

**A COMMENTARY ON CHAPTERS 39 - 46 OF
DE VITA IULII AGRICOLAE BY CORNELIUS TACITUS**

BY

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Abstract:

Julius Agricola was the Roman Governor of Britain 77 - 84 AD. He completed the conquest of the province, finally defeating the Caledonian tribes in the far north of Scotland at the Battle of *Mons Graupius*, in the process achieving a reputation for efficiency and sound command. His son-in-law was the historian Cornelius Tacitus who wrote a short biography to honour the memory of the great man a few years after his death. This commentary deals with the final 8 chapters of the work which are concerned with Agricola's return to Rome after his service in Britain and his final years. It intended for the benefit of advanced Latin students to assist them in translating and understanding the text.

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TACITUS - DE VITA IULII AGRICOLAE
A COMMENTARY ON CHAPTERS 39 – 46

INTRODUCTION

Agricola (Agr.) died in 93 AD, aged 54 years (Tac. *Agr.* 44.1). He was at home with his wife at his bedside (45.9) having served Rome loyally during a career which followed the conventional pattern of the *cursus honorum*. Starting at the age of about 18, he was a military tribune in Britain before holding a series of civilian and military appointments including: quaestor in Asia, praetor in Rome, commander of a legion in Britain, Governor of Aquitania and suffect consul in 76 AD. However, it was his appointment as Governor of Britain, 77-84, which was the culmination of his service. During that time, he completed the conquest of the province, finally defeating the Caledonian tribes at the Battle of *Mons Graupius* (*Agr.* 36-38) before being recalled to Rome.

In about 76, Agr. married his daughter to Tacitus (Tac.) then a young man (*Agr.* 9.8) who had 'devoted the last years of his education to the study of oratory as was normal for a youth who was aspiring to a career of public service' (O&R p.8). Tac.'s career then advanced rapidly leading to duty as a suffect consul in 97 during the short reign of Emperor Nerva. The *Agr.* is his first work and was written either during or shortly after his consulship, that is to say, after the death of Nerva and early in the reign of Trajan (3.1). It was published in 98 (Martin 1981 p.39) and Tac. states that his motive for writing it was to honour his father-in-law and as expression of affection (3.4).

Agr. was appointed Governor of Britain by Emperor Vespasian and he continued in post under Titus and then Domitian. Domitian was highly regarded by the Army (Waters 1964 p.71), careful in fiscal policy (Galimberti 2016 p.103) and insistent on honest and restrained rule in the provinces (Jones 1992 p.109) but he was a complex character. Somewhat reclusive, he paid little attention to the sensitivities of the senatorial class (Jones 1992 p.179) and his very real achievements were overshadowed towards the end of his reign by increasing concern for his own safety which led to the ruthless execution of perceived opponents (Galimberti 2016 p.10). When he was assassinated (96 AD) there was a general

feeling of relief in Rome that the spirit of freedom was returning to public affairs and Tac. was of the opinion that the succeeding Emperors, Nerva and Trajan, then combined things once considered incompatible, namely liberty and the Principate (3.1). This transition from tyranny to relative freedom forms the psychological backdrop to the *Agr.* which is a carefully structured work, rich in meaning, the 46 chapters being arranged as follows:

Introduction (1 – 3)

Early life (4 – 9)

Britain and Agr.'s campaigns culminating in the Battle of *Mons Graupius* (10 – 38)

Final years (39 – 43)

Conclusion (44 – 46)

W&K point out (p.2) that 'the work as a whole is an almost perfect example of circular or 'ring' composition'. Themes and language in the introduction find echoes in the conclusion. Likewise, the chapters on Agr.'s later years reflect the chapters on his early life. As well as biographical and historical aspects, the work touches on a range of themes including the Roman approach to Empire, issues of liberty and freedom, and the relationship between the Senate and the Principate. Unsurprisingly, Tac.'s account contains no word of criticism of his father-in-law and it is generous in its praise both for his achievements and his personal qualities. It is difficult to avoid the feeling that it is not entirely objective, emphasis being placed on Agr.'s virtues and Domitian's faults, but the extent of bias is difficult to gauge.

In Latin literature, subject matter determined style, so in the *Agr.*: 'the opening and closing sections are oratorical and show close affinities with the periods and diction of Cicero; the central narrative ... recalls the literary technique of Sallust and Livy' (O&R p.22). A detailed account of Tac.'s style is to be found in Woodman (2009, Ch. 13 by Oakley) and of his style more specifically in the *Agr.* in: Gudeman 1899 pp. xxiv - xxxvii, O&R pp. 21 - 31, Bews 1987. Some of the main features, insofar as they are illustrated in Chapters 39 – 46, include the following:

Brevity:

ellipsis: 41.3 *possessione (provinciarum ?)*

suppression of copula: 39.3 *id sibi maxime formidulosum (erat)*

compression to obscurity: 39.3 *ducis boni imperatoriam virtutem esse*

Use of epigrammatic *sententiae*:

42.6 *proprium humani ingenii est odisse quem laeseris*

42.7 *posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse*

Choice of words:

uncommon words: 39.1 *derisus* in the sense of 'an object of scorn'

avoidance of normal expressions: 45.5 *pro virili portione* (for *pro virili parte*)

Rhetorical devices:

accumulation of synonyms: 44.8 *intervalla ac spiramenta*

alliteration: 46.4 *inglorios et ignobiles oblivio obruet*

tricolon auctum: 45.6 *adsidere valetudini, fovere deficientum, satiari vultu
complexuque*

anaphora: 40.4 *noctu in urbem, noctu in Palatium*

clausulae: 42.7 *inclārŭērŭnt*

Conventions for referring to the manuscripts vary. Since this this commentary is based on the OCT text, the OCT conventions will be used. The main manuscripts are:

A (Vaticanus Latinus 3429). 15th century; not yet available on the Vatican website.

B (Vaticanus Latinus 4498). 15th century; available on the Vatican website.

Codex Aesinas. This is held in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome and is available online on the Biblioteca website but many pages are difficult to read. It includes a number of works, the *Agr.* occupying folios 56 - 63. The various parts of the manuscript of *Agr.* within the *Codex Aesinas* are referred to as follows:

E (referred to as H in W&K and Teubner). The central section of text, chapters 13.1 - 40.2, was written in the 9th century in Carolingian minuscule. It is thought these pages came from a manuscript written at the Abbey of Hersfeld in Germany.

e (E in W&K and Teubner). The two outer portions of text, ie chapters 1-12 and 40.3 to the end. These were copied by a 15th century scribe, although which text he copied from is uncertain.

The precise relationship between A and B and between both of them and the *Codex Aesinas* is disputed (W&K p.36).

As mentioned above, the text used in this commentary is the Oxford Classical Text (OCT). Each sentence has been numbered so that, for example, a reference to 45.4 relates to the 4th sentence in Chapter 45; other commentaries number differently.

39

Agricola served for 7 years as Governor of Britain and he was recalled to Rome in the spring of 84 AD (Birley 1999, p.xlix) or the winter of 84-85 AD (O&R *ad loc*). During his command he had built a reputation for fairness and efficiency (*Agr.* 18-22) and had recently won a major victory over the Celtic tribes at *Mons Graupius* (*Agr.* 29-38) which meant that, at least temporarily, the Romans controlled the whole of Britain. However, according to Tac., his reputation and popularity with the army was a source of envy to Domitian who feared the situation in which the name of a subject should be raised in public esteem above that of the Emperor: 39.3 *privati hominis nomen supra principem attolli*. Domitian was particularly sensitive because his own military exploits in Germany had not achieved the sort of results which attracted popular acclaim and his return to Rome had been regarded as a false triumph and a mockery: 39.2 *derisui fuisse nuper falsum e Germania triumphum*. Therefore, Domitian received the returning Agricola with reservations, with a happy face but anxiety in his heart: 39.1 *fronte laetus pectore anxius exceptit*; he decided to act cautiously until Agr.'s reputation and the acclamation of the Army faded: 39.4 *impetus famae and favor exercitus languesceret*.

39.1

hunc rerum cursum ... exceptit: Compressed language for 'he received <information about> this course of events...'. Compression to inject momentum into narrative is one of the characteristics of Tac.'s style, another example being at 42.6: *Domitiani vero natura praeceps in iram et quo obscurior <erat> eo inrevocabiliior <fiebat>...*

iactantia: *iactantia* (OLD s.v.2, 'showing off, ostentation, parade') is used by Tac. and his contemporaries instead of the older *iactatio* (OLD s.v.3, 'boasting, boastfulness'). However, in *Agr.*, Tac. uses both words: *iactatio* at 5.2, 42.6 and *iactantia* at 25.1 and here at 39.1. Tac. repeatedly draws attention to Agr.'s modesty and lack of ostentation, for example at

40.5 he describes Agr. in retirement as: *cultu modicus, sermone facilis, uno aut altero amicorum comitatus* and at 44.6: *opibus nimis non gaudebat*. By contrast, Domitian's faults are highlighted; for example in 39.4 he is said show to show *saevae cogitationis indicium* and *odium* while at 43.8 *tam caeca et corrupta mens adsiduis adulationibus erat*

epistulis: 'It was customary in any war for the general to send ... dispatches to the Senate, when reporting victory, in the traditional form of waxed wooden tablets ...' (Osgood 2009 p.338). During the Principate, a well-developed system of government communication, the *cursus publicus*, was in place by which routine dispatches could be moved at the rate of about 50 miles per day (OCD s.v. Post). The system relied not, as in earlier days, on relays of couriers on horseback, but carriages (*vehicula*) in which messengers travelled for many days in succession (Ramsay 1925, p.61). Direct evidence is lacking, but since the shortest road route from London to Rome is about 1,200 miles, one might suppose that a report to the Senate from Britain would have taken at least 24 days and perhaps more likely a month.

moris: *moris esse* 'to be customary' (OLD s.v.3b; also G&L 366 r.2). Also used at 42.7: *sciunt, quibus moris est inclita mirari*.

fronte laetus pectore anxius: A memorable, asyndetic sequence with contrasting content: noun + adjective + noun + adjective. Tac. is employing innuendo against Domitian in powerful words, implying he is insincere, as also in 42.4: *qui paratus simulatione, in androgantiam compositus*

39.2

inerat conscientia: 'he felt conscious' OLD *insum* s.v.3 'of qualities, characteristics etc, to be present in, possessed by'. As also in Tac. *Hist.* 4.41: *quis flagitii conscientia inerat* 'who felt conscious of guilt'.

falsum ... triumphum: This refers to Domitian's campaign against the Chatti in 83 AD when the frontier was advanced and secured in the Taunus district of Germany (O&R *ad loc*). Domitian was present in person in the military zone during the campaign (Jones 1992 p.150)

and on return to Rome awarded himself a triumph as well as claiming a new title, *Germanicus* (*ibid.* p.129). Tac. here refers to it as a '*falsum triumphum*' as, in his view, Domitian's achievements were slight, particularly when compared with those of Agr. in Britain. Furthermore, the Chatti were far from beaten and Domitian needed to turn his attention to them again in 89 AD (*ibid.* p.150). Suetonius in *Dom.*6 is less emotive and does not repeat the slur of the false triumph; he simply comments that Domitian awarded himself a double triumph: *de Chattis Dacisque post varia proelia duplicem triumphum egit.*

emptis: Agrees with an antecedent of *quorum* which is understood, eg, *servis* or *hominibus*.

per commercia: 'through trade'; see also 24.3 and 28.5

habitus et crinis in captivorum speciem formarentur: Changing the appearance of men to make them appear like captives taken in war was also attributed by Suetonius to the Emperor Caligula in *Calig.* 47: *praeter captivos ac transfugas barbaros Galliarum quoque procerissimum ... ac nonnullos ex principibus legit ac seposuit ad pompam coegitque non tantum rutilare et summittere comam sed et sermonem Germanicum addiscere ...*

tot milibus hostium caesis: Having caused the slaughter of thousands of enemy, Agr. was considered to have won a great victory. Public opinion in Rome was not offended by the terrible cost in lives and destruction which expanding and maintaining the Empire entailed and it proudly saw the Empire as a positive good, a civilizing force which promoted peace, as expressed by Virgil at *Aen.* 6.851 – 853:

*Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, momento;
Hae tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subiectis, et debellare superbos.*

However, Tac., while generally endorsing the expansion of the Empire, was simultaneously alert to its drawbacks (Ten Berge 2023 p.59). In *Agr.* 30.4 he places the following resounding words into the mouth of the Caledonian chieftain, Calgacus, before the battle of *Mons Graupius*, referring to the Romans: *aufferre, trucidare, rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt pacem appellant.*

fama: *fama* is an important word in the *Agr.* occurring 23 times, of which 6 instances are in Chapters 39-46, namely at: 39.2, 39.4, 40.5, 42.6, 44.7 and 46.4. The OLD provides a range of meanings including: 1. news; 2. rumour; 3. story, tradition; 4. public opinion; 5. reputation; 6. good name 7. fame, glory. Variants of meaning 7. are suitable here so *ingenti fama celebrari* can be translated as: [and now there was a true and great victory ...] 'to be celebrated with great glory'. The concept of *fama* and the various nuances of usage and meaning are explored in depth by Hardie (2012 pp.1-47).

