

Appian, *The Civil Wars*. Translated with an introduction and notes by John Carter (Penguin Classics.) Pp. xliii + 436. Harmondsworth, 1996. Paper. £8.99, \$13.95. ISBN 0-14-044509-9

John Carter's splendid new translation of Appian's *Civil Wars* has the potential to transform the reputation of this relatively underappreciated historian. The only extant continuous historical narrative of the years 133 - 35 BC, the *Civil Wars* is indisputably one of the most valuable sources for the history of the late Republic and thus well-known to all who work on that period. Cited more often than read, however, Appian has suffered from the fact that Horace White's 1913 Loeb has long been the only available English translation. This, coupled with the general feeling that he was a second-rate historian, has caused him to be little read outside of scholarly circles. While Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus have been translated into English many times over, Appian has simply not been deemed worthy of such attention.

But times have of course changed, and with them our appreciation of the fact that the value of an ancient historical text need not lie solely in the author's supposed trustworthiness or in the sources he used. In recent years Appian has experienced a significant rehabilitation, the effects of which are readily apparent in Carter's extensive, useful discussion of the historian and his work in the Introduction. In addition to assessing Appian's merits as a writer and historian, Carter fully explains the organization of the *Roman History* as a whole, the place of the *Civil Wars* in its scheme, and the structure and content of the *Civil Wars* itself. Particularly valuable is the treatment of Appian's place in the ancient historiographical tradition, the distinctive features of the narrative, and the source question. Nearly fifty pages of notes accompany the translation which concentrate primarily on historical and prosopographical matters. Also included is an Appendix containing informative surveys of several topics crucial to an understanding of the late Republic, such as the nature of the Roman assemblies and the army. In all of this Carter demonstrates a solid command of his subject. For those who want more, a Bibliographical Note provides ample guidance. In short, this book could well serve as not only an excellent introduction to Appian but a superb primer on the last century of the Roman Republic as well.

As for the translation, Carter has produced a version that is both eminently readable and faithful to Appian's Greek. Writing in the second century AD at the height of the atticizing movement, though hardly seduced by it, Appian employs a comparatively straightforward and unadorned style. But it does not on that account lack power, and there are occasions when he is capable of conveying unusual insight in compelling prose. White's transla-

tion does not necessarily obscure this, but first published in 1889, it now shows its age. Carter's rendition, moreover, apart from making Appian more accessible and palatable to the English reader, is based on a fresh evaluation of Viereck's 1905 Teubner and therefore corrects some of White's occasional inaccuracies. One example, drawn from Appian's narrative of the initial implementation of the proscription in December of 43 (*Civ.* 4.13), will suffice to indicate how Carter improves on his predecessor:

Straightway, throughout city and country, wherever each one happened to be found, there were sudden arrests and murder in various forms, decapitations for the sake of rewards when the head should be shown, and undignified flights in disguises which strangely contrasted with former splendour. Some descended into wells, others into filthy sewers. Some took refuge in chimneys. Others crouched in the deepest silence under the thickly-packed tiles of the roofs. For some were not less fearful of their wives and ill-disposed children than of the murderers, while others feared their freedmen and their slaves; creditors feared their debtors and neighbours feared neighbours who coveted lands. There was a sudden outburst of previously smouldering hates and a shocking change in the condition of senators, consulars, praetors tribunes...who threw themselves with lamentations at the feet of their own slaves, giving to the servant the character of saviour and master. (trans. White)

Many sudden arrests immediately ensued, both in the countryside and in Rome, wherever anyone happened to be caught; people were also murdered in all kinds of ways, and decapitated to furnish evidence for the reward. They fled in undignified fashion, and abandoned their former conspicuous dress for strange disguises. Some went down wells, some descended into the filth of the sewers, and others climbed up into the smoky rafters or sat in total silence under close-packed roof tiles. To some, just as terrifying as the executioners were wives or children with whom they were not on good terms, or ex-slaves and slaves, or creditors, or neighbouring landowners who coveted their estates. All at once there broke out all the resentment which had long been festering in secret. A shocking change occurred in the behaviour of senators, whether consuls, praetors or tribunes...who threw themselves moaning at the feet of their own slaves and called their domestics 'lord' and 'saviour'. (trans. Carter)

Quite apart from the fact that it reads better, Carter's translation really is more accurate (cf., e.g., Carter's 'smoky rafters' vs. White's 'chimneys'). It further captures one of Appian's strengths, his ability to evoke a sense of pathos in narrating details of the late Republican conflicts. He makes mistakes, to be sure, but he can seldom be accused of either disinterest in his subject or excessively rhetorical treatment.

In sum, this is a most welcome addition to a series that has given us (among many others) fine translations of Cassius Dio's Augustan books (by Ian Scott-Kilvert in collaboration with Carter) and Polybius (albeit abridged, and also by Scott-Kilvert). Among the advantages of these translations, of course, is that they make available to those who teach Roman history fundamental, primary texts in an affordable fashion. In the case of Carter's Appian, however, students and scholars will have much more than simply a serviceable translation.

But the *Civil Wars* is only one component of a much broader project, a history of the events and processes that gave rise to the Roman Empire. Thus the first half of Appian's *Roman History*, an account of Rome's foreign conquests organized ethnographically, is meant to complement the second half, the *Civil Wars*, in order to complete the picture. Written from the vantage point of an Alexandrian Greek who spent much of his career at Rome, this history provides an interesting and often unique perspective on Roman history from its beginnings down to the onset of the Augustan principate. As with the *Civil Wars*, there is much here that is invaluable and unparalleled (e.g., the *Mithridatica*). While perhaps not much is lost by reading the *Civil Wars* in isolation from the rest of the *Roman History*, one does forfeit an appreciation for the scope and ambition of the work as a whole. For that reason one can only hope that the editors at Penguin will see fit to commission a translation of Appian's *Foreign Wars* by a scholar of the same caliber as Carter.

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(Note: John Carter died under particularly tragic circumstances in February of 1997.)

Tacitus: *The Histories*, translated W.H. Fyfe, revised and edited D.S. Levene (World's Classics). Pp. xlix + 310. Oxford University Press, 1997. £8.99.

In the dedication to his translation of Tacitus' *Histories* (Oxford 1912), W.H. Fyfe quotes Sir Henry Savile (1591): 'If thy stomacke be so tender as thou canst not digest Tacitus in his owne stile, thou art beholding to one who gives thee the same food, but with a pleasant and easie taste'. This might imply that F.'s translation is bland, which it is not. F.'s English is pithy, but clear. D.S. Levene has done a great service in making this translation accessible to a contemporary audience and more accurate too (e.g. 'tres et viginti' (1.27.2): (F.) 'thirty-three', (L.) 'twenty-three'). L. notes wryly that an English