DYLAN SAILOR

WRITING AND EMPIRE IN TACITUS

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Writing and Empire in Tacitus examines how Tacitus' historiographical career serves as an argument about his personal autonomy and social value under the peculiar political conditions of the early Roman empire. Following the arc of his career from *Agricola* through *Histories* to *Annals*, this book focuses on ways in which Tacitus' writing makes implicit claims about his relationship to Roman society and about the political consequentiality of historical writing. In a sense, this book suggests, his literary career and the sense of alienation his works project form the ideal complement to his very successful political career, which, while desirable, might nonetheless give the impression of degrading submission to emperors. The discussion combines careful attention to the historian's explicit programmatic discussion of his work with larger-scale analysis of stretches of narrative that have unspoken but significant implications for how we view the function and importance of Tacitus' work.

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In memoriam
Dr. Corinne Sinclair Crawford (1980–2007)
hi nostri reditus exspectatique triumphi?

Contents

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Finally, this book is dedicated to the memory of Corinne Crawford, whom we lost before she wrote books of her own.

Abbreviations and editions used

For the text of Tacitus' minor works I have followed the Oxford Classical Text of Ogilvie and Winterbottom; for *Histories* and *Annals*, Heubner's Teubner editions. For the following authors who appear often in the book, I have used these editions: for Sallust, Reynolds' OCT; for the elder Seneca, Håkanson's Teubner; for the younger Seneca's *Dialogues*, Reynolds' OCT; for the younger Pliny's *Letters* and "*Panegyricus*," the OCTs of Mynors; for Suetonius' *Lives*, Ihm's Teubner. For abbreviations of ancient authors and works, I follow LSJ and the *OLD*; for modern periodicals, I use those of *L'Année Philologique*. Here is a list of other abbreviations I use:

CAH[2]	Boardman, J. *et al.* (eds.) (1982–2005) *The Cambridge Ancient History*. 2nd edn. 14 vols. Cambridge.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (1863–) Berlin.
Der Neue Pauly	Cancik, H. and H. Schneider (eds.) (1996–2003) *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopedia der Antike*. 16 vols. Stuttgart.
HRR	Peter, H. (ed.) (1967) *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae*. 2 vols. Stuttgart
ILS	Dessau, H. (ed.) (1892–1916) *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*. 3 vols. Berlin.
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, and H. S. Jones (eds.) (1940) *A Greek–English Lexicon*. 9th edn. Oxford.
LTUR	Steinby, E. M. (ed.) (1993–2000) *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*. 6 vols. Rome.
OGIS	Dittenberger, W. (ed.) (1986) *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*. 3rd edn. 2 vols. Hildesheim.

OLD	Glare, P. G. W. (ed.) (1982) *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford.
ORF	Malcovati, E. (ed.) (1976) *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta*. 4th edn. Torino.
RE	Pauly, A. (ed.) (1893–1980) *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Stuttgart.
SCPP	Eck, W., A. Caballos, and F. Fernandez (eds.) (1996) *Das Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*. Vestigia 48. Munich.

Introduction: a life, in fragments

In a 1995 article Géza Alföldy made a strong case that a fragmentary inscription (*CIL* VI 1574) probably belonged to the funerary monument of P. Cornelius Tacitus.[1] While it adds little to our knowledge of his biography, this scrap of writing from what seems to have been an imposing monument is a good way to adjust our perspective on his literary monument.[2] Everything we are accustomed to think about Tacitus is filtered through the prism of his writing: much of our information about his biography comes from his books, and our first instinct is to use that information as a means of shedding light on those books. So, for instance, knowing that he was a senator and consul matters because it justifies our confidence in his grasp, and therefore treatment, of politics; knowing that he was a star advocate illuminates his linguistic virtuosity; knowing his place of origin might explain the orientation and interests of his narrative; knowing when he died would tell us whether we can read parts of his last work, *Annals*, as bearing on the principate of Hadrian. Few would value this information for its own sake; we want it because it helps us interpret what he wrote. But this inscription would not have aimed to explain *Annals* or *Histories*, nor is there any reason to think it would have referred to them at all.[3] It is the inscription that any elite man would have had placed on his monument; what for us makes him singular would not there have rated as worthy of mention. The life of P. Cornelius Tacitus could be communicated to Rome's population

[1] Alföldy (1995b). Birley (2000) offers further considerations. Damon (2003: 2n1) is agnostic on the identification. On Tacitus' *praenomen*, see Goodyear (1972–81: 1.85); "Gaius" is our other option.

[2] We can now add service as a *decemvir stlitibus iudicandis*, as *quaestor Augusti*, and probably as *tribunus militum*, to his résumé. For perspectives on the discovery's importance, see Birley (2000: 236–8) and Giua (2003: 261–2). The original inscription will have stretched about 4 m across, and perhaps 90 cm high (Alföldy 1995b: 262). According to Alföldy (263), this would make it one of the largest preserved funerary inscriptions for a senator.

[3] In the late Republic and early Principate, elite grave *tituli* are interested in the *cursus honorum* to the exclusion of all else: see Eck (1999a) and (2005). Beard (1998) challenges our habit of reading them as altogether formulaic, but this is an uphill task when it comes to senatorial and equestrian *cursus* inscriptions, which seem to me to be governed by a rigid sense of propriety.

satisfactorily without reference to the sole reason why scholars take more than a passing interest in him.

This does not, of course, mean that we have all been misguided in our interest in Tacitus' books, nor, I hope, that we should stop writing about them. But it does remind us that his books were only part of a life made up of countless interactions with other people: appearances at the bar, epistolary exchanges with associates, literary recitations exciting or tedious, eulogies delivered, rituals performed, circus games attended, funerals planned. Interwoven with his other social acts was his publication of several short works and two long works of narrative history. Time has ensured that these are the social acts we can still access directly; the rest are simply gone.[4]

This book is the result of an attempt to take seriously the reminder this inscription offers, that Tacitus' writing was part of a life. More specifically, it explores ways in which his historiographical work interacts with, interprets, and manages the relations between his political biography, his literary career, and his social self. I focus on the self-reflexive aspects of his work, areas in which explicit or implicit questions arise about what it means to represent the past, what it means to do so under specific social and political conditions, and what it means in particular for Tacitus to do so. The scope and interests of my inquiry are defined by a set of interrelated questions: what sort of self does Tacitus' authorial voice project? How does his work position his various readerships toward his individual works, and toward his career? How does he situate his work within the history of historiography, within the history of representation, within Roman political history? From the vantage point of his work, what is the relationship between writing and the broader society? What sort of claims does his work make for its own potential to affect the world? How does his political biography affect how he represents his literary activity, and likewise how does his literary career dispose us to think about him?

In chapter 1, I set out some essential concepts for understanding the interaction of historiographical career and social self within the peculiar political and cultural circumstances of the Principate. The advent of monarchy had far-reaching consequences for the ways in which elites related to each other, to the larger population of Romans, to the state, and to the empire; these consequences extended to the production of literature, historiography included. In this chapter I sketch out elite anxieties about personal

[4] We do have *traces* of other acts – in Pliny's letters, in a couple of inscriptions, in the names of the offices he held – but not the acts themselves.

autonomy and about the availability of prestige in the shadow of the *princeps*, and I examine Tacitus' interest in various modes of life that could be used to demonstrate autonomy; I propose that we can look at his authorial career as one such mode, with unique advantages. In this regard, I also devote substantial attention to the implications for historiography of the power and authority of the *princeps*. His position within society tended to generate, and to elicit from others, accounts of the past and of the present that aligned with its own interests – in crude but useful terms, the regime both put forward narratives that it wished to be believed and, because of its power to reward or to harm, caused others to generate accounts that they hoped would meet with the regime's approval. In this way, an important literary effect of the monarchy was a crisis of authorship. A writer merely putting into words the regime's account was in important respects a copyist not an author, so it was vital that an author be able to show that his work was authentic, the creation of an autonomous social agent; yet so obvious were the incentives to ventriloquize the regime, and so strong the presumed pressures, that it was hard to persuade a readership that your work was your own. One notable feature of Tacitus' presentation of his own work and career is an ongoing struggle with this burden of authenticity, a burden made all the heavier because of his political success under a string of *principes*.

Chapters 2 through 5 then continue the inquiry across Tacitus' historiographical *œuvre*, through two complementary kinds of discussion. One kind focuses on his programmatic disposition of his work: so, in chapters 2 and 3, I begin from the prefaces of *Agricola* and *Histories*, in which he talks explicitly about his own work and prepares us to read it. In these intricately crafted pieces of rhetoric he strives for command over the implications of his work. I trace out how they negotiate the interests and stakes of multiple audiences, and how they situate the individual work within his literary career, within his biography, and within literary and political history, and I pay close attention to how these sections structure the reader's experience, create a compact between reader and author, and attempt to outfit the reader with the author's preferred hermeneutic.

The other kind of discussion, represented in chapters 2 and 4, focuses instead on particular parts of Tacitus' narrative work and explores points at which his writing implicitly comes into competition with forms of representation dominated by the regime. So, in chapter 2, I look at his depiction in *Agricola* of the relationship elite men have to imperial conquest and administration, while in chapter 4 I discuss his portrayal in *Histories* of the city of Rome and its relation to the empire. Both the representation of

military success (in the form of distribution of honors, of ritual occasions such as the triumph, of public visual depictions of conquest) and the city of Rome as a space of commemoration and communication had been, since an early point in the principate of Augustus, the private preserve of the regime.[5] Tacitus' books do not only undertake, as it were, to work in the same media as the regime, but also present themselves as antithetical to the kind of representations the regime tends to generate. Some scholars have highlighted points at which he is eager to challenge the regime's version of particular events.[6] Yet at times he pursues an even more ambitious agenda: his writing appears not merely to challenge individual points the regime has got wrong but actually to compete with several of the regime's characteristic modes of representation. So, for example, his treatment of Agricola's life corrects Domitian's portrayal of Agricola's imperial successes but also corrects the ways in which *principes* tended, for institutional reasons, to recognize the military attainments of elite men. Likewise, his depiction of the city in *Histories* reacts to the way it was treated by the competing *principes* of 69 CE, but it also suggests that this sort of treatment, too, is characteristic of what the Principate does to the city, and offers itself as a sort of alternative to that abuse. This competition is not a simple matter of political opposition, though it can be read that way; it also makes an argument about the nature of Tacitus' authorial career and so about Tacitus himself: he produces written accounts of the past that compete with (and are then, *a fortiori*, independent of) the regime's power to produce and enforce its own representations.

For good reason, in chapters 2 and 4 my discussion of Tacitus' representational work is concerned especially with representation of imperial conquest. The endurance of the empire, and of Romans' self-image as rulers of an empire, was sometimes construed as the benefit they had acquired in exchange for the sacrifice of internal political liberty, and traditionally the empire was the chief avenue to personal distinction, though the Principate had made that source problematic, to say the least.[7] Yet the empire, and representation of it, remained at the heart of questions of individual distinction and corporate identity for the elite, and Tacitus' ability to intervene in the system of representation of military success inevitably affects a reader's estimate of the value and importance of his work.

Although there is a real and useful difference between the "programmatic" and "representational" kinds of discussion I engage in, the questions

[5] Eck (1984). [6] See, for example, Damon (1999) and Eck (2002a).
[7] "Sacrifice": cf. Luc. 1.670, *cum domino pax ista venit*.

they involve are closely linked. For Tacitus' programmatic material exists, in part, in order to explain the implications of his narrative, and that narrative in turn frequently seems to have programmatic repercussions – that is, it is sometimes written in such a way as to foreground the question *what it means* to present that narrative material in the way that Tacitus does. For that reason, chapter 5 is an appropriate consummation of the preceding chapters, in that it deals with a moment in *Annals* that is at once programmatic and representational: that complex of thoughts on historiography and commemoration built around the trial of Cremutius Cordus in Book Four of *Annals*. This section of *Annals* clearly has implications, even if unspecified, for Tacitus' own writing, but it is also about the regime's investment in a particular version of the past and of the present. In this section of *Annals*, indeed, writing and politics merge, as representation becomes a means of political action, and political power is shown to be above all a matter of enforcement of representation; the story about Cremutius becomes a story about Tacitus; and the work's staged victory over the regime's representations then becomes an arrogation of sovereignty to Tacitus' writing and to himself.

After the groundwork in chapter 1, which draws on Tacitus' whole historiographical *œuvre* but especially on *Annals*, the sequence of chapters is mainly chronological: *Agricola* is our object of inquiry in chapter 2; chapters 3 and 4 are about *Histories*; and chapter 5 deals principally with *Annals*. My aim in this was to preserve the sense of career trajectory the books evoke: *Agricola* and *Histories* in particular are concerned with what has gone before, and with what is to come next. Though *Germania* and *Dialogus* are Tacitus', and fascinating, they will not appear here as primary objects of attention, because they do not form part of that arc of narrative works that imagine themselves as a sequence: *Agricola* by its promise of a future narrative treatment of the Flavians and of the blessed era of Nerva and Trajan; *Histories* by its partial fulfillment of that promise, by its evocation of the preface of *Agricola*, and by its promise (again) of a narrative treatment of the present fortunate age; *Annals* by its inevitable trend toward the beginning of *Histories*.[8]

Before we come to grips with the dynamics of Tacitus' *œuvre* as a career, it will be worthwhile to reflect, in the first chapter, on what a career in historiography had to offer, and how the writing of history fits into the larger social, cultural, and political developments of the Principate.

[8] There is a way of looking at *Dialogus* as a point retroactively inserted into this trajectory, if we take its discussion of oratory and poetry as a seminal moment in the future historiographical career of the young Tacitus, who is present but silent during the conversation.

CHAPTER I

Autonomy, authority, and representing the past under the Principate

THE HISTORIAN'S VOICE

ἐπιεικῶς γὰρ ἅπαντες νομίζουσιν εἰκόνας εἶναι τῆς ἑκάστου ψυχῆς τοὺς λόγους.

It is a universal and correct opinion that a man's words are the images of his very soul. (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.1.3)

The writer and the man are not always the same person. (Sir Ronald Syme [1970: 10])

I start with a paradox. That funerary inscription with which we began advertises Tacitus' political distinctions. To judge by what he wrote, however, it might seem shocking that he had a political career at all. He acknowledges that facet of his life in prominent places, and we would know less about him if he did not (*Hist.* 1.1.3, *Ann.* 11.11.1). Yet his works dwell on the corrupting and contaminating effects of the Principate on Roman society and often seem to suggest that political life under the Principate is only an empty, poisonous charade. How, you want to ask, could that same historian who saw with such clarity, and condemned with such trenchancy, the hypocrisy and vanity of the Principate also want to take part in it?[1] In other words, should he not rather have shaken the dust from his feet and gone into retirement, done anything rather than live the deplorable lie?

Our concern here is of course naive, in that it confuses the "Tacitus" narrating these works with the historical person P. Cornelius Tacitus. Although it is hard not to ascribe the dispositions with which the narrator is endowed to the convictions of that person, the inscription reminds us that there need be no such straightforward relationship. The works might bear the impress of Tacitus' soul. But, of course, they might not. This observation

[1] See the discussion of Martin (1994: 38).

is not purely academic but actually matters for how we read. For, if we are accordingly agnostic on the matter, we are free to decouple from the historical Tacitus the thoughts and feelings of that authorial self his writings project.[2] No longer bound to square that person with the one whose life is partly retailed in *CIL* VI 1574, we can treat it as what it is – a literary effect – and entertain other explanations for it.

Having just insisted on the value of distinguishing between narrative voice and historical author, I need to add an important caveat. While Romans were quite able to grasp this distinction in some genres of literature, it is not clear that history was one of these, or that readers of history were ready, or typically asked, to distinguish the voice that narrates the text from the voice of the person who produced it.[3] From what we know of the reception of historiography, Roman readers would have been exhibiting naivety about the rules of the genre if they imagined "Tacitus" as something largely insulated from Tacitus. Identity of the two may be no less a fiction than total difference, but it was a fiction that Tacitus' readers will have accepted as a matter of course as the terms of their reading.

So, if the narrator of Tacitus' works is a construct, it is nonetheless a construct that might have very real repercussions for the person responsible for writing them. A history was self-evidently in the thick of things – or at least was self-evidently *trying* to be in the thick of things – to a degree unequaled by any other kind of Roman literature, and its author therefore seemed to be so as well. Even if there were exceptions, that genre was felt to be the province of the political elite.[4] In justifying his historiographical activity, a historian often used in his favor his own political experience, which established his right to speak knowledgeably about the events he was reporting.[5] Writing history was then a lot like politics, in that the practitioners of each were, at least in theory, to be drawn from the same

[2] With characteristic sensitivity, Syme recognizes the separability of "writer" and "man" (see, e.g., 1970: 131, "Perhaps in himself a complicated character, perhaps not. Who can say?") and aptly compares straightforward biographical explanation of Tacitus' work to similar, but more obviously misguided, interpretation of Juvenal (131n1). But in the same piece (136) he remains persuaded that the historian's "outbursts" are good clues to his personal opinions.

[3] If nothing else, Catullus 16 shows that it was in a reader's interpretive toolkit; in fact, certain Roman genres do not make much sense unless we allow that readers were ready to accept that the voice speaking at any given time need not be narrowly identified with the writer (the novel and satire leap to mind). See also, for example, Mart. 1.4.8, *lasciva est nobis pagina, vita proba*; other examples in Howell (1980 ad loc.). See, however, the reservations of Wiseman (1992: 60–1).

[4] Syme (1970: 2): "[history] remained for a long time the monopoly of the governing order; and it kept the firm imprint of its origins ever after. The senator came to his task in mature years, with a proper knowledge of men and government, a sharp and merciless insight. Taking up the pen, he fought again the old battles of Forum and Curia."

[5] Marincola (1997: 133–48).

pool.[6] The subject matter of Roman history, too, was like politics: the elite concerned itself in political practice with policy, that is, with what was to be done by Romans in the future (*res gerendae*, "policy"), while historians occupied themselves with presenting a narrative of the results of policy, that is, with what Romans had done in the past (*res gestae*, "history").[7] The political orator had a command of history; writing history was, so far as Cicero was concerned, a job for an orator (*de Orat.* 1.201).[8] On one view, then, in writing history a senator was engaged in an activity something like delivering policy speeches – something like, that is, participating in politics. If in a history "Tacitus" appeared to think the Principate was noxious and barren, then a Roman reader would not seem mad if he or she thought this was also the political stance of Tacitus himself.[9]

So, then, although I think we should abandon all pretense of knowing Tacitus, and treat the "Tacitus" of the Tacitean corpus as, in the first instance, a textual effect, nonetheless, because this textual effect once had repercussions for the historical Tacitus, we can talk usefully about how his books represent him before his readership. Prestige attached to the skillful execution of literary monuments such as *Histories* and *Annals*: in this sense, his literary career stood to be advanced or hindered with every word he wrote (and the impression that deep, even obsessive care has gone into his works, from the smallest scale to the largest, seems to mean that *something* important is afoot at every step).[10] We can attribute to historians all sorts of motivations for writing – to air their views, to distribute praise and blame, to edify posterity, to reward or punish past heroes and

[6] It is unclear how many historians before Livy had been non-senatorial: Valerius Antias and Claudius Quadrigarius are usually excluded from the *curia*, but this cannot be proved: see Cornell (1986: 78–9).

[7] Cf. the formulation at Sal. *Cat.* 3.1–2 (note there the flurry of "doing" vs. "writing what has been done" antitheses). The sentences appear in the context of a larger argument that making and writing history are two paths to the same goal: a good reputation (2.9).

[8] Pliny (*Ep.* 5.8) worries aloud that, if he revises his speeches and writes a history at the same time, he will confuse the styles appropriate to each sort of writing. The consensus view to which he reacts, however, seems to be that writing history is quite similar to writing oratory (cf. §7, §9), and Pliny of course has every reason to emphasize the difficulties of writing history, both as an excuse for not doing it and as a way of amplifying his achievement if he does. For ancient historiography as a species of rhetoric, see Woodman (1988).

[9] See, e.g., *Dial.* 3.3, where Secundus has asked Maternus whether he is removing politically offensive material from his tragedy *Cato*, which he had recited the previous day. Maternus' answer: *Tum ille: "leges tu quid Maternus sibi debuerit, et agnosces quae audisti. quod si qua omisit Cato, sequenti recitatione Thyestes dicet . . ."* Maternus' third-person use of his own name here suggests his own interchangeability with Cato and Thyestes.

[10] Tacitus himself refers to *Annals* as *cura nostra* at *Ann.* 4.11.3 (see *Ann.* 3.24.3). For historians' emphasis on the *labor* involved in their work, see Marincola (1997: 148–58). On the enhanced potential for literary glory beginning in the late Republic, see Wiseman (1987a: 91) regarding Livy's glory.

criminals – but the point was always also to make a name for themselves. For, as we are often reminded, historiography was a subsection of Roman literary endeavor, which in a meaningful way was itself a subsection of a whole realm of performance and monumentalization aimed at winning prestige for social agents. From this perspective, a history stands on a continuum with lyric poetry and encyclopedias, with tombs and public architecture, with priestly duties and triumphal processions, with cultivated dress and comportment. The function of a history is to be a writer's public *monumentum* both present and posthumous, to attract good repute and weight to his name – in short, to be a "big deal" and to make him a "big deal" as well.[11]

There is one sense in which the prestige of writing is just about being famous, about being widely known as the author of a book. This is what Martial is talking about in the poem that opens his first book of epigrams: "Here's the guy! The one you're reading is the one you're looking for: Martial, known all over the world for his snappy books of epigrams" (*Hic est quem legis ille, quem requiris, | toto notus in orbe Martialis | argutis epigrammaton libellis*, Mart. 1.1.1–3). It is also the kind of fame that Livy enjoys in the familiar anecdote Pliny shares:

> Numquamne legisti, Gaditanum quendam Titi Livi nomine gloriaque commotum ad visendum eum ab ultimo terrarum orbe venisse, statimque ut viderat abisse? (*Ep*. 2.3.8)
>
> Haven't you ever read how a fellow from Gades was moved by the name and glory of Titus Livius to come from the ends of the earth to get a look at him and, as soon as he had laid eyes on him, left straightaway?

But there is another sense in which a historiographical career, in particular Tacitus' career, could affect his repute. If we accept the proposition that Roman readers would have read his work as a reflection of him, then we can also legitimately see his writing as a medium for managing his reputation not just as an author but also more generally as a social agent. As I will discuss in further detail below, the political conditions of monarchy created a scenario in which displays of personal autonomy, of independence from the *princeps*, garnered a good deal of attention and could enhance a person's stature considerably. Works that appeared, by whatever means, to confirm the autonomy of their author might, then, seem to offer an avenue to a kind of prestige rather different from generic literary renown. As we

[11] On this, Marincola (1997: 57–62) is excellent. On the idea of becoming famous by writing history, cf. Cic. *Fam*. 5.12.6 and Plin. *Ep*. 5.8.1.

will see in a variety of ways throughout this book, we can regard Tacitus' historiographical *œuvre* as trying to follow precisely that path, and to act as a monument to his personal autonomy.

It was equipped to serve that purpose in several ways. To begin with, we might regard that familiar package of distinctive characteristics of the Tacitean persona – the alienation, the irony, the severity, the unflagging disapproval – as a possible, if not inevitable, response to the peculiar value that elite society under the Principate assigned to displays of autonomy and authenticity. But beyond that, I would argue that we can view in a similar light two of the features of his historical writing that occupy us most in later chapters of this book: the ways in which he situates his work historically and socially in relationship to the Principate and to particular *principes*, and those in which his work appears to contrast with the representational habits and strategies characteristic of *principes*.

In the two main sections of this chapter I investigate two topics central to the relationship between historiography and personal distinction within the culture of the early Principate. The first section centers on the question of elite autonomy: here we see that in this era elite Roman society placed a substantial premium on demonstrating that you did not live in subjection, and that a historiographical career offered a way of making such a demonstration. In the second section we turn to the issue of authority and authorship. Here I explore some of the ways in which the nature of public discourse under the Principate posed challenges to demonstrating personal autonomy via a literary career.

