The Tacitus On Line **Project: an Electronic Edition of Neo-Latin Commentaries on the** Annals **to Analyse Early Modern Politicization(s) of Tacitus (1513-1607)**

Traditionally, there were two main movements in the reception of Tacitus during the early modern period, from the *editiones principes* of c. 1470 and 1515 onwards: firstly, a series of studies aimed at correcting a sometimes obscure and faulty text, explaining its meaning, and even clarifying its historical and legal dimension (Claire 2022, Bovier 2022); then, from a turning point generally situated at the beginning of the 1580s (Momigliano 1947, Claire 2020), and which would see its greatest expansion at the beginning of the seventeenth century, an "âge tacitéen", or Tacitism, in which humanists found in Tacitus principles of government adapted to the age of absolutism in which they lived (Burke 1969; Merle & Oïffer-Bomsel 2017). Following the traditional view, this chronological split came along a generic shift: commentaries on Tacitus, which throughout the first period and even afterwards professed not to meddle in politics (cf. the phrase *politica non attigi* of Lipsius in the preface to his *Liber commentarius*, 1581), were gradually replaced by treatises and speeches drawing on Tacitus for their examples – and even for their own words.

This paper deals with what appears as a blatant paradox: how is it possible that political readings did not emerge until the heart of the 1580s, and especially in the 1600s, when two of the greatest political thinkers of the Renaissance made a considerable use of Tacitus before 1520: Francesco Guicciardini, in his *Ricordi* (composed in 1512, and from which a quotation is recalled in the CfP) and Niccolò Machiavelli in the *Discorsi* (composed between 1513 and 1519, quoting and using Tacitus in chapter III, 6 on conspiracies). Is it possible that commentators who were very familiar with these seminal treatises, and who were obviously not unaware of the political dimension of the Tacitean text, should have left politics at the door before 1580 and left nothing to show for it?

In order to move beyond the debate between republican and monarchist readings of Tacitus (or between the "red" Tacitus and the "black" Tacitus: Kapust 2012), this paper proposes to consider the emergence of political readings of Tacitus using the tools of political science, by mobilizing the notion of politicization. Politicization is a complex process during which a theme benefiting from a "topicality effect" (fr. "mise en actualité") is progressively considered as a public problem thanks
to the collective actions of actors of various statuses and may call for an institutional reaction from the public authorities (Gilbert & Henry 2012; Boltanski & Esquerre 2022). We propose to study the neo-Latin commentaries on Tacitus as witnesses to the politicization of certain political themes in the period 1513-1607, and to consider the commentators as actors in this process. By studying the passages in Tacitus' text that attract the attention of humanists for political reasons, the aim is to study the genre of commentary as a laboratory in which to observe the beginnings of the major trends in early seventeenth-century Tacitism (on this question, see Salvo Rossi 2022).

This investigation into the emerging politicization of Tacitus works will draw on data from the *Tacitus On Line* project, which will be presented at the start of the paper. Launched in 2015 by Isabelle Cogitore at Grenoble Alpes University and now managed by Louis Autin at Sorbonne University, *Tacitus On Line* aims to provide an XML-TEI edition of all the neo-Latin commentaries on Tacitus prior to 1607 (the date of the last posthumous edition of Lipsius' commentary) and to provide various tools for interrogation and analysis. The project

is currently proposing a complete edition of the commentaries on book I of the *Annals* and a partial edition of the commentaries on books II and III. It is on this corpus that we will be working (*Ann.* 1-3), continuing several previous studies (Cogitore 2023, Autin forthcoming). The aim will be to observe which passages from this corpus, rich in political themes (the installation of the principate; the *arcana imperii*; the power of the army; dynastic legitimacy, etc.), attract the attention of which commentators, in order to reconstruct the process of politicization, the culmination of which can be seen in the Tacitist treatises of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Lipsius' *Politica* and *Monita et exempla politica*, works by Pasquali, Scoto and Ammirato, etc.). The latter will provide a corpus against which we will compare the trends observed in the commentaries.

Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the political reception of Tacitus diachronically in the early modern period, putting the focus on successive reinventions and reinterpretations of Tacitean themes.

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