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THUCYDIDES
THE PELOPONNESIAN
WAR
BOOK II

EDITED BY

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For Caroline Ware Rusten

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[The historian's] literary devices are not separate from historical truth, but the precise means of conveying it . . . What should prevent the historian from offering his findings in [a] dry, deliberately graceless manner . . . is not literary aversion but his recognition that such a mode of presentation would be not merely less delightful than a disciplined narrative – it would also be less true.

Peter Gay, *Style in history*

L'originalité est donc le prix dont il faut payer l'espoir d'être accueilli (et non seulement compris) de qui vous lit. C'est là une communication de luxe, beaucoup de détails étant nécessaires pour dire peu de choses avec exactitude. Mais ce luxe est vital, car dès que la communication est affective (c'est la disposition profonde de la littérature), la banalité lui devient la plus lourde des menaces.

Roland Barthes, Preface to *Essais critiques* 1.

εὐαριθμητοὶ γὰρ τινὲς εἰσὶν οἷοι πάντα τὰ Θουκυδίδου συμβαλεῖν, καὶ οὐδ' οὗτοι χωρὶς ἐξηγήσεως γραμματικῆς ἔνια.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Thucydides*

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PREFACE

The aim of this commentary is easily stated: to assist the attempt to learn to read Thucydides. Yet as our notion of reading becomes more complex, so the ways it is learned grow more numerous, and the commentator's tasks multiply. Inquiry into this particular work's historical context (and autobiographical subtext) has already been intense, nor is it slighted here; but its philosophic and literary connections deserve much deeper scrutiny, and its linguistic texture, relegated to the depths of schoolboy grammar or the heights of textual criticism, has been virtually ignored in works in English in this century.

For an attempt to correct this imbalance what is now called Book 2 (despite its intermediate status – of the stories of Archidamus and Pericles it gives only the end, and of Plataea only the beginning) seemed the most urgent place to start: the funeral oration, the account of the plague of Athens, and the obituary of Pericles belong by any reckoning not merely to historiography, but also to the elements of Greek literature. They accordingly receive more thorough treatment here, and the linguistic commentary on them speaks even to those whose knowledge of Greek is less advanced. To that end, grammatical references are frequent and, on all but the most difficult questions, to works in English. I hope more skilled readers will not find these reminders annoying, but rather feel, as I do, that such an elaborate text is better served with clarity than brevity; and that a constant (if subconscious) attention to the minutiae of expression is one of the ways we fashion an identity for the writer and his product, which, in turn, is one of the ways we read.

No commentary can be concluded without a mixture of satisfaction at accomplishments, regret for explanations not yet found, and anxiety over errors and omissions. The extent of the last has been much reduced by corrections and suggestions from

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PREFACE

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The manuscript was further improved by Susan Moore of the press staff, and Professors Easterling and Kenney. From start to finish I had the good fortune of regular access to computer tapes of the text of Thucydides (and most of the rest of ancient Greek literature) from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* in Irvine, California, and a variety of search programs written by Gregory Crane (for the Harvard Classics Department) and David Packard and William Johnson (for the Ibycus SC).

My greatest debt is to Caroline, who has lavished on this project so much encouragement, counsel and support that it rightly belongs to her.

St Louis

J. S. R.

This reprint (1991) incorporates a number of corrections, for many of which I am indebted to the legendary acumen of Professor Rudolf Kassel.