AUTONOMY AND ELITE PRESTIGE

Elite discourse under the Principate was obsessed with the interrelated questions of autonomy and access to public distinction.[12] In the first place, there was a basic anxiety about the real status of any citizen, directly related to anxieties about the real status of the *princeps*. To the extent that a *princeps* was merely what that word implied, that is, the "first citizen," elite men could be imagined still to operate by their own lights and to be citizens, not subjects. But to the extent that a *princeps* was instead the master presiding over a state and an empire that were *de facto* his domestic property, and the inhabitants of which were thus his slaves, elite men were no more in command of their own persons and actions than were slaves. This "servitude"

[12] The crisis of elite identity in the early Principate has been widely discussed; some recent, important discussions are Hopkins and Burton (1983), Eck (1984), Vielberg (1996: 9–40), Habinek (2000), and Roller (2001).

model of the elite under the Principate is, of course, a figure of speech – ask a real Roman slave if a senator was in a condition like his own – but it is a figure that describes a quite real concern.[13] The question posed in this distressing metaphor was, in a society in which there is a *princeps*, does a man of the elite have an independent social self and discretion over his own life? So long as that question hung in the air, a lot of distinction could attach to the man who offered proof that his behavior was not entirely determined by the *princeps*' power.

In this section, we delve into the interrelationship between prestige and demonstrations of autonomy under the Principate. First we will look closely at the cultural paradigm formed by the martyrs of the "Stoic opposition," and at Tacitus' own depictions of them in his work. We will then go on to examine some alternative strategies for proving one's independence, as well as Tacitus' interest in the different career paths that elite men might follow. At the end of the section, I suggest that we can regard historiography as one such path, and one with particular advantages.

Martyrs as models

Tacitus' work fits into, and reacts to, a cultural environment in which the Stoic martyrs enjoyed admiration and fame. In return for their conspicuously independent conduct, Thrasea Paetus and his son-in-law Helvidius Priscus had, under Nero and Vespasian respectively, met with disfavor and premature death. Under Domitian they had been celebrated in biographies by Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio, both of whom were later found guilty of treason.[14] By design, the arc of Tacitus' literary career begins with Thrasea and Helvidius; it is apparently a gift of chance that it now ends with them, too.[15] In the preface of *Agricola* their deaths and the deaths of their biographers form the standard by which Agricola's life – and Tacitus' memorialization of it – cannot help being judged.

[13] On the master–slave relationship as a "social metaphor," see the essential remarks of Roller (2001: 213–87). But I am not sure that the father–son relationship is the only benevolent metaphor that complements it; the citizen–citizen relationship, rather, is its natural polar opposite: for this, see Wallace-Hadrill (1982) with Plin. *Pan*. 2.3. On slavery as a metaphor in Roman culture, see Fitzgerald (2000: 69–86).

[14] There is a capsule biography of each man, with sources cited, at Ogilvie and Richmond (1967 ad loc.). The classic treatment of the "Stoic opposition" is still MacMullen (1966: 1–45); see also Boissier (1913), Brunt (1975), Raaflaub (1987), and Raaflaub and Samons (1990). For the appeal of the philosophical life under the early Principate, see Malitz (1988).

[15] Our text of *Annals* breaks off as Thrasea bleeds out his life in slow pain, with Helvidius at his side (*Ann*. 16.35.2). On the coincidence, see, for example, Heldmann (1991: 211–12). See further the book's conclusion below.

Tacitus' work is much less enthusiastic about the martyrs than the fashion for laudatory biographies of them would indicate that others were.[16] Tacitus' friend and coeval the younger Pliny puts real energy into advertising his ties to them, not merely making a point of showing solidarity with them (which would itself be significant) but also dwelling on ways in which he was what we might call interchangeable with them.[17] For one thing, in his letters he attributes his own survival of Domitian's tyranny to sheer luck: lightning had been striking all round him, he writes, and in time he would have met the same end as Rusticus, Senecio, and the younger Helvidius Priscus (*Ep*. 3.11.3).[18] Or again, when he appeals to Tacitus to be included in *Histories*, the anecdote he brings to the historian's attention is about his own conduct after the trial of the *delator* Baebius Massa. This story features Pliny despising danger at Senecio's side and suggesting that Massa enter a countercharge against Pliny, as he had just done against Senecio (*Ep*. 7.33.4–10). Later, after Domitian's assassination, Pliny styled himself the avenger of the younger Helvidius and undertook to prosecute Helvidius' prosecutor Publicius Certus, then he published his speech under the title *De Helvidii ultione*, "On Avenging Helvidius." When Pliny tells this story in a letter, he emphasizes that he had refused to heed his friends' warnings against attacking Certus, and he even reports that he quoted lines of Virgil spoken by Aeneas as the hero is about to descend fearlessly into the underworld (*Ep*. 9.13.12).[19] Like the martyrs, then, Pliny too had offered up his life as sacrifice; if the gods had not taken it, it was scarcely his fault.

Others had a stake in the martyrs, too. Epictetus is very keen on Helvidius (Arr. *Epict*. 1.2.19–24, 4.1.123); while his esteem may have been his own, it clearly did not drive away his elite adherents.[20] Two of Tacitus'

[16] "[*Agricola* was] written to praise an example of 'obsequium' when the production of Stoic encomia of 'constantia' was at its height" (Murray 1965: 59). Cf. Liebeschuetz (1966: 128–9).

[17] On Pliny's delicate handling of his relationship with them, see Soverini (1989), Ludolph (1997: 142–66), Beutel (2000: 222–37), and Edwards (2007: 132–3).

[18] In the same letter Pliny deprecates (but in so doing relays) the expelled philosopher Artemidorus' declaration that Pliny had earned exceptional glory (*eximiam gloriam*, *Ep*. 3.11.4) by helping him; we do not need to infer that Pliny hereby uses a ploy to gain equal distinction to that of the martyrs, but it is quite clear that he and they are to be measured on the same yardstick. (On Pliny's self-praise, see Gibson [2003].) We might read in similar terms Tacitus' declaration (*Ag*. 3.2) that he and others who had not died under the Domitianic terror were in a sense "survivors of themselves": even the living thereby win the honor of having being killed under Domitian. On this expression, see the remarks of Haynes (2006) and chapter 2 below.

[19] *Ad haec ego: "'Omnia praecepi atque animo mecum ante peregi'"* (= Virgil *A*. 6.105). I disagree with Malitz (1985: 246) that we should deduce from Pliny's referring less often to Helvidius that he prefers Thrasea's comparative restraint to Helvidius' provocative style: after all, he has a great deal to say about the younger Helvidius (for whom see *Der Neue Pauly* s.v. Helvidius [2]), and about his martyred biographer Senecio.

[20] On Epictetus' life and milieu, see Millar (1965).

contemporaries – of whom we know – busied themselves writing works in commemoration of "Deaths of Famous Men," *exitus illustrium virorum*.[21] In the case of Titinius Capito, the deaths should include those of Helvidius Priscus the younger, Rusticus, and Senecio; in that of C. Fannius, the misfortunes were those of Nero's victims (and so perhaps the work included Thrasea's death and the exile of Helvidius the elder).[22] At the opening of *Agricola* (2.1) the strong implication is that reading this material was almost a "generational experience" for readers of a certain age.

What was the appeal of the martyrs? In death they had shown beyond doubt that they had not submitted to the yoke.[23] By the principate of Nero, of course, Roman elites had already been living for a long time in a world in which they were only permitted certain things, but these men had done "what was not permitted" (*inlicita*, *Ag*. 42.4), had in effect denied they had a master who could tell them what was permitted and what was not. The vocabulary Tacitus uses to deprecate the martyrs' admirers shows exactly what was so appealing about Thrasea and Helvidius. His phrase "empty boasts of freedom" (*inani iactatione libertatis*, §3), while it denies there was substance to the martyrs' claim, nonetheless spells out what that claim actually was: these men had made a public declaration for others to hear (*iactare*) that they were not slaves.[24]

Yet the behavior of these men was exciting not just for what it said about themselves, but for what it implied about the continued legitimacy and corporate identity of the senatorial elite.[25] Their demonstrative noncompliance seemed to proclaim their commitment to an earlier age in which the Senate had held the world in its hands, and in which elites had

[21] On the genre, see Marx (1937), Ronconi (1968: 206–36), and Geiger (1979).

[22] Capito: Plin. *Ep*. 8.12.4, *scribit exitus inlustrium virorum, in his quorundam mihi carissimorum* (these latter might be the triad the younger Helvidius, Rusticus, and Senecio, though Sherwin-White [1966 ad loc.] does not speculate). Fannius: Plin. *Ep*. 5.5.3, *scribebat . . . exitus occisorum aut relegatorum a Nerone et iam tres libros absolverat . . .* (since he completed only three books of the work before he died, it is impossible to say who was left out). The equestrian Capito had been a secretary of Domitian and had advanced further under Nerva and Trajan (discussion at Syme [1958: 92–3]): he is an ideal example of a creature of the regime who derives credit for independence by drawing on the martyrs' prestige. He also cultivated the images of Cato, Brutus, and Cassius in his home (Plin. *Ep*. 1.17).

[23] For protection of *dignitas* in the face of external power as a Stoic justification for suicide, see Griffin (1976: 379–83). On suicide as a "classed" phenomenon in the early Principate, see Murphy (2004: 124), but see also Griffin (1986: 199–200) on its practice across social levels.

[24] Cf. Ulpian, who gives as a reason for suicide *iactatione, ut quidam philosophi* (*Dig*. 28.3.6.7). On suicide as "showing off," see van Hooff (1990: 129–30), the discussion of *Ag*. 42 in Hill (2004: 8–11), and Edwards (2007: 125–7).

[25] Grisé (1982: 82): "par leur renoncement volontaire à la vie, ils réclamaient en silence la liberté du citoyen désormais étouffée par le despotisme d'un Maître du monde qui, à leurs yeux, mettait en péril la *Res publica* elle-même."

far more extensive opportunities to distinguish themselves before the public and before each other.

Take for instance the interpretations Seneca and Thrasea were said to have imposed on their own enforced suicides. Commentators have perceived only part of what is going on when each of them makes of his own blood a libation to Jupiter Liberator (*Ann.* 15.64.4, 16.35.1).[26] In one sense, to be sure, this gesture is an acknowledgment of Jupiter for that freedom each man attains in death. On this reading, this is an ordinary libation.[27] Yet because it is in fact their own life-blood, it is not even remotely an ordinary libation: it is blood sacrifice, and self-sacrifice. Viewed from this perspective, these suicides fit into a larger thematic of altruism and ambition within Roman elite culture. The self-sacrificial aspect of these deaths makes sense through the lens of the archaic ritual practice of *devotio*, the essential Roman model for imagining dying on behalf of one's fellows.[28] In a *devotio* a Roman general could consecrate himself and the opposing army to the infernal gods or to Earth; he then had to rush headlong and heedless into the enemy line. This ritual envisioned the god or gods taking the devoted in return for sparing the Romans a disastrous defeat; in this way, the devoted became effectively equivalent to a sacrificial animal.[29] It is precisely this pattern of thought that underpins the actions of Seneca and Thrasea: they themselves become like consecrated victims and their blood is offered not in return for a gift of freedom the god has already given but in expectation of a possible return for those who remain behind.[30] That impression is

[26] Tacitus did not invent the detail about Jupiter Liberator: in Thrasea's case, it is also present in the epitome of Dio (Cass. Dio 62.26.4). Furthermore, the *exitus*-literature must have contained the last words of these two men, and it would have been daring for Tacitus to have them say something notably different from what most people thought they had said.

[27] Griffin (1976: 370–1) proposes that it indicates the liberation of the soul from the body, and the protection of the *libertas* the men have evinced thus far; cf. Gärtner (1996: 154n20). For suicide as a path to *libertas* cf. e.g. Sen. *Dial.* 5.15.4. Yet at Athens Zeus Eleutherios was associated with the ejection of the tyrants and the resistance to the Persian tyranny, and at Rome Jupiter Liber was a favorite of slaves and the freed (Bömer 1981: 110–31); in these instances, it is not the freedom of the soul that is at issue.

[28] On *devotio*, see Versnel (1976), Burkert (1979: 59–64), Versnel (1981), Oakley (1997–2005 ad 8.8.19–8.11.1), and Edwards (2007: 25–8). For our purposes, it does not matter whether *devotiones* had ever happened, but only that they were thought to have, that they were celebrated as *exempla*, and that they, along with other events in which one man had sacrificed himself to save the state, evidently remained familiar in the early Principate, through topographical associations such as those of the Lacus Curtius, but also through Livy (the Decii at 8.9.1–8.11.1, 10.28.12–10.29.7; see Feldherr [1998: 85–92] and Oakley [1997–2005 ad loc.]) and Virgil (the Decii at *G.* 2.169 and *A.* 6.824; see Leigh [1993]). For Cicero's engagement with the theme of *devotio*, see Dyck (2004); for Lucan's, see Leigh (1997: 128–43); for Silius', see Marks (2005). Its cultural currency makes problematic Hill's (2004: 189–90) dismissal of the practice as irrelevant to elite suicide in the late Republic and early Principate.

[29] Beard, North, and Price (1998: 1.35).

[30] On the proximity of "suicides . . . ordered by the state" to suicides "voluntarily undertaken to preserve it" (including *devotio*), see Griffin (1986: 193). For the *unus vir* theme in Livy, see Santoro L'hoir

strengthened by Seneca's splashing with his "libation" of bloody bathwater those of his slaves who were standing nearby (*Ann.* 15.64.4), and by Thrasea's insistence that the unnamed quaestor sent by the Senate should watch as he kills himself:

> "libamus" inquit "Iovi liberatori. specta, iuvenis; et omen quidem dii prohibeant, ceterum in ea tempora natus es quibus firmare animum expediat constantibus exemplis." (*Ann.* 16.35.1)
>
> "It is a libation we pour," he said, "to Jupiter the Liberator. Watch, young man. May the gods avert the omen, but you have been born into times when you will have need of examples of constancy."

The detail about Seneca seems to indicate that the philosopher's slaves are about to undergo testamentary manumission; in that case, his death is literally going to liberate others.[31] And Thrasea clearly envisions his death as entailing consequences: he forthrightly lays claim to status as *exemplum*, which, if Roller's definition of *exemplum* holds, means his act professes to be consequential for his community in some way.[32] Thrasea's apparent quotation of Seneca, too, suggests that his conduct seeks to insert itself into an already existing chain of *exempla*. In addition to Helvidius, then, who we know will take this *exemplum* to heart, the young quaestor too is supposed to come away from the experience ready to imitate Thrasea's deed, if it should ever come to that. This quaestor's anonymity need not signal that this section did not benefit from the historian's finishing touches (*pace* Syme): rather, without a name, he can represent the *entire* Roman

(1990: 230–41); on the "*unum pro multis dabitur caput*" theme in the *Aeneid*, see Bandera (1981); for it in post-Virgilian epic, see Hardie (1993: 27–32). For the *devotus* as scapegoat, see Burkert (1979: 63–4); the Romans seem to have been clear on this, as Ovid (*Ib.* 467) uses the verb *devovere* for what the Abderites do to the man they ritually expel. In Livy both Decii are "expiatory offerings" (*piaculum* 8.9.10; *piacula* 10.28.13) who avert *pestis* ("ruin" or "plague"; *pestem* 8.9.10, *pestis* 10.28.17) from the Romans onto the enemy. On the close association of epic warrior and scapegoat, see Hardie (1993: 28–9): the *devotus* is both. Hardie (31) writes that, in Lucan, Cato's suicide "rule[s] out absolutely any possibility of a resolution to the sacrificial crisis; turning his hand on himself, acting out the roles of both sacrificer and sacrificed in one person, he confound[s] utterly the distinction between killer and killed on which the logic of Girardian victimization rests." We might suppose that this same consideration forbids our reading the suicides of the martyrs, who emulated Cato, as sacrifices as well. Yet Griffin (1986: 69) gives strong reasons to see the sacrificial potential of Cato's suicide and the others: the deaths of the martyrs, at least, are not preferences of death over life, but the forestalling of death by execution through self-inflicted death. On this, see also van Hooff (1990: 94–6).

[31] Griffin (1976: 276n5) tentatively offers the idea. On manumission, see Bradley (1987: 81–112). For the "water of freedom," see Petr. 71.1 with Bömer (1981: 217).

[32] Roller (2004: 3–5). On *exempla* in Roman culture, see Liebeschuetz (1979: 40–1), Mayer (1991), Nicolai (1992: 32–61), Hölkeskamp (1996), Leigh (1997: 160–90), Habinek (1998: 45–59), Chaplin (2000: 1–31), Stemmler (2000), Roller (2001: 88–108), Roller (2004), with bibliography, and Kraus (2005).

elite at the educable stage.[33] To judge by how these deaths are presented, then, what interested Romans about these men was not simply that they endured pain and death but that they did so for the sake of their fellows.[34]

There was, then, a strain of Roman discourse about the martyrs that accepted their sacrifices as heroic and important, and repaid them with commemoration and praise. Tacitus' relationship to this strain of discourse is complicated and interesting. Scholars have been unsure what to say about his stance on the martyrs, because he seems friendlier to Helvidius and – especially – Thrasea, than what he says at *Ag*. 42.3–4 would lead anyone to expect:[35]

proprium humani ingenii est odisse quem laeseris: Domitiani vero natura praeceps in iram, et quo obscurior, eo inrevocabilior, moderatione tamen prudentiaque Agricolae leniebatur, quia non contumacia neque inani iactatione libertatis famam fatumque provocabat. sciant, quibus moris est inlicita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse, obsequiumque ac modestiam, si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis excedere, quo plerique per abrupta sed in nullum rei publicae usum ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt.

It is inherent to human nature to hate the one you have harmed: but the character of Domitian, swift to anger, and the more inscrutable the more inexorable, nonetheless was softened by the moderation and circumspection of Agricola, because he was not trying to call forth fame – and fate – with recalcitrance and empty boasts of freedom. (4) Let those whose habit is to wonder at forbidden activities know that in truth there can be great men under even bad *principes*, and that obedience and an unassuming manner, provided there be also hard work and spirit, attain the same degree of praise that others have – but most of these have taken a precipitous course that was of no utility to the *res publica* and have become famous through a self-seeking death.

Tacitus does not name these "others," but can only be taken to refer to the Neronian and Flavian martyrs. His critique is rather straightforward: these men did what they did for the glory, not in order to advance the interests of the community. When he comes actually to describe Helvidius and then Thrasea in his later work, however, the picture is not so clear. Both men receive much more favorable treatment and are certainly not subjected to anything so aggressive as those last few words of *Ag*. 42.4.

[33] Syme (1958: 745).

[34] In this regard, Seneca's stance on Cato in his works seems (unsurprisingly) to be out of the elite mainstream. For Seneca, Cato really does seem to be about his endurance of pain and death, and not about his political commitments: see Gowing (2005: 76–9). See also the comments of Griffin (1976: 182–94).

[35] There has been a lot of discussion: see, e.g., Walker (1952: 229–32), Wirszubski (1968: 124–71), Syme (1970), Morford (1991: 3442–47), Heldmann (1991), Pigón (2003), and Edwards (2007: 125–43).

This contrast leads Peter Brunt to write that "*Agr.* 42, 4, if applied to the Stoic opposition, is hard to reconcile with Tacitus' other judgements on its individual members; he had, it would seem, no single, coherent view."[36]

But I would propose that we can also explain this apparent inconsistency by taking account of the conflicting interests to which Tacitus' treatment is subject. On the one hand, his work appears not to be interested in further fortifying the privileged cultural position the martyrs occupied, and in fact to be rather committed to the idea of dislodging them from it. On the other hand, the fame of the martyrs was *already* enshrined: even if you were inclined to disparage them, you would exclude yourself from the arena of elite discourse by doing so, pronouncing, in effect, that you did not share the values of your fellows.[37] Tacitus' approach thus pays obeisance to individual, named martyrs by acknowledging their bravery and steadfastness, while deprecating the mode of life of the martyrs – chiefly *as a category* – by highlighting their interest in their own glory and by hinting at the larger futility of their activities. Below, we will take a closer look at Tacitus' criticism of the martyrs' desire for glory, then turn to a passage in which he positions himself as an advocate for the Neronian suicides. As we will see, the point of both of these strategies is not to denigrate the martyrs – which in any event was probably not possible – but to reduce their glory to a level at which other kinds of achievement could begin to compete with it. On this score, there is actually considerable continuity between *Ag*. 42.4 and his later work in *Histories* and *Annals*.

Now, as I have suggested, what gave these men their glamour was their apparent solidarity with the cause of senatorial dignity and significance: to show adherence to a set of values shared by their peers, they had held their own lives cheap. All the same, if you were inclined to scrutinize altruism for hints of underlying self-interest, it was easy to come up with *Ag.* 42.4. In that passage, and in his discussion of the martyrs elsewhere, Tacitus treats as an exchange what an enthusiast of the martyrs would "misrecognize." "Misrecognition," a concept I borrow from Pierre Bourdieu, is social

[36] Brunt (1975: 311n153).

[37] Liebeschuetz (1966: 132) attributes Tacitus' favorable assessments of Helvidius and Thrasea to a (possibly reluctant) "profound admiration for these men" and explains that "it was no doubt partly because as a man of his time he could not fail to feel admiration for its chosen heroes, but even more because his deepest feelings rebelled at the judgement of his historical reason, and insisted that the changes resulting from the collapse of the Republic, perhaps from the moral decay that had brought about that collapse, when judged by absolute standards involved a change for the worse." This may be so, but we can explain the contradiction equally well by tying it to rhetorical exigencies as we can by appealing to Tacitus' personal feelings. The same may be said about Marchetta's (2003: 223) attribution of the varying estimates to a clash between Tacitus' "giudizio morale" and his "guidizio politico."

make-believe that denies economic interest on the part of both parties to an exchange; in Bourdieu's words, it is "the basis of gift exchange and, perhaps [and importantly, for our purposes], of all the symbolic labour intended to transmute, by the sincere fiction of a disinterested exchange, the inevitable, and inevitably interested relations imposed by kinship, neighbourhood, or work, into elective relations of reciprocity."[38] Viewed in this light, the martyrs' activities could be conceived as an exchange of their lives in return for good repute in the present or future: Thrasea gives his life for the Republic without thought for self, and his survivors reciprocate with praise as though their martyr had acted without an eye to potential return. A narrative of the martyr's actions that misrecognizes this exchange would regard them as oriented above all to the good of the elite community, and his receipt of distinction as a desirable but altogether incidental accrual.

While the lesson that Tacitus distills from Agricola's life at *Ag*. 42.4 rejects the misrecognized narrative, it does not reduce the martyrs to mere hypocrites. Rather, it frames the question of the martyrs in such a way as to encourage us to look at their "precipitous course" as a consciously chosen path to esteem in the community, comparable to other paths and thus liable to be challenged by other models of career. In that passage the self-evident goal of a man's life is public esteem: Tacitus is interested in what attracts public attention ("wonder at"), what garners praise ("attain the same degree of praise"), what secures distinction ("they have become famous"). To be a "great man" is here to have captured the gaze of other Romans, to have been evaluated by them, and to have received a favorable reputation on the basis of that evaluation.[39] Far from standing in a class of its own, the martyrs' path is fundamentally comparable to the one that Agricola takes: they are both, above all, competing means to the end of glory. This is also the impression Tacitus gives in his narrative of Agricola's youth: although he flirted at first with that "great and exalted glory" of a career in philosophy (*magnae excelsaeque gloriae*, *Ag*. 4.3), he ended up giving way to a saner "desire for a soldier's glory" (*militaris gloriae cupido*, 5.3).[40] From the perspective of *Agricola*, then, the martyrs were in a sense just doing what

[38] Bourdieu (1977: 171); his clearest exposition of the idea comes on pp. 171–83.

[39] In this Tacitus is conventional: see, e.g., Lendon (1997: 36–55) and, on the key concept of *existimatio*, Habinek (1998: 45–59). More generally, see Knoche (1934), Philipp (1955), Drexler (1962), and Habinek (2000).

