

Materializing Agricola: Why the *Agricola* Matters

Although Harrison (2007) and Sailor (2008) have published on modes of representation and their problems in the *Agricola*, no one has paid attention to the relationship between the many materials presented in the text and their roles in accurately portraying Agricola the man. As Harrison found, Tacitus “textualizes” the soul and memory of his father-in-law Agricola into literature, a form more permanent than the human body and reputation. Yet in his attempt for commemoration Tacitus explores the permanence of various media beyond Agricola in the flesh: statue, commemorative materials (marble, bronze, and *imago*), and finally the book. Coincidentally, he “materializes” Agricola in the process.

The different materials are associated either with the public or private spheres of Rome. How should the reader reconcile these other material representations to Agricola in the flesh? This study will examine the use of these four materials to identify fully the issue of Agricola’s representation in the public and private spheres under Domitian. Tacitus ultimately settles on his intended medium, the book which becomes the *Agricola*. Nevertheless, the other representations remain for consideration.

By first identifying these representations of Agricola and then by comparing and contrasting each medium's degree of permanence, the reader then can see a more complete picture of Agricola and Domitianic Rome. I first define “materialization” as the act of transforming Agricola into materials (recall Harrison's use of “textualize”) through representation, imitation, and re-creation. I then identify and explain the public- and private-associated material forms present in the text. I conclude that through incorporation of these media, Tacitus presents a balance between Agricola's private and public representations, understood only by consideration of the materializations throughout the text. Tacitus is able to

translate “whatever we loved of Agricola” (Tac. *Agr.* 46.4, *quidquid ex Agricola amavimus*) into the tangible medium of the book. He ensures a commemoration more permanent than the ephemeral fame frequently recognized by Domitian throughout the text.

Selected Bibliography

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