39.3

privati hominis: OLD *privatus* s.v. 2, 'not holding public office ... private, unofficial ... emphasising subject status'. At this stage, *Agr.* still held a public office namely that of Governor of Britain, although soon to hand over; as such he was subject to orders from the Emperor. In *Hist.* 1.49 Tac. describes the deceased Emperor Galba as: *maior privato visus dum privatus fuit* 'he seemed greater than a subject while he was in fact a subject'.

frustra studia fori and civilium artium decus in silentium acta: 'In vain had public eloquence and the grace of civilian professions been silenced' (O&R). W&K explain that *studia fori* refers to the processes of law and *civilium atrium decus* 'indicates nothing more specific than the pursuits of civilian rather than military life'.

ducis boni imperatoriam virtutem esse: This is an expression of uncertain meaning, perhaps the result of Tac. searching for a memorable *sententia*. The words have been much debated and variously translated; proposals include: 'good generalship was the Emperor's virtue' (O&R); and 'good generalship belonged to the Emperor' (Birley 1999 p.28); W&K produce 2 variants: '<but> the excellence of a good leader was an imperial <excellence>', and '<but> a commander's prowess belonged to the Good Leader.' Taking *imperatorius* as OLD 3 'imperial' and translating literally gives: 'imperial virtue [is characteristic of] a good leader'. However it is translated into English, Tac. seems to be making the point that in Domitian's mind, military distinction was the exclusive preserve of the Emperor and that *Agr.*, with his record of military success, was encroaching on the Emperor's preserve.

39.4

saevae cogitationis indicium erat: One of the stock figures of rhetoric in late Republic and early Empire was the tyrant to whom were regularly attributed the vices of *saevitia*, *avaritia*, *vis*, *superbia*, *libido* and *crudelitas* (Dunkle 1971 p.15). The use of the word *saevae* reinforces the notion that Domitian is a tyrant as already signalled in *Agr.* 3.2: *multi fortuitis casibus promptissimum quisque saevitia principis interciderunt.*

secreto suo satiatus: Domitian had the reputation of being reclusive. Suetonius relates how: *inter initia principatus cotidie secretum sibi horarum sumere solebat nec quicquam amplius quam muscas captare ac stilo praeacuto configure* (Suet. *Dom.* 3); and: *ad horam somni nihil aliud quam solus secreto deambulat* (*Dom.* 21).

in praesentia: ie, *in praesentia (tempora)*. Elsewhere, Tacitus uses *in praesens (tempus)* eg. at *Ann.* 1.4: *nulla in praesens formidine* 'with no fear for the present'; he also uses *e praesentibus (temporibus)* eg. at *Ann.* 2.80: *nec ... omisit tutissima e praesentibus* 'he did not omit the safest things in the present circumstances'.

impetus famae ... languesceret: *impetus* + gen, OLD s.v. 7, 'a sudden accession, fit, burst of passion, anger', etc. As also in *Ann.* 4.21: *etiam si impetus offensione languerat.* Here *fama* means 'reputation' (OLD s.v. 6) or 'fame' (OLD s.v.7).

etiam tum Agricola Britannia obtinebat: Perhaps, understandably, Domitian was concerned that *Agr.*, with four legions under his command in Britain, might have been tempted to follow the example of other provincial governors and seek to become Emperor. He must have been acutely aware, for example, that his own father, Vespasian, had become Emperor in 69 AD after receiving the support of legions in Judaea and Egypt. And it was Vespasian who had appointed *Agr.* to the governorship of Britain in 77.

40.1

triumphalia ornamenta et inlustris statuæ honorem: During the Roman Republic, successful generals could be awarded the right to hold a triumphal procession through Rome. However, to emphasise the subordination of generals to the Emperor, the privilege was restricted after 19 BC to members of the imperial family. Instead, 'deserving commanders were, on imperial initiative, awarded *triumphalia ornamenta*' (OCD s.v. *ornamenta*). While the practice varied over time, the *ornamenta* included a triumphal costume and laurel crown granted by the Senate but 'the only substantial honour was seen not in the *ornamenta* themselves but in the *statua laureata* (or *triumphalis*) which portrayed the recipient wearing some of them' (Eichholz 1972 p.160). From 2 BC onwards the bronze statues of *triumphatores* and the recipients of *triumphalia ornamenta* were erected in the *Forum Augusti* (*ibid.* p.160). So, it seems that after his successful 7 years campaigning in Britain, Agr. was treated in line with contemporary protocol, at least as far as formal, public recognition was concerned.

verborum honore: A set phrase as in Liv. 28.4: *Scipio conlaudatio fratre cum quanto poterat verborum honore ...* 'It refers to the fulsome terms of the decree passed by the Senate' (O&R).

cumulata: The neuter, plural participle relates to *ornamenta* (n.plu), *honorem* (m.sing), and *quidquid* (n.sing). A&G (2000) para. 287.3 explains that where an adjective relates to 2 or more nouns of different genders, it is usually neuter if the things referred to are without life.

decerni ... iubet: 'Such honours were decreed by the Senate but usually on the initiative of the *princeps*. (O&R *ad loc*).

addique: The paradosis, shown in Manuscript E, *addique* is preserved in the OCT, Loeb, Teubner and O&R editions. W&K prefer an adjustment proposed by Muretus, *additque*, on the grounds that Domitian is then clearly making two separate actions, recommending the award of triumphal ornaments and recommending the appointment of Agr. to Syria. As elsewhere, Tac.'s brevity obscures precisely what was taking place and different

interpretations are possible; it is not clear, for example, whether the two actions took place on the same or separate occasions. The W&K case for adjustment is weak.

Syriam provinciam ... Atili Rufi consularis: Syria was incorporated into the Roman Empire in about 64 BC and was, under the Principate, an important military command (OCD s.v. Syria) garrisoned at various times by 3 or 4 legions. Atilius Rufus was a Governor who died in post in 84 AD thus creating a vacancy (Syme 1981 p.134). After his success commanding a force of similar size in Britain, Agr. might have been a strong candidate to fill the vacancy were it not for the fact that a *vir triumphalis* was not normally appointed to another command (Jones 1992 p.58). In spite of this prohibition, Tac. says that Domitian suggested that Agr. should be chosen but, whatever exchanges then took place between the Emperor and the Senate, it is certain that Agr. did not go to Syria.

maioribus: Among possible meanings of *maior* are: OLD 3 'older, elder'; OLD 6a 'greater in power or reputation, more eminent'. W&K prefer the meaning 'more eminent' because the Governor of Syria had a powerful army. However, according to O&R *ad loc:* '*maior* never means 'more eminent' in Tac. and ... Agr. was 44 at the time and Syria was usually governed by men over 50'. Tac. uses *maior* in the sense of older/elder at *Hist.* 1.48: *properata adoptione ... maiori fratri praelatus est* 'by this hastened adoption he was preferred to his elder brother'. Therefore, a safer translation here of *maioribus* is 'older' (OLD 3).

40.2

O&R say that 'it is hardly credible that Domitian should have felt that Agr. might need the inducement of Syria to leave his province or that the freedman should have turned back ...'. However, Agr. had been absent from Rome for 7 years and had conducted a series of successful campaigns with 4 legions under his command and recently he had achieved a great victory at *Mons Graupius*. No doubt Domitian had in mind the events of 68 – 69 AD which resulted in a series of Army mutinies in various parts of the Empire and 4 Emperors within a year. Unable to assess Agr.'s state of mind, he may have decided to put forward the inducement of the governorship of Syria in case Agr. harboured any mutinous thoughts. But the freedman sent to convey the proposal, seeing that Agr. was in fact returning to

Rome as instructed, had no need to intercept him. So, Tac.'s description of events does seem entirely credible and that is the view taken by Gudeman *ad loc.*

credidere plerique: Tac. has placed the verb in an emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence to stress that he is advancing a rumour about the governorship of Syria rather than a verified fact; another example of Tac.'s use of innuendo to discredit Domitian.

libertum: During the Principate, *liberti* held positions of considerable responsibility in the Emperor's court and were often used to carry out important missions. In *Ann.* 14.39, Tac. recounts how Nero sent the former imperial slave, Polyclitus, to Britain on a fact-finding mission. However, the British laughed because they found it extraordinary that the Roman general (Gaius Suetonius Paulinus) should obey a slave.

ex secreterioribus ministeriis: OLD *secretus* s.v. 5a 'done, said etc in private or unofficially'. OLD *ministerium* s.v. 5a 'a servant, attendant, or similar'; as at *Ann.* 13.27 *ministeria magistratibus*. Therefore, O&R say that *ex secreterioribus ministeriis* refers to a person who was 'a personal freedman of Domitian and not an official from one of the civil service departments'.

codicillos: OLD *codicillus* s.v.3: 'a rescript or sign manual of the emperor'; ie, in this case, a letter of appointment signed by the Emperor.

cum eo praecepto ut, si in Britannia foret, traderentur: This suggests that Domitian may have been concerned that Agricola, with 4 legions under command and on the completion of a successful campaign of conquest, might not have been ready to leave Britain. If this was the case, the letter, with its tempting offer of the governorship of Syria, might be sufficient to encourage him to hand over command. However, since Agricola was obeying his orders like a good soldier and heading back to Rome it was unnecessary to hand over the letter. By reporting this incident, Tac. is subtly emphasising Agr.'s loyalty.

in ipso freto Oceani: The English Channel.

sive ... sive: 'whether that was true or whether it was a fiction made up taking into account the character of the *princeps*'. Tac. provides the story of the freedman carrying a letter but injects a note of mystery, vouching for neither its truth nor its source. He wants his readers to realise that dealing with Domitian was not straightforward.

40.3

successori suo: When Agr. handed over command in Britain (early in 84 or 85, authorities differ), the province was peaceful and secure (Birley 2005 p.94). 'This unnamed successor cannot be securely identified but might conceivably have been Sallustius Lucullus' (W&K *ad loc*). Sallustius Lucullus is named at Suet. *Dom.* 10 as having been put to death by Domitian because he had allowed a new variety of spear to be called 'Lucullan'.

quietam tutamque: Tac., as also Livy, sometimes ends a main clause with *-que*. There is another example at 43.7: *...laetatum eum velut honore iudicioque*.

