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0521609356 - Velleius Paterculus: The Tiberian Narrative (2.94-131)

Edited by A. J. Woodman

Excerpt

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INTRODUCTION

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I THE TEXT

Modern textual criticism of V.'s work may be said to have begun with Orelli's edition of 1835.¹ If since that date V. has been deserted by commentators and historians, he has certainly not been deserted by editors and textual critics.² Besides the work of Kritz, which I have already mentioned in the Preface, there were editions from Kreyssig, Bothe, Haase, Halm, Ellis, Bolaffi and Stegmann. This last scholar stated that between 1873 and 1933 more than 1,500 emendations were proposed for V.'s text, a figure which lends considerable support to the view that 'pendant longtemps le texte de Velléius Paterculus n'ait présenté d'autre intérêt, pour beaucoup de savants, que celui de leur offrir un terrain où ils puissent exercer leur ingéniosité'.³ It is the purpose of this Section to sketch the background to this textual activity and also to explain the position of the present editor.

THE MURBACH CODEX: (M)

A solitary codex of V., probably written in a minuscule script in the eighth century,⁴ was discovered early in 1515 by Erasmus' friend Beatus Rhenanus in the Benedictine monastery at Murbach, Alsace.⁵ As we learn from his writings of

¹ See below, pp. 11ff.

² Nor was he deserted by textual scholars before that date: see the list of editions etc. in Krause 64-104, Kritz cxxviii-cxlv, Dihle 655-7.

³ Hellegouarc'h, *ANRW*; cf. Stegmann v.

⁴ Estimates of the age of the (now lost) codex have varied. Burer (on whom see below, pp. 6-11) informs us on 29.5 that the codex had there written *a* in the form of *cc*, a characteristic of Caroline minuscule script which had apparently died out by the ninth century (Havet 164 § 646; also W. Clausen, *CP* 71 (1976), 42 n. 26). This date would be confirmed by the information given below, p. 12 n. 1, provided that it derives from other evidence than that just mentioned. It is also likely that (M) wrote *s* and *l* similarly (see below, p. 22 n. 2), a further characteristic of Caroline minuscule (Havet 162 § 621).

⁵ The exact date of the discovery is unknown, but must have preceded 30 March 1515, the date of the dedication of the edition of Sen. *Apoc.* in

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1520,¹ Rhenanus was at once struck by the corruptness of the codex: ‘cum primum hunc . . . reperissem, et uiderem tam prodigiose corruptum ut omnia restituere non foret humani ingenii’.² And he had some sharp words for its unfortunate copyist. ‘Ausim iurare eum qui illum descriperat, ne uerbum quidem intellexisse: adeo omnia erant confusa absque ullis punctis aut distinctionibus. . . imo nihil erat non deprauatum: in singulis pene uerbis haerebatur.’³ Rhenanus was also struck by the incompleteness of the MS, from which V.’s preface and the greater part of Book 1 were missing. For this loss he blamed not so much the ravages of time as ‘hominum incuriam’. ‘Poterant exemplaria aetatis uitio obsolescentia describi, poterant. . . restitui, si fuissent quos huius rei cura tetigisset. Et certe fuerunt, qui tametsi parum docti, praestiterunt tamen quod potuerunt: quibus habendam gratiam censeo, quod horum saltem opera qualicunque miseras bonorum autorum reliquias licet mendosissime exceptas, conseruatas uideamus, si modo conseruari est, tam deprauate esse descriptum.’⁴ In view of these deficiencies Rhenanus decided to postpone publication of the text until he could have access to a better MS which G. Merula was supposed to have discovered in Milan.⁵ But he first arranged for the codex to be copied, which was done ‘properanter . . . ab amico quodam’.⁶

THE ‘EDITIO PRINCEPS’: P

The Milan codex failed to materialise, and Rhenanus, presumably either in 1518 or 1519, began to arrange for the publication of the *editio princeps*.⁷ In producing the edition he saw his

which Rhenanus cites V. ‘quem nos nuperrime in Murbacensi bibliotheca reperimus’. Cf. R. Sabbadini, ‘La scoperta di V.P.’, *RFIC* 47 (1919), 346f.

