

REVIEW

A NEW EDITION OF *ANNALES XI*

S. J. V. Malloch, *The Annals of Tacitus: Book 11*. Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries, 51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xxi + 538. Hardback, £94.99/\$160.00. ISBN 978-1-107-01110-6.

Malloch's edition of *Annals 11* is an outstanding labor of scholarship, evidently the result of many years of work on a difficult text that modern readers can now fully appreciate and read with much better guidance. It is a worthy successor of, but methodologically rather different from, the commentaries of Goodyear on Books 1–2 and Woodman–Martin on Book 3, and will remain a standard reference for many years to come.¹ The book comprises a short introduction, a Latin text with apparatus, a full commentary (with an appendix on the text of Claudius' famous speech), a rich bibliography, and indexes. The bibliography exemplifies the breadth of Malloch's research: over forty pages with titles in all languages, dating from the early modern period, to which one must add the extensive list (xiv–xxi) of all the major editions of the *Annals* since the *editio princeps*.² The introduction is brief: in the first half, Malloch illustrates the generally negative portrait that Tacitus gives of the emperor Claudius as a man constantly dependent upon his wives and freedmen (with glances forward also to the beginnings of Nero's reign); in the second half, Malloch discusses thoroughly the Medicean manuscript that preserved the *Histories* and *Annals 11–16*. This famous manuscript, which was written at Montecassino in the eleventh century, and 'rediscovered' by Boccaccio, has been of key importance to the scholarly work on Tacitus' text since. As it has been proved by Hanslik, Römer, and Goodyear among others, it is the source of all surviving *recentiores*. The Latin text that Malloch prints is not a mere reproduction of a 'standard' text such as Heubner or Fisher, but the original work of the editor, who has done the commendable

¹ Tacitus continues to receive great scholarly attention. In addition to the recent bibliography cited by K. E. Shannon in her review (*ExClass* 19 (2015): 195–9), note also that Woodman is preparing a commentary on *Annals IV* for the 'Orange' series (his commentary on V and VI is forthcoming), and Lavan–Whitton on *Annals XIV* for the 'Green & Yellow' series.

² A. Ramírez de Verger, in his review (*BMCR* 2015.02.51), gives a summary of all the most important editions that Malloch has used. Surely Malloch may have missed some works, but, given the variety of subjects he deals with, this is to be expected. Cf. also the review of C. Gillespie (*C7-Online* 2015.04.02).

job of tracing back most conjectures to their original proponents. Every reading is carefully assessed, and, although Malloch refrains from emending too liberally, he has produced a very sensible, though rather conservative, text.³ The resulting apparatus will become a necessary tool for scholars working on Tacitus' text.⁴

As regards the commentary proper, which runs for over 400 pages and 300 footnotes, Malloch provides both longer introductions to larger sections of the narrative into which he subdivides the text, and briefer introductions to specific topics and/or events.⁵ These introductions are very useful, for they provide readers with a general overview of the content to be discussed, and the characterization that Tacitus chooses to give it. Some of these introductory sections are extremely learned and thorough (but also difficult to assess): consider, for example, the sixteen pages that Malloch devotes to Armenia and Parthia (chapters 8–10), in which readers are not only given background information on the specific events narrated in these chapters, but also a general assessment of Rome's involvement in the East during the early Principate, and why Tacitus seems to be particularly interested in these affairs. The introductions to Italicus and the Cherusci (16–17), or to Domitius Corbulo and Curtius Rufus in Germany (18–20), are other instances of such thorough historical research. The famous speech of Claudius on the admission of the *primores Galliae* to the Senate (24) is exemplary, from both the historical and linguistic points of view.

Malloch never states his ideological approach to commentary writing, but, as compared to the commentaries of Goodyear, and especially Woodman–Martin, his approach is markedly more historical and philological in the traditional sense. History is doubtlessly the strongest aspect of this commentary, and Book 11, full as it is of 'antiquarian' digressions, gives ample opportunities to historical inquiry: cf. e.g. the note on 3.1 *sed consultanti*, or on 28.1 *iuuenem nobilem*; or the entire narrative for the year 48. The notes are also frequently concerned with textual issues, each one of which is carefully weighed. At 23.4,

³ Thus, for example, Malloch often obelizes the unintelligible text of M even when a conjecture has found favor among recent editors (cf. e.g. 30.1 *eicis*, whereas most editors print Brotier's *Titios*). While Malloch's punctuation differs substantially from, e.g., Heubner (but punctuations may reflect also the mother tongue of the commentator), he refrains from altering the standard paragraph division, as for example Woodman does so often in his translation (2004). Even those few instances in Heubner (20.3; 22.2; 25.2; 31.2) are restored in Malloch's text. This may have been a conscious decision, but it feels a little arbitrary: at 31.2 (*At Messalina*), for example, a new paragraph seems appropriate. And Malloch is also very careful in orthographical matters: see e.g. his note on *plebeii* at 24.7.

⁴ Ramírez de Verger lists all the instances in which Malloch departs from Heubner's edition. D. Wardle, on the other hand, points out the differences with Koestermann's edition in his review for *AHB* 4 (2014): 126–8.

