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TACITUS

Tacitus is universally recognised as ancient Rome's greatest writer of history, and his account of the Roman Empire in the first century AD has been fundamental in shaping the modern perception of Rome and its emperors. This *Companion* provides a new, up-to-date and authoritative assessment of his work and influence that will be invaluable for students and non-specialists as well as of interest to established scholars in the field. First situating Tacitus within the tradition of Roman historical writing and his own contemporary society, it goes on to analyse each of his individual works and then discuss key topics such as his distinctive authorial voice and his views of history and freedom. It ends by tracing Tacitus' reception, beginning with the transition from manuscript to printed editions, describing his influence on political thought in early modern Europe, and concluding with his significance in the twentieth century.

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EDITED BY

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University of Virginia*



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*To the memory of
Ronald Martin*

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Peoples in Roman Poetry: The Ethnographical Tradition (1982), a two-volume text and commentary on Virgil's *Georgics* (1988) and a collection of his articles on the subject of Virgilian allusion, *Reading Virgil and his Texts* (1999). His recent work includes *Virgil and the Augustan Reception* (2001), two co-edited volumes, *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (2006) and *Bob Dylan's Performance Artistry (Oral Tradition 22.1, 2007)*, and a forthcoming commentary on Horace, *Odes 4* for the series Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics.

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PREFACE

Who seeks the companionship of a *Companion*? One answer seems to be certain: such a book will be read and consulted by students, whether graduates or undergraduates or (as the time-honoured phrase has it) those in ‘the upper forms of schools’. If this is true, it appears to follow that the book will also be read by those who teach these students: that is to say, professional classicists of one sort or another. It is to be hoped that *Companions* will also have an appeal for the more general reader, and contributors to this *Companion* have certainly been asked to keep such readers in mind; but they have also been encouraged to pursue their own ideas and not necessarily to be content with a mere summary of the available scholarship. The aim of the book is to provide a practical demonstration of current work on Tacitus as written by experts.

Although the book covers a wide range of topics, the limitations of space or the prejudices of the editor or the refusals of importuned contributors mean that it cannot be completely comprehensive and some readers may be disappointed to find little or no treatment of an expected or favourite theme. If the *Annals* is thought to receive disproportionate coverage, the reason is that it is Tacitus’ greatest and most influential work. Although efforts have been made to avoid overlap between one chapter and another, in a book of this kind it is inevitable that contributors will sometimes cover the same ground or resort to the same passages of text. While readers should be prepared to make allowances in such cases, it should not be assumed that one contributor will take the same view as the next or that contributors will interpret a given passage in the same way.

I am most grateful to Michael Sharp for the suggestion that I should edit *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*. In the course of editing I have taken advice from various friends and colleagues, including Susan Brigden, Andrew Feldherr, Miriam Griffin, Chris Kraus, Quentin Skinner, Richard Williams, Peter Wiseman and Blair Worden; I owe an especial debt of gratitude to Salvador Bartera, Anna Chahoud and David Levene. Above all I am

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PREFACE

grateful to the contributors, whose company has made the production of this *Companion* such a pleasurable, if protracted, experience.

Lovers of Tacitus will be sad to learn that this book contains the final contribution to Tacitean scholarship by Ronald Martin, who passed away in the summer of 2008 in his ninety-third year. His scholarly career began during the war in Newcastle upon Tyne at King's College (as the University was then called), where G.B.A. Fletcher pointed him towards Tacitean study and in particular towards the work of Löfstedt and his followers. Ronald published his first paper on Tacitus in 1946 and for more than sixty years thereafter played a leading role in Tacitean scholarship. He was, in the words of F.R.D. Goodyear, 'of all scholars the most deeply versed in the intricacies of Tacitus' style', and his *Tacitus* (1981) is commonly accepted as the best introduction to the author. Modest and unassuming, he was an unfailing source of advice and good judgement to generations of friends and colleagues, not least the editor of this volume. He leaves, as one of his fellow contributors has said, 'a remarkable legacy' and will be greatly missed.

Charlottesville

A.J.W.