of Roman imperialism. On this view, Tacitus may be offering a critique of Calgacus, but one that—because it is implicit and silent—is subtle.

For example, Calgacus' claims (which Audano amplifies: 36, 128) about the violent, brutal, and rapacious nature of Roman imperialism are by this point outdated and stand in contradiction with Tacitus' own representation of the new and more insidious tools of Roman imperialism ushered in by Agricola himself: Romanisation—that is to say, cultural hegemony (*Agr.* 21). Tacitus may be suggesting that what makes Roman imperialism so dangerous under Agricola is not that it violates through aggression and exploitation but that it enervates and corrupts through the introduction of Roman urban vices; through allurements and luxuries such as baths and banquets.¹¹ In any case, the fact that the Caledonians are utterly slaughtered at the Battle of Mons Graupius may be a silent remark by Tacitus imputing guilt to Calgacus, who is, after all, a martial failure, for the annihilation of his community. Caledonian

¹⁰ On mistakes in Calgacus' speech see Woodman–Kraus (2014) 248 with references.

¹¹ Hence one of Tacitus' most famous lines: *idque apud imperitos humanitas uocabatur, cum pars seruitutis esset* ('among the inexperienced this was called "civilisation", although it was a feature of their enslavement', 21.2).

deaths also recall the ‘martyrdoms’ of the ‘Stoic Opposition’ with which the text opens: truculent, exhibitionist resistance that results in death but that does not open up a path to liberty.¹²

Separately, Audano argues that Calgacus’ speech is not just a denunciation of Roman imperialism but of imperialism of every period (36; 128). Audano seems to suggest that Tacitus identifies with this view (he writes that in Tacitus’ extremely pessimistic vision of humanity there is an insatiable greed for power and wealth that pushes the strongest to abuse the weakest, 128), although at the end of his commentary on this section he will ask whether Tacitus really does ‘denounce’ Roman imperialism through Calgacus or whether this is just masterful characterisation—a realistic harangue from a hostile perspective (129).¹³

Audano’s hesitation is judicious. First, it should go without saying that it is methodologically dangerous to assume that any one character in Tacitus serves as his ‘mouthpiece’, no matter how rhetorically compelling they might be. Moreover, if this speech is indeed a critique of Roman imperialism, then we are confronted with the inconvenient fact that its efficacious agent is the *laudandus*, and we must reconcile the subsequent tension between Agricola as a positive and praiseworthy figure with the imperialism he imposes on Britain. Nevertheless, it is easy to understand why modern readers are reluctant to view Calgacus’ speech as simply a ‘reality effect’ with which Tacitus disagrees, since we must then subsequently accept that our beloved historian who so fiercely defends the importance of liberty may have ‘believed in’ liberty only for Romans and in Rome’s imperial, civilising, and violent mission. It is also awkward that an author who can so deftly ‘uncover’, or ‘unmask’ Roman political ideology—apparently from a critical perspective—may in fact partially or fully also subscribe to it.

In any case, Audano’s assertions about the universalising scope of this speech provide us with an interesting proposition whereby Tacitus conceives of a world in which Rome and the Roman empire do not exist—a suggestion Tacitus never (so far as I know) makes in his extant writings in the way Thucydides does when he speaks of later ages contrasting Athens and Sparta (1.10). Such a proposition raises important questions about the nature, scope, and audience of Tacitus’ writings, since it may be underpinned by the

¹² Audano himself stresses the ‘theatrical’ death of the Stoics (e.g., at 87) and sees Tacitus as distancing himself from this position. Why then is Calgacus’ harangue not also ‘theatrical’?

¹³ Several scholars have strongly maintained that this text cannot be ‘anti-imperial’, usually implying or outright claiming that such views exhibit contemporary anxieties, beliefs, and politics rather than ancient realities: see, e.g., Rutherford (2010) 316; Woodman–Kraus (2014) 15–25; and Adler (2016) 2.

assumption that neither the Roman empire nor the Latin language may be eternal.

The fifth section is entitled ‘Agricola da uomo a *exemplum*’ (‘Agricola from Man to *Exemplum*’). Audano re-emphasises the generic complexity of the text, but here stresses its consolatory elements (40). He argues that although most scholars focus on the epilogue for consolatory material, the entire text is infused with the themes and *topoi* of consolation. Audano argues that all *consolationes* run the risk of failure: given their ‘generic’ or tropological nature, they may seem unpersuasive and insincere (41), but Tacitus surmounts this obstacle by reworking *topoi* in fresh ways, and in any case positions himself personally as the guarantor of the truthfulness of his claims about his father-in-law.

Audano’s own approach to the theme of Agricola’s exemplarity is fresh: rather than focusing on themes or passages that are obviously exemplary, for example, Agricola’s martial prowess or capacity to accommodate the regime, Audano chooses (to my mind) unexpected but nevertheless illuminating elements to elaborate.