⁵ See e.g. the review of Shannon.

for example, Malloch chooses to follow M in retaining *moreretur* (against Bach's conjecture *oreretur*, which is adopted by, among others, Heubner): the reading *moreretur* changes the general sense to a considerable degree, and I believe it contributes to the dramatic effect of the opponents' speech (other exemplary notes on textual matters include, e.g., 4.1 *quibus Petra cognomentum erat*; 14.3 *dis plebiscitis*; 18.1 *auxiliare aes diu meritis*). Another aspect in which this commentary is very strong is in explaining and illustrating all the main features of Tacitus' Latin. In addition to copious references to standard works, Malloch provides numerous parallels, both in Tacitus' other works and in other writers whom Tacitus seems to have had particularly in mind (cf. e.g. the note on 3.2 *partem in aliam*, or the learned discussion of *incertum an* at 18.3). These are not just lists of words or phrases that occur elsewhere: they help readers understand Tacitean usage, both in relation to previous historians, mainly Sallust and Livy, and to 'standard' Latin usage in general. Although Malloch usually refrains from making bold assertions (e.g. that Tacitus is alluding to a specific author or text), readers will find in this commentary much information from which to draw their own conclusions. At times, some notes can be demanding on the reader (or even overwhelming), but they are rarely pedantic; in fact, they are frequently engaging, providing background information or themes that run throughout the *Annals*, and are often a mine of information which readers will greatly appreciate (cf. e.g. on 6.2 *C. Asinii, M. Messalae*). Consider for example the notes on Chapter 11, where Tacitus famously recalls his role as *quindecimvir* at the *ludi saeculares* of Domitian. Not only does Malloch tell his readers about the significance of these *ludi* (Augustus' innovations of them and Claudius' deviation from his predecessor's calculations), but he also explains the literary function of Tacitus' autobiographical reference here. On the story of Nero and the snake(s) that protected him at his infancy (11.3), Malloch offers an exhaustive overview of the literary features that these 'fabulous' details played in the lives of Alexander, Scipio, Augustus, and Germanicus, pointing to the fact that the last two, in particular, would only emphasize the future failures of the young Nero. This is one of those (rare) cases when Tacitus records an incredible event which he does not necessarily believe to have happened. It is the commentator's duty to try and explain the purpose of these stories: Malloch accomplishes this commendably. The explanatory notes on the famous digression on Claudius' reform of the alphabet (14.1–3) basically provide an overview of the history of the Latin language, with references to all the major sources, ancient and modern (cf. the quaestorship digression at 22.2–6). Is Tacitus being ironic in his lengthy description? Malloch does not believe so, but perhaps he is too dismissive of the possible allusion to Seneca *Apoc.* 3.4, which he does not even quote ('the allusion, if present, is vague'). Personally, I would like to know if Malloch thinks that Tacitus is following one, or some, of the ancient sources he quotes.

Malloch pays great attention also to Tacitus' narrative technique, and smaller themes are often interpreted within the wider frame of a narrative section: an example of this is given by the legislation that Claudius passed as censor. The individual chapters are preceded by a more general introduction (206–11) which explains the reasons why Tacitus may have chosen to devote such a lengthy discussion to these topics, and how these digressions contribute to portray an emperor detached from reality, in his own world, as it were, while the scandalous conduct of Messalina was about to explode (cf. also Malloch's introduction to the end of Claudius' censorship at 25.2–5). The *SC* on the haruspices is a particularly good example of Claudius' concerns, and Malloch's notes provide insightful comments. On the final and most famous section of the book, the fall of Messalina (26–38), the Tacitean text is subdivided into smaller narrative units that emphasize the various stages that lead to the death of Messalina. In the introductory section, Malloch points out the uniqueness of Tacitus' account (a uniqueness which is highlighted even by Tacitus' choice of words and expressions). He then analyzes the reasons that each of the main characters may have had in organizing this 'conspiracy'. I agree with Malloch that the whole affair is Tacitus' construction, whose outcome appropriately prepares for the transition to the opening of Book 12 and the rise of Agrippina.⁶

The book is nicely produced and carefully edited. The fastidious but unavoidable typos are indeed very rare (e.g. the minor discrepancy between the spelling of *gentilis* at 1.2 in the text and its corresponding note, where *gentiles* is printed).⁷ The readership of this commentary will be, first and foremost, scholars; secondly, advanced graduate students. Straightforward translations are rare. Thus, although Malloch does offer insightful interpretations of problematic words and/or phrases, undergraduates will find little help in this regard. It is a dense commentary which I doubt could ever be used for teaching purposes. In the future, Cambridge University Press will perhaps ask Malloch to

⁶ The conspiracy 'flavor' of this episode recalls the Pisonian Conspiracy in Book 15; and the accusations that Narcissus plots against Messalina recall those of Tigellinus against Petronius in Book 16. In the latter case, in particular, the *codicillos libidinum indices* that Narcissus hands over are very similar to the 'pseudo-*codicilli*' that Petronius sends to Nero with details of all his sexual depravities (16.19.3).

⁷ Ramírez de Verger lists other cases as well. As far as typos are concerned, in addition to those pointed out by Wardle and Shannon, at p. 235, in the phrase 'for *palam* see 25.1n.', *palam* should be *patres*.

produce a 'Green and Yellow' of Book 11. It would be a pity indeed if such an interesting book of the *Annals* remained confined to research libraries and a small circle of scholars.

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