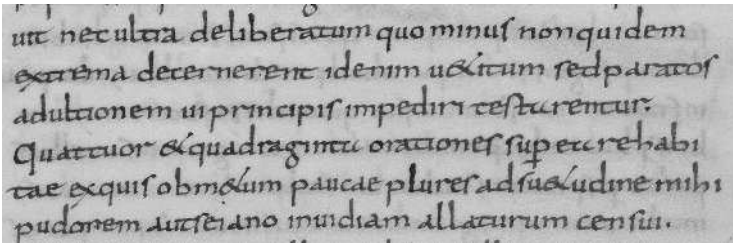


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The commentator on Books 5 and 6 of Tacitus' *Annals* is faced with an important question almost before he starts: what constitutes Books 5 and 6? The beginning of Book 5 is clearly marked with the expression 'INCIPIT LIBER V' in the Medicean manuscript (fo. 115v), but there is no indication of where the book ends or Book 6 begins; indeed there is no sign of any Book 6 at all: the text continues without a break to *suo tantum ingenio utebatur*, the final words of the manuscript (fo. 138r). Ferrettus in the mid-sixteenth century was the first to point out that much of the story of Sejanus is missing from this text,¹ of which the crucial passage (5.5–5.6.2) is here reproduced as it appears in the manuscript (fo. 117r):²



Sejanus is alive in the episode of AD 29 which concludes in line 3 with the words *impediri testarentur*. Since the following statement that 'forty-four speeches on that topic were delivered' has nothing in the preceding text to which it can refer, it is universally agreed that there is a lacuna between the words *testarentur* and *Quattuor*,³ likewise, since the relative clause which begins *ex*

¹ A. Ferrettus, *Annotatiunculae ad Annales et Historias* (Lyons 1541, 1542).

² Florence, The Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Plut. 68.1, fo. 117r, reproduced with permission of MiBACT. Further reproduction by any means is prohibited.

³ The four-letter gap in M after *testarentur* does not seem to me to be a residual trace of this lacuna; there is an almost identical gap after *censui*, likewise

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quis . . . adsuetudine in line 5 has no ending, and since the sentence which ends *mihi . . . censui* in lines 5–6 has no beginning, it is equally obvious that there is a second lacuna between *adsuetudine* and *mihi* in line 5. *mihi* and the first-person verb *censui* indicate that at least this defective sentence belongs to a speech,⁴ and the speech is part of a narrative in which it rapidly becomes clear that Sejanus has been executed (cf. esp. 5.8.1 ‘punito Seiano’):⁵ it therefore follows that the speech and its sequel belong to the later months of AD 31. In other words, between the words *impediri testarentur* and *mihi pudorem* there is a substantial amount of missing text which will have covered the best part of the years AD 29–31 but from which there survives only the defective sentence *Quattuor . . . adsuetudine*.⁶

Although Ferrettus acknowledged that in its original (i.e. non-lacunose) state Tacitus’ narrative of the years AD 29–37 was likely to have comprised two books rather than one, he did not propose where the division between these putative books should be marked; it was Lipsius in 1574 who proposed beginning Book 6 with the names of the consuls for AD 32 and who is thus ultimately responsible for the numeration which is found in modern editions.⁷ Lipsius therefore assigned the narratives of

coinciding with the end of a sentence, three lines lower down on the MS page.

⁴ *Quattuor . . . adsuetudine* could in theory belong to the same speech (see ad loc.), although never printed as such.

⁵ Sejanus was executed on 18 October AD 31.

⁶ As far as I know, the words *Quattuor . . . adsuetudine* are universally assumed to belong to the narrative of AD 31 rather than to that of AD 29 or 30.

⁷ Lipsius based his book-division solely on his view that a narrative of more than eight years (AD 29–31 + 32–37) was too much for a single book; although he said that his choice of AD 32 for the start of Book 6 was somewhat arbitrary (see his note ad loc.), it turns out to be extremely appropriate (see below, p. 7 and n. 12). On the complicated subject of the relationship between Ferrettus and Lipsius in the matter of book-division see S. Bartera, ‘Commentary writing on the *Annals* of Tacitus’, in C. S. Kraus and C. A. Stray (edd.), *Classical commentaries: exploration in a scholarly genre* (Oxford, 2016) 117–18 and n. 31.