For example, he offers an extended consideration of what may seem like a passing rhetorical platitude Tacitus makes about the possibility of the immortality of souls (*Agr.* 46.1).¹⁴ Whereas Woodman–Kraus in their commentary concentrate on the various allusive possibilities of this phrase,¹⁵ Audano offers several substantive observations worth considering seriously. He argues that expressions about the immortality of the soul are a *topos* within the consolatory genre and serve to console the bereaved, but that the conditional clause here distances Tacitus from the sentiment, evidencing his ‘secular’ or ‘agnostic’ perspective (41–2, 56–7). This distancing apparently also exemplifies how Tacitus reworks conventional material. Audano’s explanation is that, for Tacitus, immortality is not a metaphysical state of the soul, but the contemplation by survivors of the virtues of the deceased (42, 67–8).

Audano then considers Agricola’s own relationship to philosophy and argues that he embodies a certain kind of Aristotelian ‘mean’ on account of his moderation (43–4). Here of particular interest is Audano’s concentration on Tacitus’ handling of Agricola’s own bereavement, namely the loss of his son (*Agr.* 29.1; although Agricola had also lost a child at 6.2). According to Audano, Agricola’s reaction is praiseworthy because it is moderate and ‘rational’ rather than excessively emotional and ‘exhibitionist’—presumably a

¹⁴ *si quis piorum manibus locus, si, ut sapientibus placet, non cum corpore extinguuntur magnae animae, placide quiescas ...* (‘If there is a place for the spirits of the dutiful; if, as it is pleasing to philosophers, great souls are not snuffed out with the body, rest in peace ...’).

¹⁵ Woodman–Kraus (2014) 324.

dig at the Stoic deaths with which Tacitus begins the work (46; 51).¹⁶ Also praiseworthy is Agricola's channelling of his grief into public service, and the war thus comes to be a *remedium doloris* and *officium consolandi* (46).

In his discussion both of Tacitus' 'secularism' and of Agricola's child's death, Audano looks to Cicero and Seneca, especially *Pro Archia* (but also *De Oratore* and *De Re Publica*) and the *De Consolatione ad Marciam*, to contextualise Tacitus' own work. Part of Audano's claims about Tacitus' secularism emerge from a contrast with Seneca's belief in the immortality of the soul (56–7), while Audano's discussion of Cicero seeks to show that for Cicero it is poetry that immortalises, where for Tacitus it is the contemplation of virtues (60). Audano's conclusion is that Tacitus manipulates and overturns the formal and structural elements of the consolatory genre (67).

In both instances, Audano challenges readers to consider what death means for Tacitus as well as what mode of grieving he believes is appropriate for the living. But Audano's repeated claims that Tacitus' non-committal attitude to the immortality of the soul points to his 'agnostic' or 'secular' worldview merit scrutiny.

While it is tempting to ascribe specific beliefs to an enigmatic author we know little about, and while it may indeed be true that Tacitus does distance himself from the philosophical position he raises (although this *is* an open question), there is no evidence that this passage 'truly' reflects Tacitus' 'personal' opinion. This is all the more true given that—as Audano already points out—ours is a rhetorical text, and Tacitus' purpose is to be persuasive.¹⁷ Moreover, Audano is himself aware that the word 'secular' is problematic, because he sets the term in scare quotes. This kind of vocabulary misleadingly imposes a contemporary framework of belief on ancient religious practices and casts Tacitus more as a twentieth-century rationalist disbeliever than a priest in an ancient Roman religious college.¹⁸

Quibbles about diction aside, in a text deeply concerned with the matrix between death, commemoration, and the afterlife, Audano's concentration on the text's understanding of immortality is of the utmost importance. If for

¹⁶ But Audano also contrasts this with the overly 'severe' reaction of Tiberius to the death of Drusus in *Annals* 4 (48–50).

¹⁷ In other words, even if we *do* accept that in this passage Tacitus distances himself from, e.g., Ciceronian and Senecan ideas about the immortality of the soul, he may only be doing so for rhetorical convenience and effect.

¹⁸ The *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* (*Ann.* 11.11.1). Not available to Audano at the time, the recent work of Shannon-Henderson (2019) will be instructive for those interested in religion and Tacitus. Davies (2004), whom Audano does not cite, is also helpful. It seems to me that claims about secularism or agnosticism have more to do with contemporary prejudice against religion (specifically that religious belief is irrational or evidences an uncritical mind) than about the realities and complexities of ancient (and indeed modern) attitudes to the supernatural and the divine.

Tacitus' spiritual immortality does not exist, interesting valences emerge: where does this leave him on the deaths of the Stoics? What political barb may hide behind this attitude—is he, for example, condemning Domitian to a spiritual finality and death? One interpretative possibility may be that the text seeks to redefine immortality as a strategy for persuading or pressuring Nerva and Trajan to behave ethically, since it also links *their* eternal survival to the praise by their successors of their worldly ethical deeds.

