THE ANNALS
OF TACITUS

BOOKS 5 AND 6

EDITED WITH A COMMENTARY
BY

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TO DOROTHY, DAVID AND JOHN
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PREFACE

Fifty years ago F. R. D. Goodyear undertook to write a commentary on the first six books of Tacitus’ *Annals* for the series Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries. The series was the brainchild of the then Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge, C. O. Brink, who worked on Tacitus intermittently throughout his life and had originally planned to contribute the Tacitus commentary himself; but a change of plan saw the *Annals* pass instead to Goodyear, whose doctoral dissertation on the *Aetna* had been supervised by Brink and now appeared in 1965 as the second volume in Brink’s new series.

The sixties were a memorable and formative time for that fortunate generation with whose youth they coincided, but it is not for nothing that they were described by their most brilliant expositor as ‘the pendulum years’, the upswing of their hopes and aspirations often brought down to earth by the realities of subsequent decades. A projected commentary on the first six books of Tacitus’ *Annals* is nothing if not aspirational, but, as is well known, Frank Goodyear had commented on only the first two books before he sadly passed away in 1987, never to realise his ambition of moving on from Tacitus to Cicero, whom he described as ‘the master’ of Latin prose. It was Ronald Martin and I who produced a volume of commentary on Book 3 (1996), having already published a commentary on Book 4 for the alternative series Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (1989). Alas, now Ronald too has passed away and, with the kind encouragement of Stephen Oakley and Michael Sharp, I have here added a volume on Books 5 and 6. I very greatly regret that I can no longer test out my ideas on Ronald, whose own commentary on these same books appeared in 2001; my volume will be the poorer for his absence.

It is a daunting experience to dare to conclude a task left unfinished by one’s doctoral supervisor, especially when that supervisor was a scholar as formidable as Frank Goodyear. He
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could be as ferocious in person as he was in print, yet he showed me the greatest kindness and, in the twelve months of 1966 that I was under his direction, he provided me with incomparable training for the scholarly life. Since this volume represents a continuation as well as a conclusion, I have endeavoured not to repeat, but have cross-referred freely to, material already available in those earlier volumes of commentary, especially those on Annals 1–3. I can only hope that readers will not be too inconvenienced by this policy. Nor have I drawn repeated attention to the occasions – all too many – on which this volume differs from the translation of the Annals which I published in 2004. My attempt at synthesising Tacitus’ portrait of Tiberius has been reserved for an Appendix at the very end, in a manner which I like to think would have been approved of by C. O. Brink.

The bibliography on Tacitus is extensive and continues to grow; I hope readers will forgive me if they fail to find a reference to their favourite author or work. It is conventional to acknowledge the contributions made by earlier commentators to the elucidation of one’s text, and this I certainly do. But there is one scholar above all to whom I should like to pay tribute. I have heard Sir Ronald Syme’s work being disparaged by some modern scholars of ancient history on the grounds that it is outmoded and entirely lacking in influence in the world of contemporary scholarship. On the contrary, it is impossible to imagine working on Tacitus or the first century AD in the absence of Tacitus, The Augustan Aristocracy and Roman Papers. As has truly been said, the products of Syme’s genius are as fresh and compelling today as when they were first written.

It was a great help reading Books 5–6 of the Annals with a graduate class at the University of Virginia in the spring of 2014. I have also sought and received help from J. E. Lendon and E. A. Meyer (and their famous library), as well as J. N. Adams, T. Biggs, J. Bodel, F. K. Drogula, S. J. V. Malloch, J. Nélis-Clément, M. Peachin, J. T. Ramsey and Z. Stamatopoulou. E. J. Champlin very generously made available to me his notes on personal names in Book 6; with equal generosity J. D. Dillery,
PREFACE

C. P. Elliott, the late J. A. James, D. S. Levene and R. Wolters gave the benefit of their specialist advice on certain more technical sections of the Commentary. Valuable comments on the entire typescript were forthcoming from the Editors of the Cambridge series, S. P. Oakley, J. G. F. Powell and M. D. Reeve; the typescript was also read and commented on by S. Barterea, A. R. Birley, E. Courtney and R. Seager, to whom I am immensely grateful for their great kindness and tireless labours; any mistakes should certainly not be attributed to them.

This book was written during the academic year 2013–14 in Charlottesville. I am most grateful to the librarians of the Alderman and Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Libraries for the services which they provide so efficiently and which have greatly facilitated all my work over the past dozen years. Above all I should like to take this opportunity of expressing once again my great gratitude to my classical colleagues at the University of Virginia: nowhere can there be so delightful and harmonious a blend of conviviality and scholarship. My life in Charlottesville has, however, meant prolonged absences from my family; it is to them that I dedicate this book.

Charlottesville
Autumn 2015

A. J. W.
REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

References to Tacitus’ Annals usually omit both author and title (e.g. 1.24.2); references within Books 5 and 6 often omit the book number.

References to Sallust’s Histories are generally to Mauron-brecher’s edition, although the numeration of J. T. Ramsey’s Loeb edition (2015) is sometimes added and identified by ‘R’.

References to the fragmentary Roman historians are usually given according to the editions of both T. J. Cornell and H. Peter, identified by ‘C’ and ‘P’ respectively.

References to the Cambridge commentaries on Annals 1–4, the Agricola, and Velleius are usually given in the forms 1.24.2n., Agr. 20.1n. and Vell. 97.1n. (or W. on Vell. 97.1) respectively.

(A) ABBREVIATIONS

AE    L’année épigraphique
CIL   Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CILA  Corpus de inscripciones latinas de Andalucía

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REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS


IG Inscriptiones Graecae

ILS Inscriptiones Latineae Selectae


OLD Oxford Latin Dictionary

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REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS


**RE** Paulys *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*


**SCPP** *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pison Patre*


**TLL** *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*


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