40.4

ac ne notabilis ... introitus esset: A successful general returning to Rome normally arrived by day with publicity and acclaim. However, Agricola, following orders, avoids attracting a crowd by entering the City by night.

officio: OLD *officium* s.v. 2b: 'a gathering of people paying their respects.'

Palatium: This refers to the palace buildings on the Palatine Hill rather than the hill itself. As the OCD explains (s.v. *Palatium*): 'Domitian was responsible for the Flavian palace buildings designed by the architect Rabirius and conventionally known as the *Domus Flavia* and *Domus Augustana* ...'

ita ut praeceptum erat: Agr. had been given instructions on where and when to present himself to the Emperor on his return and, being a loyal officer, he followed his orders. That he was ordered to arrive at the *Palatium* by night suggests that Domitian was apprehensive

that his return could attract popular enthusiasm and that Agr. could thereby be projected into the role of a potential rival.

brevi osculo et nullo sermone ... inmixtus est: Agricola's reception by Domitian is distinctly cool. After a brief kiss from the Emperor and no conversation, he mingled in with a crowd of people in attendance. Tac. depicts this as a deliberate snub to a successful general but it is curiously at odds with Domitian's recommendation to the Senate that Agr. should take command in Syria and the award of *triumphalia ornamenta*.

40.5

nomen: OLD *nomen* s.v. 11b 'fame, repute', 12 'good name, reputation, esteem'.

grave inter otiosos: OLD *otiosus* s.v. 4 'leading a peaceful existence, peaceable'. This leads to translations such as: 'distasteful to civilians' (Birley 1999); 'irksome to civilians' (Mattingley 2009); 'unpopular with men of peace' (Gudeman). Tac. is suggesting that citizens who had lead peaceful lives were envious of the reputations of those who had served in the Army.

tranquillatam atque otium: *tranquillitatem ... otium* is a Ciceronian combination to describe disengagement from political life found in, for example, *Mur.* 55: *fortunatos eos homines iudicarem qui remoti a studiis ambitionis otium et tranquillitatem vitae secuti sunt*. W&K make the point (p.110 n.*quiete et otium*) that whereas in Republican Rome, politicians sought to succeed by effort and hard work, during the Empire those who were ambitious also made conspicuous displays of *otium*. The change in the culture was the result of the imperial system in which able and energetic men could be seen as a threat to the *princeps*. Agr.'s concern was to live inconspicuously and to avoid involvement in public life to minimise the chances of upsetting Domitian.

hausit: Wex (ie, Friedrich Carl Wex 1801-65) suggested that the paradosis, *auxit*, (the consensus of MSS e, A, B) should be amended to *hausit* and it is *hausit* which many editors have used including those of the OCT, Loeb, Teubner and O&R editions. However, W&K

prefer *duxit* (OLD *duco* s.v. 25a 'to breath or draw in') on the grounds that it is closer in meaning to the *paradosis* and also that it aligns with a wording used in Cic. *Arch.*30: *nullum tranquillum atque otiosum spiritum duxerimus*. As far as meaning is concerned, it seems to make little difference whether Agr. 'drank deeply of leisure' (*otium penitus hausit*) or 'breathed deeply of leisure' (*otium penitus duxit*). Both of these are better than the *paradosis otium penitus auxit* ('he thoroughly/completely increased leisure').

cultu modicus ... uno aut altero amicorum comitatus: A constant theme has been Agr.'s moderation, as at 4.7: *mox mitigavit ratio et aetas, retinuitque, quod est difficillimum, ex sapientia modum*. In retirement and keen to keep away from public view, he avoided anything ostentatious, dressed modestly and avoided attracting a crowd.

adeo ... pauci interpretarentur: In Rome it was normal for great men to display their wealth and power so when a distinguished general lived modestly and avoided any kind of ostentation it seemed curious and few people understood.

41.1

absens accusatus absens absolutus est: During the final years of his rule, Domitian became increasingly nervous for his own safety and he had at least eleven ex-consuls executed, mainly for dissent or alleged conspiracy (OCD s.v. Domitian). His ears were beaten by the words of courtiers who could be filled with spite and envy (41.5) and he was ready to accept the information of informers such as Carus Mettius (45.2). In this difficult and dangerous environment, Agr. although living in retirement, was both accused and absolved on occasions.

41.2

infensus virtutibus princeps: It was a conventional thought that tyrants despise good men and excellence. For example, Sall. *Cat.* 7.2 *nam regibus boni quam mali suspectiores sunt semperque eis aliena virtus formidulosa est*.

gloria viri: The use of *vir* instead of a pronoun is to dignify the reference to Agr.

pessimum inimicorum genus, laudantes: *laudantes = laudatores* (those who praise). Agr. was trying to live quietly and inconspicuously in retirement and the last thing he wanted was for courtiers, well-meaning or otherwise, to sing his praises with Domitian who was nervously on the lookout for possible assassins.

41.3

quae sileri Agricola non sinerent: 'which did not allow Agricola to be passed over in silence'; OLD *sileo* s.v. 3b 'to pass over is silence'. It would seem that, although Agricola was keeping away from the public gaze in retirement, the military disasters of the times repeatedly brought his name to mind among the common people.

tot exercitus in Moesia... amissi: This sentence lists a series of events which occurred in the period 84-93 AD, some of which resulted in serious military defeats and setbacks for Rome and in which Domitian was personally involved from time to time (Jones 1992 pp. 126-159). The events in Germania included the revolt in 89 AD of the Governor, Antonius Saturninus (Syme 1958 Vol 1, p.32), which, although it was quickly put down by Domitian's generals, would no doubt have contributed to Domitian's suspicions of his senior commanders.

militares viri: The term *militares viri* is being used in a general sense to refer to 'experienced or professional soldiers of the officer class' (O&R *ad loc*) as distinct from rank and file soldiers. However, some modern scholarship has used the term to denote 'an especially favoured class of men who passed to the consulate after only two posts, viz. a legionary command and a praetorian province' (Syme 1957 p.134). Following this fast-track route it was possible for the successful '*vir militaris*' to reach the consulate a dozen years from the quaestorship, that is to say he could become a consul by the age of 37 or 38 (*ibid.* p.135).

de limite imperii et ripa: OLD *limes* s.v. 2b: 'a national boundary, frontier; also, the patrolled and fortified line marking this'. The *ripa* is the bank of the Danube, that being the limit of the Empire at the time (O&R *ad loc*).

possessione: OLD *possessio* s.v.3 'That which is held by occupation.' Tac. says that, following the military setbacks, it was no longer only the border of the Empire which was uncertain but the areas much further back from the border including the camps of the legions and all the occupied territory.

41.4

damna damnis: An example of Tacitus's use of polyptoton, a decorative device to enhance the grandeur of his prose. There are other examples in the *Agr.*, for example, at 18.8: *sed ipsa dissimulatione fama famam auxit.*

poscebatur ore vulgi dux Agricola: In spite of his quiet existence, Agr.'s reputation lived on among the public and, following a succession of military setbacks on the Danube frontier, he was frequently mentioned by the people as a potential commander to rescue the situation.

cum inertia et formidine eorum: *eorum* is the paradosis (the consensus of MSS e, A, B) which is shown in the OCT, O&R and Teubner but it is described by W&K as 'intolerably flat and obscure'. Therefore, some editors have used amendments; Furneaux & Anderson (1939) show *aliorum*; Gudeman (1899) and W&K show *ceterorum*. But *eorum*, referring to the rash and cowardly generals mentioned in 41.3, makes sense and the proposed alternatives are no improvement.

41.5

satis constat: A standard phrase ('it is fairly clear/certain') found also at 13.2: *agitasse Gaium Caesarem de intranda Britannia satis constat.*

dum ... extimulabant: This is *dum* + imperfect indicative. *Dum* meaning 'while' normally takes the present indicative (A&G 556). Less commonly, *dum* can have a causal meaning 'as, since' (OLD 4b). W&K argue that 'better sense seems to result if *dum* is regarded as causal ... but there is admittedly no parallel for its combination with a tense other than the present.'

Actually, better sense results here if *dum* is taken here as temporal and an example of *dum* + imperfect meaning 'while' is at *Hist.* 1.1.1: *dum res populi Romani memorabantur*.

libertorum: Domitian's courtiers included many freedmen holding positions of great influence and in regular, close contact with the Emperor himself (Jones 1992, p.61-69).

pronus deterioribus: OLD *pronus* s.v. 6: 'with *ad, in* + acc., dat., etc. usu. of persons or their disposition; inclined to a given practice, course of action etc, disposed (to), liable (to).'

However, in the text *pronus* is shown with neither *ad* nor *in*. The question arises whether *deterioribus* is neuter 'inclined to the worst things' or masculine 'inclined to the worst men/generals'. W&K *ad loc* make the convincing argument that: 'Since Tacitus in the next sentence mentions *vitia* as a decisive factor, *deterioribus* is perhaps neuter'.

41.6

simul ... simul ... : This pattern occurs also at 25.1 and 36.1; it is used by Livy and Virgil but not by Cicero (W&K p.219).

suis virtutibus ... vitiis aliorum: An alliterative antithesis combined with chiasmus designed to underline yet again the *virtutes* of Agr. which stand in contrast to the *vitia* of others. Decorative features such as this suggest that Tac. viewed his prose as literature as well as history.

vitiis aliorum: There is learned dispute whether this phrase relates to the generals displaying *temeritate* or *ignavia* (41.3) or to the freedmen showing *malignitate* and *livore* (41.5). W&K prefer to think it relates to the generals which would be consistent with 39.3 which makes clear that Domitian feared *privati hominis nomen supra principem attolli*. Of course, it could mean both groups plus others not mentioned. Tac. is choosing to be vague as to details but making the point that Agr. was raised to prominence not only by his own qualities but by contrast with the faults of others.

in ipsam gloriam: *in ipsam gloriam* is the text shown in the OCT and is not challenged by O&R. This conveys the idea that Agr., in his quiet retirement, was being driven towards the very glory which he was trying to avoid. However, W&K *ad loc* feel emendation is required 'since Agr. has been endangered by *gloria* for some considerable time' and take the view that *in ipsa gloria* is to be preferred; this would lead to a translation along the lines that 'while in glory he was being pushed ...'. But the OCT version makes sense and is consistent with the context; the W&K proposal seems unnecessary hairsplitting.

42

After Agr. was recalled from Britain in 84 AD, he assumed a quiet life (40.5) because he was acutely aware of Domitian's envy of his military success (39.4). In 90, he became available for selection to one of the most important governorships which were those of Africa and Asia. However, he was keen to stay in retirement and there could have been a number of reasons for this; he might have wished to avoid incurring the same fate as Civica (42.1), his health may have been poor or perhaps, having been away from Rome for many years, he and his wife simply wished to be excused further overseas service. However, the Emperor needed to agree any decision to stand aside so, eventually, he had a meeting with Domitian to put his case, a meeting which is described in this chapter in ways unfavourable to Domitian. Tac.'s account is significantly lacking in detail so it is difficult to understand precisely what transpired and various interpretations are possible: W&K (p.285) contend that it was a farcical 'dialogue of refusal' which was planned in advance by Domitian to emphasise Agr.'s supplicant status; O&R (p.294) say that Agr. 'was forced to play a humiliating game because he did not know what Domitian's real attitude was'; Traub (1954 p.256) takes the view that the meeting was standard procedure and 'Agr.'s act of refusing a governorship was neither unusual nor unprecedented'. However, the most convincing explanation was put forward by Dorey (1960) who argues that, contrary to what Tac. would have us believe, there was in fact a respectful relationship between Agr. and Domitian and that Agr. asked to be excused on grounds of poor health; strong support for this theory is the fact that Agr. died only 3 years later.