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three full years (AD 29–31) to Book 5, which in his view ended with the words *donec magistratu abirent* at 5.11.2 but from which the central section of text was entirely missing apart from the defective sentence *Quattuor . . . adsuetudine*; and he attributed to Book 6 the narratives of five and a quarter years, AD 32 to March 37, which is when Tiberius died. Since at 5.11.2 there is no trace of the kind of subscription which separates every previous book in the Medicean manuscript, Lipsius' division almost certainly entails the assumption that an original subscription is missing at this point.

This book division was accepted for almost three centuries until F. Haase in 1848 maintained that Lipsius had been mistaken, that the narrative of Book 5 should go no further than the words *impediri testarentur* at 5.5 and that Book 6 should begin with the lacuna preceding the words *Quattuor et quadraginta orationes* in the following sentence.⁸ The effect of Haase's intervention was dramatic and can be seen with particular vividness in the work of Orelli. Orelli produced his edition of the *Annals* in 1846, and it was reprinted in 1848: both volumes follow Lipsius and begin Book 6 with the names of the consuls for AD 32. But 1848 was of course the year of Haase's intervention, and, when Baiter brought out a second edition of Orelli a decade later in 1859, he accepted Haase's arguments and began Book 6 with *Quattuor et quadraginta orationes* and the preceding lacuna. As far as I know, he has been followed by every editor ever since.⁹

Haase's two best arguments in favour of his suggestion are interrelated. He argued on the one hand that Lipsius' division left Book 6 disproportionately short: as can be seen from the following table, it would be the shortest Tiberian book by a difference of 245 lines:¹⁰

⁸ F. Haase, 'Tacitea', *Philol.* 3 (1848) 152–9.

⁹ Editors have, however, retained the traditional reference system, continuing to refer to the first six extant chapters of Haase's 'Book 6' as 5.6–11.

¹⁰ The line totals are based on Borzsák's edition.

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| Book | Total of lines | Years | Lines per year (average) |
|---------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| I (6 onwards) | 1050 | 1½ (14 [August]–15) | 789 |
| II | 1090 | 4 (16–19) | 272 |
| III | 975 | 3 (20–22) | 325 |
| IV | 1046 | 6 (23–28) | 174 |
| VI | 730 | 5¼ (32–37 [March]) | 139 |

Haase also argued that the execution of Sejanus in mid-October of 31 would have made an appropriate conclusion to Book 5. If Book 5 had indeed concluded with the death of Sejanus, that would leave almost a quarter of a year’s events to fill out the start of the allegedly deficient Book 6. Haase’s proposed division also has the incidental and attractive advantage of economy. Since on his proposal a lacuna after the words *impediri testarentur* at 5.5 will have included the point at which Book 5 ended and Book 6 began, it will also have included the subscription which, on the evidence of M’s other book divisions, separated the former book from the latter. Haase’s proposal thus solves at the same time the two problems of book length and the missing subscription.

To the best of my knowledge Haase’s division remained unchallenged for a hundred and fifty years; but in 1997 C. Ando produced detailed arguments in favour of reverting to Lipsius’ division.¹¹ Perhaps his most persuasive argument is the manner in which Tacitus opens the other books of the Tiberian *Annals*. If we exclude Book 1 as a special case, Books 2, 4 and 5 each open with the start of a new narrative year (see 5.1.1n.); and, although the same cannot be said with certainty about Book 3 (see 3.1–6 intro. n. [p. 78], 3.2.3n.), the likelihood is that this is true of that book also. Haase’s division thus has the effect of

¹¹ C. Ando, ‘Tacitus, *Annales* VI: beginning and end’, *AJP* 118 (1997) 285–303.

