

Cambridge University Press
0521609313 - The Annals of Tacitus, Volume I
Edited by F. R. D. Goodyear
Excerpt
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

I

CODEX LAVRENTIANVS MEDICEVS 68.1

The character and provenance of this prince of codices, our sole authority for *Annals* 1–6, have been discussed so often and so thoroughly by earlier scholars that the briefest outline will be more than sufficient here.¹ I have nothing new to contribute.

The first Medicean dates from about the middle of the ninth century. It is written in a Carolingian minuscule, except that, towards the beginning, some Merovingian forms occasionally appear. There are corrections by the original hand and others which seem to be by an early, but different, hand. On this matter it is not always easy to judge, but in general M 1 is extremely easy to read. It has many recurrent errors, but few, if any, of special palaeographical interest.² In its margin we find numerous annotations: they are usually attributable to the first editor of *Annals* 1–6, Beroaldus the younger.

It is commonly and plausibly surmised that M 1 emanates from Fulda: experts affirm that its script is characteristic of

¹ The most important aid to our study of M 1 is, of course, the magnificent facsimile reproduction, published at Leyden in 1902 as vol. 7.1 of S. de Vries' *Codices Graeci et Latini photographice depicti* and accompanied by a valuable introduction by H. Rostagno. Amongst other contributions I must mention those of K. Heraeus, *Studia critica in Mediceos Taciti codices*, Cassellis 1846, I. G. Orelli (aided by I. G. Baiter) in the preface to his edition (Zürich 1846), viiff and in its apparatus, F. Ritter in the preface to his edition (Leipzig 1864), vff, F. Philippi, *Philologus* 45 (1886), 376–80, G. Andresen, *De codicibus Mediceis annalium Taciti*, Berlin 1892, M. Lenchantin de Gubernatis in the preface to his edition of *Ann.* 1–6 (Rome 1940), vff, and E. Koestermann in his preface, pp. vff of the 1960 edition.

² These recurrent errors are copiously illustrated by Heraeus, Rostagno, Lenchantin, and Koestermann.

INTRODUCTION

this centre¹ and certainly the monk Rudolph, writing there in the mid ninth century, seems to show knowledge of the early books of the *Annals*.² Whatever the truth may be about its provenance and that of its exemplar,³ M 1 was in the end discovered in the monastery at Corvey and thence, in about 1508, brought to Rome and ultimately acquired, after passing through several hands, by Pope Leo X.⁴ He commissioned its publication by Beroaldus. And so in the year 1515, after centuries of oblivion, *Annals* 1–6 again emerged into the light of day.⁵

¹ M 1 was at some time joined with another MS of virtually the same date and character. This MS is now Laurentianus 47. 36 or M of Pliny's letters, 'ea scripturae forma quam Fuldensem esse periti agnoscunt exaratus' (R. A. B. Mynors, preface to his edition of the letters (Oxford 1963), xvii). When the MSS were separated is as uncertain as when they were joined.

² See Lenchantin, *op. cit.* x.

³ Some scholars have thought, and they could be right, that knowledge of Tacitus came to Fulda from Tours.

⁴ See Lenchantin, *Ann.* 1–6, vii–ix. The express testimony of Beroaldus, Soderinius, and Pope Leo, there collected, leaves little doubt that M 1 was not extracted from Germany before the beginning of the sixteenth century. But a few scholars have discounted this testimony and supposed that the MS came to Italy much earlier: see e.g. G. Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums*, Berlin 1893, I. 251–3 and L. Pralle, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Tacitus*, Fulda 1952. Such suppositions are very properly rejected by Lenchantin, by Koestermann, *op. cit.* v n. 1, and by Mynors, *op. cit.* xvii n. 1.

⁵ If I say nothing about the fortunes of *Ann.* 1–6 between the ninth and sixteenth centuries, it is because there is nothing usefully to be said. The most tantalizing problem about this text's transmission concerns an earlier period: when was book 5 mutilated and was its mutilation purely a matter of chance?

II

EDITIONS OF THE *ANNALS*

Tacitus was singularly fortunate in his early editors and critics,¹ for he attracted the interest of several of the finest scholars of the sixteenth century.² The first great age of Tacitean studies begins with Beroaldus' edition in 1515 and ends with Pichena's edition in 1607. In quality, as well as in quantity, the contributions of this period have not been surpassed.