42.1

aderat iam annus: *iam aderat/aderit* is a formula sometimes used to indicate the next stage of a story as in '*iam aderit tempus*' (Plaut. *Bacch.* 417) and *iam aderat iudicio dies* (Liv. 3.12). Tac. chooses to adapt the word order here for reasons of variety, emphasis or euphony.

quo ... sortiretur: *quo = in quo = in which*; *sortiretur* is an example of the imperfect subjunctive expressing futurity from the point of view of the past; this is a regular but infrequent usage in a relative clause (Handford 1947 p.84). It is also in Tac. *Ger.* 29.1: *populus ... in eas sedes transgressus in quibus pars Romani imperii fierent*; 'a people ... having migrated into their [present] territory in which they were to become part of the Roman Empire'.

quo proconsulatum Africae et Asiae sortiretur: Africa and Asia were the two most prestigious governorships and they were awarded annually to the two senior consuls who had not held either, the decision being made by the drawing of lots. It is likely that Agricola's turn would have come up in about 90 AD (O&R p.294), that is to say, 12-15 years after his consulship which was in 76.

occiso Civica nuper: C. Vettulenus Civica Cerialis was executed while proconsul in Asia as described by Suetonius at *Dom.*10: *complures senatores, in iis aliquot consulares, interemit; ex quibus Civicam Cerealem in ipso Asiae proconsulatu ...* Jones (1992, p.182 *et seq*) suggests that this was in 87 - 88 AD and possibly related to the appearance in Asia of a 'false Nero' of which there were two or three in the decades following the suicide of Nero in 68 AD. It appears that Cerialis did not deal vigorously with the imposter, possibly thinking that he could be ignored, and Cerialis's inactivity might have been interpreted by Domitian as treason. But whatever the circumstances, Tac. depicts the execution of a senior and distinguished governor as further evidence of Domitian's tyranny.

nec Agricolae consilium deerat nec Domitiano exemplum: The recent killing of Civica, a senior and distinguished official, must have weighed heavily on Agr.'s mind and served as a warning of the perils of imperial service under Domitian. Tac. was writing this only about 10

years later so the impact of Civica's death might still have been felt among the senatorial class although by then Domitian himself was also dead.

42.2

quidam cogitationum principis periti: Tac. does not identify the *periti*. They could have been members of Domitian's staff who needed to put candidates before the Emperor for the vacant Governorships of Africa and Asia. Dorey (1960 p.71) suggests that they were Agr.'s friends concerned about his poor health and that they encouraged him to request the Emperor to allow his to be excused further service. However, Tac. nowhere mentions Agr. as being in poor health but such information might have seemed out of place in an encomiastic biography, particularly since in earlier chapters (eg, 20) he drew attention to Agr.'s robustness and vigour as a commander in the field.

ultra: 'Adverbs are commonly put next to their verb (before it when it ends a sentence)' (G&L 677). Therefore, *ultra* should be taken with *interrogarent* rather than *iturus esset*. Taking *ultra* as 'of one's own accord' (OLD 5b) the meaning is 'the *periti* asked Agr. of their own accord' rather than 'Agr. was about to go ... of his own accord'.

42.3

In Tac.'s account, Agr. was reluctant to appear before Domitian. Those individuals, the *periti*, who were close enough to the Emperor to know his mind and wanted Agr. to state his case, first tried gentle persuasion, then offered to help him win approval, before finally frightening and dragging him into the imperial presence. This process may have taken place over some years, 84 – 89 AD, at a time when Agr. was living in retirement and Dorey (1960) views this as the work of well-intentioned friends who were concerned for Agr.'s health.

primo ... mox ... postremo non iam: A rapid sequence of time adverbs to inject urgency.

excusatione: OLD *excusatio* s.v.2 'a plea to be excused from carrying out ... a public duty'.

pertraxere: OLD *pertraho* s.v. 1. 'drag along, haul', 2. 'drag by force', 2b. 'constrain to come'. Some degree of persuasion was evidently used to bring a reluctant Agr. into the presence of Domitian.

42.4

Tac. presumably received an account of the meeting between Domitian and Agr. either from Agr. himself or from one of the *periti* who witnessed it and he relates it in a way which casts Domitian in a bad light. Agr. is depicted as beseeching Domitian to be excused another governorship, offering *preces* (*entreaties*) rather than *causae* (reasons). No doubt he was behaving cautiously, aware of Domitian's reputation for capricious cruelty described by Suetonius in *Dom.* 10 – 11.

paratus simulatione: OLD *simulatio* s.v. 1. 'the action of copying, simulation'; 2. 'the action of putting on an appearance (by a speaker)'; 3. 'the pretence of something offered as a reason, pretext'. W&K state that '*paratus simulatione* can only mean prepared by simulation'. However, taking *simulatio* as 'hypocrisy' (L&S s.v.; the OLD does not offer 'hypocrisy') leads to such translations as: 'having been prepared by hypocrisy' (Mattingly 2009); 'with ready hypocrisy' (Loeb). Tac. suggests that Domitian had prepared himself for this interview and that a cat and mouse game was being played, the Emperor enjoying being in a position of power with the great soldier, Agr., before him as a supplicant. Attention has already been drawn to Domitian's insincerity at 39.1: *fronte laetus, pectore anxius*.

in adrogantiam compositus: Tac. smears the memory of Domitian with an accusation of arrogance. *adrogantia/superbia* was one of the hallmarks of the tyrant in Roman mind (Dunkle 1971 p.15).

agi sibi gratias passus est: Domitian allows himself to be thanked for the favour he has just bestowed. Unsurprisingly, to avoid upsetting the volatile Domitian, Agr. probably adopted an attitude of great deference towards him and thanked effusively. In *Ann.* 14.56 Tac., commenting on a meeting between Nero and Seneca, says that meetings with tyrants always

end with the giving of thanks: *Seneca qui finis omnium cum dominante sermonum grates agit.*

nec erubuit beneficium invidia: An ironic statement and a continuation of Tac.'s attempt to smear Domitian. Tac. implies that the act of kindness, the *beneficium*, was done with *invidia* (OLD s.v.1 'ill-will, spite, jealousy, envy') and Domitian's personality was so distorted that he did not even blush when thanked for something which was easy for him to grant.

42.5

At the end of the meeting, there was a discussion of the salary which the Emperor had discretion to award even if a man did not take up a proconsular post. Tac. again uses innuendo to discredit Domitian but, given the lack of detail, it is difficult to understand exactly what went on and how the personalities of Domitian and Agr. interacted.

salarium: OLD *salarium* 'a regular official payment to the holder of a civil or military post'. According to W&K *ad loc* this term was first used by the elder Pliny and refers to the official pay which was introduced by Augustus for provincial governors. It seems strange that payment should ever have been offered for non-performance of a duty but Gudeman *ad loc* relates that: 'the Emperor Macrinus in 217 AD gave Aufidius Fronto a million sesterces ... on his refusing the proconsulship of Africa but this date is too late to allow for the drawing of inferences about the time of Domitian'.

solitum offerri et quibusdam a se ipso concessum Agricola non dedit: Domitian did not award a proconsular salary to Agr. which Tac. represents as a spiteful act. W&K p.300 take the view that: 'the beneficiary was expected to decline it; the offer was a mere ritual...' Traub (1954 p.255) argues that to refuse a governorship at the time of Tac. there was established protocol: the candidate appeared before the Emperor, asked to be excused and when this was accepted the candidate thanked the Emperor for the *beneficium* before requesting the *salarium* regularly requested in lieu of office; having gone through this routine Domitian might have felt irked that Agr. did not request the *salarium*. But Tac. makes clear that (44.6), as far as Agr. was concerned: *opibus nimis non gaudebat.*

sive offensus non petitum: *ie, sive offensus [id] non petitum [esse].* This implies that not requesting the *salarium proconsulare* might have been considered discourteous.

ne quod vetuerat videretur emisse: This cryptic statement was labelled 'a good instance of Tacitean over-conciseness' by Gudeman (1899). Courtney (1971) points out that Domitian had not in fact forbidden something (*vetuerat*) but had agreed to something (42.2 *adnuisset*). Why Domitian, who could have senators executed on a whim, should have been concerned about reaction to the payment or non-payment of a proconsular salary is not made clear. Tac. casts a shroud of uncertainty and innuendo over the whole incident.

42.6

proprium humani ingenii est odisse quem laeseris: This is a much-quoted *sententia* and it was part of Tac.'s style to include such sayings, especially to conclude sections, eg. 3.1: *natura tamen infirmitatis humanae tardiora sunt remedia quam mala.* Although the epigram sounds convincing, on reflection it may not be universally true; for example, if one accidentally knocks someone over in the street does one hate that person? And it is curious to introduce it at this point because Domitian did not in fact harm Agr. but agreed to his request. Perhaps this is a case where Tac. is deploying his rhetorical training to discredit the memory of Domitian, using impactful words rather than strict accuracy. *laeseris*, is an example of a 2nd person perfect subjunctive used in a gnomic generalisations (NLS 119); it is a form used elsewhere, for example, at 44.3 *crederes* and 46.3 *possis*.

Domitiani vero natura praeceps in iram: Tac. makes a direct criticism of an aspect of Domitian's character, smearing him as a prone to anger, which makes Agr.'s restraint seem all the more commendable.

moderatione tamen prudentiaque Agricolaie leniebatur: Tac. is concerned to emphasise Agr.'s fine personal qualities including, as here, *moderatio* (OLD s.v.2 'moderation, self-control, temperateness') and *prudentia* (OLD s.v.1 'practical understanding or wisdom'). Elsewhere, he draws attention to his conscientiousness as an officer (5.2), marital fidelity

(6.2), honesty in financial matters (6.3) and lack of self-aggrandisement (39.1). So, although Domitian was *praeceps in iram*, the moderation of Agr. ensured that he was mollified.

non ... famam fatumque provocabat: Members of the Stoic opposition, such as Thrasea Paetus (2.1), provoked fate by their open opposition to the Principate and paid for it with their lives.

inani iactatione libertatis: Agr. took a middle way under the Principate, he neither openly resisted like the Stoic martyrs nor actively cooperated with tyranny like the *delatores*, but conscientiously endeavoured to do his duty. Opposition was empty because it led to execution and had no long-lasting benefit for the commonwealth (42.7). Tac. himself chose a similar middle path.

42.7

quibus moris est inlicita mirari: OLD *inlicitus* s.v.2 'not permitted by law, unlawful, illegal'; O&R interpret *inlicitus* as 'not approved by the Emperor rather than contrary to the constitution' on the basis of *Ann.* 6.8.3: *abditos sensus principis et si quid occultius parat exquirere inlicitum anceps* 'to seek the prince's hidden thoughts and anything he prepares more secretly is unlawful [and] dangerous'. Tac. is here referring to people who were accustomed to admire opponents of the Emperor, such opponents being, for example, members of the Stoic opposition.

posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse: This is one of the main themes of the *Agr.* and defines the approach taken by Agr. living under a cruel autocrat. He steered a middle course between servility and outright opposition, remaining upright and moderate while providing loyal service.

obsequiumque ac modestiam: OLD *obsequium* s.v. 3 '(of soldiers, subjects etc) compliance with orders, obedience, discipline'; OLD *modestia* s.v. 1 'restraint, mildness, temperateness'. These two words are paired also at 30.3 in the speech of Calgacus to his troops before the Battle of *Mons Graupius*: *Romani, quorum superbiam frustra per obsequium ac modestiam*

effugias. However, while Calgacus says that his people cannot escape the arrogance of the Romans by compliance and restraint, Tac. argues that it is those two very qualities which have enabled Agr. to survive under a tyrant.

obsequiumque ac modestiam si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis excedere, quo plerique per abrupta, sed in nullum rei publicae usum ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt: Ruthless ambition characterised the behaviour of many prominent Romans and Tac.'s contemporaries would have been aware of the turbulent events of 69 AD, the year in which two Emperors committed suicide (ie, Nero and Otho) and two Emperors were assassinated (ie, Galba and Vitellius) in vicious struggles for power. Tac. here suggests an alternative route to greatness, namely, obedience to authority and modest conduct, provided these are coupled with energy and hard work. Ostentatiously opposing a tyrant is ultimately futile; it is better to work vigorously and conscientiously within the system rather than openly oppose it.

ambitiosa morte: Possibly with *plerique* Tac. is thinking here of Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus mentioned in 2.1, 'Stoic martyrs' in the cause of freedom.

inclaruerunt: To end this important sentence, Tac. chooses the dignified rhythm of Cicero's favourite clausula, the ditrochee or 'dichoreus' (_ ∪ _ x).

