

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

edition which sought to capture every nuance of Tacitus' idiosyncratic style would be virtually unreadable (xxiii). Yet F. does much to mirror Tacitus' style and to avoid creating sentences which collapse under their own weight: simplicity and brevity are the chief criteria. Comparison with K. Wellesley's translation (Penguin 1993) is illuminating.

'ceteri crura brachiaque (nam pectus tegebatur) foede laniavere; pleraque vulnera feritate et saevitia trunco iam corpori adiecta' (1.41.3):

(W.) 'The rest of them, with revolting butchery, hacked at his legs and arms, as these (unlike his body) were not protected by armour. These sadistic monsters even inflicted a number of wounds on the already truncated corpse'

(F.) 'The others foully mangled his arms and legs (his breast was protected) and with bestial savagery continued to stab the headless corpse',

(L.) 'The others foully mutilated his arms and legs (his breast was protected) and with bestial savagery continued to stab the headless corpse'.

'in multa conluvione rerum maioribus flagitiis permixtos' (2.16.3):

(W.) 'In the world-wide upheaval of the time they were inextricably lost amid greater enormities',

(F.) 'In the general confusion their deed was overshadowed by more heinous crimes',

(L.) 'In the vast cesspool of the age their deed was overshadowed by more heinous crimes'.

'multos in moenia egressos pugionibus fodere' (4.29.3):

(W.) 'Many attackers surmounted the wall, but were stabbed by the Roman dirks',

(F. and L.) 'Many appeared on top of the walls, and these they stabbed with their short swords'.

Tacitus famously refused to call a spade a spade, but this should never force translators to bury meaning in verbosity. Since the publication of P. Plass, *Wit and the Writing of History* (Wisconsin 1988), scholars have become more sensitive about how Tacitus' language exposes the moral and political absurdity of the principate. L.'s clear translation (particularly of Tacitus' epigrams) reflects this heightened awareness, but sometimes he could go further. So at *Historiae* 1.1.2-4, L. replaces the second-person singular verbs ('averseris', 'velis', 'sentias') with third-person generalisations, which homogenises Tacitus' narrative voice. Perhaps this does not matter, but Tacitus is in the process of establishing a rapport with his ideal reader: the third-

person verbs make him seem aloof (cf. P. Sinclair, *Tacitus the Sententious Historian* (University Park Pa. 1995) 50-6).

R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford 1958) 348, says of the *Annals*: 'The style abounds in violent metaphors, drawing imagery from light and dark, rapid movement, growth and decay, destruction and conflagration'. Such language also characterises the *Histories*, albeit less pervasively. Yet if a translator strips Tacitean Latin of its metaphorical qualities, the language is disarmed and weakened. Generally, L. preserves metaphorical language where W. is more cautious. 'veritas ...infracta' (1.1.1): (W. and F.) 'Truth suffered', (L.) 'Truth was shattered', and 'ardentibus patrum animis' (4.43.1): (W.) 'amid the eager approbation of the senators' and (F. and L.) '...the House was warming to this rhetoric'. Occasionally, L. overplays the metaphorical quality of the Latin. 'scelus exprobrans' (1.43.1): (W.) 'denounced their mutiny', (F. and L.) 'flinging their treason in their teeth' (cf. 1.37.5 and 4.85.1). Certainly, Lewis and Short offer 'to cast in the teeth' as a translation of *exprobro*, but the *OLD* restricts itself to 'I bring up as a reproach' (cf. *TLL* 5.2, 1802). L.'s version sounds archaic. Another example is 'custodire sermones' (2.52.1): (W.) 'they spied on their conversation', (F. and L.) 'they treasured up their conversation'. Momentarily, clarity is lost. L. pledges to modernise F.'s English (xxiii), which he often does (e.g. 'vernacula urbanitas' (2.88.2): (F.) 'a cockney joke', (L.) 'a cheap practical joke'). Yet some oddities remain.

