
With this volume Bristol Classical Press has almost completed its series of commentaries on Suetonius’ imperial *Lives*. Only *Titus* is outstanding, and there is probably no one more suitable to edit that than Brian Jones, who is the author of the most recent and standard biography of the emperor Titus. Scholars will be grateful to Jones for this latest volume, which is the first since 1930 on *Vespasian*, and can hope that BCP will commission a new commentary on *Divus Julius*, as Townend’s updating of the 1927 Cary commentary was merely a stop-gap measure, and also soon an extensive revision of J.M. Carter’s *Divus Augustus* (or a wholly new edition).

In the preface Jones writes ‘my aim has been to examine the political, social and, to a lesser extent, the literary, textual and grammatical questions posed by the *Life*’ (vi). How far has he fulfilled this? Most of the commentary by far deals with political and social matters and is notable for conciseness and general accuracy, so that the reader is as well served as could be expected in a commentary of limited scale. Grammatical questions are given very short shrift, unless we understand by this the explanation of obscure terms (e.g. ‘*calciarii*: understand *argenti*, i.e. “shoe-money”’, 60).

Jones lists seven divergences from the standard text for Suetonius, Ihm’s 1908 Teubner. None of these are new and discussion of all of them can be found in Mooney, even when he does not accept them. For example, Jones prints *manebuntque* for the manuscripts’ *manebant* (1.2): Suetonius makes quite frequent reference to objects and so forth that were still extant for anyone to see (collected in my ‘Suetonius and His Own Day’, in Carl Deroux, ed., *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History IX*, Brussels 1998, 426 n.7), but does not refer to what had existed. Rather than the future *manebunt*, we should expect something involving the present, perhaps *manentque ibi* (cf. Casaubon’s *manent hodieque*); at 2.3 Jones rejects the manuscripts’ ‘tribunatum … meruit’ for the emendation of Torrentius *tribunus*, although his note demonstrates that the former is perfectly consistent with a persuasive modern interpretation of how the
latus clavus was acquired; and at 19 Jones prints Bücheler’s *Apellae* for the manuscripts’ *Apellari* with due caution, as the emendation requires a tragic actor who was famous in the late 30s still to be active in the 70s. I know of only one passage where Jones ignores a discussion of the text post-Mooney: at 2.3 Jones accepts, along with Mooney, Ihm and others, Lipsius’ emendation *infensum* for the manuscripts’ *infensus*. See L.F Rossi, ‘Tracce di lotta politica nel senato di Caligola’, *RFIC* 99 (1971), 170 (cf. J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *The Emperor Gaius*, Oxford 1934, 84 n.2).

At the beginning of the introduction Jones rightly notes how Suetonius’ reputation has risen over the past century—the tabloid muck-raker is now seen as a successful courtier, high-ranking ‘civil servant’ and scholar. However, it is what Jones leaves out of Suetonius’ achievements that for me constitutes a weakness of his work. I have argued at length elsewhere (*Suetonius’ Life of Caligula: a Commentary*, Brussels 1994, esp. 64-94) that Suetonius should be seen as just as skilful an organiser of his material as Tacitus, and just as manipulative of his readers. While Jones makes it clear that his is primarily an historical commentary, and indeed he carries out that role well, to ignore literary aspects, e.g. the construction and organisation of the *Life*, does little justice to Suetonius’ overall achievement. Evidence of Jones’ reluctance to engage with this area is the absence of W. Steidle’s fundamental work *Sueton und die antike Biographie* (Munich, 1951) from the bibliography.