That those early in the field reap the easier harvest is true enough, but not always the whole truth. The *editio princeps* of *Annals* 1–6 by Philippus Beroaldus the younger is no perfunctory and commonplace piece of work. To be sure the

¹ For a convenient survey of editions of Tacitus see C. W. Mendell, *Tacitus: the man and his work*, New Haven 1957, 349–78. Mendell assembles much useful information not readily to be found elsewhere, but some of the opinions he expresses on the value of particular editions are misguided. For much detailed evidence about the work of sixteenth-century scholars on Tacitus see also J. Ruyschaert, *Juste Lipse et les Annales de Tacite*, Louvain 1949. For a judicious assessment of many aspects of it see C. O. Brink, 'Justus Lipsius and the text of Tacitus', *JRS* 41 (1951), 32–51. I should add that J. E. Sandys, *A history of classical scholarship*, Cambridge 1906–8, has disappointingly little to say about the contributions of some of the most important Tacitean scholars of this period, notably Pichena.

² As to the fifteenth century, many true corrections and many false ones are to be found in the MSS of *Ann.* 11–16 and *Hist.* 1–5 descended from M 2. Often enough they passed into the early printed texts, and there was probably some traffic the other way too, from printed texts into MSS. But MSS of this time are rarely, if ever, systematic editions: see E. J. Kenney, in *Classical influences on European culture A.D. 500–1500* (ed. R. R. Bolgar), Cambridge 1971, 119–28. The typical humanist MS, as Kenney says (122), was 'a random hotchpotch of tradition and often wilful and occasionally violent alteration'. And most early printed texts inherited these characteristics from the MSS on which they were based. In recent years Mendell and others have paid far more attention to fifteenth-century MSS of Tacitus than any of them deserve.

Cambridge University Press
 0521609313 - The Annals of Tacitus, Volume I
 Edited by F. R. D. Goodyear
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

majority of Beroaldus' corrections are such as anyone with a little Latin could have made, given a ninth-century MS never systematically corrected before. But a respectable minority attest perception, judgement, and understanding of Tacitus' usage. Beroaldus has undeservedly been eclipsed by his eminent successors: though he can hardly bulk very large in the history of scholarship, he merits fuller recognition than he has yet been accorded.¹

The edition pirated from Beroaldus and printed at Milan in 1516 need not concern us,² nor the Froben edition of 1519,³ nor the Juntine of 1527. But the second Froben edition, which appeared at Basel in 1533, is a different matter. This is the first of the great editions of Tacitus. Valuable as had been the services of Puteolanus⁴ and Beroaldus, Tacitus now for the first time came into the hands of a scholar of the highest ability and foremost amongst the Latinists of his generation, Beatus Rhenanus.⁵ Rhenanus' success may in part be measured by the ready absorption of his conjectures and his observations into the common stock of material upon which his successors worked. But the conjectures at least may conveniently be separated out and assessed. They are naturally far fewer than Beroaldus', but they are not few, and they show the activity of an exceptionally penetrating and disciplined intellect. Indeed I go

¹ The multitude of Beroaldus' corrections poses a problem for the scrupulous modern editor. Like many others before me, I have tried to find a compromise. Such corrections as seem to me of some merit are recorded in the apparatus. All the others, except only the slightest corrections of spelling, are collected in Appendix 1 as 'adnotationis criticae additamenta'.

² The notes of A. Alciatus appended to this edition are the only material it contains of any interest.

³ This edition is of some importance, in that it contains a text of the *Germania* revised and corrected by Rhenanus.

⁴ In his Milan edition of 1476 and his Venice edition of 1497.

⁵ Rhenanus deserved well of other Latin historians, and he holds a special place of honour as *sospitator Velleii*, badly though his edition of Velleius was executed. But his Tacitus is his best work.

EDITIONS OF THE ANNALS

further: if quality of emendations were the only criterion of scholarly excellence, Rhenanus might vie with Pichena and Nipperdey for the second place amongst Tacitean scholars. His conjectures are not often, one must admit, brilliant and exciting, but they possess the more valuable quality of often being right. In his patient attention to grammar and idiom, and his concern with logic and precision, Rhenanus might well be compared with Madvig. Lipsius built upon the foundations which Rhenanus had laid.¹ If his occasional mentions of Rhenanus are mainly adverse criticisms, that is largely the fashion of the time: it was not then conventional to record specific obligations or to express agreement.²

The Aldine edition (Venice 1534) has, it seems, no independent value. But the Gryphian edition (Lyons 1542) contains, along with earlier material, some notes by A. Ferrettus which are not entirely negligible.³ And in 1544 Rhenanus produced a second edition (published, like the earlier one, by Froben at Basel), with corrections and modifications.⁴ Nothing of importance can be recorded for the next twenty years and more,⁵ but a spate of activity

¹ Lipsius based his text on Rhenanus' revised edition of 1544, as Ruyschaert has shown.