¹ These writings, upon which our knowledge of such matters depends, are: the dedication of the *ed. pr.* to the Duke of Saxony; the addresses to the reader on the first and final pages of the *ed. pr.*; Rhenanus’ letter of 16 Dec. 1520 to the Duke’s employee, G. Spalatinus. For the text of this last, cf. Fechter 42. ² *ed. pr. dedic.* ³ *ed. pr.* pp. 69–70.

⁴ *ed. pr.* p. 1. ⁵ *ed. pr. dedic.* ⁶ *ed. pr. dedic.*

⁷ Again the exact date is uncertain. In *ed. pr. dedic.* Rhenanus says that he waited ‘iam treis annos’ for the codex, but on p. 69 he says ‘iam in quartum annum emendatius exemplar expectando’.

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role as that of scholar-editor. 'Vtinam uero quidam autores extarent, quamlibet mendose scripti. Possent in illis multa restitui per uiros eruditos, ac iudicio praeditos.'¹ He claimed to have eliminated many corruptions from the text, with varying degrees of success ('Curauimus autem nos multa uulnera perfecte: nonnulla sic, ut cicatrix etiamnum appareat: quaedam splenio tantum obduximus'), all of which took him some considerable time. 'Proinde cogita quantis mihi uigiliis constiterit haec qualis qualis castigatio... Quod si tu scires quam ego laborarim in hiis fragmentis utcunque restituendis, credo fateberis te mihi non nihil debere. Neque enim quia tu multa absque offensione legis, idcirco codex planus erat.'² And he quickly dismissed those who might have objected to his conjectural method: 'Quasi uero qui iam olim poetas enarrarunt, aut nostro saeculo sunt interpretati, non coniecturas plerunque sequantur!'²

In many respects Rhenanus' confidence, not unmixed with an agreeable diffidence, was justified, as will be seen below (pp. 20-5); but in one respect at least Rhenanus' method seems to have been seriously defective. His restoration of the text was apparently based not on the original codex but on the copy made by his anonymous friend.³ The matter seems incapable of definite proof, but there are several indications that this was so. First, when Rhenanus sent the text to J. Froben to be printed, he sent both the Murbach MS and its copy, often warning Froben's men 'ut uetus exemplar non minus quam exemplum inspicerent'.⁴ Second, Rhenanus on occasion proposes as an emendation of his own a reading which was in the original codex.⁵ Third, writing a few days after the *editio*

¹ *ed. pr.* p. 1.² *ed. pr.* pp. 69-70.³ So Fechter 52ff.; also Ellis ix; G. Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo*² (1952), 100. There is no authority in any of the three sources mentioned above (p. 4 n. 1) for Kritiz's statement that Rhenanus 'ipse codicem Murbacensem descripsit' (lxxvi). See too below, n. 5.⁴ *ep. Spalat.*⁵ Thus *aciem* and *at ea* at 112.3-4, assuming (with Krause 62) that Rhenanus' marginal formula 'alias' is not a method of referring to the text of the codex. There are in fact only two places in the whole *ed. pr.* where Rhenanus

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princeps had been published, Rhenanus claimed that he had been deceived as to the accuracy of the copy of the codex: ‘in quo multum falsus sum, quod exemplar fidelissime descriptum arbitrabar’.¹ Fourth, the inaccuracy of this copy was revealed by a late *collatio* which Rhenanus refrains from specifying as his own: ‘cum postrema sed nimium sera collatio librarii oscitantiam arguat’.² None of these four circumstances is likely to have taken place if Rhenanus had had the original Murbach codex in front of him while preparing his text for Froben. However much we may regret Rhenanus’ omission, it was characteristic of his age: Lipsius was to act similarly when he produced his edition of Tacitus in 1574.³

BURER’S APPENDIX: B

The bulk of the *editio princeps* – that is, the text and Rhenanus’ marginal notes – seems to have been completed in November 1520, the date printed on its (unnumbered) seventy-first page. It was then that one of Rhenanus’ scribes, J. A. Burer, happened to notice an error which led him to retrieve the Murbach MS from Froben and collate it with the *editio princeps*. ‘Cum Velleium typis excusum uidissem, casu inspecto recenti libro erratululum⁴ quoddam deprehendi, leuiusculum quidem illud, sed adeo non leue, quin dignum uideretur obseruatu: atque ex hoc uno (quod aiunt) caetera omnia spectare coepi, uetustum Vellei codicem a Io. Frobenio repetens animo conferendi eius ... Contuli itaque Velleium a capite (quod aiunt) usque ad

nus seems to mention the codex: his note on 109.1 (‘nam hic in exemplari lacunulam omissae dictionis offendimus’) and his final remarks on p. 70 (‘nam in exemplari versus aliquot erant erasi’). The former could be either an assumption on Rhenanus’ part, or information derived from the copy of the codex; the latter is similarly explicable, but might equally be due to Rhenanus’ recollection of the codex when he discovered it five years before.