[40] It is also worth recalling that a "philosophical career" was related to the martyr's life, given the Stoic identifications of Thrasea and Helvidius. Cf. MacMullen (1966: 75) – "These Roman martyrs were all philosophers, in a broad sense" – and Ogilvie and Richmond (1967 ad loc). (This is not to say that philosophy in turn meant opposition: see Brunt [1975] and Griffin [1984: 171–7].) In an important passage (*Ann*. 4.20.3) that we will examine below, a mode of public life is imagined as a "path" (*iter*) that can be followed as a matter of deliberate policy (*consiliis*). See also Sallust's portrayal of the

anyone else would do, and their activities could be understood, without exception, in terms of a rather conventional sort of careerist calculation. What Agricola had over them was that *his* interest in glory had at least resulted in conquest, which was an unquestionably useful thing.

Likewise, although in *Histories* and *Annals* Tacitus deals gently with Thrasea and Helvidius, he takes care to register the importance of ambition to their conduct. As he closes an account of a Senate debate in which Helvidius had expressed himself candidly, Tacitus comments that "that day above all others was the beginning of his great offense, and of his great glory" (*isque praecipuus illi dies magnae offensae initium et magnae gloriae fuit*, *Hist.* 4.4.3); here "offense" and "glory" are nearly a hendiadys for "his glorious offense."[41] Shortly after this, Tacitus goes on to report that "there were those to whom [Helvidius] seemed too solicitous of a reputation, since even among the wise the last desire to be laid aside is the desire for glory" (*erant quibus adpetentior famae videretur, quando etiam sapientibus cupido gloriae novissima exuitur*, *Hist.* 4.6.1). Although Tacitus attributes this view to others, he does not actually dispute it, and that appended "since" clause feels as though it is there to soften a criticism that does not belong to the unnamed "those" alone.[42] He reports as well that Thrasea stood by a proposal that was insulting to Nero both "because of his customary determination and so that he would not lose his glory" (*sueta firmitudine animi et ne gloria intercideret*, *Ann.* 14.49.3).[43]

In general, this emphasis on the martyrs' interest in glory seems specifically Tacitean. Martial provides a precedent in a poem addressed to his Stoic friend Decianus: "I don't have any use for the man who buys fame with easy blood: | I'll take the one who can be praised without dying" (*nolo*

choice between engaging in politics and writing history as a choice between paths (*Cat.* 2.9). On the road as a metaphor for life, Martin and Woodman (1989 ad 20.3) direct us to Fantham (1972: 70–1). The potential harvest in glory is central to the discussion of career-choice in Tacitus' *Dialogus* as well.

[41] Cf. *Ag.* 42.3 (quoted above) on Agricola as compared to the martyrs: *neque inani iactatione libertatis* ***famam fatumque*** *provocabat*.

[42] The indicative *exuitur* makes the *quando* clause a statement of general truth that Tacitus vouches for, not the reasoning of the subject of *erant*: retrospectively, it makes us feel as though *erant quibus adpetentior famae videretur* really *meant* erat *adpetentior famae*.

[43] Syme (1958: 561n3) denies the phrase all weight: "the censure is so faint as not to matter." The expression may not be deeply depreciatory, but it surely matters that one of the two motivations attributed to Thrasea on this pivotal occasion is deliberate concern for his glory. Better to see in *ne gloria intercideret*, with Koestermann (1963–8 ad loc.), "ein leichter Tadel." It is hard to agree with Devillers (2002: 308) that Tacitus refers to Thrasea's glory merely by way of contrast with Nero's failure to deserve glory: considerations of glory are indeed Thrasea's primary motivation at this point, an impression not dispelled by *Ann.* 15.20.2, where he is said to "turn an opportunity to the public benefit." It is no easier to grant to Heldmann (1991) that Thrasea presents as unproblematic a model of behavior as Agricola does. Cf. the illuminating discussion of Lendon (1997: 142–5).

virum facili redemit qui sanguine famam, | *hunc volo, laudari qui sine morte potest*, 1.8.5–6.).[44] Yet even the other authors who represent a less positive tradition about Helvidius do not emphasize glory as a consideration: rather, they think of him as a boor, rabble-rouser, and democrat (Suet. *Ves.* 15; Cass. Dio 65.12, 65.12.2). If true, that would indicate that Tacitus' picture of the martyrs was important enough to his project that he specifically rejected other images of them.

One telling feature of Tacitus' treatment of Thrasea and Helvidius, then, is an understated but perceptible emphasis on their strong interest in glory. The other, complementary charge he levels at *Ag.* 42.4 – that their activities had not been of any use to anyone other than themselves – also finds support in his later work: this is the thought behind his declaration about Thrasea upon his walking out of the Senate that "he created a cause for his own endangerment, but did not give the others a beginning of freedom" (*sibi causam periculi fecit, ceteris libertatis initium non praebuit*, *Ann.* 14.12.1).[45]

In Tacitus' most extensive reflections on the Neronian suicides, however, we see a strategy not represented in *Agricola*. Pausing in that string of executions that began with the failure of the Pisonian conspiracy, he imagines how the monotony may be affecting his readers:

Etiam si bella externa et obitas pro re publica mortes tanta casuum similitudine memorarem, meque ipsum satias cepisset aliorumque taedium exspectarem, quamvis honestos civium exitus, tristes tamen et continuos aspernantium: at nunc patientia servilis tantumque sanguinis domi perditum fatigant animum et maestitia restringunt. (2) neque aliam defensionem ab iis, quibus ista noscentur, exegerim, quam ne oderint tam segniter pereuntes. ira illa numinum in res Romanas fuit, quam non, ut in cladibus exercituum aut captivitate urbium, semel edito transire licet. detur hoc inlustrium virorum posteritati, ut quo modo exsequiis a promisca sepultura separantur, ita in traditione supremorum accipiant habeantque propriam memoriam.[46] (*Ann.* 16.16)

Even if I were reporting foreign wars and deaths met for the sake of the Republic, since I am giving a narrative that shows so much similarity between one calamity and the next, I would already myself have had my fill, and I would be anticipating that others would be sick of it as well and would turn away from citizens' deaths that were dignified, to be sure, but grim nonetheless, and unremitting. As things

[44] On these lines, see Howell (1980 ad loc.) and Edwards (2007: 137–8).

[45] A declaration at *Ann.* 14.49.1 (*libertas Thraseae servitium aliorum rupit*) *does,* however, indicate that on one occasion Thrasea's refusal to act like a slave prevented others from doing so as well. Martin (1994: 169) suggests that Tacitus omits to discuss in its most natural place Thrasea's role in the prosecution of Cossutianus Capito, in order for Thrasea's first appearance in *Annals* to be about a trivial, rather than a grave, matter.

[46] The first sentence of *Ann.* 16.16.2 is a vexed one, and I have printed the reading of the Leidensis (*oderint*) over that of the Mediceus (*oderim*): otherwise, this *ne* clause does not make sense.

actually are, though, slavish passivity and so much blood wasted at home exhaust the mind and hem it in with sorrow. (2) Nor would I ask for any advocacy [for these men] from those to whom this material will become known, beyond that they not hate those who perished in so passive a manner. That was the anger of the divine wills against Rome, and it is not permissible – as it *would* be in the case of defeats of armies and captures of cities – to make just one report and pass on. Be it granted to the posthumous reputation of men of distinction that, just as by funeral rites they are distinguished from common burial, so in the handing down of their final scenes they be given and retain their own individual memories.

Just before these reflections we had the report of the suicide of Ostorius Scapula (16.15), and after them the "train" (*agmine*, 16.17.1) of victims picks up again. By position, then, Tacitus' remarks would seem to apply to these men in particular. But the narrative that leads up to Thrasea's end begins only a few chapters later, at *Ann*. 16.21.1, and furthermore the historian's point here is that these deaths are notable for resembling each other so closely, not for differing from each other. The remarks at *Ann*. 16.16 stand far enough from Thrasea's end that they do not indisputably apply to him, but close enough for us to suspect that they might. That suspicion is strengthened by the appearance of what Koestermann has shown is the same thought, and similar language, in the mouths of those who urge Thrasea to face down Nero in the Senate: "but if Nero should persist in his savagery, [they said,] posterity for certain would distinguish the memory of a respectable death from the ignobility of one who died without making a sound" (*sin crudelitati insisteret, distingui certe apud posteros memoriam honesti exitus ab ignavia per silentium pereuntium*, 16.25.2).[47] Likewise, Tacitus' transition from the other deaths to those of Thrasea and Barea Soranus presents the latter ones as a natural progression from the former, not a change of course: "having butchered so many men of distinction Nero at last conceived the desire to rip out virtue at its very root by killing Thrasea Paetus and Barea Soranus" (*trucidatis tot insignibus viris ad postremum Nero virtutem ipsam exscindere concupivit interfecto Thrasea Paeto et Barea Sorano*, 16.21.1). Thrasea and Barea are here the abstract (***vir**tus*) of which the earlier victims were concrete instances (***viri**s*) and the parallel between this pair and the earlier multitude is strengthened by their appearances in similar ablative absolutes bracketing the main clause (*trucidatis . . . viris, interfecto . . . Thrasea . . . et Barea*). Several hints, then, guide us to apply the remarks of *Ann*. 16.16 to Thrasea and Barea.[48]

[47] Koestermann (1963–8 ad 16.25.2).
[48] Contra Edwards (2007: 134–6), for whom the death of Thrasea "seem[s] unambiguously positive."

What Tacitus does in *Ann*. 16.16, however, is no frontal assault on the model of martyrdom; it is something subtler and more insidious. To be sure, some terms of his critique here are familiar from the more aggressive challenge advanced in *Agricola*. By implication, as in *Agricola*, the deaths of the men in question do the *res publica* no benefit ("even if I were reporting . . . deaths met for the sake of the Republic," *Ann*. 16.16.1). They also exhibit a *patientia* like that of slaves: "slavish passivity" (*Ann*. 16.16.1) recalls "we have truly given a huge demonstration of passivity; and, just as the former age saw what the outer reaches of freedom were like, so have we seen the outer reaches of slavery" (*dedimus profecto grande patientiae documentum; et sicut vetus aetas vidit quid ultimum in libertate esset, ita nos quid in servitute*, *Ag*. 2.3). The difference lies in how Tacitus assigns *Agricola*'s terms in *Ann*. 16.16. Unlike in the biography, here he does not accuse those who have died to no benefit to the state of having done so in order to attract attention, nor does he say they have attracted any. To the contrary, here their deaths have made them *unremarkable*: so many died, in so uniform a way, that the historian must intervene to save them from the figurative "common grave" (*promisca sepultura*, *Ann*. 16.16.2) of oblivion, although in that earlier work it was Agricola himself whom Tacitus rescued from oblivion and inconspicuousness (*Ag*. 46.4) – a fate made all the more likely, of course, by his father-in-law's meager claims to martyrdom. In *Agricola*, moreover, those who had shown "slavish passivity" were not Domitian's victims, of course, but instead that whole Domitianic generation that had lived to read the biography – in other words, everyone *but* his victims.[49] The implied premise of Tacitus' comments at *Ann*. 16.16 is not, then – as it is in *Agricola* – that Tacitus expects his readers to adore the Neronian suicides and that accordingly he must counter their enthusiasm; rather, he exploits that sense of tedium his narrative has produced at this point in order to position his *readership*, not himself, as the party dissatisfied with these deaths, and *himself*, not the readership, as the party insisting that these deaths be reported at all.[50] With this daring shift, he at once reduces those who committed suicide under Nero to nothing more glamorous than slaughtered cattle

[49] Oddly, Aubrion (1985: 88–9) uses the echo of *Agricola* to argue that Tacitus must be talking about the *patientia servilis* of all Romans at *Ann*. 16.16.1 as well.

[50] "Sense of tedium": see Marincola (2003: 312–13), for whom the creation of a feeling of disgust here is "part of Tacitus' way of getting across what it is like to live under an Emperor." But we should not assume that the experience was so tedious for a Roman readership: after all, the works of Fannius and Capito seem to have contained nothing *but* deaths (and exiles, in the case of Fannius), for books on end, and they were clearly read nonetheless. From this point of view, the deaths were the attraction, the other bits were the filler, and the *exitus*-genre was the equivalent of a "highlight reel" of a sports match.

and casts himself as lone advocate for their memory. This move is all the bolder because some of these deaths may already have been commemorated in C. Fannius' work: Tacitus' narrative then supplants Fannius' work altogether, but presents Nero's victims in what must be a less appealing light.[51]

Tacitus' treatment of the martyrs, then, pays them respect while also furnishing the material for a serious critique of them. His strategy does not aim to reverse public enthusiasm for them but rather to suggest that you *could* say they were motivated by interests of personal prestige rather than promotion of the common good, were mainly ineffective, were short of perfect with respect to their dignity and manly courage, and had even failed to secure the lasting glory to which they had aspired. What we might term his "de-sanctification" of the martyrs thus promises to make their lifestyle a model with which other models can compete, or, in other words, to revoke that privileged exemplary status these men enjoyed and to open the field to other kinds of *exemplum*. This may be one reason why in his treatment of the martyrs in *Ann*. 16.16 it is difficult to get a sense of what precisely he thinks they should have done: his agenda here is not to provide a positive model for how you should behave once you have won the regime's disfavor so much as it is to persuade us that Thrasea and the other victims could be conceived to be something other than faultless and ideal.[52]

It is significant that the techniques of indirection and suggestion Tacitus uses in dealing with the martyrs are essentially the same as those you would use in criticizing a sitting *princeps* or any other powerful figure: you give your readership or audience enough direction for them to be able to draw a particular conclusion, but you preserve "deniability" by not actually articulating the conclusion yourself and so unload the responsibility for the criticism onto the reader who wishes to find it there.[53] This tactic is useful whenever you are operating at the margins of publicly acceptable discourse; the difference in this instance is that it is not the regime's surveillance that

[51] Fannius' work was unfinished when he died (Plin. *Ep*. 5.5.2), but the three books that he had completed were available and apparently read with enthusiasm (§3). When Pliny writes that Fannius had spent his energies in vain (*frustra*, §7), he surely does not mean that people were not reading his work but that his work could not be a perfect monument for all time (cf. §4). Marx (1937: 86) is almost certainly right that Tacitus availed himself of this work or another like it: he cannot have found his description of these deaths in the *acta senatus*. Tacitus' depiction of Thrasea probably owes a great deal to the biography by Rusticus as well.

[52] To my mind correctly, Luce (1991: 2908–9) dissuades us from supposing that *Ann*. 16.16 implies that Thrasea and others should have put up more of a fight.

[53] The fundamental pieces of scholarship on this rhetorical mode in antiquity are Ahl (1984) and Bartsch (1994). For a cross-cultural theorization of it, see J. C. Scott (1990). We will come back to the topic of "figured speech" in chapter 5.

the technique aims to flout, but the sensibilities of an elite community that has placed considerable value on the martyrs.

Career options

The "lesson" of *Ag*. 42.4 cited above, when set off against the popularity of men such as Thrasea and Helvidius, aims to resolve an alarming concern. If proving your autonomy is the surest route to prestige, and if autonomy can best be proved by demonstrative, significant noncompliance, then is not the man who pursues the *cursus honorum* sacrificing all hopes of prestige, in the sense that success in the *cursus* could easily be construed as a badge of total compliance and therefore perhaps utter servility?[54] This is an anxiety that Tacitus' work returns to continually.

In discussing the careers of Antistius Labeo and Ateius Capito, Tacitus places the modes of compliance and demonstrative autonomy in high relief:

> [sc. obiit eo anno vir inlustris] Capito Ateius . . . principem in civitate locum studiis civilibus adsecutus, sed avo centurione Sullano, patre praetorio. consulatum ei adceleraverat Augustus, ut Labeonem Antistium isdem artibus praecellentem dignatione eius magistratus anteiret. (2) namque illa aetas duo pacis decora simul tulit: sed Labeo incorrupta libertate et ob id fama celebratior, Capitonis obsequium dominantibus magis probabatur, illi, quod praeturam intra stetit, commendatio ex iniuria, huic, quod consulatum adeptus est, odium ex invidia oriebatur. (*Ann*. 3.75)

> Ateius Capito, a man of note, died that year . . . he had attained a principal place in the state by practice at the bar, but his grandfather had been a centurion under Sulla, and his father had achieved only praetorian rank. Augustus had hastened his becoming consul in order that, through the status conferred by that office, he should surpass Antistius Labeo, who was a man of distinction in precisely the same field as Capito. (2) For that age produced two lights of the peacetime arts at one and the same time: but Labeo was a man of uncompromised freedom and, because of that, better famed, while the compliance of Capito was more appealing to those who exercised dominion. The former, because his career had ended at the praetorship, received approval for the insult done him, while the latter, because he ascended to the consulship, encountered dislike from the indignation it inspired.

Tacitus arranges his paradox lovingly: what used to be the path of honor in the eyes of the evaluating public is now an index of submission and obedience and so a source of bad repute, while what once would have been – and *was* in the case of Capito's father – a sign of only limited

[54] On the *princeps* as distributor of honors, see Eck (1984) and Lendon (1997: 131–9).

success (that is, a career that faltered at the praetorship) is now a mark of autonomy and consequently a cause of widespread good repute.[55] In effect, this formulation imagines two kinds of *cursus honorum*, the one merely a series of offices held that indicates not merit but compliance and the other a sort of spectral sequence of offices *not* held that proves noncompliance and therefore a species of merit.[56] This is precisely the point of view advanced in this exclamation of Epictetus:

ἢ πάλιν ὅταν ὑπὲρ τῶν μεγάλων τούτων καὶ σεμνῶν ἀρχῶν καὶ τιμῶν τὰς χεῖρας τῶν ἀλλοτρίων δούλων καταφιλῇς, ἵνα μηδ᾽ ἐλευθέρων δοῦλος ᾖς; (9) εἶτά μοι σεμνὸς περιπατεῖς στρατηγῶν, ὑπατεύων. οὐκ οἶδα, πῶς ἐστρατήγησας, πόθεν τὴν ὑπατείαν ἔλαβες, τίς σοι αὐτὴν ἔδωκεν; (Arr. *Epict.* 4.1.148–9)

Or again, when you kiss the hands of the slaves of other men in order to get these great and august offices and honors, that you may be the slave of ones who themselves are not even free? (9) And then you actually strut around proud of your praetorship or your consulship? Don't I know how you got to be praetor, how you got your consulship, who it was that gave it to you?[57]

Or consider Tacitus' verdict at *Ann.* 4.26.1, where Tiberius denies P. Cornelius Dolabella the triumphal insignia so that the honor of Q. Junius Blaesus, Sejanus' nephew, will seem like yesterday's news: "All the same, Blaesus did not thereby become any better famed, and the honor denied only enhanced [Dolabella's] glory" (*sed neque Blaesus ideo inlustrior, et huic negatus honor gloriam intendit*). Another example: right after the syncrisis of Capito and Labeo comes another failure of the regime to determine distinction, in the report of the funeral of Junia Tertulla, niece of Cato, wife of Cassius, sister of Brutus (*Ann.* 3.76). The *imagines* of the tyrannicides were not included (and we infer that the regime would not have been pleased, or had forbidden their appearance); but, he writes, "Cassius and Brutus shone forth all the more conspicuously for the very fact that their images

[55] Gingras (1992: 254–5) remarks that the juxtaposition of Labeo and Capito was not historically necessary, as Labeo had died some years before. Perhaps, but we are not sure when Labeo died: see Bauman (1989: 27 and 45n105). On Tacitus' fondness for pairing obituaries, see Syme (1970: 88). Ducos (2003: 565) usefully observes that Labeo and Capito are here reduced to mere figures of *obsequium* and *libertas*.

[56] Clearly, however, the *cursus* did still mean a great deal, because people continued to seek and hold office: see the enlightening overview of Eck (2005). The competing constructions of public life under the Principate are related to the tension between articulations of the post-Republican world according to which either nothing or everything had changed since the Republic: we may compare here the *Dialogus*' juxtaposition of the arguments of Aper (who never properly allows that Republic and Principate are different things) and Maternus (who argues that the nature of public speech has changed utterly because of the Principate).

[57] See also Sal. *Jug.* 3.1. Even the position of *princeps* could be imagined in these terms: cf. Otho's cultivation of the Praetorians at Tac. *Hist.* 1.36.3, *omnia serviliter pro dominatione*.

were not to be seen" (*sed praefulgebant Cassius atque Brutus, eo ipso quod effigies eorum non visebantur*, §2). While a central aim of sanctions against memory was to harm the posthumous reputation of their object, Tiberius here achieves exactly the opposite, only enhancing the conspicuousness of men whom he had meant to make invisible.[58]

In these instances Tacitus appears to insist on what we might call "inverse proportionality of prestige": the more the regime insults or harms someone, the greater his credit grows; the more it rewards him, the less he is worth. Compare here the brutally precise "to the degree that" (*quanto*) at *Ann*. 1.2.1: no one opposed Augustus' assumption of all functions of state, Tacitus writes, "since those who were most defiant had died in battle or in the proscriptions, and, as for the rest of the nobility, the faster one was to descend to servitude, the higher one was exalted with wealth and honors" (*cum ferocissimi per acies aut proscriptione cecidissent, ceteri nobilium, quanto quis servitio promptior, opibus et honoribus extollerentur*). Here those riches and offices that under the Republic were indices of excellence have, after Augustus, become instead measures of one's servility. This formula does nothing less than posit a complete inversion of the Republican basis for assigning prestige, wholly consonant with how Tacitus characterizes the Augustan regime at *Ann*. 1.4.1, "at the change in the character of the state, there was nothing left whatever of the former uncorrupted ways" (*verso civitatis statu nihil usquam prisci et integri moris*). When pressed to its logical extreme, this equation leaves the highest prestige for the martyr and the least for the man who has run the *cursus honorum*, collecting the regime's stamp of approval at each stage. On this view, then, radical difference in reputation is attainable only through radical difference in life.

Part of the pleasure supplied by the instances of Capito and Labeo, Dolabella, and Junia lies in the complete failure of the *princeps*' attempt to manage the economy of repute: Augustus' intention was to readjust the relative statuses of Capito and Labeo in favor of Capito by giving him a consulship, but in fact the outcome is the reverse, and Labeo's account is credited at Capito's expense.[59] In that sense, Tacitus' syncrisis vindicates

[58] "Harm": see Flower (1996: 23–31) and (1998) on the *SC de Cn. Pisone Patre*.

[59] As Woodman and Martin (1996 ad 75.1) remark, Tacitus plays with the etymological force of Labeo's name Antistius ("Mr. Out-in-Front"): "although an 'outstanding' lawyer, i.e. an *antistes* (*OLD* 2), he was 'outstripped' by the political advancement of Capito (*antiret*) and remained 'standing' within the praetorian rank (2 *intra praeturam stetit*)." As we have seen, however, in another sense Labeo's name does turn out to correspond to his fame: we could then say either that Augustus failed in his attempt to ironize the name, or that he was unable properly to interpret it in the first place, for, had he been able to, he would have seen that his efforts would be for naught.

the notion of an independent system of value under the Principate: in the end, *principes* cannot control who thinks what about whom, and the power to assign repute still rests in the hands of the elite community.

In a larger sense, however, the fact of *principes*' existence has entirely determined how this system works. For while Augustus perhaps did not confer the relative degrees of prestige he intended, his intervention nonetheless wholly determined how much prestige each man received, in that Capito's poor repute, and Labeo's good, both derived directly from the *princeps*' effort to secure them repute of the opposite sort. In that sense, our passage sketches out a scenario in which you can win prestige by proving your autonomy but how much distinction you get for being autonomous is really only calculated by the degree to which the *princeps withholds*, rather than distributes, his approval. As a consequence, you do not receive good repute directly from the community but rather in relation to the *princeps*, whose treatment of you then becomes the yardstick by which everyone measures actual prestige.