On a slightly different tack, but equally worrying in the light of the wider debate which has been carried out from the 1970s at least among historians, reflecting the influential but nebulous concept of postmodernity, it may seem somewhat ostrich-like to approach an author like Suetonius as a source for ‘facts’, as the works of T.P. Wiseman and A.J. Woodman have shown for ancient historiography. In saying this I do not suggest for a second that Jones’ work is crude and simplistic—indeed he makes several excellent comments about the partisan nature of the writers on whom Suetonius (and Tacitus) drew: e.g. ‘once again, the Flavian historians on whom Suetonius relied strained the truth to and beyond its limits in disguising the slavish adulation lavished by Vespasian on the emperor of the day and exaggerated (or invented) any loss of influence the family suffered’ (35). Yet anyone writing on ancient historiography should inform the reader of his views on the nature of the genre.
In his discussion of Suetonius' career Jones sets out with due caution the differing assessments of the biographer which have been put forward, e.g. on the date of Suetonius' dismissal as ab epistulis (x-xi). My response to the arguments of Hugh Lindsay (\textquoteleft Suetonius as ab epistulis to Hadrian and the Early History of the Imperial Correspondence\textquoteright, Historia 43 [1994], 454-68) will appear in Historia 2001 and, I hope, will strengthen the arguments for dismissal in 121/22 and for a North African patria for Suetonius.

It is difficult to discuss a commentary as it is in essence a series of short notes providing information on specific points or subjects. Its primary aims should be clarity and precision. In these respects Jones is a model—what he means is crystal clear and words are rarely wasted (e.g. his discussion on page 17 of how the latus clavus was secured in the early empire). I will inevitably concentrate on what appear to me to be shortcomings, but this should not detract from his achievement in assembling a mass of wide-ranging, up-to-date information which is essential for any student wanting to make use of the Life.

1.1: on imagines the reader should now be referred to H.I. Flower, \textit{Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture} (Oxford, 1996). 5.7: on the aedes tensarum, some reference to \textit{Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae}, Vol. 1: 17? 7.1: on Vespasian and portents, see now Rhiannon Ash, \textit{Ordering Anarchy: Armies and Leaders in Tacitus' Histories} (London, 1999), 127ff. 8.2: Jones ignores arguments for the retention of the manuscripts' 'sescentorum' at Caligula 44.1 (see Wardle, ad loc.). More recent and better on donatives is J.B. Campbell, \textit{The Emperor and the Roman Army 31 BC-AD 235} (Oxford, 1984), 165-74, 186-94. 8.5: on the bronze tablets on the Capitol, see C.A. Williamson, 'Monuments of Bronze: Roman Legal Documents on Bronze Tablets', \textit{Classical Antiquity} 12 (1986), 160-83. 9.1: on Vespasian's building programme, see R.H. Darwall-Smith, \textit{Emperors and Architecture: a Study of Flavian Rome} (Brussels, 1996); the Flavian amphitheatre may have been known as the Colosseum before the Middle Ages, see H.V. Canter, 'The Venerable Bede and the Colosseum', \textit{Transactions of the American Philological Association} 61 (1930), 150-164. 12: on the title of pater patriae and its associations, see T.R. Stevenson, 'The Ideal Benefactor and
the Father Analogy in Greek and Roman Thought’, *Classical Quarterly* 42 (1992), 421-36. 18: on the colossal statue of Nero, see M. Bergmann, *Der Koloss Neros, die domus aurea und der Mentalitätswandel im Rom der frühen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz, 1994). 20: for a detailed comparison of some of Suetonius’ portraits of the emperors with physiognomical texts, see J. Gascou, *Suétone historien* (Rome, 1984), 592-616; he has only a few remarks on Vespasian (614)—perhaps a more detailed study of Vespasian’s portrait would be profitable. 22: Vespasian’s joke against Mestrius Florus is an important piece of evidence for the pronunciation of Latin, see W.S. Allen, *Vox Latina* (Cambridge, 1965), 61. 23.4: Vespasian’s final words are also discussed by T.W. Hillard, ‘Vespasian’s Deathbed Attitude to his Impending Deification’, in Matthew Dillon ed.), *Religion in the Ancient World: New Themes and Approaches* (Amsterdam, 1996), 193-215.

An oddity of citation is to use the date of reprints in the commentary so that, for instance, L. Friedländer’s *Sittengeschichte* appears as 1968, van Berchem’s *Distributions de blé* as 1975. The work is marred by a good number of misprints—the less said about the printing of the Greek text at 23.1, the better! Despite these various gripes, Jones’ *Vespasian* should be snapped up by the library of any university where Latin or Roman history is taught; the volume is handy and useable even by the Latinless student (all Greek is translated into English).

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