¹ *ep. Spalat.*, completely misinterpreted by Kritz lxxvii.

² *ep. Spalat.*

³ Cf. C. O. Brink, ‘Justus Lipsius and the text of Tacitus’, *JRS* 41 (1951), 33 n. 9; Kenney 53.

⁴ Other copies of the *ed. pr.* have ‘erratum’: cf. Kritz cxxix; also below, p. 7 n. 7.

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calcem.¹ It is this *collatio* to which Rhenanus referred in the passage quoted near the end of the preceding paragraph;² and it revealed many discrepancies between the book and the codex for which Rhenanus blamed both Froben's printers, who contrary to his warnings had failed to consult the MS as well as its copy,³ and also his anonymous friend, who had made that copy 'infeliciter'.⁴ If the above reconstruction is true, however, the blame should rest with Rhenanus himself.

Burer's collation takes up ten unnumbered pages at the end of the *editio princeps*. The book then seems to have gone back to Froben, for he added not only Rhenanus' dedication and *Vita Vellei*, dated 8 and 13 December 1520 respectively, but also, on p. 70, an emendation by Rhenanus of 112.4 which is so self-evidently correct that even Burer, had he been able to see it, would scarcely have bothered to advance his own wrong emendation of the same passage.⁵ The book was finally published at some point between 13 and 16 December,⁶ but even that seems not to have stopped Rhenanus' tinkering: there are several places where different copies of the *editio princeps* have different readings.⁷

¹ Burer's address 'historiarum amatoribus' on the (unnumbered) p. 73 of *ed. pr.*

² This seems clear because Rhenanus' statement 'meus amanuensis uolumen typis excusum denuo cum uetusto contulit' follows directly upon his reference to 'postrema sed nimium sera collatio' (*ep. Spalat.*). It must be admitted that the words *denuo* and *postrema* imply that the codex had been collated previously; but I think Rhenanus here means the *collatio* which he had expected Froben's men to perform.

³ 'Illi non obtemperarunt, magis curantes, ut quam primum labore defungerentur, quam ut liber bene haberet' (*ep. Spalat.*). Such discrepancies as 1.4.3 *Graeciae* for *Graecae* or 1.16.2 *clausa capsas* for *clausa capso* might reasonably fall into this category: see also below, p. 17 n. 3, p. 21.

⁴ *ed. pr. dedic.*

⁵ For the unreliability of Burer's emendations see below, p. 9 n. 4.

⁶ The respective dates of the *Vita* and the letter to Spalatinus, in which latter the book is referred to as published.

⁷ See e.g. Haase iv-v, who says that at 35.2 (on p. 27, not 37, of *ed. pr.*) some copies have *homo*, others *non* (the former is correct, the latter the reading of the codex); and that at 83.2 some copies have *hunc mox auunculum*, others *mox autem hunc auunculum* (the latter is the reading of the codex and probably nearer the truth than the former). See too Orelli xii-xiii; Stegmann on 73.1, 76.3; also above, p. 6 n. 4.

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Rhenanus does not emerge from this story with much credit, and to that extent his edition may be said to have been ‘badly executed’;¹ but his acceptance of Burer’s collation as an appendix, while admittedly ‘nimum sera’, does at least give some grounds for the view that ‘maximae Rhenano curae fuisse, ut editio princeps quam accuratissime ad codicis fidem excuderetur’.²

That Burer took his job seriously seems not to be in doubt. He regularly expresses an interest in and knowledge of old MSS and their characteristics, observing their orthographical habits (on which he quotes Politian), their abbreviations, the habits of scribes, and the way in which corruptions might have arisen. He remarks upon such items as erased words in (M), its marginal notes, and the different hands which it exhibited; and he confirms Rhenanus’ impression of the codex by such statements as ‘uestigia literarum uix poterant uideri prae uetustate’ (103.3).³ It is not surprising that such a man should introduce his collation with the following claim. ‘Cum hunc recentem uetusto Vellei codici conferrem, non modo uersum uersui, sed etiam syllabam syllabae, & (quod alicui plus quam curiosum ac pene stultum uideri queat) etiam literam literae contuli.’⁴