As for Tacitus' representation of Agricola's handling of his sons' deaths, in addition to potentially illustrating his moderation (as Audano argues), it is worth asking to what extent these are meta-literary passages designed to inform readers' interpretations of how to handle death appropriately, especially in the epilogue. Audano's framing opens up the possibility that Tacitus invites readers to juxtapose his own reaction to Agricola's death with Agricola's towards his own children.

Here another potentially subversive reading can emerge: whereas Agricola's *remedium doloris* is to prosecute an imperial war, Tacitus' *remedium doloris* is to write the *Agricola*. It may then be the case that Tacitus advocates not only administrative or martial service as a cure for bereavement, but also reflection and writing. Further, if one believes that this text articulates anti-imperial sentiments, Agricola's mode of grieving becomes even more difficult to justify, since the text may be interrogating the value (and indeed praiseworthiness) of public service in the aftermath of a bereavement, given that this service confers limited recognition.¹⁹ Might it not have been better for Agricola to pause and grieve? In all cases, it is ironic that Tacitus' mode of bereavement—writing—is what secures Agricola his recognition and immortality.

Having concluded his discussion of Tacitus' engagement with the consolatory tradition, Audano turns to the reception of our text, also divided into multiple sections, the first of which is two pages long, entitled 'The Return of the *Agricola*' ('Il ritorno dell'*Agricola*'). Audano offers a brief discussion of the discovery of the Codex Hersfeldensis (which contained the minor works of Tacitus and an epitome of Suetonius' *de Grammaticis*) and its 'adventurous life', whereby it was brought to Italy by Enoch d'Ascoli on behalf of Pope Callixtus III and passed through the hands of Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Pope Pius II) before it was copied and eventually lost. Audano mentions the detachment of the *Agricola* from the *Germania* and *Dialogus* and the text's transcription in 1472 by Stefano Guarnieri, but does not explain the interesting relationship

¹⁹ And it opens up interesting psychoanalytic interpretations: Agricola's loss is inserted immediately before the battle of Mons Graupius. Is his annihilation of the Caledonians connected in some way to his grief (and anger), not completely successfully repressed?

between the Codex Hersfeldensis and the Codex Aesinas, in which form our text survives today.²⁰

Next comes ‘Agricola in Trafalgar: Translations and Current Affairs’ (‘Agricola a Trafalgar: traduzioni e attualità politica’) (70). Here Audano highlights Giovanni Maria Manelli and two of his publications of translations of the *Agricola*, the first in 1585 (with John Wolff), in London, dedicated to Robert Sidney, first Earl of Leicester and, in 1588, in Rome. In the first edition Manelli stresses the purely biographical content of the text; in the second edition, Manelli reframes the work by varying the title to stress Agricola’s martial excellence and the topographic and ethnographic themes of the work. Audano explains this variation as an allusion to the war against England led by Alessandro Farnese in 1588.

For Audano this is one of several instances in which the *Agricola* is a flashpoint for disputes between England and the Continent, especially because Agricola is useful as a model of an Italian general who defeats insular barbarians. Another example Audano adduces is the edition of Giuseppe de Cesare (1777–1856) (72), whose introduction to the text contains ‘revolutionary heartbeats’ and whose dedication to Giulio Cesare Estense Tassoni, a Napoleonic diplomat, reveals anti-monarchic sentiments that implicitly connect Agricola to Napoleon. Napoleon’s defeat at Trafalgar by Nelson is from this perspective analogous to Domitian’s curtailing of Agricola’s glory (73).

Audano then fully concentrates on the reception of the *Agricola* in Italy, starting with Guicciardini (‘Reuse of the model: Guicciardini and the portrait of his father-in-law’—‘Il riuso del modello: Guicciardini e il ritratto del suocero’). He argues that it is not only the major works but the *Agricola* too that plays a role in the development of Tacitism, and he raises the possibility that a reference in Guicciardini’s *Ricordi* (*Ricordi* 220) to the need for good citizens of carving out a space for virtuous behaviour even under tyrants (here understood to be the Medici) may be an allusion to *Agricola* 42 (74).²¹ Indeed, Audano sees Guicciardini’s *Ricordi* as generally influenced by the *Agricola*; although autobiographical rather than biographical, Guicciardini’s father-in-law, Alamanno Salviati, a key figure in the Florentine political scene who served as a nexus between the Medici, Savonarola, and Republicans, is a kind of analogue

²⁰ On the manuscript tradition and transmission of the *Agricola*, see Mendell (1949); Ogilvie and Richmond (1967) 84–90; Krapf (1979), esp. 11–42; Schaps (1979); Murgia and Rogers (1984); Bischoff (1998); and Murgia (2012). While the Codex Hersfeldensis is lost, the Codex Aesinas was rediscovered in 1902 and contains the *Agricola*, *Germania*, and the *Bellum Troianum* of ‘Dictys’. Several folios from the *Agricola* are in a Carolingian minuscule, almost certainly suggesting that these are from the Codex Hersfeldensis. It is Annibaldi, the discoverer of the Codex Aesinas, who identifies the scribe as Guarnieri.