What greatly enhances L.'s edition are the new introduction and end-notes, which should prove invaluable to a first-time reader of Tacitus. The introduction contains five useful sections (Tacitus the Historian, The Background, Sources and Methods, Understanding Tacitus, Germans and Jews) followed by three explanatory notes (The Imperial Roman State, Roman Names, The Text). There is also a select bibliography, a chronological table (AD54-117) and four maps, accompanied by a glossary of place-names (293). The text itself is clearly laid out. Each chapter-number is conveniently indented and end-notes are marked by an asterisk. Where the manuscript breaks off at *Histories* 5.26, L. has supplied a satisfying synopsis of what happens to the main protagonists (cf. F.: 'The rest is lost!'). Finally, the book's cover is illustrated with a lavish detail from *The Capture of Jerusalem by Titus* (1638/9) by Nicolas Poussin.

In the introduction, L. carefully explains points which the non-classicist might find puzzling, such as the convention that speeches in a historical work often diverge from what was really said (x). Helpfully, L. puts this feature into context by citing well-chosen examples from the *Histories*. L. is inevitably selective about what to include in the introduction. Discussion of the parallel accounts (Dio, Plutarch, Suetonius, Josephus) is reserved for the end-notes, which is sensible. Likewise, L. elaborates the historiographical background largely in the end-notes, which is less satisfactory. L. does refer

to Sallust and Livy in the introduction (xi), in order to explain that Tacitus models entire episodes upon his predecessors. Yet although L. cites as an example *Histories* 4.68ff (4.58, 4.62 and 4.72 would be more helpful), he does not elucidate which Livian scene is evoked and why (cf. E. Keitel, 'The Function of the Livian Reminiscences at Tacitus *Histories* 4.58.6 and 62', *CJ* 87 (1992) 327-37). Although the end-notes rectify this up to a point, this unelaborated reference in the introduction is tantalising.

Generally, more attention to rhetoric and historical topoi would be welcome. Several comments could be expanded along these lines. Firstly, L. refers to Vinius (xiii-xiv), cast by Tacitus as a likely conspirator (1.42), who paradoxically offers Galba potentially life-saving advice (1.32-4). L. highlights the difficulty of reconciling these two conflicting impressions of Vinius. Yet the flawed character who unexpectedly says the right thing recurs in ancient historiography (cf. Antonius Primus at *Histories* 3.2, Eprius Marcellus at *Histories* 4.8) and Vinius, 'deterrimus mortalium' (1.6.1), fits this type. Secondly, L. notes that Tacitean battle-scenes 'usually fit the known features of the landscape closely' (xi). Sometimes this is true (as at *Histories* 4.71), but the first battle of Bedriacum is particularly problematic (see L.'s note on 263). On Map 3 (xlvi-xlvii), Bedriacum, the site of two battles in the *Histories*, is indicated with a question-mark, which conflicts with L.'s generalisation about topography. Perhaps the more pertinent issue for a new reader is why these ancient historians could modify their battle-descriptions with inaccurate details and get away with it. L.'s perceptive analysis of Germans and Jews (xvii-xxii) is illuminating precisely because it sets both portraits in a wider rhetorical and historiographical context. L. argues that Tacitus interlocks the portraits of the Jews, Germans and Romans so as to present a series of questions about the categories of foreigner and Roman. This synthesised overview is particularly helpful with the Jewish 'digression' in *Histories* 5, which is often examined in isolation and provokes sharp criticism of Tacitus' calibre as a writer.

To conclude, L.'s edition should be welcomed both by those with and (increasingly) without Latin. His introduction and end-notes combine powerfully to enhance a reader's enjoyment and understanding of the *Histories*. L. notes that 'the best a translator can do in practice is to give some sense of the biting and lapidary quality of the original, without sacrificing intelligibility' (xxiii). Translation is a balancing-act at the best of times, but L., building on F.'s groundwork, negotiates his task adeptly.