43

O&R (p.298) observe that: 'At this point, the writing undergoes a change. From the historical style, modelled on Sallust and Livy, Tacitus switches to a more oratorical manner in keeping with the subject-matter. In particular, these chapters owe a clear debt to Cicero's ... third book of the *de Oratore*.' News of Agr.'s impending death was widely known in Rome and the grief of friends, acquaintances and even strangers gave an indication of his popularity. Domitian paid close attention to the unfolding situation, his behaviour interpreted by Tac. as yet further evidence of a personality distorted by suspicion.

43.1

Finis vitae eius nobis luctuosus, amicis tristis, extraneis etiam ignotisque non sine cura fuit:

These words, in *tricolon auctum*, exemplify the change to a more Ciceronian style echoing, albeit faintly, the words of Cic. *De or.* 3.2.8, referring to the death of L. Lucinius Crassus: *fuit hoc luctuosum suis, acerbum patriae, grave bonis omnibus.*

circulos: '*Circuli*, were a recognised feature of Roman society and signified more than simply groups of people talking' (O'Neill, 2003 p.137). Sometimes they had political overtones and were viewed as potentially subversive and problematic for Roman rulers (*ibid.* p.149); they were often associated with public culture and the *plebs* (*ibid.* p.150). They could be associated with gossiping and wasting time as in Cic. *Fin.* 5.56: '*inertissimos homines ... cum re nulla impediatur necessaria ... cumque non habeant ingenuas ex doctrina oblectationes, circulos aliquos ... consecrari.*' Tac. tells us that in this case the *circuli* were composed of the common people and busy citizens (43.2) showing concern at Agr.'s sickness. In the next sentence he promotes the rumour that Agr. was poisoned and perhaps this rumour was spread via the *circuli*.

43.2

vulgus ... populus: Here the words *vulgus* and *populus* are virtually synonymous. However, elsewhere they can have slightly different meanings with *vulgus* referring to the ordinary people, sometimes with derogatory implications (OLD *vulgus* s.v. 2) while *populus* can represent the whole population acting together as a legal entity (OLD *populus* s.v. 2) as in '*Senatus Populusque Romanus.*'

ad domum: Tac. here departs from the normal, classical usage which is that with *domus* and *rus* 'to a place' is expressed by the Accusative without a preposition (A&G 427).

aut laetatus est aut statim oblitus: Ancient editions of the Agr. showed the word *est* twice, ie, after each participle. According to W&K (p.304): 'Scholars are generally agreed that one of the two occurrences of *est* in this sentence is a scribal error; most follow Muretus [ie, Marc-Antoine Muret, 1526-1585] in deleting the second but the deletion of that after

laetatus seems more elegant'. The OCT follows Muretus in deleting the second, perhaps mindful of the structure of the sentence at 3.4: *aut laudatus erit aut excusatus*. Teubner includes both with the second in brackets.

43.3

augebat: *augebat* is in an emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence to emphasise the fact that the rumour of poisoning increased the sympathy for Agr.

constans rumor veneno interceptum : Tac. records a rumour that the death of Agr. was the result of poisoning. The executions and exilings of members of the senatorial class in Domitian's final years produced an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust in which rumours were likely to have flourished.

nobis nihil comperti adfirmare ausim: Tac. is careful to add that he has no evidence to back up the rumour of poisoning. However, by bringing the rumour into the open, perhaps he hoped his readers would believe it. *Nobis* probably refers to Tac. himself; he uses the plural elsewhere, eg, *Hist. 2.77: nobis nihil ultra adrogabo ...* 'For myself I will claim nothing more ...'. *Nihil comperti* means 'no certainty' (OLD *compertus* s.v. b.). *Ausim* is a perfect subjunctive form from *audeo*, here used in a potential subjunctive construction (ie, a subjunctive of cautious assertion), so literally: 'as for myself, I have nothing of certainty I would dare to declare' (cf: *certum affirmare ... non ausim* 'I should not dare to assert as sure'; Liv. 3.23).

43.4

valetudinem: *valetudo* can mean either 'good health' (OLD s.v.1) or 'unsound state of health ... illness' (OLD s.v.3). Here, 'illness' seems appropriate.

crebrius quam ... nuntios visentis: The Emperor was accustomed to keep in touch with sick friends by sending his servants. In the case of Agr. it seems that the servants visited more frequently (*crebrius*) than usual, an indication of Domitian's interest in the case although Tac. casts this interest in a negative light.

libertorum primi: Domitian's court contained a large number of freedmen carrying out a wide range of duties including, for example, looking after palaces and gardens, running gladiatorial games and supervising aqueducts (Jones 1992, p.61 *et seq*). Some were employed as spies and couriers and it is related, in *Agr.* 40.2 that a freedman was sent to Britain to persuade *Agr.* to return to Rome. The most eminent were the *ab rationibus* (financial secretary), *ab epistulis* (correspondence) and *a libellis* (petitions) but it is not certain how they ranked in order of precedence. Who Tac. regarded as the *primi libertorum* is not clear.

medicorum intimi: 'Trusted doctors were an essential part of the imperial establishment' (O&R).

sive cura ... sive inquisitio: 'either for care ... or checking up' (OLD *inquisitio* s.v. 2c: 'in a bad sense, officious investigation, spying or similar'). Tac. while seemingly concerned to appear unbiased, raises a doubt about Domitian's motives in sending his own doctors to treat *Agr.* Were they providing care or spying on him? This technique of the 'weighted alternative' as a way of encouraging the reader to draw an adverse inference is discussed by Sullivan (1976 pp. 321-323). It often, as here, involved using *sive ... sive* and is found elsewhere, for example, at *Agr.* 40.2: *sive verum istud sive ex ingenio principis fictum ac compositum est* 'whether that is true or a fiction based on the character of the Emperor'.

43.5

dispositos cursors: The fact that runners were organised to convey information to Domitian about *Agr.*'s deteriorating condition suggests that Domitian may have been residing at his Alban Villa, which was about 20 km from the city. It also suggests that Domitian was taking a very close interest in the unfolding situation.

nullo credente ... audiret: 'No-one believed that he would be sad to hear such things thus speeded up.' Normally, citizens might suppose that an organised system of runners conveying news quickly would indicate the extreme concern of the Emperor and that he

would be sad to hear of Agr.'s worsening situation. But since Domitian was a tyrant, Tac. says that no-one believed that, implying that Domitian was receiving the news of Agr.'s declining condition with satisfaction rather than sadness.

43.6

speciem tamen doloris animo vultuque prae se tulit: This is the transmitted reading used in OCT, O&R and Loeb texts which some editors have found problematic on the grounds that it seems curious that: 'he showed the appearance of pain with mind and expression'. Consequently, the Teubner edition gives '*habitu vultuque*' ('with appearance and expression') and W&K prefer '*speciem tamen doloris animi vultu prae se tulit*' (ie, he showed the appearance of pain of mind with his expression). However, the OLD shows a wide range of meaning for *animus* including: 'attitude (10a), 'spirit, morale' (13b), 'disposition, character' (14) so the transmitted version could be translated as: 'he showed the appearance of pain with his [facial] expression and [general] attitude'. Translated in this way the transmitted version works well and does not need to be changed.

securus odii: The poets and later prose writers often used a genitive with adjectives where an ablative of respect might be expected (NLS 73 (6) and A&G 349d); cf: Tac. *Ann.* 4.7 *non occultus odii* 'not secretive in his hatred'. The meaning is that Domitian could now be untroubled by his hatred of Agr. because Agr. was clearly close to death. Tac. emphasises *odium* as one of the disagreeable traits of Domitian's personality as also in 39.4: *optimum in praesentia statuit reponere odium* 'he decided that the best thing for the present was to lay aside hatred'.

qui facilius dissimularet gaudium quam metum: Tac. has already mentioned that Domitian was capable concealing his true feelings; in 39.1 he met the returning Agr. with *fronte laetus, pectore anxius* and in 42.4 Domitian is *paratus simulatione*. Here Tac. reinforces the point by explaining that Domitian found it easier to disguise his joy than his fear.

43.7

coheredem ... scripsit: It was not unusual for Romans to make the Emperor a beneficiary of their will (Champlin 1991, p.150 *et seq*). The Emperors inherited vast sums from all parts of society; from the highest ranks who were perhaps personal friends, but also from freedmen, soldiers, employees and others who may have had the Emperor to thank for their advancement. However, it was generally felt that Emperors should not accept inheritances from those who had children and Domitian adhered to that principle in the early part of his reign (Suet. *Dom.* 9). But later, (*Dom.* 12) he was under great financial pressure as the result of his spending on spectacles, a building programme and pay increases for soldiers and Tac. notes that he was pleased to be nominated as a co-heir of Agr.'s will.

laetatum eum velut honore iudicioque: Domitian seems unaware that being made a co-heir, far from being a compliment, was in fact a sign of distrust on the part of the testator. Tac. is implying that by making Domitian a co-heir, he will be content to accept his share of the will and not attempt to seize the shares of Agr.'s wife and daughter.

43.8

tam caeca et corrupta mens adsiduis adulationibus erat: Further damning innuendo concerning the character of Domitian.

44 – 46

In the first three chapters of the *Agr.*, Tac. explains why he wrote it and the difficult political situation which prevailed in the final years of Domitian's reign. These last three chapters form a counterpoint and are written as a eulogy, the style being that of *consolatio*, 'words of comfort for those in grief' (OCD s.v. Consolation). The genre was familiar in the circles in which Tac. moved and, in the case of bereavement, the words were sometimes conveyed by letter, as in Servius Sulpicius's letter to Cicero on the death of his daughter Tullia (Cic. *Fam.* 4.5). They could also be conveyed in a funeral speech, *laudatio funebris*, such as that given by Julius Caesar at the funeral of his aunt Julia, recalled by Suetonius (Suet. *Iul.*6). Writers and speakers tended to draw from a relatively narrow range of topics and Tac. employs some of them here, namely: praise for the virtues of the deceased (44.2 – 44.3), praise for his

worldly successes (44.5), death as a relief from worldly dangers (45.1), the timeliness of death (45.4), encouragement to his family to revere the memory (46.3), and his spirit will live on (46.1). Mackail (1895, p.211) justifiably used high praise and wrote that: 'The *Agr.* has the stateliness, the ordered movement of a funeral oration; the peroration ... of the two concluding chapters reaches the highest level of grave Roman eloquence'.

