

What Are We Teaching These Kids? Using Tacitus' *Germania* to Cultivate Humanity in the Latin Classroom

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I often envy my colleagues who teach modern languages because of the fact that native speakers are constantly generating authentic new materials for them to use in their classrooms.¹ For example, there is a fascinating web site called "Watching America" which features news articles (both in the original language and in English) about the United States from countries around the world. The articles reflect a wide range of opinions from quite positive to extremely negative; some are based on excellent information, others less so; most are pretty intriguing; and all reflect without fail the values, perspective, and preoccupations of at least some portion of the population in their country of origin.

One article, actually a transcript of an interview, that recently caught my eye, had originally aired on Syrian television.² The interviewee is Al-Jazeera TV host Faysal Al-Qassem, and in the course of the interview he repeatedly makes one big point: Americans are politically illiterate. The reason for this (he says) is that Western media are a monopoly and do not allow for diversity of opinion. Whether or not this statement is actually true I will leave for you to decide. What's more striking (and appropriate to my classical topic) is his evidence, which seems designed to appeal to his audience and certainly reflects his cultural concerns more than it shores up his arguments.

The following example from the transcript of Al-Qassem's interview will serve as an illustration: "I watched a show recently and almost died of laughter. Someone was interviewing a group of Americans in a public park. He asked an American, for example: 'Which terrorist country should America attack?' he answered: 'Italy.' His answers showed he didn't have a clue about what goes on in the world, or where this country is." When I first read this, the reported American response struck me as unbelievable. It may be possible to interview random Americans who can't locate Iraq on a map or who don't know the difference between Iraq and Iran, and that in itself is lamentable proof of our political illiteracy, but Italy? We like to take Mediterranean cruises that stop there. Upon reflection I realized that, while it clearly suits Al-Qassem to exaggerate American ignorance (we don't even know East from West), that's not the only thing he's accomplishing with his example. His laughter also reveals a deep discomfort with the xenophobia which the United States currently projects, as we've gone past lumping all the Muslim countries together and now view everyone equally with suspicion. In other words, even if the response he reports ('Italy') isn't true of the average American, it still truly reflects the perception and concerns of Al-Qassem and his audience.

I bring up this web site because it's fascinating to view one culture through the perspective of another, because even the distortions are interesting, and because – although we Latin teachers

¹ I would like to thank audience and fellow session members for their encouraging responses to an early version of this paper at the April 2007 meeting of CAMWS in Cincinnati, Ohio. Thanks are also due to Charles Lloyd and the two anonymous editors for *CPL Online* for their many challenging comments and helpful suggestions. Needless to say, any remaining errors in judgment are my own.

² This article can no longer be found on the "Watching America" website, most likely due to a problem with its archival search engine. Excerpts remain available on another site, called "Discover the Networks," which is listed in the bibliography.

may be out of luck with this particular web site – we actually have a similar resource in Tacitus' *Germania*, since it allows us a view of the German peoples (both as a group and as individual tribes) from the perspective of a Roman. As far as facts go, the archaeological and iconographic records suggest that Tacitus got some things right, others wrong, while many other things remain difficult to confirm. Still, since Roman concerns determined the topics and Tacitus' own judgments pervade the work, the *Germania* remains valuable to us as Classicists: it says as much about Roman identity as it does about the Germans.³

So far I've been using the words "fascinating" and "interesting" to describe the study of intercultural material, but allow me now briefly to argue that it is also important. In a book entitled *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Martha Nussbaum makes the case for rethinking the undergraduate curriculum so that it more effectively prepares students for the demands of "an age of cultural diversity and increasing internationalization" (6). She bases this case on Stoic philosophy, arguing that, since the Stoics held that "the central task of education ... is to confront the passivity of the pupil, challenging the mind to take charge of its own thought" (28), then perhaps the best way "to wake pupils up" is "to confront them with difference in an area where they had previously thought their own ways neutral, necessary, and natural" (32). This confrontation, she continues, should ultimately encourage three capacities or ways of being in the world: first, the "capacity for the critical examination of oneself and one's traditions – for living ... 'the examined life'" (9); second, the attitude of being a world citizen, or the sense that we as human beings are bound together "by ties of recognition and concern" despite our many real differences; and third, the skill and habit of "narrative imagination," or the ability to imagine life in another person's situation (9-11).