Yet while on one view the syncrisis of Labeo and Capito supports the notion of inverse proportionality, we can detect in it a contrary idea that Tacitus' works also entertain, that is, that an apparently small difference in your life can make a big difference in what people say about you. So sharply does Tacitus contrast the two men that it is almost surprising to review the differences in their careers: in fact, they seem to have lived almost the same life, except that Capito had been consul and had behaved in a way that evinced not *libertas* but *obsequium*.[60]

The much-discussed M. Aemilius Lepidus is relevant here. At *Ann.* 4.20.2, having just reported that Lepidus made a moderating proposal for a milder punishment for Sosia Galla, found guilty of treason together with her husband C. Silius, Tacitus dilates upon Lepidus' virtues:

[60] The whole edifice would have tumbled had Tacitus reported what – as Syme (1958: 761) points out – the Digest (1.2.2.47) says: Augustus had offered the consulship to Labeo, who refused it in order to devote more time to his *studia* (see however the reservations of Horsfall [1974]). A reader who recalls the most recent appearance of Capito, at *Ann.* 3.70 (to which our passage in fact refers us: 3.75.1, *Ateius Capito*, ***de quo memoravi***), might even be ready to doubt the distinction between the modes of life of Labeo and Capito. In that episode Tiberius forbade prosecution of a man accused of having melted down a statue of him, and Capito protested: *Ann.* 3.70.2, *palam aspernante Ateio Capitone quasi per libertatem. non enim debere eripi patribus vim statuendi neque tantum maleficium impune habendum. sane lentus in suo dolore esset: rei publicae iniurias ne largiretur*. Tiberius sees through this charade, but his success in doing so is notable because Capito's words bore the external appearance of *libertas*, even if they were *really* (*ut erant*, §3) specimens of phenomenal unctuousness. (Cf. Sinclair [1995: 162–3].) The modes of public activity of Labeo and Capito might not, then, look so different after all. On the connotations of *obsequium*, see Vielberg (1987: 130–4) and Pani (1992: 159–80).

hunc ego Lepidum temporibus illis gravem et sapientem virum fuisse comperior: nam pleraque ab saevis adulationibus aliorum in melius flexit. neque tamen temperamenti egebat, cum aequabili auctoritate et gratia apud Tiberium viguerit. (3) unde dubitare cogor, fato et sorte nascendi, ut cetera, ita principum inclinatio in hos, offensio in illos, an sit aliquid in nostris consiliis liceatque inter abruptam contumaciam et deforme obsequium pergere iter ambitione ac periculis vacuum. (*Ann*. 4.20.2–3)

I have determined after inquiry that this Lepidus was a man of seriousness and wisdom in that era. For there were quite a few matters that he redirected for the better, away from the vicious adulation of others; yet he was not without discretion, as is evidenced by his ongoing influence and favor with Tiberius. (3) This gives me cause to wonder whether the favor of *principes* for some people and their taking offense at others are, like everything else, ruled by fate and by the chance of one's birth, or whether there is not some power seated in our choices and behavior, and we may travel a path between precipitous defiance and disgraceful compliance that is free of self-seeking and peril alike.

These reflections are not solicited by anything momentous about Lepidus' proposal; rather, Tacitus puts them here because they contrast with what happens in the next chapter, the accusation and death of Calpurnius Piso (about whom more shortly), whom he puts forward as a figure of just the kind of defiance Lepidus avoided ("a defiant man of aristocratic descent" [*nobili ac feroci viro*, 4.21.1]).[61] This juxtaposition of Lepidus and Piso resembles what Tacitus does at *Ag*. 42.4, where he contrasts with Agricola's moderation the conduct of "those who have become famous by a self-seeking death."[62] It also betrays the same anxiety as the biography about the consequences of following the "third path," as we can see in the unusual track that Tacitus' argument follows. He begins with the obvious two paths to recognition that inform discussions of prestige in his narratives: the first, supported by "the favor of *principes*" (*inclinatio principum*), is political success earned by surrendering autonomy to the *princeps*, and the second, generated by *principes*' "taking offense" (*offensio*), is hostile confrontation with the regime (*Ann*. 4.20.3). At this point, the issue is whether distribution of *inclinatio* and *offensio* is determined by inexorable fate; strictly, therefore, the second part of this alternative question should be whether we can win

[61] The remarks might have been placed in his obituary at *Ann*. 6.27.4, where Tacitus excuses his brevity by saying that he has already given adequate space to Lepidus earlier.

[62] See Syme (1970: 49): "Marcus Lepidus as depicted by Tacitus in the *Annales* is a prototype of his Agricola." On Lepidus as an organizing principle in the Tiberian *Annals*, see Sinclair (1995: 163–91). The argument of Devillers (2002) that the conduct of Lepidus and that of Thrasea are almost identical and that it is the difference between Tiberius and Nero that explains their diverse fates seems to me to miss the point of Tacitus' ruminations on whether individuals can choose *itinera* that are more or less dangerous.

inclinatio or *offensio* by choosing or avoiding certain kinds of behavior. Instead Tacitus asks us to accept a Trojan Horse: having rejected the idea that we cannot affect our relationship to the *princeps* by our choice of behavior – since clearly we can – we turn to the second option, which turns out to be not merely that we can exercise choice but also that, when we do so, we ought to choose a superior, and so far unmentioned, third kind of behavior that lies between the poles of *inclinatio* and *offensio*. When the alternatives are arranged like this, the unique desirability of this "third path" becomes obvious, and its appeal is only enhanced by its being free from ugly ambition and danger and even by its merely being situated between extremes.[63] Notice, though, that prestige, which was the goal of those two kinds of behavior we started with, has quietly been dropped from our equation; this new third path aims rather at safety without disgrace, and is remarkable not for what it offers but for what it does not (*vacuum* ["free," lit. "empty"]). Tacitus reinforces this impression with his hint that he did not know much about Lepidus before he started his research, and that his readers will need some introduction as well.[64] Here Tacitus performs for Lepidus and his "third path" the same service, on a much smaller scale, as he has already performed for Agricola and his, saving him from the onrush of oblivion (*Ag.* 46.4). So then, while the passage is confident in its assertion that Lepidus deserves our attention and that his discreet conduct has made a significant difference in the kind of reputation he deserves, it also betrays exactly what is dissatisfying about that "third path": it does not promise the kind of distinction that can persist on its own, without a Tacitus having to argue for it.

Accordingly, Tacitus' books are intrigued not with the prospect of a life on the "third path" – a medium between "precipitous defiance and disgraceful compliance" (*Ann.* 4.20.3) – but rather a path that offers all the benefits of both "precipitous defiance" and "disgraceful compliance" and none of their disadvantages, a life that bears unmistakable signs of autonomy, signs that suffice for acquiring prestige, but that nonetheless do not lead inevitably to an encounter with the regime's violence. Being killed by the regime was, we have seen, the lone incontestable proof that you had not surrendered your autonomy to the *princeps*' domination and that you did not recognize the

[63] To Roman thinking, the middle was an immensely satisfying place, from an ethical standpoint, for a set of practices to be located. On the theme see, for example, Scheidle (1993). The appeal of the first alternative is likewise diminished by its association with the sordid practice of astrology.

[64] To be sure, the phrase is "lifted bodily" (Syme 1970: 42) from Sal. *Jug.* 45.1. In Sallust, however, the reference is to Metellus' conduct in a particular situation, not over his whole career, so his assertion that he had "discovered" this is much less striking.

legitimacy of his coercive power. But there were also alternative "careers" that argued, though less conclusively, for the possibility of both staying alive and securing real distinction for considerable autonomy. These careers all involve a species of refusal, even if selective or figurative, to recognize or respond to the Principate as a political form.

An example early in *Annals* gives us a starting point. In 16 CE, Tacitus reports, L. Calpurnius Piso erupted in the Senate:

> Inter quae L. Piso ambitum fori, corrupta iudicia, saevitiam oratorum accusationes minitantium increpans abire se et cedere urbe, victurum in aliquo abdito et longinquo rure testabatur; simul curiam relinquebat. commotus est Tiberius, et quamquam mitibus verbis Pisonem permulsisset, propinquos quoque eius impulit, ut abeuntem auctoritate vel precibus tenerent. (*Ann*. 2.34.1)

> As this was going on, Lucius Piso, blaming the canvassing in the Forum, the corruption of the courts, the viciousness of speakers who threatened accusations, declared that he was walking out then and there, that he was leaving the city, and that he would live in some distant, remote locale. With that, he headed out of the Senate house. Tiberius was disturbed, and while he had tried to win Piso over with soft words, he also forced Piso's friends to use both influence and entreaty to restrain him as he was departing.

This lively scene and its less spectacular upshot – Piso goes nowhere – are instructive. In effect, what Piso says is that the present character of civic life is illegitimate: the organs of state do not take into account what is right or what is just; rather, influence, money, and lies reign. At least formally, this complaint seems to limit itself to the law courts, but it obviously has rather broader implications for the Principate as an institution, for not only is the response that comes to Piso's mind a clean break with the city itself and not just the Forum, not only does Tiberius himself feel the protest to reflect on his own legitimacy, but the next windmill at which Piso tilts is the impunity at law of Urgulania, who is protected by her friendship with the Augusta – in that anecdote Tacitus makes quite clear the connection between the sorry state of the courts and the institution of the Principate (*Ann*. 2.34.2–4).[65] Once Piso has taken the rather strong position that civic life is corrupt and empty, his participating further in that life would seem to be attended by an implicit acknowledgment, at the least, that his efforts are pointless, and probably that they are depraved as well. After committing yourself to this declaration, the only self-consistent courses of action would

[65] A readership contemporary with Tacitus, familiar with the careers and habits of Thrasea and Helvidius, would have been equipped to see in Piso's protest more than mere grousing about the courts – they knew what a senator meant when he proposed to leave the Senate.

be either to set the state back on the right footing – which, we may allow, would be a tall order – or to protect your integrity by exempting yourself from that life.[66] This is what he threatens to do by separating himself from the space that life occupies; in essence, his is the choice of Camillus, who, because he had been treated disrespectfully by his fellow Romans – who were already itching to discard their Romanness by moving to Veii – went into exile, taking "Rome" with him (Liv. 5.32.6–9).[67]

If done ostentatiously, withdrawal was an insult to the *princeps*, a declaration that he was a tyrant.[68] Alarmed, Tiberius tries to make Piso stay, and so tacitly concede that the *res publica* is not beyond saving after all. The *princeps*' intervention is not overtly menacing here, but nor is it demonstrably benign.[69] Exempting himself from the system by simply leaving it is thus eliminated from Piso's options.[70] Not that we must suppose he desired to go anywhere. Thrasea seems to mean to succeed in walking out of the Senate (*Ann*. 14.12.1) but Eprius Marcellus means nothing of the kind when he does the same thing ("making as if to walk out of the Senate-house" [*velut excedens curia*, *Hist.* 4.43.2]) and is restrained by a throng of friends.[71] Doubtless there were advantages to being at Rome, and one might prefer to stay.

This is the path of literal retirement; a different, related path to exemption is exemplified by the anecdote that Tacitus appends about Piso's further activities in the affair of Urgulania, an intimate of the Augusta. Though Piso does not leave Rome, he nonetheless behaves as though he does not acknowledge the political conditions of the Principate. He summons Urgulania to court, but she ignores the summons and moves into Tiberius' house to stay with the Augusta. Officially, as a private citizen Urgulania is subject to the law and so can be called to court; unofficially, of course, "her friendship

[66] For instances of "opposition by retirement," see MacMullen (1966: 306n6) and, for the tension between engagement and *otium* in Seneca, see Griffin (1976: 315–66).

[67] On Camillus and the city, see Edwards (1996: 44–9).

[68] Wirszubski (1968: 141), Brunt (1975: 27), and Lendon (1997: 119–20).

[69] Cf. the unofficial missions from Domitian to Agricola about Agricola's possible proconsulship (*Ag*. 42.1): the conversation begins with suggestive praise of the advantages of *otium*, proceeds to promises of help in securing pardon, continues with open pleas and threats, and ends with Agricola being hauled before the *princeps*.

[70] An anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press observes that "there is some irony in the fact that [exempting himself from the system by simply leaving it] is precisely what Tiberius himself will do."

[71] It is of course in protest against Helvidius himself, and not against the presiding Domitian, that Marcellus makes for the door, but the force of Marcellus' tactic is to put Helvidius in the position of the tyrant with whom Marcellus bravely refuses to comply: *"imus . . . Prisce, et relinquimus tibi senatum tuum: regna praesente Caesare"* (*Hist*. 4.43.2). On the significance of Thrasea's withdrawal, see Murray (1965: 52–4) and Griffin (1984: 176–7).

with the Augusta had exalted her above the law" (*supra leges amicitia Augustae extulerat*, *Ann*. 2.34.2). With demonstrative obtuseness, Piso refuses to recognize the unofficial arrangements that are the substance of power under the Principate and goes ahead with his ostentatiously archaic summons.[72] This kind of behavior, too, was an old favorite of the "Stoic opposition." Cicero had complained that its hero, the younger Cato, acted as though he were living in Plato's Republic, not in Romulus' Dregs (Cic. *Att*. 2.1.8). Later, Thrasea would acquit himself in the same way. His conduct in the matter of Antistius Sosianus is remarkable because, even though everyone seems to know that Nero is conducting a travesty of a trial, Thrasea behaves as though the Senate were actually going to decide the question of Antistius' punishment (*Ann*. 14.48–9). As Suetonius characterizes it, Helvidius' behavior after Vespasian's accession, too, amounted to nothing less than acting as if there were no *princeps*:

> Helvidio Prisco, qui et reversum se ex Syria solus privato nomine Vespasianum salutaverat et in praetura omnibus edictis sine honore ac mentione ulla transmiserat, non ante succensuit quam altercationibus insolentissimis paene in ordinem redactus. (*Ves*. 15)

> Though Helvidius Priscus alone had addressed him as "Vespasian" – what he was called as private citizen – after his return from Syria, and though as praetor he had omitted in every last one of his edicts to pay his respects to, or even to mention, him, Vespasian did not lose his temper with him until he had nearly been reduced to a mere senator again by his exceedingly disrespectful wrangling.[73]

That Piso's conduct had both models and imitators does not make it a matter of mere empty allegiance to predecessors, or even just a question of principle. It is rather one instance of the application of an obvious and ready-to-hand strategy for creating an "exile on main street": even if you could not or would not leave the city and take whatever credibility came from doing that, you could still affect a life of "exile" within the city, by behaving as though you were not in the city *as it was* but in the city as it *ought* (or *used*) to be.[74] In a way, you could set yourself up as the only

[72] On the episode, and the *provocatio in ius*, see Goodyear (1972–81 ad loc.). "Refuses . . . to recognize": when Tacitus relates the events at *Ann*. 4.21.1, the phrase is *spreta potentia Augustae*, "he ignored contemptuously the power of the Augusta."

[73] Cf. Cass. Dio 65.12.

[74] In most cases Tacitus seems sympathetic toward this conduct. Remarkable then is his treatment of Cn. Calpurnius Piso: after all, as Shotter (1974: 237) notes, Piso "insisted on behaving as though the Republic still existed." Piso, though, is no grim Catonian, but rather more the ostentatious and contentious sort of Republican *nobilis* who had brought down the Republic in the first place; and his antagonist is not the *princeps*, but the Germanicus who represented (however improbable the idea) hope for the restoration of the Republic. For the association of Germanicus with the Republican past, see, for example, Pelling (1993: 77–8). For this Piso as one of a series of Pisones in *Histories* and *Annals* who represent a sort of alternate history, see O'Gorman (2006: 289–90).

Roman living in Rome; those around you were living in some other city that happened to occupy the same ground.

This technique offered a way of being in the state without being of it, of living among other Romans but in such a way as to present to them the marks of your autonomy; it also gave you an audience to applaud or envy your independence, an advantage the exile did not enjoy. As Brunt puts it, "our records can hardly be expected to commemorate lives of quiet seclusion."[75] The remarks of Eprius Marcellus in his *agon* with Helvidius in Book Four of *Histories* express the distinction this mode could confer: "Let Helvidius [said Marcellus] rank himself in constancy and bravery with the Catos and the Brutuses; he himself [i.e., Marcellus] was just another member of that Senate who were all slaves together [sc. under Nero]" (*denique constantia fortitudine Catonibus et Brutis aequaretur Helvidius: se unum esse ex illo senatu, qui simul servierit*, *Hist.* 4.8.3).[76] Marcellus has no benign intent here – his real aim is to cast Helvidius as a rival to Vespasian – but what he says captures the signal that Helvidius' behavior sent: the Senate was a crew of slaves, while he himself was a free man.[77] This path of demonstrative noncompliance could be effective, but had serious disadvantages. For one thing, the surest indication of autonomy could only be bought with blood; anything less, though it might seem genuine, was not so fully certified. For another, the path was dangerous: with enough bad luck or effort, it could end in a premature death. Tacitus is careful not to deny a connection between the death of our Calpurnius Piso in 24 CE and his emphatic independence in 16 CE: Tiberius, he says, had secretly been stewing over those events for eight years (*Ann.* 4.21.1–2).[78]

The path of history

Death, exile, retirement, acting "as if": each mode was a variation on a single strategy, that is, the creation of an impression of autonomy and so

[75] Brunt (1975: 21).

[76] In traducing Thrasea before Nero, Cossutianus Capito depicts Thrasea as building a rival court around himself (*Ann.* 16.22); cf. also *Ann.* 13.49.3, where Thrasea's critics insinuate that he is trying to usurp Nero's place. On the Nero–Thrasea storyline as a competition of prestige, see Lendon (1997: 142–5), Habinek (2000: 271–2), and Ronning (2006). Galtier (2002: 313) argues that Capito gives Thrasea Neronian traits.

[77] Cf. the communal senatorial experience under Domitian expressed at *Ag.* 2.3 as *quid ultimum . . . esset . . . in servitute*. Of course, Vespasian himself had been one of those who "had all been slaves together" under Nero.

[78] In this sense, he presents much the same problem for Tacitus as Agricola does: in *Agricola* Tacitus discreetly omits to say that nine years had elapsed between Agricola's recall from Britain and his death, nine years during which he had conspicuously failed to call down on himself Domitian's violence. In chapter 5, we will see that Cremutius Cordus was similarly difficult: his history had been published under Augustus, but he was not tried for treason until the twelfth year of Tiberius' rule.

of social worth. Each had its disadvantages. I would suggest that writing history, too, appears to offer a means of establishing your autonomy, and that we can regard a historiographical career as an alternative to these other paths. I mentioned above that historiographical activity overlapped with political: you do it, traditionally, as an alternative to politics, not because it is the opposite of, but because it is the nearest thing to, politics. I have also urged that we bear in mind a close relationship between the historical Tacitus and the narrator of his texts: the books stood to have repercussions for the man's life. The differences between a life in practice and a life in text are without question significant and pronounced, and these two kinds of life line up easily within that vast "saying–doing," *logos–ergon* dichotomy that structures much of Greco-Roman thinking.[79] This polarity, however, was easily deconstructed: "saying" could, from another perspective, also be a species of "doing," and the distance between the two, being undefined, was therefore negotiable.

Consequently I am sympathetic to the insights of Morgan, about Asinius Pollio, that "in the hands of a writer like [him] . . . historiography could constitute an alternative, semi-public form of élite self-assertion" and that his writing and conduct "both are components of what seems to have been [his] overarching project: the continued assertion of his autonomy and self-sufficiency in the very adverse conditions which pertained during the triumvirate."[80] It was one thing, though, to proceed as Pollio had, bringing his political life to a close and opening a historiographical one; it was another to conduct them simultaneously. And it is exactly in this respect that Tacitus' historiographical career is remarkable: it continued apace with his political career. He published *Agricola* around 98 CE, and his work on *Annals* should have extended well into the second decade of the second century.[81] In 97 he was suffect consul, and in 112/113 or 113/114 he was proconsul of Asia.[82] He appeared for the prosecution in the trial of Marius Priscus as late as 100 (Plin. *Ep*. 2.11.2). Five *principes* in succession, Flavian and "adoptive" alike, had contributed to his advancement. There is no trace of alienation in his biography, and attempts to show otherwise rely heavily on special pleading. As we have seen, though, his texts show a world in which merely following the *cursus honorum* can be evidence not of meaningful political distinction but of degrading submission to the *princeps*. Under these circumstances, evidence of autonomy could be especially valuable; and, if that evidence

[79] See, e.g., the argument of Cremutius Cordus at *Ann*. 4.34.2. [80] Morgan (2000: 58, 61).
[81] There is a full discussion of the dating of *Annals* at Goodyear (1972–81 ad 2.61.2).
[82] Consul: Plin. *Ep*. 2.1.6. Proconsul: *OGIS* 487 with Syme (1958: 664–5). Syme (1958: 71) reasonably suspects a consular command after the consulship.

came in the form of books, there was the considerable advantage that your political career could continue alongside these books.

Significant in this regard is Tacitus' brief obituary of Domitius Afer and Servilius Nonianus:

Sequuntur virorum inlustrium mortes, Domitii Afri et M. Servilii, qui summis honoribus et multa eloquentia viguerant, ille orando causas, Servilius diu foro, mox tradendis rebus Romanis celebris et elegantia vitae, qua clariorem se fecit, ut par ingenio, ita morum diversus.[83] (*Ann.* 14.19)

Thereupon followed the deaths of two men of distinction, Domitius Afer and Marcus Servilius, who had flourished in the highest offices and with great eloquence, the former well known for pleading cases, Servilius for activity in the Forum but then for writing Roman history and for his principled conduct in his life, by which he made himself more distinguished, being as much Afer's equal in talent as he was his opposite in character.

What distinguishes these men from each other is not their political careers but Servilius' literary career and moral scruples (which we know the *delator* Afer did not have: *Ann.* 4.52.1).[84] Tacitus first lists these two features of Servilius' life separately ("writing Roman history . . . principled conduct in his life") but later in the sentence subsumes them under the category of "character": those senses in which he resembled Domitius thus fall under the category of *ingenium* (where we might ordinarily expect literary ability to appear) but the senses in which he differed from him fall under *mores*. Historiographical endeavor here becomes testimony to the historian's character, and it is this difference in character that lets Servilius enjoy a better reputation.

AUTHORITY, AUTHORSHIP, AND AUTHENTICITY

hoc ipsum tu praestas, quod ad te scribimus. haec fiducia operis, haec est indicatura. multa valde pretiosa ideo videntur, quia sunt templis dicata. Pliny *Nat. praef.* 19 (addressed to Titus)

You are the one who supplies what I am writing to you. This is the guarantee of the work, this its index of value. Many things are deemed terribly precious because they are dedicated in temples.

From one perspective, then, the political configuration of the Principate can be seen as making a career in writing history a potentially desirable

[83] I adopt here the conjecture *qua . . . fecit* in Wellesley's Teubner edition.
[84] On Servilius, see Syme (1970: 91–109) and Noè (1984: 83–4).

means of projecting an image of independence. In the latter section of this chapter we turn our attention to an important way in which this political configuration also made the use of career for this purpose difficult and complicated.