² Rhenanus' conjectures get a somewhat lukewarm appraisal from Sandys, *History of classical scholarship* 2. 263 and Mendell, *Tacitus* 362, probably because they are usually unspectacular. I do not understand what Mendell means when he says that Rhenanus' corrections 'are on the whole of a conservative character'. In *Ann.* 1–6 at least, while most of his changes are neat and simple, they are not conservative, for as yet there was no firmly agreed text to conserve, and changes do not conserve a text still undetermined. Changes back from a vulgate to the *paradosis* may properly be called conservative, but these are not in question.

³ Lipsius used this edition as the starting-point for his commentary.

⁴ That it was no mere reprint has been established by Ruyschaert, *Juste Lipse* 20–1.

⁵ This gap is perhaps not wholly the result of chance. A new generation of scholars, such as Vertranius and Lipsius, were to offer a new approach to Tacitus, in particular by the use of more diverse historical evidence. Tacitus became less of a literary text, more of an object for scholarly

INTRODUCTION

begins with the acute and original notes on the *Histories* and *Annals* by M. Vertranius Maurus (Lyons 1569).¹ And now a commanding personality appears.

First and indisputably first of all Tacitean scholars stands Justus Lipsius, whose earliest edition of Tacitus was published by Plantin at Antwerp in 1574. Lipsius cannot rank with Bentley and Heinsius and Housman, but he can bear comparison with those who come next, such as his contemporary Scaliger. If he lacks Scaliger's dazzling ingenuity and breadth of interest, he is by no means narrow in scope nor devoid of imagination. He excels Scaliger in sanity of judgement, though he almost equals him in egotism. Lipsius was pre-eminently qualified to edit and interpret Tacitus, by his versatility in conjecture, by his sense for style, and by his perfect knowledge of Roman history, as far as it could at that time be known.² His main contribution is twofold: in a vast improvement of Tacitus' text and in the creation of the first complete commentary on Tacitus. Tiny this commentary may be by the scale of later work, but it was the necessary nucleus upon which a mass of later accretions gathered, some inferior and superfluous. Two hundred and fifty years were to elapse before students of Tacitus could discard from direct consideration that body of learned material, based upon Lipsius, which was the substance of so many variorum editions.

If we are fairly to appraise Lipsius' success in conjectural emendation, we must remember that he worked upon a *textus receptus* often far removed from M 1 and M 2. After its initial employment by Beroaldus, M 1 had in the sixteenth century largely been neglected. And M 2 had never been

research. Such a change of attitude naturally takes some time to become established and reflected in published works.

¹ See Ruysschaert, *Juste Lipse* 38.

² A. Momigliano, *JRS* 39 (1949), 190, justly observes that 'his combination of feeling for style with historical knowledge is still a challenge to any editor of an historical text'.

EDITIONS OF THE ANNALS

used directly as the foundation of a printed text. Much of Lipsius' most admirable work was in a sense unnecessary, for in numerous passages he laboured to restore by conjecture what was later found to be transmitted by the Medicean MSS. These conjectures now go unrecorded in critical editions, but, thanks to Ruyschaert, we can at least take account of them in assessing Lipsius' achievement. Even if we were unjustly to set them aside, the number and quality of his other conjectures would still fully justify his reputation as a critic.

Unhappily this reputation is not unblemished. It seems likely that Lipsius drew rather too freely on the work of Muretus (see Brink, 'Justus Lipsius' 51), though in this instance conscious plagiarism cannot be proved. Perhaps it can be proved for Lipsius' use of certain unpublished conjectures of Claude Chifflet: at least Ruyschaert, *Juste Lipse* 144ff, has produced documentary evidence which strongly suggests that Lipsius knew Chifflet had prior rights to ideas which he published as his own. If this evidence is valid, we cannot exonerate him completely on the grounds that the age in which he lived accepted less exacting standards of scholarly proprietorship than our own. But it is proper to emphasize that the likely cases of plagiarism are, amongst the multitude of Lipsius' conjectures, very few indeed.¹

One enduring result of Lipsius' work deserves special mention. He established as canonical Vertranianus' division²

¹ Lipsius' great celebrity led to a good many conjectures being ascribed to him which had in fact been advanced earlier by others. As far as earlier published work is concerned, we may without hesitation restore the correct attribution. Unpublished work poses more of a problem. Perhaps, as Brink says, 'Justus Lipsius' 50, it would be 'an act of justice' to give back his unpublished conjectures to Chifflet. But later scholars, as well as Lipsius, are here concerned, and we cannot assume that they had access to Chifflet's notes. To give two names is usually the fairest solution.