Most of us no doubt feel that this is an encouraging list: we already teach at least one of these capacities (narrative imagination) every day in literature classes; we already teach self-examination and a sense of cultural and linguistic perspective in our language and civilization courses. I would like to go one better and suggest that Tacitus' *Germania* may be uniquely suited to serve as a model of someone striving to achieve all three capacities.⁴ Which is not to downplay the limits of Tacitus' perspective – that certainly merits discussion too – but rather to suggest that our students might nevertheless learn curiosity, respect, and indeed something important about the human experience via this work.

Critical Examination

Ethnographers describe a people's location, origin, and customs. From a modern standpoint, the most successful of these have the appearance of being mere depictions of what is there. But ancient ethnographers made no secret of the fact that they were invested in their representations. In fact, in the *Germania* Tacitus frequently contrasts his own culture's customs quite

³ With this statement I mean to acknowledge both the ethnographer's sincere effort to present accurate information as well as the inevitable interference of his outsider status and perspective. Others have championed more extreme positions: see Anderson who attempts to find archaeological support for all Tacitus' assertions and O'Gorman who states in rather absolute terms that the *Germania* "is about Rome" (135). Perhaps because post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said have only recently provided the theoretical framework for discussing texts as products of the cultures that made them ("as representations, not as 'natural' depictions" (21)), our commentators stress accuracy at the expense of perspective. We have not yet made the most of the *Germania* in our teaching about Roman values in the late first century AD or about the Roman perspective on encounters with foreign peoples.

⁴ Although Nussbaum's book is concerned with the general education curriculum for undergraduates, I believe the same approach would also be appropriate for upper-level high school students. Please see footnote 16 below on introducing high school students and undergraduates to Tacitus' *Germania*.

explicitly with those of the Germans: he starts where his audience is and uses negatives to indicate where German customs differ from the Roman norm. This is most easily seen in Chapters 6, 16, and 25, where Tacitus actually uses phrases such as *non in nostrum morem* (“not according to our custom”) to describe a German custom, but I would argue that this same attitude is present whenever he defines the Germans in negative terms or otherwise highlights difference. It is at precisely these moments that Tacitus may be seen to engage in the critical examination of Roman traditions. This is not to say that his interest in the Germans and their customs is not sincere, but rather to suggest that such confrontations with difference sometimes prompt him to turn his attention back to his own cultural norms with a more critical eye.

One such moment takes place rather early in the work during a discussion of gods and various methods of divining their will (10.2):

et illud quidem etiam hic notum, avium voces volatusque interrogare; proprium gentis equorum quoque praesagia ac monitus experiri: publice aluntur isdem nemoribus ac lucis candidi et nullo mortali opere contacti, quos pressos sacro curru sacerdos ac rex vel princeps civitatis comitantur hinnitusque ac fremitus observant. nec ulli auspicio maior fides, non solum apud plebem, sed apud proceres, apud sacerdotes: se enim ministros deorum, illos conscios putant.⁵

And indeed even here [in Germany] that practice is known, i.e. consulting the calls and flights of birds; it is a characteristic practice of the people also to test the predictions and warnings of horses: these horses are kept at public expense in the same groves and glades; they are white and touched by no human work; and when they are harnessed to the sacred chariot, the priest and king or prince of the state accompany and observe their neighing and snorting. Nor is there greater confidence in any auspice, not only among the common people, but also among the noblemen and among the priests: for they consider that they themselves are the servants of the gods, but that those [horses] are the gods' confidants.

In this description of auspices, Tacitus both allows similarities between Germans and Romans and highlights some key differences. Part of the German practice is familiar, since both groups consult birds. And while the keeping of horses for auspices is not a Roman practice, they might recognize it as similar to the Roman army's custom of keeping chickens; thus the German habit is like the Roman one, only considerably more elaborate. The last part of the passage highlights the fact that belief in this auspice is a shared value: the Germans are not divided in terms of class on this matter; in fact their conception of the role they play in all of this is quite humble. An attentive reader⁶ may notice that this is quite different from the Roman attitude toward religious ritual: while Germans of all classes are said to have faith (*fides*) in this auspice, for Romans religion was more a matter of duties performed than *fides*, more for the lower than for the educated upper classes. But this difference need not surprise us since, as Tacitus remarked in the opening to this

⁵ The texts cited throughout are those edited by Winterbottom and Ogilvie (Oxford 1975).