Auctoritas *and the* princeps

Republican government and the social order it confirmed and perpetuated were characterized by distributed, contestable authority. Within the state there were (or at least were supposed to be) two consuls; there were various religious authorities; there were men who by service to and accomplishment within the *res publica* had earned the right to speak consequentially. As Wallace-Hadrill has argued, knowledge too was based in multiple private, domestic centers: a *paterfamilias*, any *paterfamilias*, was assumed to be able to speak definitively to – *inter alia* – tradition, the law, the reckoning of time, and language.[85] The Principate saw – and, in important respects, was – the recentering of authority within most realms of discourse around the *princeps* himself, rather than around multiple, competing centers. To be sure, we should not overschematize: it did not literally become impossible to disagree with the *princeps*, nor was he inundated with requests for advice about matters such as plumbing and animal husbandry. The *princeps*' authority remained in general notional and potential, but it was present nonetheless as a structuring element in wide swaths of Roman discourse.[86]

What did Roman authority look like? The quality of *auctoritas*, usually translated "authority," enabled its possessor to make valid and consequential statements.[87] When oriented toward the future, these statements are in the imperative mood: an *auctor* brings into being or fosters circumstances that would not have existed, or would not have been such as they are, were it not for his intervention. But *auctoritas* extended to the past as well. In historiographical discourse, an *auctor* is a "source," a writer who provides an account of past events that would not exist, or would not be so well attested, if he had not provided that account (*OLD* s.v. *auctor* 9b). He tells us simply that *x* happened, or that *x* happened and not *y*, or that *x* happened in year *a* and not year *b*, and so forth. Different *auctores* might of course differ or conflict, and you could devise procedures for, or at least develop tendencies in, choosing between them or admitting *aporia*. In fact, at Rome a non-contemporary history was in good measure the result of a series of

[85] Wallace-Hadrill (1997, 2005).
[86] For example, for the authority of *principes* in natural history see Murphy (2004: 197–201).
[87] On *auctoritas*, see Heinze (1925), Hellegouarc'h (1972), Kienast (1999: 84–5), Crook (1996: 117–23), and Galinsky (1996: 10–41).

decisions, on the part of its author, as to the relative degrees of *auctoritas* of previous writers. *Auctoritas* could be enhanced by the *auctor*'s antiquity, by his agreement with other *auctores* that led to a statistical preponderance of one version over against another, by his general reliability as measured by a number of factors (including whether he had been caught lying or making mistakes), by the plausibility of his account, and by his reputation for probity or seriousness in other areas of his life.[88]

Naturally, the general authority of *principes* governed present and past alike. They provided, or had provided for them, versions of the past that bore, directly or indirectly, on their own position within society.[89] The proto-*princeps* Julius Caesar narrated both his wars in Gaul and the civil war with an eye to what reflected best on himself.[90] Octavian/Augustus was a prolific renderer of accounts of the past. As is well known, he capped his rule and his life with an autobiography inscribed on his mausoleum; he composed a literary autobiography as well; and his program for his Forum was manifestly a three-dimensional act of historiography (quite apart from his having composed the *tituli* and *elogia* himself).[91] His engagement with historiography began early in his rule: a mere two years after Actium he was confronted with the irritating problem of M. Licinius Crassus' apparent eligibility to dedicate *spolia opima*; Crassus' eligibility was denied, and the problem solved, by Octavian's historical research in the Temple of Jupiter Feretrius. He claimed to have found the linen corselet dedicated by Cornelius Cossus in 437 BCE, complete with an inscription proving that Cossus had been consul when he took the *spolia*; the version according to which Cossus had been a *tribunus militum* was therefore wrong, there was consequently no precedent for a man who was not fighting under his own auspices to have made such a dedication, and so Crassus, who as proconsul of Macedonia had been fighting under Octavian's auspices, had no right to make one and in the event did not do so.[92] This was a crude fraud, but, for

[88] So, for example, when Cicero (*Tusc*. 4.3) calls Cato a *gravissimus auctor*, "weightiest of authorities," the adjective refers to a lot more than the impression you get from his works alone.

[89] On "the literary output of the Roman emperors," see Dilke (1957). On the historiographical work of the *principes*, see Durry (1956); on their memoirs, see Noè (1980). Kraus (2005) argues that the *princeps* comes to operate at once as primary or sole *exemplar* and generator of new *exempla* and as the only appropriate imitator of the great *exempla* of the Republic.

[90] See, e.g., J. Henderson (1998: 37–69), Welch and Powell (1998), Ramage (2003), Kraus (2005: 188–91), Riggsby (2006).

[91] *Res Gestae*: see Brunt and Moore (1967), Yavetz (1984), Ramage (1987), André (1993), and Kraus (2005: 191–6). Autobiography: see Yavetz (1984). Forum of Augustus: see Zanker (1968), Bonnefond (1987), Zanker (1988: 192–215), Luce (1990), Flower (1996: 224–36), Galinsky (1996: 197–213), Spannagel (1999), and Gowing (2005: 138–45).

[92] On the episode, the bibliography is vast: see Dessau (1906), Syme (1959: 42–6), Walsh (1961), Daly (1981), Harrison (1989), Badian (1993), Miles (1995: 40–54), Rich (1996), Flower (2000b), and Sailor (2006).

our purposes, what matters is that its method was historiographical (or, at least, antiquarian) and that the version Octavian produced was valid and treated as authoritative, in the sense that everyone behaved in accordance with it and Crassus did not dedicate *spolia opima*. In this instance, the *auctoritas* that Augustus would later single out as the respect in which he surpassed his fellow citizens (*Anc*. 34.3) was the capacity to establish historical fact and thereby also present policy. The last two Julio-Claudians had historiographical leanings, too. Claudius had been a historian before his accession and had pursued that endeavor as *princeps* as well.[93] Nero was said to have pondered composing an account (characteristically, a verse account) that covered the whole sweep of Roman history (Cass. Dio 62.29.2).

The historiographical work of the *principes* was not exhaustive, nor was it, for the most part, written. Others wrote; *principes* might simply in particular instances be eager that a certain version of events be accepted as valid and take pains to see that version supported and propagated, and alternatives to it discouraged.[94] But that it was not written does not mean there was no official version; there was, and it could not have been otherwise. Pliny's "Speech of Thanksgiving" (*Pan*.) is vivid testimony that that version was obvious, and readily available: no doubt he did not need to consult the court to find out what to say about the past, because anyone with any sense already knew what was and was not welcome. In fact, since the right note to strike on this sort of occasion was so apparent that any sane speaker would strike it whether or not it was meant, it might be hard to persuade an audience that you really meant your words of praise.[95] Under

[93] Suet. *Cl*. 41.1–2, esp. §2. His *magnum opus* was a history of Rome, beginning with the assassination of Julius Caesar; he omitted the triumviral period, however, leaving a gap between the aftermath of the assassination (to which he devoted two books) and the end of the civil wars. Suetonius reports that Claudius became aware that he did not have the ability to offer, with truth and candor, the tradition about the civil war: his mother and grandmother rebuked him about it often. Claudius was here as subject as anyone to Augustus' version of the civil wars, and that version was largely silence (so, in Augustus' *Res Gestae*, the civil wars are of interest not because they occurred but because there was a time at which, by Augustus' agency, they *ceased* to occur: cf. *Anc*. 34.1, *postquam bella civilia exstinxeram*; on the omissions in the *Res Gestae*, see Ramage [1987: 32–7]). On Claudius' historiographical career, see Durry (1956: 222–4) and Levick (1990: 18–19).

[94] See the conclusions of Eck (2002a: 162) on the *SC de Cn. Pisone Patre*: "events were deliberately and with official sanction manipulated and falsified, in order to mislead both contemporary and future readers, and to create history."

[95] In this regard scholars often cite Plin. *Ep*. 3.13, in which he sends a friend a copy of his *gratiarum actio* and frets that a reader will not be surprised by any of the content of the speech and so will pay attention only to the style. "*Nota vulgata dicta sunt omnia*" (§2) may not (as it is generally taken: cf. Bartsch [1994: 165] and Giua [2003: 256–7]) mean that the content is trite but that the reader already knows the particular content of Pliny's speech because it has already been delivered in the Senate.

these circumstances, the *princeps* did not have to write in order to create his accounts; indeed, he did not have to do anything at all.

All the same, written accounts had their uses. Repetition and elaboration might confirm segments of the regime's version of past and present. It was the early opinion of Syme that Livy was an official historian, that is, the transcriber of official history.[96] Writing under Tiberius, Velleius Paterculus cheerfully composed a history that was insistently celebratory of the *princeps*; Josephus, too, is regularly treated as court historian.[97] Efforts like these were perhaps not solicited by the regime – they may even have embarrassed a *princeps* like Tiberius – but they owed their existence to a strong, pervasive sense of what kinds of thing you should and should not say about the past and the present.[98] What this mechanism might look like is suggested in a passage of Tacitus' *Histories* that we will look at more closely in chapter 3:

> Scriptores temporum, qui potiente rerum Flavia domo monimenta belli huiusce composuerunt, curam pacis et amorem rei publicae, corruptas in adulationem causas, tradidere: nobis super insitam levitatem et prodito Galba vilem mox fidem aemulatione etiam invidiaque, ne ab aliis apud Vitellium anteirentur, pervertisse ipsum Vitellium videntur. (*Hist*. 2.101.1)

> Historians of that era, who composed their accounts of this war when the House of the Flavii was in power, have handed down [that the reasons of Caecina and Bassus for betraying Vitellius were] solicitude for peace, and patriotism, motivations invented dishonestly for the purpose of flattery. My view is that, apart from their being naturally fickle, and fidelity's having become cheap after Galba was betrayed, it was in an envy-driven struggle not to let anyone else surpass them in Vitellius' good graces that they brought Vitellius himself down.

The prominent agents in the sentence are the writers themselves, who "composed their accounts" and "invented" and "handed down" false motivations, but the overarching condition that shapes what they write is the ascendancy of the House of the Flavii, and the result is historical narratives that make the Flavian partisans look better than they really were.

Before he wrote a word, then, a historian already faced a version of the past that had been stamped with the regime's authority. This presented a literary

[96] In Syme (1939) discussion of Livy's history falls in the chapter entitled "The Organization of Opinion." Syme (1959) is less harsh.

[97] On the question of Velleius and panegyric, see Woodman (1977: 28–56).

[98] From that point of view, Velleius can be imagined as trying to conduct a relationship of reciprocity with the *princeps*, who had bestowed honors on him (2.121.3, 2.124.4) and was now to receive well-earned praise in return (see Roller [2001: 182]). Whether Tiberius desired this narrative or not, Velleius is quite able to construct an account that looks like what you would expect a *princeps* would want people to say about him.

and social challenge. Ancient writers of history were acutely concerned with positioning themselves in relation to their predecessors, whose failings they often pointed to as justification of their own, new accounts.[99] In order to seem more than a waste of papyrus, a new account needed to differ from previous ones, and that difference had to reside at least to a degree in substance: as Marincola has shown, an improvement in style alone was not enough.[100] We can look at the historian's relationship to the regime's version as a species of his relationship to his other authorities, with intriguing nuances. Repeating the official version would have similar consequences for the historian to repeating, say, the *A fine Aufidii Bassi* of the elder Pliny: the credit for the book – that is, its authorship – would belong to the producer of the original text, not to its transcriber. The author of an official history was not the person who happened to have operated the pen, but the *princeps* who determined the content, just as the "author" of most Roman books was not the slave who took dictation but the master who dictated.[101] Equally helpful to keep in mind are other literary ancillaries, for example the figure of the *lector* at recitations, a reader paid to recite the writings of those not blessed with good voices.[102] Here, the composition belonged expressly to its author, and the *lector* was a mere medium.[103] Or, again, Nero's use of Seneca as a speechwriter: Tacitus depicts old men listening to the new *princeps*' eulogy of Claudius and observing that he "was the first of those who had held supreme power in Rome to have required another's eloquence" (*primum ex iis, qui rerum potiti essent, Neronem alienae facundiae eguisse*, *Ann*. 13.3.2).[104]

This was of course a possible route to failure whenever a historian was dealing with already published narrative treatments of the period that he himself was treating. When his predecessor was a sitting *princeps*, however, the stakes were higher, and the anxieties more acute. A historian who simply repeated the narratives of others was unoriginal and negligible, perhaps, but if you could win the credit for composition without having to do much composing of your own, that was surely preferable to receiving comparable credit for a significant original effort.[105] This may have been an appealing

[99] Marincola (1997: 217–57). [100] Marincola (1997: 116–17).

[101] On the public amanuensis at Rome, see Teitler (1985); I know of no full resource on the slave as secretary in the private sphere.

[102] On this, see Pliny's concern at *Ep*. 9.34 and also Suet. *Cl*. 41.2. For *lectores*, see Plin. *Ep*. 9.17.3, Suet. *Aug*. 78.2, and the article in *Der Neue Pauly* s.v. "*lector*."

[103] See Suet. *Cl*. 41.2, *recitavit* ***per lectorem*** [sc. *Claudius*].

[104] See O'Gorman (2000: 162): "The Tacitean Nero . . . is an emperor who quotes rather than speaks." Tacitus does allow that Nero's poetry showed rudiments of learning (*Ann*. 13.3.3), but plainly does not mean this to mitigate things.

[105] Polybius (9.2.1–2) is informative on the disgrace of plagiarism and of repeating work that others have already done. What he says, however, applies to mythic material and foundation and colonization

route for the lazy or uninspired, but it offered no advantages beyond ease. It was an entirely different situation with the *princeps*, who had at his disposal an array of rewards and punishments that seemed to beckon to or to menace the historian.[106] Whether or not *principes* bothered with what historians wrote or reacted to historians in any way, their power meant rewards and punishments were always *possible*, and this very possibility wholly informed Roman thinking about the writing of history under the Principate.[107] Trajan may well have been that benevolent, liberal *princeps* described in the contemporary chorus of praise, but the nature of his power was basically independent of his personality and of his personal patterns of conduct, for it was the power always present, and ready to be enacted, in the position within society occupied by *anyone* who was *princeps*.[108]

Writing a history that appeared to have had its contents determined by the *princeps*' power was useless for purposes of gaining literary prestige, although there might be other rewards. But playing the regime's stenographer was also socially degrading: whatever rewards you expected for the service could be offset by the stigma you incurred when you put yourself at the service of a superior. In effect, to do so was to trade your own authority *cum* authorship for some other consideration, whether a reward or mere freedom from retribution: you could have your payoff or your dignity, but not both. This problem was directly related to the constitutive role of public speech in the construction of elite identity: under the Republic, *oratio* was "the means by which the ideal citizen enact[ed] and confirm[ed] his status or *dignitas* within the socio-political hierarchy of the state. For the Roman nobleman, the opportunity to use such language in such a manner and thereby gain access to high honors is the essence of *libertas*."[109] In the Principate, exercise of free expression (that is, *libertas* in one of its senses)

stories; a little later, the "historiography of events" (*pragmatikos tropos*) seems always to be justified since prior generations were, obviously, unable to narrate events subsequent to themselves (§4). Cf. Plin. *Ep*. 5.8.12.

[106] See Giua (1985: 15): "Ora che lo scrittore non è più attore sulla scena della *res publica*, il suo ruolo nel gioco politico si limita ad una relazione personale con chi ha il potere; ed è sempre un rapporto di subordinazione, perché il principe può fare e negare benefici, favorire o ostacolare la carriera di chiunque."

[107] So Velleius Paterculus is quite ready to declare that he and his brother had received benefits from Tiberius (2.121.3, 124.4); as a result, his history becomes an act of remuneration. Cf. the story about Pompey and Theophanes of Mytilene reported at V. Max. 8.14.3.

[108] The remarks that Tacitus crafts for Galba at *Hist*. 1.15–16 on what it means to be the *princeps* illuminate this problem. Having spent his life as a senator among senators, and been suddenly translated to the supreme position in state and society, Galba is keenly aware of the immediate difference in the way others respond to him: he retains the personality he has always had, but has become a different social person thanks to the power inherent in his structural position at the top of the pyramid (*Hist*. 1.15.4). His eventual overthrow is, Tacitus implies, due above all to his failure to alter his own person to conform to that role into which he had been thrust (1.18.3).

[109] Dupont (1997: 44).

continued to serve as a measure of social value, and the exercise of *libertas* in historiography was either analogous to, or a kind of, exercise of *libertas* in speech.[110]

So, in order to produce a history eligible for literary or social prestige, an author would have to ensure that his book could be seen as nothing other than an exercise in *libertas*, an independent production of an autonomous social person. The *auctoritas* of the *princeps* carried such weight that a writer had to show his readers his book was independent; absent a convincing demonstration, he stood to lose authorship of his own book in the eyes of the reading public.

Authenticity and authorship

As we have seen in the case of the martyrs, authenticity implies autonomy: you say what you think and you write your own material *because* you are not subject to, or do not acknowledge, the power that would cause you to reproduce its account. It was hard to show that your work was authentic, though, because of the power of the *princeps* and his investment in the quality of his reputation; in fact, it was the difficulty of the endeavor that made success in it so valuable. For this and other reasons, there was an obsession under the Principate with the possibility of proving sincerity. As Bartsch's fundamental discussion has shown, Pliny's "Speech of Thanksgiving" strains against the essential problem of praise and blame under the Principate: when every conceivable favorable statement that could be made about a *princeps* has already been made, in flattery, of other *principes*, could any language be discovered that conveyed sincerity?[111]

A couple of episodes from *Annals* suggest the dynamics of the problem and illustrate Tacitus' interest in it. Take first an exchange reported for the first meeting of the Senate in Tiberius' principate. The sole item on the agenda was the question of honors for the deceased Augustus, but Valerius Messalla proposed, out of order, that the oath of loyalty to the *princeps* be renewed annually.

interrogatusque a Tiberio, num se mandante eam sententiam prompsisset, sponte dixisse respondit, neque in iis quae ad rem publicam pertinerent consilio nisi suo usurum, vel cum periculo offensionis . . . (*Ann.* 1.8.4)

[110] On *libertas* under the Principate, see above all Wirszubski (1968: 97–171) and Brunt (1988: 349–50). For freedom of speech at Rome as a specifically aristocratic concept, and as constitutive of elite status, see Raaflaub (2004: 54–7).

[111] Bartsch (1994: 148–87).

Tiberius asked him to agree that it was not at his own [i.e., Tiberius'] instigation that he had made this proposal. Not at all, said Messalla. He had spoken on his own initiative, and in matters affecting the state he would use no judgment but his own, even at the risk of giving offense.

This scene is a drama of authorship *qua* political voice. Tiberius' question is whether Messalla is the original *auctor* of his proposal, or merely the conduit for a proposal Tiberius himself has composed. Messalla gives the sole response a senator could give if he was unwilling to confess publicly his own lack of autonomy: "of course my work is original!" On the surface, then, he reaffirms his ability to author his own words and so reasserts his own dignity. As is usual, however, when Tacitus' Tiberius is interacting with the Senate, what happens on the surface is not all that is going on. For Messalla's insistence that he acted on his own initiative is also the response that has been "scripted" for him ahead of time. The one statement he can make without causing offense is that he always says what he thinks without worrying about causing offense, because, knowing Tiberius wishes to be seen as a *civilis princeps* (roughly, "*princeps* who behaves like a fellow citizen"), he can only say that considerations of what others (read: Tiberius) wanted to hear did not affect what he said. Both Messalla's extraordinary proposition and his vehement assertion of independence might be Tiberius' "texts," then. The first magnifies the *princeps* (that is, in the proposal itself) without requiring him to seek magnification, and it gives him the opportunity to underscore his own moderation by declining an unexampled honor proposed out of turn.[112] The purpose of the second text is then to establish Messallan authorship for the first. That second text is useful only because Tiberius knows that those present are already sufficiently schooled in the patterns of public discourse to suspect that he has staged the proposal, so they need further assurance that the whole matter was spontaneous after all. This is the point of the concluding sentence "that was the one fashion of adulation left" (*ea sola species adulandi supererat*, *Ann.* 1.8.4): since the effectiveness of simple adulation had been lessened by universal awareness that it was wholly inauthentic, only refusal to adulate (which is, Tacitus shows, itself a kind of second-order adulation) stands a chance of being taken as genuine. With just a little more cynicism, however, an audience equipped to suspect Tiberius of prompting this proposal is equally well equipped to suppose Messalla's indignant reply was no more his own than the original proposal. The response to this deeper suspicion would then be

[112] On *recusatio* and the advantages of seeming moderate, see Wallace-Hadrill (1982: 36–7) and Huttner (2004).

some additional statement from Messalla to the effect that Tiberius had not scripted the whole dialogue, which, in an infinite regression, would then itself be susceptible to similar suspicions that *that* answer, too, was of the *princeps*' devising.

This scene rehearses in brief the whole crisis of elite voice under the Principate. Even if you are speaking your mind, you cannot avoid the impression that you are not, that you are merely an instrument for transmitting texts produced by the regime: a *scriptor* or a *lector* but not an *auctor*. Additional measures are then required to persuade listeners or readers that the speech or book at hand is actually your own. The ideal way of doing this would have been to remove the *princeps*, and therefore any possibility of reward or punishment, from the potential audience. Authenticity could seem secure only when those listening in were sure that an author felt confident his words would never reach the *princeps*.[113]

A useful example is Germanicus' attempt, on the eve of the battle of Idistaviso, to find out what his soldiers really think of him:

igitur propinquo summae rei discrimine explorandos militum animos ratus, quonam id modo incorruptum foret, secum agitabat. (3) tribunos et centuriones laeta saepius quam comperta nuntiare, libertorum servilia ingenia, amicis inesse adulationem; si contio vocetur, illic quoque quae pauci incipiant reliquos adstrepere. penitus noscendas mentes, cum secreti et incustoditi inter militares cibos spem aut metum proferrent. (*Ann.* 2.12.2–3)

So, now that the test was at hand that would decide the whole enterprise, he decided he should scout the attitude of his men, and pondered how he might do it in such a way that the experiment would not be tainted. (3) Tribunes and centurions, he reasoned, tended to report what would be encouraging, rather than what was settled fact; freedmen were slavish by nature; friendships had in them an element of adulation; if he were to convene an assembly, there, too, anything a few voiced the rest would cry out as well. One had to get into their minds, when they were on their own, not watched over, and were revealing their hopes or their fears over their meals in the mess.

The prince here combines in himself both the function of the *princeps* whose position tends to elicit accounts that agree with or even replicate its own and that of the broader readership that wants to know whether a text originated with its author of record or was *really* "authored" by the regime.

[113] There are some variations on the idea of "*princeps*-as-reader" that fill out the picture. We need not restrict the model to situations in which the *princeps* directly encounters, with his own eyes or ears, writing that displeases him. Equally relevant would be other imaginable scenarios in which others, either long-term subalterns or temporary opportunists, characterized for the *princeps* or his close associates offensive writings that he or they had not read (see, e.g., *Ann.* 13.43.1), or in which others were *themselves* displeased with the contents of a work and brought to bear the repressive power of the regime on other pretexts.

The epistemological problem in the anecdote has two layers: Germanicus can neither learn what the common soldier thinks nor be sure, on the basis of what any intermediary says, what the *intermediary* thinks the common soldier thinks. The impediment is the prince's presence in the audience, which does not make it impossible for the men, the officers, the freedmen, or his own friends to tell him what they really think, but does make it impossible for him to discern whether they are doing so. Once they know he is listening, anything they say that aligns with what you would think he wants to hear may have been spoken only because his position of power has implicitly authored their words: maybe he would be hearing them, but maybe only an echo of himself.[114]

Germanicus' solution is disguise, which enables him to be present but to be rid of his social self – in other words, Caesar remains, but his physical presence ceases to project the social effects of "Caesar." Cloaking himself in an animal's pelt, he steals out of his quarters and eavesdrops on his men. The results of this reconnaissance are as good as a person in power could hope, and the men turn out to be saying among themselves exactly what they would have said if they had known of his presence:

adsistit tabernaculis fruiturque fama sui, cum hic nobilitatem ducis, decorem alius, plurimi patientiam comitatem, per seria per iocos eundem animum laudibus ferrent reddendamque gratiam in acie faterentur. (*Ann.* 2.13.1)

He stood at the tents and savored his own reputation, as one man praised their leader's nobility, another his good looks, a good number his endurance and agreeableness, his disposition that remained the same whether at work or at play. They said they would return the favor on the battlefield.

The notion that the *princeps* must be extracted from society in order for authenticity to be possible is underlined by the nature of the prince's disguise: he becomes not a Roman of another status but a total outsider.[115]

[114] But there is a strain of discourse that asserts that you *can* in fact tell the difference between true and false praise. Plutarch's handbook "How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend" (48E–74E) presupposes that you can, though by positing the need for a handbook it admits that the task may be beyond the amateur. Praise, says Pliny in the *gratiarum actio*, shows the strain when it is false (*Pan.* 72.6–7). When his aim is to show that Tiberius should have known better than to behave as he did, even Tacitus can insist: *nec occultum est, quando ex veritate, quando adumbrata laetitia facta imperatorum celebrentur* (*Ann.* 4.31.2).