Burer’s normal practice was to print a lemma from P and follow it by the formula *exemplar uetustum habet*, which he would in turn follow by his reading of (M). Although he occasionally made mistakes, we shall see that he generally maintained a very high level of accuracy in his transcriptions.⁵ Thus he notices

¹ Goodyear, *Comm. Tac.* 1.6 n. 5. ² Kritiz lxxxiii.

³ Burer makes similar statements on several other occasions, esp. towards the end of his collation (cf. Krause 51).

⁴ *ed. pr.* [= p. 73]. Rhenanus testifies that Burer acquitted himself ‘plus quam diligenter’ (*ep. Spalat.*).

⁵ See below, p. 16. Although some scholars like Burman and Gruter questioned Burer’s fidelity, he was defended, in my opinion rightly, by Ruhnken (*praef.* 2), Krause 52–3, and Kritiz lxxxii–lxxxiv. Some exs. of Burer’s errors are as follows. He apparently omits *gladiatorum* from his reading of the codex at 22.2 (for the controversial case at 120.1 see my n. ad loc.) and occasionally seems to attribute to (M) two different readings of the same word: 1.2.1 *incies* and *ncies*, 115.2 *in integras* and *in integritas*; the same may have happened at 107.1 *metumque* and *motumque*, but the case is more uncertain. Even though in almost every instance Burer’s reading of (M) will

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Scpiones at 127.1; and he is excellent at noting such normally elusive items as omissions, transpositions, and alterations of numerals. On roughly half the occasions on which Burer notes the divergence of P from (M), the reading of P is in fact correct,¹ often quite blatantly so. From this we are compelled to conclude that Burer saw himself strictly as a collator and that to him a *uera lectio* was the reading of (M), which he proposed to record, regardless of its merits, on as many occasions as he noticed that P diverged from it. If true, this conclusion is of great importance (see below, pp. 16–19).

Unfortunately, however, the issue is less straightforward. Burer was strongly influenced by an age in which scholars ‘did not distinguish between collating and correcting a text: the one operation embraced and assumed the other’.² This comes out clearly in the ambiguous page-headings of Burer’s appendix, ‘*Emendationes Velleianae ex codice uetusto*’ (my italics); and it also emerges clearly from another peculiarity. Burer took advantage of his role as collator to introduce into his notes some emendations of his own, usually prefaced by the formula, again regrettably ambiguous, *mihi legendum uidetur*. Such emendations, sometimes made in the face of the stated reading of the codex,³ are easily isolated;⁴ but there are other occasions on which

be exact, these small mistakes (which often look like printing errors) confirm the simple fact that no transcript is infallible. It is therefore quite wrong of Halm, Rockwood and Stegmann to denote Burer’s readings by *M* rather than by *B*. Ellis at one time adopted the same misleading practice (*Hermath.* 10 (1897–9), 2), but fortunately not in his edition.

¹ See below, pp. 21, 25.

² Kenney 8–9.

³ So e.g. at 1.13.5 ‘tamet si sic [sc. as his lemma from P] habeat uetustum exemplar, tamen uidetur legendum...’.

⁴ Those of Burer’s emendations which I mention in my app. crit. are ascribed to Burer in full: in this way they are distinguished from his readings of the codex, which I, like everyone else except Halm, Rockwood and Stegmann, denote by *B*. The merit of Burer’s emendations varies greatly and cannot be gathered from a perusal of the app. crit., which naturally includes only his more plausible efforts. Sometimes Burer’s emendations are clearly right (e.g. 130.3 *Druso suo*), sometimes almost certainly right (e.g. 123.1 *firmanda*). But many of them are pure nonsense (e.g. 119.4 *pectore* for *petere*), which he is capable of defending with such statements as the following (on 128.1): ‘ipsus uideat lector quid sibi lectu optimum uideatur, nam mihi haec lectio non admodum displicet.’ It is

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Burer combines his two standard formulae to produce hybrids like *exemplar uetustum sic habet ut potius legendum existimem*. In such cases it is naturally impossible to deduce what exactly Burer thought the reading of (M) to be;¹ but more important is the fact that in such cases his sole testimony contains at least some conjectural element. It could perhaps be argued from this evidence that Burer regarded as *uera* a reading which was not necessarily that of (M) but in his opinion that of V. himself;² it could also be argued that Burer did not always record the readings of (M) if he himself had been anticipated by Rhenanus in restoring to the text what he considered to be V.'s own words.³ Again this conclusion, if true, is of great importance.