⁶ A reluctant reader -- a contemporary who is very satisfied with the *status quo*, for example -- may well not make this connection back to the situation in Rome. Tacitus does not force the issue here. Still as the reader encounters more and more of these comparisons, the connections become harder and harder to ignore.

chapter (10.1), the Germans “pay attention to auspices and lots as those who do so the most” (*auspicia sortesque ut qui maxime observant*). By grouping the Germans among the most religious people, Tacitus may indeed be challenging the Romans to do better.

Tacitus describes the habits of German women in terms that also seem designed to throw his own society’s declining values in harsh relief (19.1):

ergo saepta pudicitia agunt, nullis spectaculorum inlecebris, nullis conviviorum iritationibus corruptae. litterarum secreta viri pariter ac feminae ignorant. paucissima in tam numerosa gente adulteria, quorum poena praesens et maritis permissa: adcisus crinibus nudatam coram propinquis expellit domo maritus ac per omnem vicum verberare agit. publicatae enim pudicitiae nulla venia: non forma, non aetate, non opibus maritum invenerit. nemo enim illic vitia ridet, nec corrumpere et corrumpi saeculum vocatur.

Therefore the German women live with their chastity guarded, corrupted by no allurements of games, no stimulation of parties. Men and women alike know nothing of the secrets of written letters.⁷ There are very few instances of adultery among so numerous a people, the punishment for which is immediate and entrusted to the husbands: stripped nude and with her hair cut back, the husband drives her from their home in the presence of her kin, and he drives her with a whip through the entire village. For there is no pardon for chastity once it has been made public: she could not find a husband by means of beauty, youth, or wealth. For no one laughs at vices there, nor is corrupting or being corrupted called ‘the fashion.’

Apart from the vivid description of the adulteress’s punishment in the middle, this entire section on German women seems to be an exercise in negative definition: German women are what Roman women are not; they are not subject to the same temptations; their transgressions are not easily overlooked. Even though a critique of Rome is not Tacitus’ main objective in this passage, there can be no doubt that he has taken this opportunity to express dissatisfaction with contemporary morals.⁸ Roman women are not the only ones who are criticized here, but Roman men as well; since husbands presumably allow participation in *spectacula* and *convivia*, men are part of that society which forgives shame, laughs at vices, and calls corruption ‘the fashion.’

This is as far as Tacitus is willing to go with this critical examination of his own culture’s *mores*, but a modern audience might want to push farther. We might want to talk with our students, for instance, about the harsh punishment of the adulterous woman in this passage – something that Tacitus narrates in a vivid way, but does not explicitly comment upon. We might wonder how his contemporary audience would have felt about this illustration of a husband’s absolute power over

⁷ The point here seems to be about the corrupting power of literacy, whether because it enables lovers to exchange secret (because silent) messages or because it allows poets wide influence over others with their accounts of erotic excess. Although in Latin the noun *litterarum* is ambiguous, as it might convey the meanings “letters” or “literature,” a translator must necessarily choose one or the other.

⁸ Indeed Tacitus uses this same phrase (*corrumpere et corrumpi*) once again in *Annales* 14.20.4 where, as part of a critique of society under Nero, conservatives are said to have worried that traditional customs (*patrios mores*) were in the process of being completely overturned with the result that “whatever is able to corrupt or be corrupted anywhere is now seen” in Rome.

his wife. We might also wonder about the adulterous woman's partner in the affair. Does Tacitus leave him out because the Germans did not hold him responsible in any way, or was there also a punishment for him?⁹ Indeed this passage raises many interesting questions for modern readers about marriage, fidelity, and a woman's autonomy under a patriarchy, ancient or modern. Such a discussion, even though beginning in a Latin or Roman civilization classroom, might extend to Afghanistan and the extreme public punishments prescribed for women who violated the decrees of the Taliban. We might consider the many cultures today that arrange marriages for women while they are still young girls, or those that consider the remarriage of a divorced or widowed woman taboo.¹⁰ Eventually the conversation would return to the traditions and practices that answer these same concerns for us, for example abstinence-only sex education or the way that the wedding industry markets primarily to women. In this way Tacitus' critical examination can lead to our own.