44.1

Natus erat Agricola Gaio Caesare tertium consule idibus Iuniis: Years were identified by the Romans using the names of both consuls who had been elected to serve, the *consulares ordinarii*. For example, 30 AD was the year in which M. Vinicius and L. Cassius Longinus were consuls. Tac. states that Agr. was born on 13 June in the year in which Gaius Caesar (later the Emperor Caligula) was consul for the third time (OLD *tertium* advb. 'for the third time'). The *fasti consulares* show that Gaius Caesar was consul in 40 AD (Cooley 2012 p.460) so Agr. was born on 13 June 40 AD. Tac. identifies the year using the name of only one consul because the other elected consul died before he could take up post (Suet. *Calig.* 17).

excessit: *excessit* (OLD s.v. *excedo* 2b, 'to die') is placed in a prominent position at the beginning of its sentence, balancing *natus* in the previous sentence. So, Agr. died at the age of 54, a good age for those days considering that life expectancy at birth for the general population during the Roman Empire was about 25 years (Carrieri & Serraino 2005, p.1435) although perhaps somewhat higher for the more prosperous classes.

decimum: *decimum* stands for the usual *ante diem decimum* (cf: *Ann.* 6.25: *quintum decimum kal. Novembris*). The date referred to here is 23 August 93 AD which was the year that Sextus Pompeius Collega and Quintus Peduceus Priscinus were the *consulares ordinarii*. However, the *fasti consulares* (eg, in Cooley 2012, p.466) show that they were succeeded in May 93 by two suffect consuls who were the consuls in post when Agr. died in August of that year.

44.2

habitus: OLD *habitus* s.v. 5 'appearance'. Compare 39.2 where *habitus* is more likely to refer to 'dress' (OLD s.v. 3).

decentior: OLD *decens* s.v. 2: 'having a pleasing appearance, becoming'; the word is related to *decet* and has an implication of 'appropriateness' (W&K).

sublimior: OLD *sublimis* s.v. 6 'imposingly tall'.

nihil impetus in vultu, gratia oris supererat: Birley (1999) translates as 'there was no trace of aggressiveness in his features, kindness abounded in his expression'. However, the meaning of *impetus* is strained and is hard to parallel in the OLD and TLL. Noting that the combinations of letters *inb-*, *inm-*, *inp-* were often confused in the manuscripts, Lund (1982 p.179) proposed the conjecture: *nihil immotum in vultu, gratia oris superat* implying, in compressed language, that Agr. could have an unmoved expression although he could also appear gracious. This is convincingly supported by 9.3:

ubi conventus ac iudicia poscerent gravis intentus severus et saepius misericors; ubi officio satis factum nulla ultra potestatis persona: 'When the assizes and the courts demanded his attention he was serious and attentive, strict but often merciful.

When he had completed his official duties, he no longer wore the mask of power' (trans. Birley 1999).

Accepting Lund's conjecture, it is clear that Tac. is making the point that Agr., as a leader in war and a governor with heavy responsibilities, had a grave expression but that his personality included a gentler dimension off duty.

44.3

bonum virum facile crederes: 'You would readily believe him a good man.' Tac here invites us to judge Agr. on the basis of his appearance and he does so using the imperfect potential subjunctive which, according to NLS 121 p.91: 'expresses the speaker's or writer's opinion of what was likely to happen in the past, ie, what could or might have happened ... the second person singular is nearly always indefinite and generalising as 'you' '. This construction is

also found at *Agr.* 22.4: *ut silentium eius non timeres* 'so that you would not have feared his silence'; and it is sometimes used by Roman historians to make character descriptions more vivid (Gilmartin 1975, p.112 *et seq.*).

magnum: Throughout the *Agr.*, Tac. is keen to remind readers that Agr. was a great man. Here he is described as *bonum ... magnum*; at 18.7 as *clarus et magnus*; at 42.7 he is included with the *magnos viros*.

44.4

medio in spatio integrae aetatis ereptus: OLD *integer* s.v. 11b 'unimpaired', so this could be translated along the lines: 'having been snatched away in the middle of his life [with faculties] unimpaired'; but better: 'having been snatched away in his prime.' *Medio in spatio* is one of the echoes of Cicero's *De or* 3 and is found at 3.2.7: *inanis nostras contentiones, quae medio in spatio saepe franguntur et corruunt ...* 'our efforts are empty which often are broken and thrown down in the middle [of their course]'.

quantum ad gloriam: OLD *quantum* s.v. 7c 'so far as concerns'; translate: 'as far as glory is concerned' (with *pertinet/attinet* understood). Tac. tells us in 5.6 that Agr. developed a desire for military glory early in his life: *intravitque animum militaris gloriae cupido* and that during his career he achieved his ambition to an extent that made Domitian jealous while placing Agr. himself in danger during his retirement (41.2).

peregit: *perago* is a normal word for living a life (OLD 10 *perago* s.v.). Agr. achieved much glory, as much in fact as if his life had been even longer. It was a commonplace of *consolatio* that the deceased had achieved much, eg, Plin. *Ep.* 2.1.2 extols the remarkable life of the aged Virginius Rufus: *perfunctus est tertio consolatū ut summum fastigium privati hominis impleret*: 'he performed [his] third consulship with the result that he filled the highest rank [which was possible] of/for the private citizen'.

44.5

This sentence asks what else life had to offer Agr. as he had lived virtuously and been accorded consular and triumphal honours.

vera bona quae in virtutibus sita sunt ... fortuna poterat: Both Birley (1999) and Mattingley (2009) translate *vera bona* as 'true blessings', a term used, for example, by the stoic philosopher, Seneca in *Ep. 74*: *bona illa sunt vera quae ratio dat, solida ac sempiterna* 'true blessings are those which reason gives, substantial and everlasting'. Seneca contrasts these inward, true blessings which flow from reason, with outward, worldly advantages. Tac. follows this thinking and says that as well as *vera bona*, Agr. had been fortunate to receive worldly honours such as *consularia et triumphalia ornamenta*. Neither Agr. nor Tac. were stoics in the mould of those who openly and heroically resisted the Principate and were consequently widely admired, men such as Helvidius Priscus and Thrasea Paetus (2.1). However, Tac. finds it convenient to allude to the stoics and to attract some of their prestige to Agr. in his laudatory biography.

44.6

opibus nimis non gaudebat: Tac. underlines Agr.'s moral qualities by mentioning that he was not especially interested in wealth. As a young man and a quaestor in Asia, although serving in a rich province under a proconsul inclined to greed, he was in no way corrupt: *neutro corruptus est quamquam et provincia dives ac parata peccantibus et proconsul in omnem aviditatem pronus* (6.2).

speciosae contigerant: OLD *contingo* s.v. 8 'to fall to one's lot, befall'; L&S s.v. 3b point out that it is generally, but not invariably, used to apply to good things. *speciosae contigerant* has been translated as: 'He had a handsome fortune' (Birley 1999); 'he was possessed of an ample fortune' (Loeb); 'and wealth he had, even to splendour' (Church & Brodribb 1877). However, OLD *speciosus* gives: 1. 'attractive in appearance' 2. 'spectacular, brilliant' 3. 'fine sounding, plausible'; none of which meanings refer to wealth. So, perhaps it might be better to translate the sentence '*opibus ... contigerant*' along the lines: 'He did not rejoice in too much wealth [but nevertheless] fine/splendid things fell to him'.

44.7

filia atque uxore superstibus ... futura effugisse: It was considered a blessing to die before one's children (cf: Pliny *Ep.* 1.12) and Agr. was fortunate with the timing of his death because he escaped the horrors which attended the final years of Domitian (cf: 45.1) with his life and reputation (*fama*) intact. In line with the conventions of *consolatio*, Tac., with another subtle swipe at Domitian, claims that Agr. seemed happy, *beatus*, with this turn of events; happy in death.

44.8

Nam sicut ei <non licuit> durare in hanc beatissimi saeculi lucem... ita festinatae mortis grave solacium tulit ...: There is an antithesis between *sicut* and *ita* (ie, as he did not endure in this light of the [current] beautiful age ... so he brought the great comfort of his hastened death). Dahl (1802 p.25) felt the MS contains a lacuna and proposed the addition of the words *non licuit* to complete the sense, an idea which has been widely adopted, including in the OCT.

in hanc beatissimi saeculi lucem: It was conventional to refer to a new regime in terms of new dawns and light as, for example, in Cic. *Dom* 75: *Utrum me patria sic accepit ut lucem salutemque redditam sibi ac restitutam accipere debuit ...?* 'Did my country receive me as it ought to have received light and salvation returned and restored to it ...?' The words *beatissimi saeculi* link back to the beginning of the biography, at 3.1: *et quamquam primo statim beatissimi saeculi ortu Nerva Caesar res olim dissociabilis miscuerit principatum et libertatem...*

principem Traianum: Domitian was assassinated by court officials in 96 AD. He was succeeded on the same day by Nerva who was familiar with imperial affairs as he had served the Emperor Nero and been in Rome during the chaotic years which followed Nero's suicide in 68. Nerva, under pressure from the Army, adopted Trajan (*Traianus*) who was a young and popular general as his heir but Nerva died of natural causes in early 98 after just over a year in power. Trajan then took over and ruled until 117 (Syme 1958 p.30 *et seq*), avoiding

the tyrannical excesses of Domitian and earning the praise of Tac. in 3.1: *augeatque cotidie felicitatem temporum Nerva Traianus*.

quod augurio votisque ... ominabatur: Tac. writes that he heard Agr. say that, although he did not live to see the enlightened new regime under Trajan, he foresaw and was hoping for it.

apud nostras aures: Tac. is here referring to predictions made in his own hearing and it is one of the 3 instances at which Tac. indicates the personal contacts he has had with his father-in-law. The other instances are at 4.5: *memoria teneo solitum ipsum narrare se prima in iuventa studium philosophiae ...*; 24.5 *saepe ex eo audivi legione una et modicis auxiliis debellari obtinerique Hiberneam posse*. Tac. wants us to understand that his biography was based on first-hand rather than second-hand information.

festinatae mortis: OLD *festino* s.v.6 'hasten to, lose no time in'. The expression *festinatae mortis* is found elsewhere in the context of murder (Quint. *Decl.* 4.5) or suicide (*Ann.* 4.28 2). However, L&S *festino* s.v. II also shows *mors ... festinata* 'death prematurely inflicted'. The meaning 'premature' is found in Mart. 9.86.1 *festinata sui gemeret ... fata Severi Silius*: 'Silius was lamenting the premature death of his [friend] Severus'. So, there is ambiguity as to whether Agr.'s death was 'hastened' by foul play or simply 'premature' in the sense of being earlier than normal. Perhaps this is a case of Tac. being deliberately vague and using innuendo directed at Domitian as in 43.3 he repeated the rumour that Agr. had been poisoned.

grande solacium tulit: OLD *fero* s.v. 30c. 'to bring (help or similar)'. By his hastened death, Agr. brought a great consolation to his family. In addition, he avoided the few, final, frightening years of Domitian's reign.

postremum illud tempus: This refers to the time between the death of Agr. in August 93 AD to the assassination of Domitian in September 96. It was particularly during this period that

Domitian's paranoia increased which led to the executions and exiling of a number of prominent individuals; see 45.1.

non iam per intervalla ac spiramenta temporum: OLD *spiramentum* s.v. 2, 'breathing space, pause', is similar in meaning to *intervallum* (OLD 3) 'length of time between two events, an interval'. Translate along the lines: '[Domitian] no longer with pauses and breathing spaces' Tac. is using synonyms for rhetorical emphasis.

continuo et velut uno ictu rem publicam exhausit: *continuo* is an adverb, it is also a part of *continuus*, an adjective. O&R state that it is an adjective here as everywhere in Tac.; Gudeman (1899, p.147) says that, although it is an adjective, it can be translated here as an adverb. Adjective or adverb, *continuo* sits slightly strangely with *uno ictu*: 'as if with one continuous blow', or 'continuously as with a single blow'. W&K suggest that Tac. may be attempting to conjure the image of Domitian making 'a single, unending incision in the body of the state like the blood-letting of many Roman suicides'. If that is the case, *exhausit* may imply 'drained of blood', with *sanguine* understood.