Two passages throw further light on the problem. At 72.5 Burer follows his normal practice of quoting a lemma from P which we know is an emendation of Rhenanus, *ad quem et e Brutianis castris*; Burer then says of this lemma, 'lectio Velleiana bene habet', after which he proceeds to observe: 'In uet. cod. sic scriptum erat, adque me T e brutianis castris &c'.⁴ Here an emendation of Rhenanus, by no means one of his more spectacular efforts, has been indicated by Burer to be true. Again at 118.1 Rhenanus in a marginal note had conjectured *prouocantes* for *procaces*, the reading in the text of P. Burer quotes P's lemma and then says: 'ex. uet. non habet procaces, sed procataes. Hinc lectionem marginalem ut ueram, in ordinem redigendam puto.' Here Burer wishes to restore to the text an emendation of Rhenanus on the grounds that it is true. On the basis of these examples it looks as though Burer tended not to pass over in

thus essential, for critical purposes, not to confuse Burer's own emendations with his readings of the codex. The latter are as reliable as the former are unreliable.

¹ E.g. 102.3 'exemp. uetustum sic habet, ut nescias an diu reluctatus, seu potius de reditu luctatus, legendum sit: mihi tamen prior lectio non usquequaque displicet.'

² Thus he calls one of his own conjectures *uera* at 1.14.6.

³ So Fechter 47; Halm (1875), 541.

⁴ Since B's reading of (M) is confirmed by A, we can be certain that P is an emendation of Rhenanus. See below, p. 23.

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silence even those emendations of Rhenanus which he considered to be true. There is thus no need to assume that Burer did not record as many divergences of P from (M) as he noticed.

AMERBACH'S APOGRAPH: A

In 1835 J. C. Orelli produced an edition of V. based on a text which he had earlier discovered in the library of the Academy in Basel and which had been copied in Basel by Rhenanus' young friend Bonifacius Amerbach (the copy is dated 11 August 1516).¹ Orelli decided that it was not identical with the copy which Rhenanus described as having been made 'properanter ac infeliciter'. In the first place the *editio princeps*, which is based on this latter copy, contains various passages, including the first eight chapters of Book 1, which are omitted from Amerbach's copy.² In the second place Froben's printers were presumably using the 'anonymous' copy in 1520 and doubtless littered it with printers' marks in addition to those marks already made by Rhenanus; but from a letter which Rhenanus wrote to Amerbach in that same year, we know that Amerbach had his own copy, which is devoid both of printers' marks and of Rhenanus' corrections, with him at Avignon.³ We must therefore conclude that while Amerbach's apograph has survived, the copy upon which the *editio princeps* was based has not. The latter evidently

¹ The copy, comprising 72 pages at 38 × 26 cm, is now to be found in the Öffentliche Bibliothek of Basel University (MSS AN. 11.38), to whose Keeper of Manuscripts, Dr M. Burckhardt, I am most grateful for sending me a microfilm. For a more detailed description of the apograph see Ellis xiii, Bolaffi vii–ix. Its subscription *apparently* reads, in part, 'Tertio Eid. Aug. MDXVI Basileiae In edib. tuis Bo. Amorbachch' (so too Fechter 9). Amerbach was then 21 years old (cf. Fechter 5).

² Cf. Orelli viii–ix. A fair idea of A's omissions may be gathered from the long list in Kritz cx–cxi; but Kritz wrongly follows Orelli in stating that A omits *uidemus...deinde ego* at 104.4, *non enim...occidit* at 119.5, and *triumphosque* at 127.1. The numerous other deficiencies of Orelli's collation are noted by Fechter in his (12–32).

³ 'apud illum [sc. Froben] aedimus Vellei fragmenta quae nosti, nam habes exscripta': cf. Fechter 35ff. (the text of the letter on p. 38).