World Citizen

An awareness of difference can lead us to the critical examination of our own traditions, but we do not want to stop there. As Nussbaum observes, the goal of a confrontation with difference is not merely to allow it to bring us to a better knowledge of ourselves, but also to bring us into the world, to lead us to understand that even the most seemingly bizarre custom arises out of a familiar impulse. Once again Tacitus' *Germania* may serve as a model of this process of evaluating different customs and recognizing that such differences ultimately stem from common human circumstances.

Our first example concerns women's dress and the related topic of marriage and monogamy (17.2-18.1):

nec alius feminis quam viris habitus, nisi quod feminae saepius lineis amictibus velantur eosque purpura variant, partemque vestitus superioris in manicas non extendunt, nudae brachia ac lacertos; sed et proxima pars pectoris patet. quamquam severa illic matrimonia, nec ullam morum partem magis laudaveris. nam prope soli barbarorum singulis uxoribus contenti sunt, exceptis admodum paucis qui non libidine sed ob nobilitatem plurimis nuptiis ambiuntur.

Nor is there a different dress for women than for men, except for the fact that women are more often covered with linen cloaks and they add interest to them with purple thread, and women do not stretch part of the upper garment into sleeves, but rather have bare lower and upper arms; even the part of the chest nearby is bare. And yet marriages there are strict, nor would you praise any part of their customs more. For nearly alone of the barbarians the Germans are satisfied with one wife each, with the exception of only a few men who are courted by very many marriages not because of lust but on account of their high position.

⁹ A careful reading of the text suggests that his punishment may be hinted at in Chapter 12, where Tacitus notes that those who are *corpore infames* ("disreputable in terms of the body") will be drowned, as such shameful acts (*flagitia*) should be hidden and not seen.

¹⁰ For example, until quite recently in India widowed women in traditional Hindu society were not allowed to work or to marry again. Indeed their physical appearance (shaved head and distinctive dress) marked them as other. This situation is effectively dramatized by Deepa Mehta's 2006 film "Water."

Thus Tacitus describes the clothing of German women as much the same as that of their male counterparts, with the only difference being the occasional addition of an extra wrap and a little decoration, and the subtraction of sleeves. The ethnographer knows how his audience thinks respectable women should dress; indeed he is only too aware of the fact that a Roman noblewoman wears layers and layers of garments as a sign of her wealth as well as her chastity. Precisely because he can anticipate what his audience will think, he acknowledges the temptation that the bare skin might be imagined to cause, but then assures his readers that, despite the German women's comparatively revealing clothing, they are in fact very chaste: one would certainly praise their marriages.¹¹ And so we see Tacitus as a world citizen here, as he acknowledges the different style of dress practiced by the Germans, but insists that this difference comes from a familiar impulse to protect and decorate the body, and yet retain necessary mobility. Indeed the important economic role of German women was described only two chapters earlier (15), where women are said to take care of the house, hearth, and fields. Their different style of dress must be evaluated and interpreted on its own terms, as a function of its own culture's division of labor.

There are other aspects of the Germans' lives that Tacitus acknowledges as different, but recognizes as only too human. One is their addiction to a strange beverage made of rotted barley and wheat (Chapter 23). Another is their habit of playing high stakes dice, during which they bet their very freedom on the final throw (24.3-4):

aleam, quod mirere, sobrii inter seria exercent, tanta lucrandi perpendive temeritate, ut, cum omnia defecerunt, extremo ac novissimo iactu de libertate ac de corpore contendant. victus voluntariam servitutem adit; quamvis iuvenior, quamvis robustior alligari se ac venire patitur. ea est in re prava pervicacia; ipsi fidem vocant. servos condicionis huius per commercia tradunt, ut se quoque pudore victoriae exsolvant.