[115] Outsider: Germanicus seems to be dressed in the garb of a German auxiliary (Koestermann [1963–8 ad loc.] and Goodyear [1972–81 ad loc.]). This story explores the fantasy entertained by all those who occupy positions of social dominance that what their subordinates say to their face *is* after all reliable, and that no secret treachery lurks behind a compliant façade. The sincerity of the soldiers' approval is even overdetermined by what happens when he is spying on the men: a German rides up to the walls of the camp and promises wives, land, and money to anyone who would defect and fight for Arminius, and naturally the Romans reject the offer out of hand (*Ann.* 2.13.2–3).

The sturdiness of the knowledge Germanicus obtains here is exceptional: the bizarre lengths to which he must go simply to find out if he is liked underscore that, without such measures, the question of authenticity and authorship in the presence of *principes* is usually far more vexed, more like that world to which Galba wearily introduces Piso Licinianus as he makes him associate of his rule:

> etiam <si> ego ac tu simplicissime inter nos hodie loquimur, ceteri libentius cum fortuna nostra quam nobiscum; nam suadere principi quod oporteat multi laboris, adsentatio erga quemcumque principem sine adfectu peragitur. (*Hist*. 1.15.4)
>
> Even if today you and I speak with each other with utmost directness and sincerity, everyone else would sooner speak with our station than with us: for attempting to convince a *princeps* of the proper course of action is a great effort, but flattering agreement can be done, with any *princeps*, without one's true feelings being involved.

Germanicus engineers a small world in which, because there is no *princeps*, any audience (including a disguised *princeps*) can feel sure that the soldiers are the authors of their own public pronouncements; Galba gestures to an even smaller world in which there are *only principes*, who can be certain of each other's sincerity because they enjoy equal station. In ordinary social interaction, this kind of certainty is simply not possible: the authenticity available under these special conditions is then artificial, in the sense that it cannot be created and verified "in the field" but only under these "laboratory" conditions in which there are either no *principes* or no non-*principes*.

Outside the laboratory other measures were needed. One obvious and sure way of broadcasting your independence was to say something the regime objected to outright: all doubts about whether you had been speaking to please the *princeps* could be dispelled when you were forced into exile, or to open your veins. As the autonomy of the martyrs' lives was certified by execution or enforced suicide, so too could a book gain significance if the regime's violence was directed against it or its author. "Talents who have been subjected to punishment see their authority increase, and foreign kings (or those who have exercised the same savagery as they) have effected nothing but disgrace for themselves and glory for the writers" (*punitis ingeniis gliscit auctoritas, neque aliud externi reges aut qui eadem saevitia usi sunt nisi dedecus sibi atque illis gloriam peperere*, *Ann*. 4.35.5). In this famous conclusion to his report of Cremutius Cordus' trial and suicide, Tacitus reprises a pattern of thought that we have already seen surface: just as Augustus thought he could enhance the regard in which Ateius Capito was held but ended by inadvertently increasing that of Antistius Labeo, so the

resistance of autocrats to writers' efforts to attract attention only increases public admiration of them and expands their audience.[116] Any book that, say, Domitian had burned was clearly not one he authorized, and, since he had bothered to burn it, it was also plainly important. Even so, because the burning of books came with sanctions for the author – indeed, book-burning might be seen as an attack as much against the writer as against the contents of the book, in that his "monument" was thereby defaced or effaced – one might wish to avoid it.[117]

The other side of this coin is that, so long as it is widely available, a history implies that it has not earned the regime's attention. Just as to have survived Domitian was an embarrassment after the sacrifices of Thrasea and Helvidius, not to have been consigned to the fires along with the history of Cremutius Cordus or the biographies composed by Rusticus and Senecio meant that a historical work stood in constant, implicit need of apologia for its own existence. The regime's toleration was hard to bear because it seemed to invite one of three imaginable, unappetizing explanations. The book might be thought to be in line with the regime's wishes, or to be innocuous and therefore negligible because of its own peculiar properties, or yet again to be innocuous and therefore negligible because writers of history were of no consequence and the regime could afford to ignore them. Just as Labeo derived his distinction from Augustus' special attention to his case, so a history was best disposed to garner prestige if it seemed likely to anger someone. So we might say that, in the famous Pollio ode (*Carm.* 2.1), Horace does that historian a great favor by highlighting the dangers to which Pollio has exposed himself in writing about the civil wars (1–8). It is for this reason, too, as I will propose in chapter 3, that in the preface of *Histories* Tacitus is more concerned with insidious *malignitas* ("malice") than with easily dismissed *adulatio* ("flattery"): while he does not have to worry about rival historians who seem obviously servile, a competitor who seemed to be exercising candor might be stiffer competition.

Now, if a historian could not point to evidence of the regime's hostility to himself and his work, it was the job of rhetoric, mere words unauthenticated by fire or sword, to persuade readers that the book at hand was just as surely independent, just as surely the exclusive product of its one and only author,

[116] Cf. the case of Fabricius Veiento, whose scurrilous books Nero ordered to be burned: *Ann.* 14.50.2, *libros exuri iussit, conquisitos lectitatosque, donec cum periculo parabantur: mox licentia habendi oblivionem attulit*. *Mox* evidently refers to his return from exile after the fall of Nero and his rise to influence under the Flavians (see Koestermann [1963–8 ad 14.50.1] and Syme [1958: 633]). In this instance we are probably supposed to be pleased with the diminished popularity: under the Flavians he would go on to achieve impressive political success, not by pleasant means.

[117] On book-burning in antiquity, see Forbes (1936), Cramer (1945), Pease (1946), and Speyer (1981).

as if it had come under attack from the *princeps*. This claim is breathtaking and, when you see it spelled out simply, even incredible.

At least two factors, though, could help make it less preposterous. First is readers' strong desire to believe that sincerity is possible even within relationships of power, or, put differently, their readiness to ignore the potential consequences of power for authenticity. Even if it knows and feels that everything that happens in the public sphere is informed by the relations of power that constituted the Principate, an elite readership could still be ready to be persuaded that *just this once* an author has been able to write without letting those relations of power affect his writing. A second factor, which is dependent on the first, is the rhetorical potency of any given book: an audience may be ready to be seduced into believing in a book's authenticity, but the book actually has to do the seducing. As we will see, Tacitus' work tries to do this by constructing him as an outsider to his society, aware of its fictions but not deceived by them, critical of the operations of power within it but not affected by them. From one perspective, this is not unusual for a historian. Marincola's chapter on the "'lonely' historian" is a treatment of historians' habit of asserting that they alone among writers have known how to write history properly, but his phrase could serve equally well to describe the stance of historians towards their societies.[118] One of the few pieces of biographical information Thucydides shares is that, as general, he had been blamed for failing to prevent the Spartans taking Amphipolis and that he had gone into exile, which he says had better positioned him to record the war accurately (5.26.5). Sallust weaves into the prefaces of his monographs remarks on his own disillusioned renunciation of political activity (*Cat.* 3.3–4.2; *Jug.* 4.3–4).[119] We do not know precisely when Asinius Pollio began writing, but it was clearly after he celebrated his Dalmatian triumph in 39 or 38 BCE and subsequently withdrew from politics.[120] In each case, the writer's alienation from prevailing structures of power in his home state is the precondition for his writing: Thucydides' history has been well served by his being unwelcome at Athens, Sallust's was written only because he could no longer stand the corruption of government, Asinius Pollio's work began after he removed himself from the contest of Octavian and Antony.[121]

[118] Marincola (1997: 217–57).

[119] Whether Sallust's "renunciation" was not really rather a justified ejection is irrelevant to our discussion. On his career, see Syme (1964: 29–42).

[120] On the date, see Bosworth (1972). On Pollio's writing and career, see André (1949), Zecchini (1982), J. Henderson (1998: 108–62), Morgan (2000), and Woodman (2003: 196–213).

[121] The examples could be multiplied: Herodotus, Polybius, Xenophon. Livy is, moreover, an outsider to the social grades that ordinarily write history (cf. *Praef.* 3).

But a couple of things set Tacitus apart in this regard. One, as we have seen, is the total absence of external markers of alienation. Unlike his illustrious predecessors, he had no convincing case to make for his own outsiderdom, unless it was to argue that, under the Principate, he and the rest of the political class were *all* in effect outsiders, in that the Imperial household had reserved for its own discretion the most important functions of state. That argument, while it might appeal to a readership that felt the Principate to be a humiliating affront to its own collective dignity, was nonetheless problematic in a culture that had a clear idea of what alienation from the regime looked like: it looked like brave words in the Senate, like offices denied, like biographies of Cato, like exile, like libations of life-blood to Jupiter the Liberator. The changed political circumstances between Sallust and Tacitus did not mean marks of alienation would have served the latter any less well than the former; in fact, the value he might have derived from them was much greater, given that to be inside society (i.e., *not* to be alienated from society) under the Principate was to stand in a constant and permanent state of indebtedness to the *princeps*, a situation fraught with peril for an audience's estimate of a text's independence.[122] The other, related feature that distinguishes Tacitus is the pervasiveness and intensity of the sense of alienation his work radiates. Sallust, whose monographs present a consistent stance of disapprobation of the events they relate, comes closest, but with Tacitus it is as if alienation is not merely a preexisting circumstance that has enabled him to begin writing but a state of being that at every turn in his text allows it to go as it does, and not otherwise: having no stake in the fictions by which political culture under the Principate goes on, he is free to show the "true" nature of power at work, no matter how unedifying the reality. We might indeed, as critics have traditionally done, attribute the intensity of this impression to the depth and strength of his personal feelings about the Principate as a constitutional form. Yet we could equally well argue that it is precisely because his alienation is not indicated by anything other than his writing that so great a burden falls on that writing: it has to perform alone the hard task of proving a degree of alienation that is otherwise quite imperceptible in the life he led. From this point of view we can think back to the inscription on Tacitus' funerary monument, which recorded the many occasions on which successive *principes* of successive dynasties had expressed their approval and favor by bestowing honors on him. His other monument, his work, clearly tells an altogether different story. Together, Tacitus' two careers, and the two monuments that are their

[122] On the *princeps* as gift-creditor, see Roller (2001: 173–93).

written product and summation, lay claim both to the honor to be had from full acceptance of the domination of the *principes* – the "wealth and honors" of *Ann*. 1.2.1 – and to the credit to be had from contemptuous rejection of it.

In the next chapter I pick up the discussion with Tacitus' first work, the point at which his historiographical career emerges as a new appendage to his biography, of negotiable relation to his life past and present. Central to understanding the function of this work and this career are the concerns we have just surveyed: what role does writing about the past play in Tacitus' engagement with other Romans, and what relationship does it bear to that version of reality generated by the regime?

CHAPTER 2

Agricola *and the crisis of representation*

On March 27, 19 BCE L. Cornelius Balbus proceeded through Rome in triumph, along a route packed with admiring denizens of the city, to the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, perched on the Capitoline Hill. His experience was no doubt gratifying, but the event was not, all things considered, so unusual: victorious generals had for centuries done the same thing, and his victory over the Garamantes was of no special moment by comparison.[1] It is for an entirely different reason that his triumph attracts the notice of scholars: it was the last celebrated by a man outside the family of the sitting *princeps*.[2] From the beginning, the Principate severely restricted opportunities for elite self-display, especially for public celebration of feats of conquest; removal of the possibility of a triumph is only the most familiar of the innovations that arrogated to the house of the *princeps* a monopoly on glory, and military glory in particular.[3]

[1] For Balbus, see *RE* Cornelius (70). On the triumph, see especially Versnel (1970), Weinstock (1971: 60–70), Scullard (1981: 213–18), Campbell (1984: 133–42), Künzl (1988), Rüpke (1990: 225–34), Beard (2003a), Beard (2003b), and Murphy (2004: 154–64).

[2] The event was also unique in that Balbus was not Roman by birth. On Augustus and the politics of the triumph see Hickson (1991). There was a lone *ovatio*, or "lesser triumph," for a man outside the Imperial family, that of A. Plautius in 47 CE. On the *ovatio*, see Versnel (1970: 166–8). Rather than being voted triumphs, victorious generals were often given a set of distinctions called the *ornamenta triumphalia*, for which see Boyce (1942), Eck (1984: 142–5), and Chaplin (2000: 184–92). On the regularity with which grants of *ornamenta* were accompanied by acclamations of the *princeps* as *imperator*, Eck (1999b: 127) observes drily: "Für das Selbstwertgefühl der Senatoren was es vermutlich nicht unwichtig, daß ihr jeweiliger Sieg dadurch als bedeutend anerkannt wurde, daß der Kaiser ihn als den seinen akzeptierte und dies in seiner Titulatur zum Ausdruck brachte."

[3] One might point also to how often *principes* and their relatives held the consulship, and to the *principes*' near-monopoly on building notable public structures. Balbus' theater in the Campus Martius is the last instance of a man outside the Imperial house constructing a public building in the city with spoils from a conquest. There is a synthesis of the limitations in Syme (1939: 404–5). Important too are Campbell (1984: 348–62), Eck (1984), and Roller (2001: 99–101). Rawson (1991: 587) thinks we should suspect that something similar happened to the practice of affixing spoils to the front of one's house. On the episode in 29 BCE involving M. Licinius Crassus' right to dedicate *spolia opima*, see chapter 1, note 92.

As a practical matter, *principes* needed preeminence: if another man had achieved greater renown, especially in an endeavor in which the *princeps* was supposed to excel, he inevitably came to seem a potential replacement for him.[4] So Seneca, so Thrasea, so Helvidius, and so Agricola.[5] The consequences of this need for a monopoly on glory are familiar. Beyond the standing, tacit limits on public commemoration of military achievement, individual *principes* might kill, banish, or undermine the success of particular generals or might exaggerate or even fabricate their own achievements: as we will see, these possibilities are a recurrent interest in *Agricola*.[6] The institutional limitations, and the dangers that success incurred, had tangible effects on the activities of imperial administrators: so Julius Frontinus, Agricola's predecessor as governor of Britain, was "a great man . . . to the degree that it was permitted" (*vir magnus quantum licebat Ag.* 17.2), so Agricola himself learns from the fate of Civica that his safest course is not to accept a proconsulship (42.1).[7]

Although in *Agricola* Tacitus is interested in this sort of violent deterrence, he contextualizes it within a broad crisis of representation marked by two tendencies: exaggeration or fabrication of the victories of men inside, and inadequate recognition of those of men outside, the ruling house. Under bad *principes*, at least, these tendencies cause representation no longer to offer reliable access to reality. *Agricola* presents itself, and Tacitus' future literary career, as a potential solution to that crisis, as a reconciliation of reality and representation. It does so above all by commemorating Agricola's achievement fittingly, but also by ensuring that Domitian, too, receives the sort of recognition *he* had earned. To do the former, it takes over the role of the triumph the tyrant would not award Agricola and of the funeral eulogy Tacitus was prevented from delivering for his father-in-law; to do the latter, it contributes to the "*damnatio memoriae*" to which Domitian was posthumously subjected.[8] By taking on the function of these modes of remembrance, the biography offers itself as the first step toward total

[4] Habinek (2000).

[5] For Seneca: *Ann.* 15.65. For Thrasea: Cossutianus Capito depicts Thrasea as building a rival court around himself (*Ann.* 16.22); cf. *Ann.* 13.49.3. For Helvidius: *Hist.* 4.8.3–4.

[6] For the centrality of this possibility to Tacitus' representation of the Principate, see Griffin (1995: 44–9).

[7] Domitian had Civica (C. Vettulenus Civica Cerialis) killed when he was serving as proconsul of Asia: Suet. *Dom.* 10.2.

[8] The term *damnatio memoriae* is not ancient, and Flower (2006) avoids the term altogether since it tends to "suggest a more formal and static way of behaving than was actually the case in ancient Rome" (xix). In this book I use the term for convenience and because it will be easy enough to avoid the problem that Flower points to, as I will almost always be referring to what was done to the *memoria* of Domitian.

reorganization of the perverse system of public representation that prevailed under Domitian: everything is, so far as is possible, to be placed back where it was, as though he had never been. In so doing, the work asks to be read as closely bound to its peculiar historical moment, but by its claim to large-scale correction of representation seems not just to mark but itself to enact the difference between Domitianic and post-Domitianic: that is, it is not merely a consequence of the new order produced by Nerva and Trajan, but in turn plays a role in creating the features of this order that distinguish it from the era of Domitian.

The discussion in this chapter falls into two parts, dealing respectively with the preface and the body of the work.

THE PREFACE

Truth, in the sense of "conformity of representation to reality," is at the work's beginning in crisis and, by its end, rescued. This is among the important insights of Hedrick.[9] *Agricola*, however, is interested not in the problems of representing all reality but mainly in the particular problems concerning the relationship between elite men and the empire. Nor is it concerned with what we would think of as pure representation, that is, impartial transcription of events into language, but rather what would seem to a Roman to be "pure" representation, that is, a rendering of events in language that recognizes the ethical value of those events and assigns praise and blame to historical actors according to their deserts.[10] In other words, while it is right to say the work is concerned with representation and therefore truth, in practice its concern is limited to a narrowly delimited segment of truth: it is, at base, interested – but intensely so – in whether elite men receive justly appreciative recognition for feats of conquest.

This *particular* branch of truth is in urgent need of Tacitus' attention because it is central to two basic institutional features of Roman society. In the first place, the distinction of the elite from the rest of Rome's population is predicated on correct portrayal of the various excellences of its members. If glory and marks of honor are denied to elite and non-elite alike, then what is left to make the elite the elite? Second, if truth cannot be maintained – that is, if credit cannot be assigned for military achievement – then the empire would cease to be a going concern, in that, in Tacitus' formulation,

[9] Hedrick (2000: 153–70).

[10] On praise and blame in historiography, see Avenarius (1956: 157–63), Woodman (1988: 40–4), and Marincola (1997: 212–16).

it is the expectation of receiving credit that prompts men to fight and toil for the empire.

In this section I want to demonstrate the depth and intricacy of the preface's concern with representation; in particular, I mean to bring out the links it makes between representation and social distinction, and to examine what sort of place it makes for *Agricola* in the history of representation.

"The deeds and ways of illustrious men"

Agricola opens with a capsule history of representation:

> Clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere, antiquitus usitatum, ne nostris quidem temporibus quamquam incuriosa suorum aetas omisit, quotiens magna aliqua ac nobilis virtus vicit ac supergressa est vitium parvis magnisque civitatibus commune, ignorantiam recti et invidiam. (*Ag.* 1.1)

> The practice of handing down to those who come after us the deeds and ways of illustrious men, common in times past, has also not been neglected even in our time (uninterested in its own though it is) whenever a great and noble excellence has bested and risen above that vice common to states great and small alike: ignorance of what is right, and envy.

The act imagined by the opening sentence, which is also the thematic act of the work, is representation: transmission of things with absolute, but temporally bounded, reality – *facta* and *mores* – by means of some medium to an audience or readership to whom the passing of time would otherwise have denied them. Tacitus' phrase underplays the representational character of the act. Rather than a verb that would evoke its symbolic and mediated nature, such as *conscribere*, "write up," he uses one that dismisses as irrelevant and therefore uninteresting all questions of mediation. *Tradere*, "hand down," suggests that posterity receives not discourse that points to past events and characters but rather those events and characters themselves, in the same way as a house or an heirloom, and not symbolic representations of these, are handed down from one generation to the next. The kind of representation imagined in "handing down to those who come after us the deeds and ways of illustrious men" is sufficiently faithful for the difference between it and reality to be negligible. My emphasis on the difference in valence between *tradere* and *conscribere* is not mere hair-splitting; it becomes important to our interpretation again as we near the close of the work, as we will see below.

From the beginning of *Agricola* representation is bound up with ethical considerations. Of interest to Tacitus and to us is not simply whatever

happened in the past, but what happened that involved men of social prominence and moral quality: *clarorum* ("illustrious") assumes positive notoriety, and *virorum* ("men") encapsulates a host of *virtutes*, or "virtues."[11] In fact, "ways of illustrious men" is close to meaning "virtues," and their "deeds" are nothing more than instances in which those virtues are realized and exemplified. The first sentence does not, however, aim to distinguish an appropriate from an inappropriate subject for writing about the past, but rather assumes conventional expectations: for a Roman, there is no such thing as a literary portrayal of the past that *appropriately* deals with the trivial or the ethically inert.[12] The mode in which good acts are best depicted is praise.[13] As is ordinary in Roman elite discourse, these ethical concerns are bound up with questions of social distinction: the link between *claritudo* ("illustriousness") and *virtus* is here treated as axiomatic.

"A practice common in times past"

The practice of representation is itself a tradition, and it has changed over time. It was both done "back in days of old" (*antiquitus*) and persists "in our era" (*nostris . . . temporibus*, *Ag*. 1.1). In those two eras, however, it is subject to quite different conditions.

sed apud priores ut agere digna memoratu pronum magisque in aperto erat, ita celeberrimus quisque ingenio ad prodendam virtutis memoriam sine gratia aut ambitione bonae tantum conscientiae pretio ducebatur. (3) ac plerique suam ipsi vitam narrare fiduciam potius morum quam adrogantiam arbitrati sunt, nec id Rutilio et Scauro citra fidem aut obtrectationi fuit: adeo virtutes iisdem temporibus optime aestimantur, quibus facillime gignuntur. (*Ag*. 1.2–3)

Yet, among those who came before us, precisely to the degree that it was easier and more in the clear to accomplish things worthy of commemoration, the most conspicuous talents also were drawn to give forth records of virtue not ambitiously nor to secure obligations, but by the lone reward of a satisfied conscience. (3) And very many in the past thought that telling their own life-story was testimony to

[11] See Leeman (1973: 200): "The moral aspect of the biography is indicated at once."

[12] This impression is only strengthened by instances of historians criticizing other historians for dealing with the trivial, or apologizing for introducing it into their works: both kinds of comment assume generic conventions about what does go into a history, which are guided largely by considerations of importance and of ethical quality. Cf. Cato's critique of what was recorded in the chronicle of the *pontifices* (*HRR* fr. 77) and Sempronius Asellio's dismissal of the annalists' method as "telling tales to children" (*HRR* fr. 1–2). For Tacitus, cf. *Ann*. 13.31.1 (discussed in chapter 4 below). Entertainment value, while clearly a *desiderandum* in historiography, is rarely allowed to stand alone for purposes of justifying the inclusion of certain material in your writing. On pleasure as an aim of historiography, see Fornara (1983: 120–34) and Woodman (1988: index s.v. "entertainment").

[13] Steinmetz (1971: 135) shows that in the preface *vitam alicuius narrare* effectively means *laudare*.

their character, and not self-aggrandizement: Rutilius and Scaurus neither fell short of credibility nor encountered criticism for doing so. So true is it that virtues are valued most highly in those very times in which they come into being with the greatest ease.

In the old days the system of representation obeyed a kind of Golden Age economics.[14] Like the crops of that mythical era, *virtutes* sprang forth unbidden from the earth ("it was easier and more in the clear to accomplish things worthy of commemoration," §2; "virtues. . . . come into being with the greatest ease" §3).[15] In other words, production occurred with almost no labor. Curiously, however, though it was easy to produce *virtutes* and though accordingly they were widely available, their price did not crash, but rather stayed as high as the *virtutes* were common: "so true is it that virtues are valued most highly in those very times" (§3). Supply-and-demand too thus follows the logic of the Golden Age. A consequence of that high value is that *virtutes*, though less remarkable because they are ubiquitous, were nonetheless commemorated quite often, as the iterative force of *usitatum* indicates (*OLD* s.v. *usitatus*). Like producing them, representing *virtutes*, too, is denied an economic character. Commemorators did their work *gratis*, gaining as their sole "wage" (*pretio*) the satisfaction of a clear conscience (§2). This "wage" corresponds to the inherent value of the *virtutes* commemorated: *conscientia* here is a sense of the intrinsic ethical appropriateness of such commemoration.[16] The non-economic nature of the Golden Age finds its extreme example in the case of autobiography. Since considerations of profit and loss are alien to the system, even those who would in the present be supposed to have the greatest stake in advertising their own *virtutes* did not mean their autobiographies as anything but correct reflections of their own good character: "many thought that telling their own life-story was testimony to their character, and not self-aggrandizement" (§3). Sharing the expectations of authors, readers too regarded autobiography as unproblematic: "Rutilius and Scaurus neither

[14] On the key point that there was a practical consciousness in the ancient world that constriction of supply meant higher prices, see Finley (1984: 178).