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making Book 6 look a strange anomaly in the Tiberian narrative. Also to be considered is the way in which the second half of the Tiberian hexad corresponds to the latter stages of Tiberius' *mores* as outlined in his obituary notice (6.51.3):

Morum quoque tempora illi diuersa: [1] egregium uita famaue quoad priuatus uel in imperiis sub Augusto fuit; [2] occultum ac subdolum fingendis uirtutibus donec Germanicus ac Drusus superfuere; [3] idem inter bona malaque mixtus incolumi matre; [4] intestabilis saeuitia sed obtectis libidinibus dum Seianum dilexit timuitue; [5] postremo in scelera simul ac dedecora prorupit postquam remoto pudore et metu suo tantum ingenio utebatur.

The beginnings of the third and fourth stages are marked more or less explicitly at the beginnings of Books 4 and 5 respectively (cf. 4.1.1, 4.6.1; 5.3.1): one would therefore expect the fifth and final stage, in which the emperor erupted into the sexual *dedecora* from which he had been prevented during Sejanus' lifetime, to be foregrounded at the beginning of Book 6; and it is Lipsius' book division, not Haase's, which produces this correspondence (cf. 6.1.1–2).¹²

Equally telling is the relationship between books and narrative years. When he completed Book 4, Tacitus had eight and a quarter years to accommodate in Books 5 and 6: Lipsius' assignment of five and a quarter years to Book 6 (AD 32–37) leaves three full years for Book 5 (AD 29–31), an identical total to Book 3 (AD 20–22), whereas Haase's division would reduce the total in Book 5 to less than three years, an unparalleled proportion apart from Book 1 (AD 14–15), which is exceptional on other grounds (as already noted) and is the longest book of all. It is also worth observing the average number of lines which Tacitus devotes to his narrative years. Book 6 as envisaged by Lipsius has an average of 139 lines per narrative year, which is only 35 lines fewer than the average in Book 4, the other book

¹² On this see the Appendix.

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which embraces multiple years. Yet even average figures are misleading, as the following table shows:

| AD | Chapters | Lines |
|----|-----------|-------|
| 32 | (1–14) | 193 |
| 33 | (15–27) | 170 |
| 34 | (28–30) | 56 |
| 35 | (31–9) | 131 |
| 36 | (40–45.2) | 82 |
| 37 | (45.3–51) | 98 |

The narrative of AD 34 is the second shortest of the fully extant years in the *Annals*, and that of AD 36 is among the half-dozen of the shorter years; but Tacitus has expanded brilliantly the narratives of AD 32, 33 and 35, and has given full measure to Tiberius’ last months in AD 37.¹³ The total and average figures for Book 6 on Lipsius’ division thus should not allow the inference that readers of that book are somehow being short-changed by the author.

It is true that Lipsius’ division requires the assumption of a missing subscription between Books 5 and 6; but we should remember that on any interpretation there is a second lacuna between the defective sentences *Quattuor . . . adsuetudine* and *mihi . . . censui* at 5.6.1–2: Lipsius’ assumption of a third omission does not seem unduly extravagant. It is also true, as Haase maintained, that the fall and death of Sejanus would have made a dramatic conclusion to Book 5; yet so perceptive a reader of Tacitus as Sir Ronald Syme seems clearly to have favoured the ending of Book 5 as envisaged by Lipsius, ‘a dispute between two consuls, ferocious and not to be allayed by the public intervention of many senators’.¹⁴

¹³ On all these passages see the introductions to each relevant section of the Commentary.
¹⁴ Syme, *Tac.* 267.

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The choice of episode is neither fortuitous nor inartistic. The two names together recapitulate the signal catastrophe of the year: the one consul had been an adherent of Seianus, the other was among the principal agents of his downfall. Further, consuls discordant in their last days of office served as a lively reminder of Rome's history under the Republic.

Haase has had a good run for his money: for over a century and half his arguments have determined the format of the Tiberian *Annals*; but a reconsideration of Tacitean practice suggests that we should revert to the division between Books 5 and 6 as perceived by Lipsius.