²¹ For Tacitism, see Burke (1969); Schellhase (1976); Momigliano (1990) 109–31; Gajda (2009); Waszink (2010).

for Agricola, himself a moderate who fluidly moved between competing spheres of Roman political life.

According to Audano, Guicciardini himself takes on Tacitus' own position in the *Ricordi* when, as Audano persuasively shows, he commemorates his father-in-law in encomiastic language that closely follows the structure and substance of the epilogue of the *Agricola* with its focus on Agricola's physical appearance and moral excellence. But Audano also shows how Guicciardini adapts Tacitus to suit his own context, for example by emphasising Salviati's status as a rich merchant, an element lacking in Tacitus' praise of Agricola, but which is important in a mercantile Florentine context where wealth signifies success and is itself an index of social status. Audano also highlights Guicciardini's stress on Salviati's frankness (this contrasts with Agricola's necessary dissimulation), apparently designed to counter claims of authoritarian or tyrannical characteristics against his father-in-law. On this view, Salviati himself becomes an *exemplum* suited to this Florentine moment: someone who, like Agricola, is a moderate rather than a fanatic.

Audano concludes his introduction and discussion of the reception of the *Agricola* with an affirmation of the relevance of Tacitus in Italy and Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and with a treatment of the Tacitist Traiano Boccalini ('Traiano Boccalini, Reader of the *Agricola*'—'Traiano Boccalini lettore dell'*Agricola*'). Audano reminds us that Boccalini had worked on a commentary on Tacitus that comprised the first hexad of the *Annals*, *Histories* 1–2, and the *Agricola*, although he cuts some chapters of this latter work and in any case never publishes his commentary during his lifetime. The focus of Boccalini's commentary is not philological but political, and reflects Early Modern attempts at drawing universal principles of human nature and power from Classical texts, and especially from Tacitus. Here Audano stresses Boccalini's own mannered literary style, his admiration of Tacitus' ability to transform a marginal figure such as Agricola into a universal *exemplum* that offers eternal precepts about power, politics, ethics, and justice, and Boccalini's consequent emulation of this eminent classical antecedent. For example, in *Ragguagli di Parnaso*, Boccalini has Apollo allow Calgacus to utter his famous harangue against Roman imperialism, but this speech is cut short by Spanish soldiers who believe the barb to be directed at them. For Audano, this is a crystallisation of how Tacitus has been received: his cynical critique of power adapted at every age to comment on, and undermine, apparently similar phenomena.

Audano does not explain why he chooses the moments of reception that he does, but these can be inferred: for a primarily Italian audience, it is certainly relevant to know about the role Italians play in the discovery and publication of the text and about the role this text plays in crucial periods of Italian history like the Renaissance. Unlike the *Germania*, a minor work

appropriated by nationalists (and National Socialists) as a foundational text of modern German identity—which thus received a great deal of general and scholarly attention—the *Agricola* does not seem to have been as popular and its reception consequently not as well researched (or, for that matter, as controversial).²² Audano's treatment of the text offers us a good, even if brief, comparandum through which we can contrast the unique afterlives of two different Tacitean minor works, and conveys well how even this minor work was marshalled by various factions and to various ends. This treatment thus offers a helpful starting point for those wishing to explore the impact and appropriation of the *Agricola*, especially in Italy.

In closing, while I cannot comment on the quality of the translation (not being a native Italian speaker), this is clearly a commendable work that brings an important (and, despite recent scholarship, still relatively neglected) Tacitean text to the attention of a general Italian audience, for whom it can serve as a terrific introduction to the text, author, and literature of the period. At the same time, the quality of the notes is such that they will also benefit specialist readers interested in Tacitus, genre, consolatory literature, Roman imperialism, and Roman Britain. For such researchers, this volume will nicely complement the commentary of Woodman–Kraus. Audano shows a special interest in intertextuality and allusion, often citing Sallustian or other models that Tacitus may be reworking. He often identifies and explains the linguistic or rhetorical features of the text, for example the metaphors or *topoi* Tacitus deploys. Audano also provides important historical information that helps readers understand the social and political context, always with citations to primary and secondary scholarship that will allow eager readers to pursue any one topic further. All of these will certainly deepen readers' appreciation and enrich their understanding of this important and fascinating text.

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²² On the role of the *Germania* in the foundation of German identity and German nationalism—and, later, for German National Socialism—see Krebs (2011).

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