[15] Cf. e.g. Hes. *Op*. 109–20, Arat. 100–14, Ov. *Met*. 1.89–112, Virgil, *Ecl*. 4.4–45. On the Golden Age in Augustan culture, see Galinsky (1996: 90–121) and, in Roman culture more generally, Feeney (2007: 108–37).

[16] Hedrick (2000: 167–8) seems indirectly to connect *bona conscientia* to "the guilty sense that he was a participant in the murder and so has not only survived his friend and father-in-law, but a bit of himself as well" (169). I am uncertain whether the "murder" is Agricola's or that of the Domitianic victims, but at any rate I think the point here is that the desirability of commemoration is supposed to be utterly obvious and that, in the Golden Age, *anyone* would have commemorated great *virtutes*, not just those bound personally to the commemorands. On *conscientia* in Seneca, see Roller (2001: 82–8; 82n30 for *bona* or *mala conscientia* as "one's self-awareness as a good or bad moral agent").

fell short of credibility nor encountered criticism [for telling their own life-stories]" (§3). If that genre in which the incentives for misrepresentation were most obvious enjoyed this degree of simplicity, then, we are left to infer, all representation in the Golden Age was equally unproblematic, and, if that is so, then representation probably never deviated from reality.[17] It is in this era, and not the present one, that representation is properly called a "handing down of deeds and ways."

"In our time"

The economy of representation in the old days is wholly defined by its lack of those features that characterize it in the present.[18] In the sweat of their faces men now labor to show their *virtutes*. When *virtutes* do achieve commemoration, it is by victory against long odds: "whenever a great and noble excellence has bested and risen above that vice common to states great and small alike: ignorance of what is right, and envy" (*Ag.* 1.1). So, you can now labor but still fail to produce, fail to achieve something "worthy of commemoration" (§2) unless you labor very hard indeed. Though conspicuous excellence is now far more rare than it once was and is the product of greater effort as well, the value placed on it by the market is nonetheless lower, as is implied by the corresponding superlatives *optime . . . facillime* (§3). Here supply-and-demand has gone as haywire as in the old days, but in the opposite direction: *virtutes* are now at once rare *and* poorly valued. Because of the low esteem in which they are held, they rarely receive commemoration: rarity is implied by the expression "the practice has also not been neglected even in our time (uninterested in its own though it is)" (§1) and by the contrast with *usitatum*. Now, since *virtutes* are no longer worth much, commemorators must be remunerated with something that does have value, that is, with a real wage. This wage comes in the form of the *gratia* ("favor") and rewarded ambition that Tacitus excludes as factors in the Golden Age. The availability of this wage comes with two imaginable consequences: first, that commemoration of real virtues only occurs if there is "something in it" for writers; second, that if they think there is "something in it," they may invent or misrepresent "deeds and ways." While in

[17] Leeman (1973: 201): "this statement figures as a premise for an *a fortiori* conclusion – even autobiography, let alone biography." The feat of self-praise was tricky enough for Plutarch to compose a tract on how to do it, the "On Praising Oneself Short of Inspiring Envy" at *Moralia* 539–47. Cf. the very pertinent Cic. *Fam.* 5.12.8.

[18] Büchner (1962–79: IV.29–30) adds that the past is here constructed specifically as a contrast to the present. On the Golden Age as "often described through a series of omissions, as a life lacking all the defining characteristics of normal human life," see Feeney (2007: 115–16).

the past the absence of relations of reciprocity from representation permitted even those acts of representation now considered most invidious, their presence in the current age makes suspect even those that should be freest of suspicion. Accordingly, *Agricola* will come in for suspicion, even though its author has meant to praise someone else, not himself, and even though this someone else, being no longer alive, is unable to reciprocate his praise with any sort of reward beyond that of a clear conscience.[19] Accordingly, readers respond with hostility even when there are no grounds for suspicion: *venia opus fuit, quam non petissem incusaturus* ("there was need for asking a pardon which I would not have asked for were I going to reproach," 1.4). In the particular instance of this work, of course, these suspicions are to be taken as baseless, but they are more broadly justified, because, in Tacitus' depiction, *gratia* and *ambitio* are in fact involved in the economy of representation in the present age.

"So vicious the times, and hostile to virtues"

In the present, in fact, the value of virtues is so low that they evoke not admiration but positive hostility, as though they were vices.

> at nunc narraturo mihi vitam defuncti hominis venia opus fuit, quam non petissem incusaturus: tam saeva et infesta virtutibus tempora. (*Ag.* 1.4)

> But, as things are, when I was going to relate the life of a man who has already passed, there was need for asking a pardon which I would not have asked for were I going to reproach that life: so vicious the times, and hostile to virtues.

Were *Agricola* a vehicle for criticism, it would be in harmony with contemporary modes of representation and consequently readers would accept it without hesitation, but, because it means instead to praise, it is only by obtaining special exemption (*venia*) from conventional usage that it can be acceptable. It is not clear how we should take this sentence. One option is to refer it to Domitian's lifetime and imagine that Tacitus felt required to ask the regime's permission to praise Agricola; in that case, the "times hostile to virtues" would mean "the principate of Domitian."[20] The other is to take "there was need for asking a pardon" (*venia opus fuit*) and "I would not have asked" (*non petissem*) as referring to the preceding words of the preface, in which (on this analysis) Tacitus is begging his readers' pardon for writing praise in an age in which praise is invidious.[21] By indicating tense, a copulative verb would have let us decide between these interpretations, but we are

[19] See Leeman (1973: 201). [20] Ogilvie and Richmond (1967 ad loc.). [21] Heubner (1984 ad loc.).

not given one.[22] It is hard to see this as accidental in a preface that everywhere else breathes meticulous care. This ambiguity permits a link between the conditions of public discourse under Domitian and those that prevail in the present. It is less likely to insinuate that Trajan and Domitian are not so different after all, than to suggest the former tyranny's enduring effects on the public. Under Domitian the biography might have required pardon because he was "hostile to virtues" (*infensus virtutibus*, *Ag*. 41.1), but just now, at the work's opening, it might have required pardon because, despite the new *principes*, conditions of representation remain unchanged.[23] As we will see later in the preface (3.1), Tacitus is deeply invested in the notion that the development of literary discourse is lagging behind the opportunity presented by the accession of Nerva and Trajan.

In fact, we might well look at *Ag*. 2 and 3 as successive meditations on these alternative interpretations of *Ag*. 1.4, the first dealing with Domitian's hostility to virtues, and the second, somewhat more delicately, with the persistence of the crisis of representation into the principate of those who replaced him.[24]

"We would have lost even our memory itself, together with our voice"

After that powerful "so vicious the times, and hostile to virtues," we confront in *Ag*. 2 an image that leaves us no doubt whether that phrase could be applied to the rule of Domitian, if not to that of Nerva and Trajan:

[22] Ogilvie and Richmond (1967 ad loc.) dismiss the second interpretation in this way: "[it] seems at variance both with c. 1, 1 (*nostris quidem temporibus*) which implies that the writing of biographies did not require permission or indulgence from the present public and also with the optimistic tone of c. 3, 1 which recognizes that Nerva and Trajan have introduced a new era in which no apology is needed for freedom of speech and which is no longer hostile to merit." But *nostris temporibus* is defined against *antiquitus* (*Ag*. 1.1), and surely does not mean just "the principate of Nerva and Trajan"; it must include that of Domitian as well. Furthermore, the statement *clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere . . . ne nostris quidem temporibus quamquam incuriosa suorum aetas omisit* scarcely means that biography did not have to be excused, but rather that biography could be written despite the unwelcoming atmosphere. As for *Ag*. 3.1, it does of course herald a new era, but it insists with equal strength that the "hangover" from Domitian's principate continues to have severe effects on the body politic and on public discourse, including, presumably, the production and reception of biographies. To my mind, a better argument could be built around *saeva*, since elsewhere in the preface *saevitia* is Domitian's special characteristic (*saevitum Ag*. 2.1, *saevitia* 3.2). Of course, at *Ag*. 1.4 we do not yet know this will be so; and, at any rate, my point is precisely that the passage imagines the public still responding to *virtutes* as Domitian did, in which case it would not be surprising if a Domitianic quality were to be attributed to these post-Domitianic readers.

[23] Cf. Marchetta (2003: 216–17).

[24] Those strands then reconverge at the end of the preface (*Ag*. 3.3); see Leeman (1973: 205): "*prioris servitutis* carries all the heavy load of [Chapter] II, and *praesentium bonorum* points to the limited *libertas* and the general convalescence of [Chapter] III."

Legimus, cum Aruleno Rustico Paetus Thrasea, Herennio Senecioni Priscus Helvidius laudati essent, capitale fuisse, neque in ipsos modo auctores, sed in libros quoque eorum saevitum, delegato triumviris ministerio ut monumenta clarissimorum ingeniorum in comitio ac foro urerentur. (2) scilicet illo igne vocem populi Romani et libertatem senatus et conscientiam generis humani aboleri arbitrabantur, expulsis insuper sapientiae professoribus atque omni bona arte in exilium acta, ne quid usquam honestum occurreret. (3) dedimus profecto grande patientiae documentum; et sicut vetus aetas vidit quid ultimum in libertate esset, ita nos quid in servitute, adempto per inquisitiones etiam loquendi audiendique commercio. memoriam quoque ipsam cum voce perdidissemus, si tam in nostra potestate esset oblivisci quam tacere. (*Ag.* 2)

We read that it was a capital crime when Thrasea Paetus had been praised by Arulenus Rusticus and Helvidius Priscus by Herennius Senecio, and that ferocity had been turned loose not only on the writers themselves but also on their books, when the *tresviri* were assigned the task of burning in the Forum, in the very Comitium, the monuments of the most conspicuous of talents. (2) One can only suppose they thought that in those flames the voice of the people of Rome and the freedom of the Senate and the conscience of the whole human race were being wiped out, all the practitioners of philosophy being expelled as well, and every upright kind of practice driven into exile, so that nothing honorable could make an appearance anywhere. (3) We have indeed left a conspicuous example of passivity; and just as the former age saw how far liberty could go, so we have seen how far servitude can, in as much as even the traffic in speaking and hearing was taken away from us by the investigations. We would have lost even our memory itself, together with our voice, if it had been equally within our power to forget as to keep silent.

Domitian is at once everywhere and nowhere in this report. While his power and malice hang over it, he is nowhere acknowledged, unless in the subject of "they thought" (§2). In fact, Tacitus' avoidance of specifying agency in any of this borders on pathological: "it was a capital crime" (§1), "ferocity had been turned loose" (§1), "were assigned the task" (§1), "were being wiped out" (§2), "they thought" (§2), "expelled" (§2), "driven into exile" (§2), "was taken away" (§3). The only agents mentioned – the *tresviri capitales* – were mere functionaries performing a task on someone else's behalf (*delegato ministerio*, §1). Given these remarkable contortions, the question here is not simply "Why will Tacitus not refer to Domitian?" but rather "Why does Tacitus make a show of not referring to Domitian?"

A couple of considerations could be operative here. I have already argued that Tacitus expands the Domitianic tyranny into a wider cultural crisis capable of persisting beyond the tyrant's death, and we might say that conspicuously suppressing the figure of Domitian facilitates that task. More importantly, we should take into account the political context

within which *Agricola* falls. Suetonius describes the aftermath of Domitian's murder:

> senatus adeo laetatus est, ut repleta certatim curia non temperaret, quin mortuum contumeliosissimo atque acerbissimo adclamationum genere laceraret, scalas etiam inferri clipeosque et imagines eius coram detrahi et ibidem solo affligi iuberet, novissime eradendos ubique titulos abolendamque omnem memoriam decerneret. (*Dom.* 23.1)

> The Senate was so elated that, crowding into the Senate-house, they did not stick at rending the deceased with the bitterest and most insulting kind of outbursts, nor even at ordering ladders brought in and his shields and images dragged down before their eyes and dashed to the ground on the spot, nor in the end at decreeing that inscriptions honoring him should everywhere be scratched out and all memory of him erased.

This was Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*, the condemnation of his memory.[25] "Post-mortem disgrace contains two distinct tendencies . . . the urge to remember the villain so that his fate may be a warning to others and an equal or opposite tendency to forget him, to obliterate his name and career as if he had never existed."[26] Those inscriptions that had borne his name did not disappear from view; they remained, with a crater in the stone where the letters of his name were once engraved. Everyone knew what had once been written there, and that was vital, because the insult lay not so much in total forgetting but in defacing an ever-renewed and defenseless memory.

The recent *damnatio* has significant implications for the preface of *Agricola*. Affording Domitian's name a place of honor in your work would probably have been gauche, if it had very recently been removed from places of honor all over the city. The inappropriateness of admitting him to the preface becomes especially clear when we consider the place he had occupied in works by Martial (cf. 5.1, 8 *praef.*), Statius (*Theb.* 1.17–33 and *Silv.* 1.1 and *passim*), and Quintilian (*Inst.* 4 *praef.* 2).[27] Although the last Flavian is, after Trajan, the second most significant figure in the program of the younger Pliny's "Speech of Thanksgiving," and although his negative example is implied early in it (*Pan.* 2), his name does not appear until well on in that speech (11.1, together with that of every other previous *princeps* except Gaius) and it is used only once more thereafter (20.4). This is similar to how Tacitus handles the name in *Agricola*: while Domitian is referred to late in the preface with *principis* (*Ag.* 3.2), his name itself does not appear

[25] On the practice, see Vittinghoff (1936), Flower (1998), Hedrick (2000: 89–130), and Flower (2006). On the sanctions against Domitian's memory, see also Cass. Dio 68.1 and Flower (2006: 243–71).

[26] Flower (1998: 180). See also Hedrick (2000: 89–130).

[27] For a historical assessment of Domitian's relationship to *literati*, see Coleman (1986: 3095–115).

until *Ag.* 7.2 (and then only in passing), and then there is a flurry of mentions near the end (39.1, 40.2, 41.1, 41.4, 42.1 [twice], 42.3, 43.4, 44.5, 45.2). But I would suggest that there is more going on in Tacitus' case – and in Pliny's – than simple decorum. For when Tacitus does not simply avoid but calls attention to his own avoiding of Domitian's name, he would also seem to proclaim his work's participation in the spirit of *damnatio*. On this view, the preface of *Agricola* is yet another public space from which Domitian's name has been gouged. As we will see later in this chapter, this impression fits neatly with other senses in which we can say this biography takes part in the *damnatio*.

While *Ag.* 2 does not mention Domitian, then, it is all about him, and contains a nexus of arguments about representation under him. As Tacitus presents it, the *princeps* is upset by public commemoration of "deeds and ways of illustrious men" and "virtues": what bothers him is that Thrasea and Helvidius have been praised, that is, have had their lives narrated in such a way as accurately to reflect their value. His distress drives him to measures that reflect not just his perversity but also his basic confusion about how representation works. Attacking Arulenus and Herennius, while naturally objectionable, made some sense nonetheless: they had committed what could be construed as an offense against the *princeps* and were punished as a result. What is more puzzling (as is brought out by "not only . . . but also," §1) is that his violence extended to their books too. His folly, underscored by that mordant "one can only suppose," is to have thought that burning books in which "the voice of the people of Rome and the freedom of the Senate and the conscience of the whole human race" were *referred to* would actually remove these things from the world (§2). The expulsion of the philosophers and "every good practice" (*bona arte* [§2], "ethically admirable way of operating in the world," for our purposes means *virtute*) obeys a strange logic, too.[28] Domitian seems chiefly interested in making certain not that nothing good happen, but that nothing good happen *that can be perceived* ("so that nothing honorable could make an appearance anywhere" [§2] conjures an image of Domitian turning a corner and being suddenly presented, to his horror, with bravery or rectitude). He is indifferent to everything but what he encounters because he believes in the absolute reality of representation and so assumes that, when he cannot hear anyone talking about or see anyone practicing virtue, virtue has ceased to exist. Later, we learn of the corollary of this aversion: unlike Nero, who

[28] For the meaning of *artes bonae*, compare *Ag.* 4.2 to *Dial.* 28.6 with Mayer (2001 ad loc.) and to Sal. *Jug.* 63.3, which Guerrini (1977: 483n6) rightly identifies as an intertext. See also the discussion of *honestae artes* at Guerrini (1977: 487n13). Earl (1961: 12) argues that Sallust uses the phrase *bonae artes* where ordinary usage would have *virtutes*.

ordered crimes and left them to others to commit, he watched, obsessively (45.2). If we import to this late passage our explanation of his behavior in *Ag.* 2, we can see why he stays to watch: if he does not see the crimes committed, they were not really committed.

When Domitian reacted violently to Arulenus' and Herennius' depiction of *virtus*, the public response was to cease from acts of representation, that is, "to fall silent" (*tacere*, *Ag.* 2.3), not to engage in discourse ("traffic in speaking and hearing"). "To fall silent" here is not "to say nothing at all" but "not to say what you might otherwise have been expected to say in a given situation"; what is not spoken here is, above all, correct portrayal of good acts as good acts and of the *princeps*' bad acts as bad acts, that is, reproach of him as a tyrant. In other words, you might have said the words "everybody loves Domitian" or (as Tacitus has already told us at *Ag.* 1.4 with "were I going to reproach") "Agricola is a criminal," without breaking the silence.[29] So too *voce*, "voice," is not just "physical capacity to make articulate sound" but "ability to assert your view in matters of importance" (as it is just before, too, in "the voice of the people of Rome" [2.2]). Under Domitian, then, things as they really are, or events as they really occurred, simply cease to be represented and assigned their real value.

What lay beyond Domitian's grasp was memory. Rather than a set of words constructed after the fact to point to things with greater or lesser accuracy, memory is here the imprint of events left on the mind as they occur.[30] Because it is involuntary, its fidelity to reality is certain: the tyrant cannot alter memory because the recollectors themselves played no role in its acquisition and are helpless to change it or rid themselves of it.[31] It may or may not be articulated in voice, but it persists all the same, so long as the people on whom the events impressed themselves survive. Because of Domitian, it has been a long time since memory has been put into voice, or, in other words, since a satisfactory public act of representation has been made.

[29] See Murgia (1980: 102).

[30] For the objectivist ancient conception of memory, see Farrell (1997). Regarding our passage of *Agricola*, Marchetta (2003: 210–11) offers a number of further thoughts on the question "*memoria* of what?"

[31] On voice and memory, see Hedrick (2000: 121): "Memory, like reality, is imagined as independent of and prior to representation. The suppression of representation cannot touch it. Consequently it can work outside of representation to preserve truth even when it is forbidden – in silence." The idea here is not simply that memory *can* work but that there is no way to prevent it from working. I would thus differ from the observation of Haynes (2006: 153) that Tacitus' "crude, unpracticed voice" "is . . . a metaphor for the degeneration of memory after a period of enforced silence" and that "we are . . . supposed to believe that we are about to read . . . something poorly and painfully remembered, and therefore difficult to discuss." To the contrary, the salient characteristic of *memoria* here seems to me to be that it is indestructible, and pitilessly accurate. Marchetta (2003: 219) misleadingly treats *memoria* as "pensiero."

This silence has grave implications for social distinction. As we saw in chapter 1, using your voice in public was the mark of the elite male citizen. To stop speaking, then, means losing that status: it is here the particular question of speech ("the traffic in speaking and hearing was taken away") that supports Tacitus' contention that "we" had experienced the outer limits of servitude. The clause "we have seen how far servitude can go" reiterates and explains "we have indeed left a conspicuous example of passivity." *Patientia*, "passivity," is the characteristic quality of the slave, and "our" condition under Domitian is an "example useful for demonstrating what *patientia* is" because it depicts the condition of servitude unsullied by any misleading traits of freedom.[32] It is not odd that the vocabulary of servitude should appear here: the metaphor of servitude was one of a few basic models for talking about the relationship of *princeps* and elite.[33] It is of special relevance, however, since Tacitus has already focused our thinking about representation around the particular problem of upholding elite prestige: as we have seen, he proclaims a concern only with whether and under what conditions the "deeds and ways of illustrious men" are transmitted, and the purpose of the biographies that Arulenus and Herennius wrote was to ensure that Thrasea and Helvidius received the praise due to them. On this view, the "servitude" engendered by Domitian's attacks on representation meant not only that individual men of the elite were kept from asserting themselves verbally in public but also that the medium through which social distinction is enacted and preserved was shut down entirely.[34] If men of the elite cannot talk about and celebrate each other's "deeds and ways," then in a way they cease to be an elite, and the gulf between the highest (elite) and lowest (slave) becomes, rhetorically at least, negligible.[35]

[32] O'Gorman (2000: 177–8): "The history which Domitian's senators can perpetuate is a narrative of their own oppression." For "answerability with their bodies" as a fundamental distinction between slave and free in antiquity, see Finley (1980: 93–8). On *patientia servilis*, cf. *Ann*. 16.16.1 and see Kaster (2002: 138–9). Unlike Leeman (1973: 203), I do not feel any sense of Stoic *karteria* behind *patientia* here; Kaster (2002: 143) rightly remarks that in Tacitus the word "when it does not refer to physical endurance . . . denotes only servility, above all the servility of the political elite in the face of the *princeps*' power."

[33] Roller (2001: 213–87).

[34] The important discussion of Leeman (1973) emphasizes the centrality of moral concerns in the preface and has less interest in matters of social distinction: it is telling that, in the crucial sentence *Ag*. 42.4, he misremembers Tacitus' *magnos viros* as *bonos viros* (207), as does (apparently) Hedrick (2000: 154).

[35] The idea that the Principate has eroded distinction between Roman social categories is widespread in Tacitus' later work as well: the conversion of the *res publica* into a possession of the *domus* of the *princeps* exalts freed slaves over the freeborn elite (and sometimes over the *princeps*), the women of the Imperial household over the heads of other households (and sometimes over the *princeps*), the mob (in the form of the army) over their betters (and sometimes over the *princeps*), and all of the several ranks of society, from consular to ditchdigger, into a single *vulgus* governed by an elite of one.

"Now at last"

Memory, Tacitus has said, has survived Domitian. So have effects of his principate, as we discover in the succeeding paragraph.

Nunc demum redit animus; et quamquam primo statim beatissimi saeculi ortu Nerva Caesar res olim dissociabiles miscuerit, principatum ac libertatem, augeatque cotidie felicitatem temporum Nerva Traianus, nec spem modo ac votum securitas publica, sed ipsius voti fiduciam ac robur adsumpserit, natura tamen infirmitatis humanae tardiora sunt remedia quam mala; et ut corpora nostra lente augescunt, cito extinguuntur, sic ingenia studiaque oppresseris facilius quam revocaveris: subit quippe etiam ipsius inertiae dulcedo, et invisa primo desidia postremo amatur. (2) quid, si per quindecim annos, grande mortalis aevi spatium, multi fortuitis casibus, promptissimus quisque saevitia principis interciderunt, pauci et, ut <sic> dixerim, non modo aliorum sed etiam nostri superstites sumus, exemptis e media vita tot annis, quibus iuvenes ad senectutem, senes prope ad ipsos exactae aetatis terminos per silentium venimus? (3) non tamen pigebit vel incondita ac rudi voce memoriam prioris servitutis ac testimonium praesentium bonorum composuisse. hic interim liber honori Agricolae soceri mei destinatus, professione pietatis aut laudatus erit aut excusatus. (*Ag.* 3)

Now at last is courage returning; and though from the very beginning, at the rise of this exceedingly blessed new era, Nerva Caesar has combined two things long antithetical to each other, that is, principate and freedom, and though Nerva Trajan increases the happiness of our age every day, and the citizens' peace of mind has not only hopes and wishes but confidence in those wishes and strength, still, since human beings are naturally infirm, our cures are slower than our ills; and just as our bodies grow slowly and quickly are snuffed out, so you would find it easier to suppress literary talents and pursuits than to revive them – and on top of all that, there steals in the pleasure of inactivity itself, and the idleness at first so hated ends up being adored. (2) What, if over the course of fifteen years, a great space in a human life, many of us have been cut down by the vagaries of fortune – but the most prominent by the savagery of the *princeps* – and only a few of us remain, and (if I may so speak) are the survivors not only of others but even of our own selves, since so many years were taken right out of the middle of our lives, during which years the younger men among us have reached old age and the elderly have reached the very bounds of extreme old age, the whole time in silence? (3) Still, it won't be unpleasant with even a crude, unpracticed voice to put together a recollection of our former enslavement and an attestation to our present good fortune. In the meantime, this book, dedicated to the honor of my father-in-law, Agricola, will for its claim to fulfill duty meet either with praise or at least with pardon.