45.1

non vidit Agricola ... exilia et fugas: This is another echo of Cic. *De or* 3 in which Cicero says of Crassus: *Non vidit flagrantem bello Italiam, non ardentem invidia senatum, non sceleris nefarii principes civitatis reos ... non exsilium generi ... caedem omnium crudelissimam.* Tac. had received thorough training in oratory as a young man and resorted, either consciously or unconsciously, to the language of Cicero (died 43 BC) as he sought to draw the *Agr.* to a dignified and memorable conclusion.

obsessam curiam et clausum armis senatum etc: *Agr.* died on 23 August 93 AD (44.1) which meant that he did not live to see some of the tyrannies which marked the end of the reign of Domitian in 96. *Obsessam curiam et clausum armis* relates to the besieging of the senate but there seem to be no recorded incidents between *Agr.*'s death in 93 and the publication of the *Agr.* in 98. Tac. may be thinking here of the besieging which took place in 66 for the trial of Thrasea Paetus as he records in *Ann.*16.27: *postera luce duae praetoriae*

cohortes armatae templum Genetricis Veneris insedere... But the period after 93 was certainly one during which there were arbitrary arrests and executions of prominent citizens at the whim of Domitian as he became increasingly fearful for his own safety. Pliny records in *Ep.* 3.11 that seven of his friends were killed or exiled: *atque haec feci, cum septem amicis meis aut occisis aut relegatis*. Suetonius in *Dom.*10 lists a number of senators and ex-consuls who were executed: *complures senatores, in iis aliquot consulares, interemit*.

nobilissimarum feminarum exilia: In the final years of Domitian's reign, the terror was extended to certain prominent women and Pliny in *Ep.* 3.1 records the following as being forced into exile: Gratilla who is thought to have been the wife of Arulenus Rusticus (the two are linked *Ep.* 5.1), Arria widow of Thrasea Paetus and her daughter Fannia, wife of Helvidius Priscus. Arulenus Rusticus, Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus were victims mentioned in 2.1. Brave women were celebrated in imperial times such as those in *Hist.* 1.3 who followed sons and husbands into exile: *comitatae profugos liberos matres, secutae maritos in exilia coniuges*.

45.2

Carus Mettius: Carus Mettius was a prolific *delator* in the days of Domitian. Among others, he accused Senecio, one of the Stoic opponents of Domitian (*Agr.* 2.1), and Pliny records (*Ep.* 7.19) an angry confrontation between Carus Mettius and the Roman matron Fannia (wife and daughter of other Stoic opponents). Furthermore, he provided information to Domitian against Pliny (*Pliny Ep.* 7.27) who was later sent into exile. The words of Tac.: *una adhuc victoria Carus Mettius censebatur* are probably ironic in view of Carus Mettius's later and numerous *delationes*. In this instance, Tac. inverts the name, more usually Mettius Carus, just as also he inverts the name of Thrasea Paetus in 2.1. Norma Miller's view is that the reversing of a name is 'a silver Latin conceit to give it prominence' (Dorey (ed)(1969), Chap. V, p.107). Tac. gives prominence to the names of members of the Stoic opposition as a way of attracting some of their prestige. However, neither *Agr.* nor Tac. chose to follow the Stoic example and openly oppose the Principate; they worked within in it.

intra Albanam arcem: *Albanam arcem* refers to Domitian's villa in the Alban Hills about 20 kms from Rome. The word *arx/arcem* suggests a fortress although, in reality, it was a huge villa complex including a palace, baths and theatre. Domitian liked to spend much of his time there conducting official business remote from the Senate (Jones 1992 p.27-28). W&K say that the word *arx* was used invidiously by Tac. as it could refer to the dwelling of a tyrant (OLD *arx* s.v. 1c 'the abode of tyrants').

sententia Messalini strepebat: *Messalinus* (ie, L. Valerius Catullus Messalinus) was a blind consul and another well-known *delator*. Pliny (*Ep.* 4.22) has a story about him concerning a dinner party which included the Emperor Nerva and various guests: *incidit sermo de Catullo Messalino, qui luminibus orbatus ingenio saevo mala caecitatis addiderat: non verebatur, non erubescibat, non miserebatur.* Pliny adds that Messalinus was often used by Domitian to carry out his dirty work: *saepius a Domitiano non secus ac tela, quae et ipsa caeca et improvida feruntur, in optimum quemque contorquebatur.*

Massa Baebius: Baebius Massa was procurator of Africa in 70 AD, his name being mentioned unfavourably by Tac. in *Hist.* IV.50: *Baebius Massa e procuratoribus Africae iam tunc optimo cuique exitiosus et inter causas malorum...* He was proconsul of Hispania Baetica in 91 and in 93 was charged with corruption. Pliny records (*Ep.* 7.33.4) that the Senate instructed him to act with Herennius Senecio on behalf of Baetica against Baebius Massa: *Dederat me senatus cum Herennio Senecione advocatum provinciae Baeticae contra Baebium Massam.* At the time Tac. was writing the *Agr.*, Baebius Massa was still a *reus* and the subject of legal proceedings.

nox nostrae duxere Helvidium in carcerem manus: In *Agr.* 2.1, Tac. mentioned C. Helvidius Priscus. He was one of the Stoics who, at great danger to themselves, tried to uphold the principles of republican government during the Principate and was killed on the orders of Emperor Vespasian around 74 AD. He had a son, also Helvidius Priscus, and it is Helvidius Priscus the younger who is referred to here (W&K p.318). Like his father, he was of fiercely independent opinions and suffered a similar fate, killed writing a play which criticized Domitian's divorce from his wife (Suet. *Dom.* 10): *Occidit et Helvidium filium, quasi scaenico*

exodio sub persona Paridis et Oenones divortium suum cum uxore taxasset. Tac. uses the words *nostrae manus* to imply that the whole senatorial order was complicit in seizing Helvidius, complicit in injustice.

nos Mauri Rusticique ...: There were two brothers, Iunius Arulenus Rusticus and Iunius Mauricus, who were Stoics and followers of Thrasea Paetus. Iunius Arulenus Rusticus was executed by Domitian as mentioned by Tac. in *Agr.* 2.1. His brother was a friend of the younger Pliny and was sent into exile (*Ep.* 3.11) but returned to Rome after the assassination of Domitian as recorded by Pliny in *Ep.* 4.22. The exact meaning of the words *Maurici Rusticique visus* has been debated; do they mean 'the appearance of Mauricus and Rusticus to us' (objective) or 'the look Mauricus and Rusticus gave us' (subjective)? O&R prefer the subjective reading and W&K, Gudeman *ad loc.*, and Birley (2009, p.32) prefer the objective. There is no certain way of deciding between these alternatives but the objective meaning seems to continue the implication of the immediately preceding words, namely, that witnesses to injustice become complicit if they fail to intervene.

visus ***: At first reading, the words of the manuscripts (ie, MSS: e, A, B): *nos Maurici Rusticique visus nos innocenti sanguine Senecio perfudit* seem to suggest the use of *perfudit* in a zeugma. This makes sense as far as Senecio's blood is concerned but it does not make sense when used with the sight of Mauricus and Rusticus. Therefore, it is possible that a verb may have dropped out after *visus*. The result is that different editions either leave a space (as W&K, Teubner, Loeb) or provide a possibility such as that of OCT and O&R: *nos ... visus adflixit* ('the sight ... cast down/dejected us'). However, Gudeman (1899) and Furneaux & Anderson (1939) and prefer *nos ... visus foedavit* ('the sight ... defiled/polluted us) which has the advantage that it supports the idea which Tac. seems to be putting forward about the corrupting effect of injustice on passive witnesses.

nos innocenti sanguine Senecio perfudit: Tac. referred to the death of Herennius Senecio in *Agr.* 2.1. He was instructed by the Senate to act with the younger Pliny (*Ep.* 7.33) to represent the province of Baetica against Baebius Massa (see above). After writing a eulogy of the life of Priscus Helvidius, he was put on trial by Domitian, executed and his book was

burned. W&K point out that the use of the adjective *innocenti* as applied to blood occurs nowhere else in Latin literature but *perfundere* is not uncommonly linked with *sanguis*, eg. *Ov. Met.* 5.156-157: *pollutosque semel multo Bellona penates / sanguine perfundit renovataque proelia miscet.*

45.3

Nero: Nero was Emperor 54 – 68 AD and noted for excess. Suetonius lists some of his faults as: *petulantiam, libidinem, luxuriam, avaritiam, crudelitatem ...* (Suet. *Nero* 26).

saevus ille vultus et rubor: Hendiadys; 'that savage red face'. Domitian's face was said to have been flushed as noted by Suetonius: *statura fuit procera, vultu modesto ruborisque pleno* (*Dom.*18).

contra pudorem muniebat: A ruddy complexion hid blushing so was thought to provide a defence against embarrassment and hence to indicate potential shamelessness (W&K).

45.4

tu vero felix, Agricola: At this point Tac. switches to an apostrophe in which he addresses the dead Agr. It continues to 46.3 the effect being to heighten the feeling of pathos.

opportunitate mortis: That death had occurred at an opportune moment was a common sentiment of *consolatio* and the same words were used by Cicero of the death of Crassus at *De. or* 3.3.12

45.5

Ut perhibent qui interfuere novissimis sermonibus tuis: Evidently, Tac. was not present at Agr.'s death so he has not recorded his final words. A person's final words are regularly found in Latin literature. For example, Suetonius relates in *Oth.*11, how the Emperor Otho, having made preparations to commit suicide, delayed and said: '*Adiciamus vitae et hanc noctem!*'

constans et libens fatum excepisti tamquam pro virili portione innocentiam principi

donares: Those who were present with Agr. at his death reported that he received his fate willingly and without accusing the Emperor; a loyal soldier to the end. However, at 43.1 Tac. mentions the rumour that Agr. had been poisoned by Domitian.

45.6

sed mihi filaeque ... non contigit: Tac. here seems to show genuine affection for his father-in-law and regrets that he and his wife were not present at his final moments.

45.7

Excepissimus: A pluperfect subjunctive to express a wish in the past, placed at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis. OLD *excipio* s.v. 14 'pick up, catch, seize on (spoken words)'. Tac. and his wife regretted not being present to catch Agr.'s final words.

45.8

nobis tam longae absentiae conditione ante quadriennium amissus est: Tac. says that he and his wife had been away from Rome for 4 years when Agr. died, but he does not say where they had been.

45.9

omnia ... superfuere honori tuo: Tac. depicts a traditional deathbed scene with close relatives of the dying person gathered at the bedside as in Ov. *Am.* 3.9.49 *et seq:* *hinc certe madidos fugientis pressit ocellos / mater ... / hinc soror in partem misera cum matre doloris / venit ...*

uxore: This refers to Agr.'s wife, Domitia Decidiana, whom he married in about 61 AD. The union appeared to have been a happy one, described by Tac. in 6.2: *vixeruntque mira concordia, per mutuam caritatem et in vicem se anteponendo*. The year after the marriage she bore a son who died in infancy. Later, she bore the daughter, Julia Agricola, who was

married to Tac. in about 76 when she was barely into her teens. In 9.7 Tac. describes her as: *egregiae tum spei filiam* 'a girl of outstanding promise'.

paucioribus tamen lacrimis compositus es: The OCT, Teubner, Loeb and O&R editions show *compositus* which leads to translations of this passage along the lines: 'you have been laid out for burial with too few tears' (OLD *compono* s.v. 4c: 'bury, lay out for burial'). However, some other editors, including, Gudeman 1899, Pearce 1901, and Stuart 1916, but also more recently W&K 2014, show *comploratus* which results in: 'you were mourned with too few tears' (OLD *comploro* s.v. 'lament, bewail, mourn'). W&K prefer *comploratus*, although it is found nowhere else in Tac., because *compositus* 'laid out for burial' seems to get ahead of the next words which refer to Agr.'s final gaze indicating that he is still alive. The *Codex Aesinas* (MS e) has *comploratus* with *compositus* in the margin. The placing of a word in the margin seems a deliberate act by a scribe indicating second thought, therefore, we should infer that the word which Tac. actually used was *compositus*.

aliquid: Gudeman (1899, p.151) speculated plausibly that, in his final moments, the eyes of Agr. were looking around for something familiar, perhaps his only daughter, Tac.'s wife, who, was not at his bedside (45.8). The last look of a dying person was a regular topic; eg. Tib. 1.1.59 as the poet thinks of his love, Delia: *te spectem suprema mihi cum venerit hora*.

