of his political establishment that this Cambridge don has famously been, still the Jr/Sr Pliny might stand as a turning point for a consular H.

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TACITUS AND THE PARALLEL TRADITION: *HISTORIES* I

C. DAMON (ed.): *Tacitus:* Histories *Book I* (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics). Pp. xiv + 324, maps. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Paper, £16.95/US$24 (Cased, £47.50/US$70). ISBN: 0-521-57822-1 (0-521-57072-7 hbk).

If a commentary is supposed to help a reader comprehend a text, then a commentator on Tacitus faces an extraordinary challenge. Tacitean style, terse and concise, often defies comprehension. We are fortunate that Damon rose to the challenge. Designed for advanced undergraduates and graduate students, this commentary puts an important text within reach. It remains to be seen whether D. achieves her stated purpose, 'to reintegrate *Histories* I into the corpus of teachable Latin texts' (p. vii), but hopefully this commentary will defuse the notion that Tacitus is too difficult for the classroom.

In addition to text and notes, the book contains three maps, a thirty-page introduction, four appendices, a select bibliography, and two indices. The notes refer to the maps intelligently and often; my students were grateful for the clarity and direction. The introductory material is also a fine summary of Tacitean style that leads the student to appreciate, rather than deplore, the craggy sentences ahead. The lexical, historical, and stylistic information contained in the notes contributes to the main theme of the commentary: the comparison of Tacitus with the parallel tradition for the Long Year in Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dio. Throughout the commentary, D. demonstrates her mastery of the parallel sources, and in this respect the notes are sensible and informative. Of particular interest is Appendix 1, 'Parallel Passages Showing Strong Verbal Similarities'. Two further appendices collate D.'s notes on parallel incidents and differences between Tacitus and the other three authors. Appendix 4, 'Notes Illustrating Differences between *Histories* I and the Parallel Tradition', has four subcategories: differences in context, tone or detail, chronology, and facts. These carefully prepared appendices lay the groundwork for students to discover what is distinctive about Tacitus.

I single out three exemplary sentences from the introduction that demonstrate D.'s sensitivity to Tacitean mentality, her mastery of the parallel tradition, and the uncanny ability to merge the two that marks this commentary out as exceptional. In preparing the student for the style of *Histories* I, D. comes to terms with why Tacitus is so difficult to read. Simply put, 'some of T.'s explanations rely heavily on the reader' (p. 10). D. then describes *how* Tacitus relies on the reader: 'Where Cicero would supply conjunctions and Caesar or Livy temporal indicators, T. leaves the reader to make sense of his juxtapositions' (p. 19). Finally, D. alerts the reader to what I consider a principal feature of Tacitean thought: 'Another measure of T.'s quality as an historian (and another source of differences between T. and the parallel tradition), is that unresolvable dubieties are declared as such' (p. 28).

These unresolvable dubieties are of two varieties: the inescapable and the deliberate.

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Indeterminacy in the text is an inescapable component of any narrative. Because a text cannot capture every single aspect of the event it attempts to record, some elements must remain undefined. But in order to maintain the momentum of the story, in order to avoid silence, the author must create continuity where there is none, and the reader must infer continuity where the author is unable to sustain it explicitly. Paradoxically, such moments of indeterminacy can also be thought of as the most stable moments in the text. Both author and reader must confront the limits of knowledge. The mechanics of a text cause the reader to form an interpretation that is not explicitly expressed. But the task of reading Tacitus is doubly hard: not only does the reader grapple with the indeterminacies inherent in any text, Tacitus also insists on making the reader supply information that he could give—but does not.

Therefore, we must not discount the possibility that Tacitus' reliance on the reader to supply information may serve another function in the narrative. Omissions of temporal indicators or conjunctions (or even finite verb forms; repeatedly D. tells the reader to supply a form of the verb 'to be,' e.g. 2.1, 2.2, 5.1, 26.2, and *passim*) are deliberate stylistic choices on Tacitus' part. Such omissions raise the reader's awareness to the possibility that *supplied* connectives may be suspect. Furthermore, such omissions establish the reader's confidence that he is in the hands of a sensible narrator, one who is prepared to admit the limits of his knowledge. Tacitus is most trustworthy at precisely those moments when his inability is patent. And this is one of the qualities that sets Tacitus' version of events in *Histories* I apart from the versions in Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dio.

Like all of the introductory material, the discussion of *sententiae* is clear, informative, and very useful for preparing the reader to tackle the demands of Tacitean style. From this introduction, however, it is difficult to ascertain the criteria for including a *sententia* or an epigram in Appendix 2, 'Epigrams and *Sententiae*'. The fifty-three items listed range from phrases and clauses to complete sentences and truncated sentences reproduced with ellipsis. Most puzzling is the exclusion of the memorable quote: 'the secret of empire was that a *princeps* could be made elsewhere than at Rome' (*euulgato imperii arcano posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri*, 1.4.2). If a *sententia* 'tends to bring the narrative to a full stop,' (p. 15), then the very next word (the adversative conjunction *sed*, 1.4.3) suggests that the preceding sentiment forced the reader to pause and the reader needs to be restored to the principal train of thought.

Overall, this commentary makes an impressive contribution to the field of Tacitean scholarship. Repeatedly, D. elucidates the mode of presentation (e.g. narrative vs. speech; *oratio recta* vs. *oratio obliqua*), pointing out when the mode is particularly noteworthy, and making the reader think about how Tacitus presents information and to what effect. D. is sensitive to the anxiety of inauguration that suffuses *Histories* I. With the groundwork laid in this thorough-going commentary, scholars can turn their attention to the way the adoption of Piso (Chapters 12–20) operates thematically in Book 1: 'Throughout this section T.'s material is fuller, more accurate, and more richly elaborated than that in the parallel sources' (p. 126). We are now ready to consider the extent to which Tacitus uses adoption as a metaphor for his writing style and his debt to his predecessors (especially Sallust), and the extent to which the successors of Tacitus adopted his thinking and so owe a debt themselves. Here, metahistory meets metapoetics, and D.'s commentary adroitly anticipates what will no doubt be a fruitful encounter.

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