And this is something which you may marvel at: they play dice among serious business and while sober, [but] with so much thoughtlessness of winning or losing that when they have lost everything, with the last and very final throw they bet on their freedom and their body. The loser goes into voluntary servitude; although he may be the younger, although he may be the stronger, he allows himself to be tied up and sold. There is a perverse stubbornness in this business; they themselves call it loyalty. They trade slaves of this type, so that they may release themselves from the shame of victory.

The Germans, who are drunk most of the time,¹² are sober while engaged in a pastime that the Romans themselves associated with festival time (at best) and debauchery (at worst). In this instance Tacitus anticipates that his audience will have some trouble understanding this custom of gambling with such serious stakes: "you may marvel at this," he says. Indeed this practice seems mind-boggling to Tacitus himself: although he recognizes a familiar impulse in these barbarians, he cannot abide by its careless indulgence (*temeritas*). Although he tries to understand the practice on

¹¹ This verb (*laudaveris*) is one of the fairly rare instances of a second person form in this work. Third person verb forms are the norm in an ethnography such as this one, as the historian aims to report on the activities and beliefs of others. For this reason the occasional use of first and second person verb forms are suggestive of how Tacitus envisions his relationship with his audience.

¹² The previous two chapters (22 and 23) had described the German customs regarding the consumption of alcohol.

their terms, he ultimately rejects it as folly, as to do otherwise would require the inversion of such basic terms as free and slave, strong and weak, stubbornness (*pervicacia*) and loyalty (*fides*).

The very fact that Tacitus anticipates his audience's response to these two topics (women's dress and gambling) indicates that he is only too aware that they are likely to project their perspectives onto these foreign peoples. He intervenes in order to redirect their process and help them both to see the Germans on their own terms and also to understand that they are driven by familiar concerns and interests: like us, the Germans enjoy gambling and want to do the right thing by honoring a bet, however extreme; like us, the German women choose their costumes for work conditions, comfort, and decoration. In this way Tacitus encourages his readers to become world citizens as we recognize that, despite our differences, we still have a great deal in common.

Narrative Imagination

As an historian, Tacitus routinely engages in the habit of "narrative imagination," as he offers various explanations for the decisions and actions leaders make. Likewise, as an ethnographer, he frequently offers various explanations for German cultural practices by imagining life among them. Still, as we will see, some explanations are more perceptive than others.

One particularly interesting example of this appears in a passage on the physical appearance of the Suebi, as Tacitus tries to explain why they wear their hair as they do (38.2-4):

insigne gentis obliquare crinem nodoque substringere; sic Suebi a ceteris Germanis, sic Sueborum ingenui a servis separantur. ... usque ad canitiem horrentem capillum retro sequuntur, ac saepe in ipso vertice religant. principes et ornatiorem habent; ea cura formae, sed innoxia; neque enim ut ament amenturve, in altitudinem quandam et terrorem adituri bella compti ut hostium oculis ornantur.

It is distinctive of this people to twist their hair and to tie it in a knot; in this way the Suebi are separated from the other Germans and the freeborn are separated from the slaves. ... the men maintain this hairstyle all the way to bristling old age, and often they tie it back on the very top of the head.

Princes have even more elaborate hair; this is their care for appearance, but it's innocent; for they are not fixed up so that they may love or be loved [but rather], as they are about to enter wars, [they are] combed to a considerable height and terror as if for the eyes of the enemy.

The physical appearance of the Suebi would have been quite different from most other Germans, and certainly from all Romans, but still Tacitus aims to understand it in terms that are familiar to him. He starts with race and class, imagining that the Germans would be interested in maintaining some difference in appearance between themselves and other Germans, and between *servi* and *ingenui*. He then acknowledges vanity briefly, before dismissing it on the grounds that these men are far too innocent, too child-like to be libidinous. Instead he settles on an attempt to gain physical height and to induce terror in the enemy. We have a variety of literary and iconographic evidence that depicts this hairknot (Rives 285), but none of this evidence can provide a more satisfactory explanation for the style. Tacitus' explanation – considering class, vanity, and intimidation as motives – shows a considerable ability to identify with his enemy.