² See Ruyschaert, *Juste Lipse* 147 n. 4. Incidentally Ferrettus, not Lipsius, first divided books 5 and 6 of the *Annals*.

Cambridge University Press
 0521609313 - The Annals of Tacitus, Volume I
 Edited by F. R. D. Goodyear
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

of Tacitus' historical writings into *Annals* and *Histories*.¹ No one now has much confidence that this titlature is correct, but it would be fruitless to change a convention so long accepted, when we have nothing more certain with which to replace it.

The last quarter of the sixteenth century saw an abundance of excellent work on Tacitus. Particular mention is due to the contributions of M. A. Muretus, in his *Variae Lectiones* (Antwerp 1580) and elsewhere, of F. Modius, in his *Nouantiquae Lectiones* (Frankfurt 1584), and of F. Ursinus and I. Mercerus in their *Notae*, published respectively at Antwerp in 1595 and Paris in 1599. Meanwhile Lipsius' edition was going through several revisions.² The last appeared in 1607, the year after his death. This year was indeed an *annus mirabilis* in Tacitean studies, being additionally distinguished by the appearance at Frankfurt of the immensely important edition by Curtius Pichena and the useful variorum edition by Ianus Gruterus, and at Hanover of the acute and original notes of V. Acidalius.

Pichena's services to Tacitus are second only to Lipsius'. If Lipsius was a child of his age in his cavalier attitudes to the MSS, Pichena had in no small part grasped one of the great lessons which Bentley was to teach a hundred years later, that MSS must be weighed, not selected at random. He recognized the outstanding importance³ of the Mediceans,

¹ I have discussed these matters in the second note in my commentary.

² See Ruysschaert, *Juste Lipse* x-xi and Brink, 'Justus Lipsius' 32 n. 2.

³ I choose my words very advisedly here. Pichena did not recognize the unique importance of M 2. If he had, he would have discarded from consideration Puteolanus' edition of 1497.

Pichena had already, before his edition, published information about the readings of the Medicean MSS, in two collections of notes (Hanover 1600 and 1604). Lipsius knew of this crucial information from these notes: see Brink, 'Justus Lipsius' 33 n. 10. His reaction is typical of his time and personality. He was delighted to find many of his conjectures confirmed, but unable or unwilling to perceive that the whole basis of his text of the *Annals* and *Histories* needed to be changed.

EDITIONS OF THE ANNALS

and made them one of the main foundations of his text. Indeed he was the first editor of a printed text to use M 2 at all. And he rescued M 1 from increasing neglect. By his use of these MSS Pichena was able to effect very substantial improvement over all texts earlier current. But he did much more by his own skill, for he was an adroit and careful emendator, endowed with a rare sensitivity to the niceties of Tacitus' language and style. It might have been better for Tacitus if some of Pichena's successors had followed his example, rather than expending so much labour on the fifteenth-century MSS. Pichena was a prophet who won only limited acknowledgment from his contemporaries, and scant praise from posterity.

Gruterus' edition contributes a little of independent value, but, like the Paris variorum edition of 1608, is mainly useful as gathering together the fruits of learned work by scholars of the preceding century. Gruterus is usually credited with establishing the chapter divisions in Tacitus which have become conventional.¹

The next two hundred years brought only slow and intermittent progress in the study of Tacitus: as a whole this was an arid period and in retrospect the more depressing because substantial advances were being made elsewhere. Tacitus had not ceased to be popular. It was rather that, without new information and new scholarly methods, original research on the constitution and interpretation of his text could not be sustained at the level it had attained by the end of the sixteenth century. We must wait until the mid nineteenth century before Tacitean studies will again advance so quickly and on so broad a front as in their first and best period.

The edition by M. Bernegger (Strassburg 1638) claims passing mention because it contains notes by I. Freinsheim,

¹ On this convention see below, p. 18. According to Mendell, *Tacitus* 367, the credit for the chapter divisions should go to Pichena, not Gruterus.