46

In this final chapter, using conventional formulas expressed in dignified, poetic language, Tac. shows the deep respect, admiration and affection for his father-in-law as well as his conviction that Agr.'s memory will live on.

46.1

si quis piorum manibus locus, si, ut sapientibus placet: There was a widely held belief that souls of the righteous dead had their own place of rest, vividly imagined as Elysium by Vergil in *Aen.* 6.638 *et seq: devenere locos laetos et amoena virecta / Fortunatorum Nemorum sedesque beatas ...* Gudeman (1899) suggests that *sapientibus* refers to philosophers including the 3rd century BC Greek Stoic, Chrysippus, who held a belief in an afterlife for the

good and great. However, as O&R (p.312) point out, 'the conditional clause tells us nothing about Tac.'s personal convictions about survival after death'. Austin (1939, p.116-117) noted that Tac. lapses into lyric meters in a way befitting the elevated tone of this emotional passage. For example, *si quis piorum* is the first half of an Alcaic line (- - u - -) and *ut sapientibus* is the last half of an Alcaic line (- u u - u -).

placide quiescas: A funerary formula but used elsewhere, for example in Tib. 2.4.49: '*discedens dicet, placideque quiescas ...*'. Using the words *placide quiescas*, Tac. forms the last line of an Alcaic stanza: *Māgn(ae) ānīmāē plācīdē quīēscās*. The combination of funeral language and poetic rhythms provides a solemn and dignified end to the work.

nōsquē dōmūm tūāam: The last half of an Alcaic line. OLD *domus* s.v. 6 'family, household or dependants collectively of the head of a house'. Strictly speaking, Tac. was not a member of Agr.'s household and neither was Tac.'s wife (ie, Agr.'s daughter) as they lived separately from Agr. at the time of his death (45.8). However, they clearly felt very close to Agr. as indicated in 45.6: *sed mihi filiaeque eius praeter acerbitem parentis erepti...* Some editors (eg, Pearce 1901, Gudeman 1899) insert an extra *et*, to produce: *nosque et domum tuam* on the grounds that 'pronoun-*que et*' is a favourite collocation in Tac.; cf: 18.6 *simul seque et arma*. However, the insertion of *et* disrupts the Alcaic rhythm and Tac. is clearly favouring Alcaic rhythms in his concluding chapters.

ēt mūliēbrībūs lamentis: Unrestrained lamenting was traditionally associated with women and at 29.2 Tac. mentions how Agr. bore the loss of a son neither with the indifference which some men display to domestic tragedy but: *neque per lamenta rursus ac maerorem muliebriter tulit*. In the *Ger. 27*, Tac. implies approval of the Germans who do not lament much at funerals, but he adds: *feminis lugere honestum est, viris meminisse*.

quās nēquē lūgērī nēquē plāngī fas est: Tac. says that it is right that the contemplation of Agr.'s virtues should not be the cause of excessive sorrow. O&R (p.313) point out that this reflects the ancient belief that loud lamentation disturbed the peace of the dead. *Fas* is a word with religious overtones which is used here as it is in keeping with the solemn mood of

the chapter. *quās nēquē lūgērī nēquē plāngī* scans as the end of a line of dactylic hexameter, reinforcing the dignity of the words.

46.2

admiration te potius et laudibus et ...: In this sentence Tac. suggests that Agr.'s memory should be honoured with admiration and praises since these are within our ability to provide, but we should also try to imitate him as far as our natural abilities permit. Some manuscripts show: *admiration te potius temporalibus et laudibus et...* However, Muretus (ie, Marc Antoine Muret 1526-1585) noticed that *temporalibus* was an example of dittography following *te potius*. Most modern texts including OCT, O&R, Loeb and W&K omit *temporalibus*; Teubner shows it in brackets.

si natura suppeditet: OLD *suppedito* s.v. 1b 'come to the aid of', 1d 'have the resources for' so this could be translated as 'if nature should help'. At the time of writing the *Agr.* in 98 AD, Tac. was about 40 years old and perhaps he wondered whether nature would allow him the years to imitate Agr. to the extent he deserved and his words could be seen as praise for his remarkable father-in-law.

similitudine colamus: The paradosis was *militum decoramus*, the sense of which does not fit the remainder of the sentence. Amendments suggested are *similitudine* by Grotius (ie, Hugo Grotius, 1583-1645) and *colamus* by Muretus and these have been widely adopted by modern editors including those of the OCT.

honos ... pietas: These two words are combined elsewhere in bereavement literature, for example Plin. *Ep.* 7.24.8 in the context of the death of a wealthy Roman lady who left part of her estate to her grandson: *gaudeo enim pietate defunctae, honore optimi iuuenis* 'I rejoice in the dutifulness of the deceased, in the repute of the best young man'. *Pietas* was an important concept to the Romans and implied 'an attitude of dutiful respect towards gods, fatherland, parents and other kinsmen' (OCD s.v. *pietas*). It crops up elsewhere in the *Agr.* for example at 3.4 where Tac. mentions that his book is written as an expression of affection

for his father-in-law, *professione pietatis*; also at 7.3 where Agr. is on the way to his mother's funeral, the *sollemnia pietatis*.

46.3

In this sentence, Tac. addresses his exhortation to Agr.'s wife and daughter. O&R infer from this that Tac. had no children of his own at this time.

praeceperim: Potential subjunctive, 'I would enjoin', 'I would impress on'. Usually, since this is a verb of urging, an *ut* clause would follow, but sometimes an infinitive is used, as here, ie, *venerari* (A&G 563).

facta dictaque: Gudeman (1899) said that: 'the usual order of this phrase, common in both Greek and Latin, is reversed to emphasise the deeds of Agr. as the more important'. However, the words in this order are not particularly unusual and occur, for example, in the first sentence of Plin. *Ep.*3.16: *Adnotasse videor facta dictaque virorum feminarumque*.

formamque ac figuram: An alliterative pairing of synonyms found elsewhere, for example at Cic.*Tusc.* 1.37: *formam aliquam figuramque quaerebant* and Plin. *Pan.* 55: *formam principis figuramque*.

putem: Subjunctive of rejected reason (A&G 540 n.3) following *non quia*.

marmore aut aere: These are in the Ablative of Material without the preposition *ex*. The lack of *ex* is more usual in poetry (A&G 403 n.2) and Tac. is building to a resonant and uplifting conclusion to his work so he uses rhetorical and poetic language.

simulacra vultus imbecilla ac mortalia sunt, forma mentis aeterna: The point here is that physical representations eventually perish but a man's character lives on. This sentiment was also placed in the mouth of Tiberias in *Ann.* 4.38: *haec mihi in animis vestris templa, hae pulcherrimae effigies et mansurae, nam quae saxo struuntur ... pro sepulchris spernuntur*. And Cicero at *Arch.* 30 asks whether we ought not, rather than leaving behind

statues and images of the body, leave behind a copy of: *consiliorum ... ac virtutum nostrarum*.

46.4

quidquid ex Agricola amavimus, quidquid mirati sumus, manet mansurumque est in animis hominum in aeternitate temporum, fama rerum: Gudeman (1899) notes 'the equilibrium of clauses, the anaphora and the sonorous rhythm of this fervent passage', while O&R observe that 'the thought that a man's fine qualities will be immortal through memory was conventional in Consolations'. W&K suggest that it makes poor sense to recall personal qualities (ie, *quidquid amavimus, quidquid mirati sumus*) through the fame of deeds (ie, *fama rerum*). They then seek to justify the inclusion of the word '*ut*', not present in the MSS, so that it reads: *animus hominum <ut> in aeternitate temporum*. But this seems an over-interpretation of words designed for emotional impact rather than forensic accuracy. Tac. may feel that in human memory famous deeds and personal qualities may indeed become inseparably fused.

manet mansurumque: 'Such repetitions are frequent in consolatory and similar contexts' (W&K *ad loc*), for example, Plin. *Ep.* 2.1.11 writes to a friend about the death of the distinguished *consularis*, Verginius Rufus: *vivit enim vivitque semper ... postquam ab oculis recessit*.

nam multos veterum velut inglorios et ignobiles oblivio obruet: A rhythmical sentence as Tac. draws the biography to a close; *nam* connects and explains the previous statement and the alliteration is 3-fold. The OCT, O&R, Teubner and Loeb editions show *obruet* as MSS e, A and B. However, the nineteenth century scholar, Mauritius Haupt, suggested that *obruit* was intended and this is the reading preferred by Gudeman, Stuart and W&K. O&R point out if either *oblivio obruet* 'oblivion will overwhelm', or *oblivio obruit* 'oblivion overwhelms', is used, Tac.'s point is equally valid; that is to say, while many famous men of the past are still remembered they will gradually slip from memory but the memory of Agr. will live on because his deeds have been recorded and preserved. The case to adjust the wording of the MSS seems unconvincing.

Agricola posteritati narratus et traditus superstes erit: In the first sentence of the *Agr.*, Tac. declares that: *Clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere antiquitus usitatum*, words that are reflected here in chapter 46. Similarly, and as further evidence of ring composition, in 3.4 he says that: *hic interim liber honori Agricolae soceri mei destinatus professione pietatis* and here in chapter 46 he points out that he has told Agr.'s story so that his memory will live on. Indeed, were it not for Tac.'s work, we would know very little about Agr. who is elsewhere mentioned in literature only in two short passages written in Greek by Cassius Dio; in addition, his name is mentioned on two lead water pipes found at Chester and an inscription from the forum at St Albans (O&R p.316).

16,003 words

ABBREVIATIONS

A&G	Allen & Greenhough (1903). <i>New Latin Grammar</i> Focus Publishing 2000 edition
G&L	Gildersleeve & Lodge (1895) <i>Gildersleeve's Latin Grammar</i> Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers Inc, USA reprinted 1989
L&S	Lewis & Short (1879) <i>A Latin Dictionary</i> OUP
Loeb	Hutton M, rev Ogilvie R.M. (1970). <i>Tacitus: Agricola, Germania, Dialogus</i> . Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press
NLS	Woodcock E.C. (1959) <i>New Latin Syntax</i> . Bristol Classical Press (2002 imprint)
O&R	Ogilvie R. & Richmond Sir Ian (eds) (1967) <i>Cornelii Taciti: De Vita Agricolae</i> OUP
OCD	Hornblower & Spawforth (eds) (2003) <i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> OUP
OCT	Winterbottom & Olgivie (1975) <i>Cornelii Taciti Opera Minora</i> Oxford Classical Texts
OLD	Glare (ed) (2016) <i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> . OUP
Teubner	Delz J. (ed) (2010) <i>P. Cornelius Tacitus, Tom II Fasc 3 Agricola. Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana</i> . De Gruyter
TLL	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> at https://thesaurus.badw.de
W&K	Woodman A.J. with Kraus C.S. (eds) (2014) <i>Tacitus: Agricola</i> . Cambridge University Press

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