But, like most of us, Tacitus is not always able to imagine reasons why other people do the things they do; sometimes his own experiences make him blind to alternative explanations. An example of such a failure of narrative imagination occurs in this passage wherein Tacitus comments on the Germans' living arrangements (16.1):

nullas Germanorum populis urbes habitari satis notum est, ne pati quidem inter se iunctas sedes. colunt discreti ac diversi, ut fons, ut campus, ut nemus placuit. vicos locant non in nostrum morem conexas et cohaerentibus aedificiis; suam quisque domum spatio circumdat, sive adversus casus ignis remedium sive inscitia aedificandi.

It is fairly well known that no cities are inhabited by the peoples of the Germans, and that they don't even endure their residences to be connected to each other. They live separate and divided, where a spring, where a field, where a grove has appealed to them. They position their villages not in our manner with buildings connected and depending on each other; but rather each one surrounds his own home with space, whether as a preventative measure against accidents of fire or because of a lack of knowledge of building.

In order to explain the placement of homes in isolation throughout the countryside, Tacitus first imagines that some physical feature of the landscape has appealed to them. This is certainly feasible, as a water source and possible sources of food (from field or forest) were then and still remain important criteria in planning a successful settlement. Still, as he next discusses their tendency to scatter homes throughout the countryside rather than group them together, Tacitus shows less understanding. While he acknowledges that their choice is not familiar (*non in nostrum morem*), he seems unable to explain it in any but familiar terms. Since fires were a serious threat in crowded Roman neighborhoods, he imagines that the Germans planned their communities very deliberately to avoid that threat. The only other explanation he can imagine is a lack of building knowledge.

But the passage continues with the topic of the defense of these individual homes, as Tacitus describes the Germans' method of hiding goods of value from invaders.¹³ Although he doesn't mention defense earlier, it is certainly a concern throughout the passage, as the Romans themselves tended to group their dwellings together in hill-top towns because these both provided a view of an approaching enemy and were more defensible in the case of attack. The fact that the German attitude toward attack and defense was so different from the Roman one ultimately frustrates Tacitus' understanding, much as it may have also frustrated the Romans' many attempts to conquer Germany, since they found it to be a considerable challenge to overcome militarily an enemy with no clear center of power.

So, while he imagines a couple of reasons for this difference, his imagination is ultimately limited by his experience. Such a failure is no less instructive than a success, as it allows us to talk together about how ignorance of different cultural *mores* can frustrate attempts to understand each other. For example, in her recent book, *The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and*

¹³ 16.2: et si quando hostis advenit aperta populatur, abdita autem et defossa aut ignorantur aut eo ipso fallunt quod quaerenda sunt. ("And if, when the enemy has come, he raids the goods out in the open, still the hidden and buried things are not known about or they deceive by the very fact that they have to be searched for.")

World Affairs, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has commented that the failure of American policymakers to make an effort to understand the religious traditions of others has had a profoundly negative effect on diplomatic relations.

Watching Germania

The *Germania* isn't a text that many Latin students read today, and I imagine that there are several reasons for this: there are so many other 'more important' texts to read, it still appears to many to be more about Germany than about Rome, Tacitus says some insensitive and even embarrassing things about foreigners, Tacitus' prose is somewhat difficult, and there aren't any good texts for undergraduates out there. I've tried to answer the first three of these objections already, so let me respond to the final two now.

It is indeed hard to find a good text of the *Germania* for today's Latin students. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (especially 1880-1938), there was a good deal of interest in reading this text; German scholars were the most enthusiastic, not surprisingly, as they imagined that they were learning about their own distant ancestors, but English-language commentaries were also being produced by William Frances Anderson (1880), George Stuart (1885), Duane Reed Stuart (1923), and J.G.C. Anderson (1938). This last text has remained the only English commentary on the *Germania* in print until very recently, largely due to the fact that it was so very thorough, especially with respect to the archaeological evidence. But the fact that this text was published before the Second World War may also be significant: in the years following the Nazi regime teachers may have felt uncomfortable recommending to their students a work that at least in part glorifies Germany. An unfortunate effect of this discomfort is that many students were denied the opportunity to reflect on how much the *Germania* really has to say about the Romans of Tacitus' day, not to mention how it might serve as a model for negotiating difference.

Happily, two important resources for teachers (a Latin commentary and a historical commentary) have been published within the last ten years.¹⁴ The former was produced by Herbert Benario, the preeminent American scholar of Tacitus' *Germania*: he has published a facing-page Latin text and translation with notes (Aris and Phillips 1999); that format will be of limited use for undergraduate students of Latin, but will no doubt aid teachers in need of textual and cultural guidance as well as researchers in related disciplines. The historical commentary by J.B. Rives (Oxford University Press 1999) likewise seems to have been designed primarily for those in related disciplines. This volume does not offer a Latin text or notes on the challenges of Tacitus' language, so again will be of limited use to students struggling with Tacitus' language; still, it will be of tremendous use to teachers because of both its many cross-references to other Latin texts that illuminate Tacitus' prose as well as its summaries of relevant archaeological information from throughout northern Europe.

Despite the great value of these two texts, there remains a need for a new English-language commentary on the *Germania* aimed at advanced high school students and undergraduates. I am currently working on just such a project: "A Reader's Commentary" in which the notes are designed to coach students through Tacitus' prose by encouraging the development of their expectations as readers.¹⁵ In addition, the notes encourage an awareness of Tacitus' struggle to describe a foreign

¹⁴ I have not included in this discussion another useful resource for students and teachers (the text and word study tools available through the Perseus Project) because it does not include any sustained commentary. Still this resource might help students interpret forms of fourth declension nouns as well as some obscure vocabulary.

¹⁵ My pedagogical method here has been informed by the work of Deborah Pennell Ross.

culture through his own interpretative lens by including summaries of archaeological finds to show his accuracy, as well as Roman cultural and literary material to illustrate what was normal to him and his contemporaries. In this way the commentary will engage students in intercultural analysis while also easing their transition to a sometimes difficult author.¹⁶

Although reading Tacitus can be challenging, in my experience students work hard at anything that they are interested in, and today's students are interested in how Rome gained its empire.¹⁷ As Tacitus himself acknowledged, at the time of this work's composition Rome had been at war with Germany for 210 years or one quarter of its existence. And yet Tacitus could write an ethnographic treatise that included not only tolerance, but praise as well. What would be the equivalent of this in our society? To me this is worth thinking and talking about in a Latin classroom.

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***Germania* Texts and Commentaries in Print: An Annotated Bibliography**

Anderson, J. G. C. *Tacitus: Germania*. London: Bristol Classical Press. 1997 (1938).

Contents: An introduction, Latin text, and commentary with copious notes on historical, archaeological, and linguistic topics. Notes sometimes translate large chunks of Latin for the student and at other times assume the knowledge of Greek.

Benario, Herbert. *Tacitus: Germania*. Oxford: Aris and Phillips. 1999.

Contents: An introduction, Latin text with English translation on facing pages, and commentary with notes on matters of grammar, syntax, vocabulary and literary appreciation. The first English language commentary on the *Germania* since Anderson's; comparatively much more up-to-date in terms of the archaeological record and Tacitean scholarship.

¹⁶ I believe that advanced high school students would be entirely capable of reading the *Germania*. Although Tacitus' style can be compressed and asymmetrical, students can be taught to anticipate and work past these challenges. Still some chapters are more accessible than others and, while each teacher is the best judge of what she/he will be able to teach successfully, I would definitely encourage the selection of certain chapters: 9-10 on gods and prophecy, 15-27 on daily life including dress, food, and entertainment, as well as 37 on Rome's long engagement with Germania. Undergraduates will need the same tutorial on style, but can read the work in its entirety within nine or ten weeks.

¹⁷ On the matter of teaching this difficult topic responsibly, please see "Paedagogus: Special Section on Classics and Colonialism" in *Classical World* 96 (2003): 409-433. Authors include Peter W. Rose, Sally Macewen, Judith Perkins, and Donald Lateiner.

Rives, J. B. *Tacitus: Germania*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. 1999.

Contents: English translation (no Latin text) with an introduction and extensive notes on historical, archaeological, and anthropological topics from the perspective of a modern historian.

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