Together, the phrases "now at last" and "from the very beginning, at the rise of this exceedingly blessed new era" (§1) delimit a period during which Domitian has been gone but his effects have remained. The suggestion that some things have not changed from the former regime to the present would

strike a discordant note in the contemporary political situation, and you might not have gone down that path at all, were there not an important reason to do so. For if Tacitus means to frame *Agricola* and his subsequent literary career as a correction to the way in which representation took place under the tyrant, it is vital to show that the change of regimes has not solved the problem. The next best option is to assert that the problem remains but completely absolve the regime of responsibility for it.[36] Nerva has reconciled freedom and Principate, which means Romans are no longer treated like the slaves of the *princeps*.[37] Trajan has been adopted, which has calmed fears about whether the next *princeps* will treat them as slaves.[38] The fault, rather, lies in "ourselves." While the old regime stifled public acts of representation and silenced those who would otherwise have made them, the new one tries to call them back (*revocaveris*, §1), but they remain as Domitian made them.[39] The simile that likens the literary sphere of Roman society to a convalescent body does not pay off until Tacitus gives that convalescence a moral dimension, for "literary talents and pursuits" are then shown not merely to suffer from an infirmity but to have internalized the inverted system of values that is characteristic of Domitian's Rome: through inurement under him, they came wrongly to enjoy and cling to ("the pleasure of inactivity itself," "inertia . . . ends up being adored") the "inertia" (*desidia*) that at first they had rightly hated and resisted (§1).[40]

[36] The thoroughness with which Tacitus does absolve Nerva and Trajan undermines the contention of Soverini (1996: 25–6) that *tam saeva et infesta virtutibus tempora* cannot describe conditions under Nerva and Trajan: Tacitus' absolution means that the *saevitia* is anyone's fault but theirs.

[37] The insistence of Ogilvie and Richmond (1967 ad 3.1), who follow Wirszubski (1968), that *libertas* means only "the right of a senator to make his own contribution in the senate and in the service of the state" seems to me misguided. It will always also be able to mean, literally and metaphorically, "the condition of not being a slave": cf. Roller (2001: 256–8). On *libertas* in Tacitus, see Wirszubski (1968: 160–7), Jens (1956), Hammond (1963), Liebeschuetz (1966), Ducos (1977), Vielberg (1987: 150–68, with further bibliography 150–1), and Morford (1991).

[38] I can think of two explanations for "the strangely involved phrase" (Leeman 1973: 203) *augeatque cotidie felicitatem temporum Nerva Traianus, nec spem modo ac votum securitas publica, sed ipsius voti fiduciam ac robur adsumpserit* (*Ag*. 3.1). Already quite pleased with Nerva, Romans now have their contentment enhanced by not having to worry about whether they will be equally pleased with the next *princeps*, a concern all the more pressing given Nerva's advanced age. We might also hear here an echo of the concerns that caused Nerva to adopt Trajan: Romans knew Nerva was weak without a younger, martial successor, and they could be surer that the new regime would not be overthrown once he was adopted. (Cf. what Galba says to Piso Licinianus as he prepares to adopt him, at *Hist*. 1.16.3: *audita adoptione desinam videri senex, quod nunc mihi unum obicitur*.) These explanations are not mutually exclusive; if either or both are in play, it is clear why a little obscurity would be in order.

[39] The second-person singular verbs *oppresseris* and *revocaveris* (*Ag*. 3.1) express a general truth ("one may . . .") but may also be read as direct addresses to the poor *princeps* wondering why his newly freed subjects stubbornly refuse to speak up.

[40] On the sustained medical metaphor, see Leeman (1973: 203–4). It is essential to understand that *ingenia* and *studia* (*Ag*. 3.1) here are "authors" and "literary activity," as often, not, for example, "'men's spirits and their enthusiasm'" (Liebeschuetz 1966: 133).

Love of vices is the partner of hatred of virtues, so the "times hostile to virtues" (1.4) that prevailed under him abide in the persons of authors and readers.[41] Just as during the tyranny Romans stopped talking about virtues because of hostility backed by violence, so under Nerva and Trajan virtues remain in regard so low that no one is drawn to represent them, despite the friendliness of the regime to both virtues and representation. Or at least that was the case until now. "Now, at long last, courage is returning" (3.1).[42] The former "passivity" is, as we read, being replaced with vigor; and, if this is beginning to happen only just now, it is *Agricola* itself that serves as the first entry in the "traffic in speaking and listening" whose disappearance marked the depths of the passivity (2.3).[43] Whether or not the reading public is ready, Tacitus will break the silence and begin to talk about "the deeds and ways of illustrious men" (1.1).[44]

[41] For this reason I disagree with Soverini (1996: 27), who insists: "Nessun espresso accenno leggiamo, ivi o in altre parti del proemio, a una presunta valenza 'morale' delle conseguenze negative della tirannide, in vista di un'intrinseca corruzione da essa provocata nelle coscienze dei cittadini, così da renderli avversi alla virtù e alla sua celebrazione, corruzione che risulterebbe non ancora 'smaltita,' pur nell'atmosfera rinnovata e purificata dell' 'era felicissima.'" Yet *desidia* and *inertia* (*Ag.* 3.1) are nothing if not an "espresso accenno" of exactly the kind that Soverini describes. Furthermore, to say that the only effect of Domitian's hostility to which Tacitus refers is that which he had on literary activity and to suggest that Tacitus thus does not bring moral consequences into view (Soverini 1996: 27) is too narrow: here he is interested not in all literary activity but in literary activity as a means of representing *virtutes*, and he has established an intimate link between the vigor of literary activity and the esteem in which *virtutes* are held.

[42] The eagerness of Leeman (1973: 204) to show that *animus* here is best translated as "consciousness" causes him to treat his comparanda somewhat tendentiously. He points to passages in other writers where this does seem the best translation, but he refers also to a recurrence of the combination of *animus* and *redire* at *Ag.* 26.2, where he says it "indicat[es] the sleepy soldiers coming to their senses." Now, we are told, to be sure, that the Ninth legion had been sleepy the previous night when Britons surprised them, but we also learn that they were panicked (*Ag.* 26.1, ***inter somnum ac trepidationem*** *caesis vigilibus inrupere*). After a night's sleep and some good generalship from Agricola, things changed: 26.2, *ita ancipiti malo territi Britanni; et nonanis* ***rediit animus***, *ac securi pro salute de gloria certabant.* What comes back to the Ninth here is not their consciousness but their courage. That impression is fortified by the chiastic antithesis with *territi Britanni*, which implies that the Ninth now becomes the opposite of "terrified," and by the apparent reiteration of the idea in the next clause with *securi pro salute*. For what it is worth, then, the only other occurrence of *animus* and *redire* in *Agricola* is about the rallying of courage to act, not of the mental faculties. There is a similar use at Liv. 2.43.8. Sailor (2004: 153) – alas – translates with "our consciousness." In extensive remarks on the phrase (11–22), Marchetta (2004: 11–12) thinks that *animus* has a specifically intellectual cast and is the equivalent of *ingenia studiaque*, but he reaches this conclusion because he finds it intolerable that Tacitus should imply that there is any reason why it should take courage to speak under Nerva and Trajan (9–10, 14–15). I have suggested above, however, that Tacitus absolves the new *principes* of responsibility for the condition that leaves Romans hesitant to speak.

[43] For a historical assessment of the degree of continuity in Roman literature before and after 96 CE, see Coleman ([1990] 2000).

[44] In this regard Tacitus resembles Sallust, who presents his literary career as a direct consequence of everyone else's corruption and of his own dissent from those *mali mores* (*Cat.* 3.5). What is remarkable is that Tacitus, unlike Sallust, has not left the public sphere, and he dissents from contemporary culture in company with the regime. For the presence of Sallust in the biography, cf. Perrochat (1935),

By the time we arrive at *per silentium venimus*, "we have come [through those fifteen years] all in silence" (*Ag.* 3.2), the momentum of the argument seems bound for the breach of that silence: everything so far has revolved around the desirability of speech, the misery of its suppression, and the distressing endurance of silence into the current blessed age. The long period that begins with "what" and ends with "all in silence" (§2) replicates, with its very length, the extended suspension of breath of those fifteen years. We fully expect Tacitus now to release the pressure, and to assert forthrightly what was implied by the sentence "now at last is courage returning" (§1), that is, that *Agricola* itself will restore truth to representation.[45] And in fact, as we begin the next sentence, that seems to be what is happening: "still, it won't be unpleasant with even a crude, unpracticed voice (*voce*) to put together a recollection (*memoriam*) . . ." (§3). *Memoria*, we recall, had continued unabated under Domitian, but it had ceased to be given voice; here, the juxtaposition *voce memoriam* at first would seem to mean that our author is now reuniting what had been sundered, bringing back into public representation an unerring transcript of the past.[46] This reconciliation seems timely as well, since it would be consonant with the new political conditions, in which Nerva has reunited two other things "long antithetical to each other, that is, principate and freedom" (*Ag.* 3.1). Even the subject of this recollection sounds about right: *memoria* under Domitian tracked the ways in which the *princeps* treated Romans like slaves (*prioris servitutis* ["former servitude," 3.3] recalls *servitute* ["servitude," 2.3]), and simple narrative of that *memoria* might itself serve, through contrast, as "attestation to our present good fortune" (3.3). Only at "in the meantime, this book" (3.3) does it become apparent that the work in question is not this book after all, but something else, not yet written.

In this way, quite suddenly, *Agricola*'s sole explicit purpose becomes something for which we have been poorly prepared. Its scope appears to contract, from the epochal and societal to the domestic; its function is now to satisfy the demands of familial obligation, and the aim of voicing fifteen years of suppressed memory at least formally leaves our field of vision. One interpretation is that this move forms part of a pattern in which the biography makes simultaneous claims both to great and to limited consequentiality, and that this pattern makes sense within the context of

Martin (1969: 125–7), Guerrini (1977), Lausberg (1980), Petersmann (1991: 1794–800), and Sailor (2004: 161–3).

[45] Büchner (1962–79: IV.33) rightly notes that the preface allows us to forget for a while that we are reading a biography, not a history.

[46] See O'Gorman (2000: 178): "Memory here has been given a voice, to contrast with its consignment to silence in the preceding chapter." As the sentence continues, though, it is implied, against our expectations, that memory is *not* after all being given a voice yet.

a career-opening work, in that it leaves the book ready to deal with either success or failure.[47] If the work meets with approval, it can inaugurate Tacitus' literary career; if with rejection, it is protected from too harsh critique by its claim to be only an act of filial respect, or an exercise in imitating Sallust. It is possible to imagine another purpose for this shift as well. Recourse to this defensive maneuver itself dramatizes the problem with which, as Tacitus has already lamented, a biographer is faced "in our times" (*Ag*. 1.1). In the Golden Age, it was accepted practice that the "deeds and ways" (1.1) of an illustrious man should receive praise in a public forum, and if the readership of the biography should approve (*laudatus . . . erit*, "will meet with praise," 3.3) of Tacitus' reviving the practice in the form of this book, then that was well. But if the age hostile to virtues should still prevail in the hearts of readers, and they should reject the book, then the claims of familial duty would provide the "pardon" (*excusatus*, 3.3) that will allow the work to exist despite the harsh environment.[48] Observe that, rather impressively, Tacitus has managed over the course of the preface to associate those readers who like his work not just with himself but with Nerva and Trajan (who have provided the new atmosphere, and the clarion call to speech to which *Agricola* is a response) and with the Golden Age (whose rules *Agricola* alone in the current age obeys), and to align those who do not like the book with Domitian (who burned books that dwelt on the virtues of individual men) and with the corrupt Age of Iron that even Nerva and Trajan have not yet managed to dismantle.[49] The argument here has also confirmed what had already been a strong impression since the beginning of *Ag*. 2, that the book is to be classed with the biographies of Thrasea and Helvidius, since all have earned enmity arising from the same source.[50] In sum, then, you are either in step with the program of *Agricola*, or you are out of step with the new age, with the new regime, with virtue,

[47] Sailor (2004).

[48] See Leeman (1973: 206–7). An anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press observes that Tacitus "reworks some of this language in a fascinating way at *Histories* 2.60." Describing Vitellius' treatment of the surviving Othonians, Tacitus comes to Otho's brother: *Salvius Titianus Othonis frater nullum discrimen adiit, pietate et ignavia excusatus*. The claims of *pietas* allow for an exception to consequences that would otherwise follow inevitably.

[49] I do not mean here that Tacitus is addressing two real groups of people, but that he imagines two varieties of response that readers can have to his work, invests those varieties with certain associations, and implicitly asks any actual reader with which of those imaginary groups the reader feels aligned. The argument of Soverini (1996: 34) does not quite catch this distinction: "risulterebbe per lo meno contraddittorio che lo scrittore pensasse di ottenere indulgenza per il suo libro – o al limite presumere che esso potesse essere addirittura *laudatus* – da parte di lettori che egli giudicasse profondamente avversi alla *virtus*, proprio in grazia dell'esercizio da parte sua di una delle più significative tra le virtù stesse, quale appunto la *pietas*."

[50] Lausberg (1980: 424–5) argues that, by implicit associations between Agricola and the younger Cato, Tacitus seems to indicate that while he himself "steht in der Linie der Lobredner Cicero–Thrasea–Rusticus–Senecio, Agricola selbst führt die Linie Cato–Thrasea–Helvidius weiter . . ." (425). Cicero

with truth, with the martyrs, with the cause of freedom and elite dignity.[51] In this way, what appears to be a defensive maneuver becomes almost a strong-arm ploy for consent and concurrence.

Another potent feature of Tacitus' shaping his readership is his use of the first-person plural.[52] The preface is home to a striking succession of these: "our time" (*Ag.* 1.1); "we read" (2.1); "we have left," "we have seen," "we would have lost," "our power" (2.3); "our bodies" (3.1); "we are the survivors . . . of our own selves," "the younger men among us . . . and the elderly have reached" (3.2). "Our time" here in the first instance marks a difference between historical circumstances ("our time" as opposed to the former time); it may be the authorial "we" at "we read"; and it means "us human beings" at "our bodies."[53] In the other instances, though, "we" are "those who lived under Domitian" – "we" are defined by victimization at the hands of that *princeps* specifically in relation to our production of writing. In fact, in context, all the first-persons fit this last valence: in retrospect, the initial "our time" is part of a point about the conditions under which books operate in the current age, which includes the Domitianic era; "we read" refers to a communal experience of the present generation in its post-Domitianic form; and the quick snuffing out of "our bodies" brought in by way of simile can also be read as a grim reference to the actual snuffing out of books and bodies that had been carried out under the previous *princeps*.

This use of the first-person plural collapses all experiences of Domitian's rule to a single model: *everyone* who lived then was injured and oppressed. Some have seen in the biography a defense of Agricola's, and Tacitus', advancement under that regime; though others have denied that Tacitus had anything to apologize for, his emphasis on collective suffering and shame does seem to aim at shutting down division and anticipating criticism.[54] Yet he does not construct this community of the universally injured generation in order simply to fade into the crowd and dilute his culpability with that of others. Instead, he becomes that community's voice, the first to speak after the general silence. By means of *Agricola* – that is, by being first to use his voice when the call has gone out (*re**voc**averis, Ag.* 3.1) to speak – he

had written a work in praise of Cato (Cic. *Att.* 12.4; Tac. *Ann.* 4.34.4), as had Thrasea (Plu. *Cat. Mi.* 25.1, 37.1).

[51] Leeman (1973: 204) calls the preface "certainly not 'optimistic,' but not without hope." I would say that we are to understand the source of Tacitus' reservations not as the new era itself but rather as the presence of readers who might not like reading Tacitus.

[52] See here the astute remarks of Sinclair (1995: 53–62).

[53] Murgia (1980: 101–2) rightly argues against the authorial "we."

[54] See Shotter (1991: 3268), though he concedes (3267) that Tacitus himself may have felt some embarrassment at least over 88 CE, in which he both held a praetorship and was a *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*.

brings "us" from the Domitianic circumstances in which we still live into the new era over which Nerva and Trajan preside. So, rather than being persuaded by the last sentence of *Ag.* 3 that *Agricola* is not after all part of the reconciliation of voice and memory, we see all the more clearly that it does wish to be read as part of a struggle, of historical dimensions, to reconstitute a society in which "illustrious men" can be celebrated, and that it is in fact waging that war before our eyes, against the "envy and ignorance of right" that resist virtue (1.1).

Before reading this preface, we might have wondered how precisely a biography of Agricola could be part of the creation of the new era. He had not done badly under Domitian, not badly at all, unless we are persuaded that Domitian had him killed. If he was forced to ask to be excused from a proconsulship, as Tacitus maintains, that was, even so, a notably gentle species of persecution when compared with what Arulenus and Herennius had suffered.[55] By the preface's end, however, Agricola has become the exemplary victim of a broad crisis, and his posthumous repute the contested ground in a struggle over whether Romans will keep acting like subjects of Domitian or follow the lead of Nerva, Trajan, and Tacitus.

Tacitus' alignment with the new regime is itself problematic, and the preface manages that relationship carefully, as it must. As he sets out the blessings that Nerva and Trajan have bestowed on Romans, he implicitly declares his own debt to them; we then have to expect that he will try to reciprocate the benefit in some fashion. That reciprocity might come in the form of an "attestation to our present good fortune" (*Ag.* 3.3), a literary work that depicts, with praise, the history and present state of Rome under Nerva and Trajan, something akin in spirit to Pliny's "Speech of Thanksgiving." But from a literary standpoint, a work like that would be disastrous: it would be mired helplessly in the praise-economy of "our times" (*Ag.* 1.1) in which writers are driven by ambition and aim to oblige others to them, so it would not amount to a restoration of correct representation but rather perpetuation of representation as it has been. Furthermore, the historiographical career that *Agricola* projects for Tacitus could not suitably begin with an expression of indebtedness, since, as we will explore further in the next chapter, the norms of historiography demand that a historian stand outside relationships of reciprocity. The obligatory nature of these professions is perhaps best shown by Seneca's mockery of them at the opening of the *Apocolocyntosis* (1.1–2). If an advantage of writing history was that it

[55] Scholars have skirmished over whether Agricola was or was not intimidated into recusing himself from pursuit of a proconsulship: see, for example, von Fritz (1957), J. K. Evans (1976), and Benario (1979). What is lost in the controversy is that, even if he was, there were much worse fates.

could fashion for the author the impression of personal autonomy, writing an "attestation to our present good fortune" (*Ag*. 3.3) meant giving up on creating that kind of impression. Tacitus avoids this outcome in part by deferring to the next work the praises of Trajan, but in part Agricola himself helps to buttress his biographer's autonomy: his role as dedicatee (3.3) interposes him between the writer and the *princeps* to whom the work might otherwise have been dedicated.[56] Considerations of private obligation then excuse the work, exempt it from the ordinary rules of writing in the present age, when favor and ambition reign. By establishing the exceptional character of both the present book and his own future career, Tacitus can claim the restoration of representation as his own achievement, and not a mere epiphenomenon of the new regime. Though he acknowledges that the new regime is incomparably better than the old, and has bestowed countless blessings on all of "us," in important ways we are to see him as writing *in spite of* contemporary conditions. On all sides, it is exemption – from Domitian's hostility, from Romans who still hate virtues as the tyrant had, from the implicit claims laid by the regime's beneficence, from the economics of the Age of Iron – that defines Tacitus' first work and his incipient career. It is not enough that Domitian had been disposed of, nor even that the new *principes* had been enhancing the security and felicity of their fellow citizens. In *Agricola* the defining feature of the former regime and the common trait in all its crimes is its perversion of representation, and, in the preface, that era does not properly end until its central characteristic is abolished. In other words, the Domitianic era does not come to a close until Tacitus begins to write.

FAMA RERUM

In this section we turn to the ways in which the rest of *Agricola* depicts the Domitianic crisis of representation and offers itself as a solution to that crisis. My discussion falls into four parts. In the first, we look at problems of glory in Agricola's youth and early career. *Gloria*, if we avail ourselves of Cicero's definition "widespread favorable public discussion of someone," is the only correct way of representing significant imperial achievement; so, when Tacitus makes the problem of glory central to his father-in-law's career, he is also necessarily introducing the question of representation.[57]

[56] "Deferring": Sailor (2004: 152–3).

[57] *Frequens de aliquo fama cum laude* (Cic. *Inv*. 2.166), cited by Lendon (1997: 273). On the nature of repute in Roman culture, cf. e.g. Knoche (1934), Philipp (1955), Drexler (1962), Lendon (1997), and Habinek (2000).

The second part examines the cooperation of Tacitus and Agricola in conquering and representing Britain. Establishing the interdependence of conquest and writing makes representation not an ancillary to the endurance of empire, but an integral part of it. Third, we examine the ways in which Agricola's imperial successes during his governorship of Britain are shown being represented in the biography, first by Agricola himself as governor, then by Domitian on Agricola's return. In this part we will see that, while the governor is able to uphold correct representation and right use of language within his province, Domitian presides over a perverse system of representation at Rome and abuses the system of signs through which glory is supposed to be generated. In the fourth section we return to the intervention that this biography itself makes on behalf of Agricola's good repute, and to that intervention's broader implications within the work's political context.

Desire and the perpetuation of empire

Agricola's youth and early career depict as indispensable to right functioning of empire both desire for glory and its fair distribution. In Tacitus' depiction of his subject's desire for glory and of his correct participation in the economy of glory we are given a global picture of the centrality of representation to the system of imperial expansion, pacification, and administration. In order to show the economy of glory operating as it should, though, Tacitus has to mark Britain off as a space apart from the rest of the empire, as a field for elite activity largely insulated from the influence of the *princeps* back at Rome and of the cultural and political system organized around *principes*.

Desire is central to Agricola's childhood.[58] Upon moving to Massilia for his studies, his desires were aroused, and he was about to act on them.

memoria teneo solitum ipsum narrare se prima in iuventa studium philosophiae acrius, ultra quam concessum Romano ac senatori, hausisse, ni prudentia matris incensum ac flagrantem animum coercuisset. scilicet sublime et erectum ingenium pulchritudinem ac speciem magnae excelsaeque gloriae vehementius quam caute adpetebat. mox mitigavit ratio et aetas, retinuitque, quod est difficillimum, ex sapientia modum. (*Ag*. 4.3)

I recall that he himself used to tell a story that at the outset of his youth he would have drunk more deeply of a zeal for philosophy than is acceptable for a Roman and a senator, had not his mother's caution brought his hot-burning passion to heel. It

[58] Guerrini (1977), who teases out from the account of Agricola's childhood allusions to Sallust's account of Catiline's youth, identifies as the principal difference between them Catiline's enslavement to, and Agricola's mastery over, desires. Cf. Sal. *Cat*. 5.4–6.

would seem that his upright and elevated nature had a more overpowering hunger for the lovely appearance of a great and exalted glory than was recommended by prudence. Soon reason and age had a softening effect, and he retained – a thing most difficult to do – moderation from philosophy.

The philosopher's life is here figured as an attractive body that ignites the adolescent's burning desire.[59] Timely maternal intervention converts a factual report ("he [had] drunk more deeply of a zeal for philosophy") into a contrafactual condition ("had not his mother's caution . . ."), and the boy is saved from the wrong path.[60] The desire that here found no suitable object was given one once he had embarked on his career:

Prima castrorum rudimenta in Britannia Suetonio Paulino, diligenti ac moderato duci, adprobavit, electus quem contubernio aestimaret . . . (3) quae cuncta [i.e., suppression of the Boudiccan revolt] etsi consiliis ductuque alterius agebantur, ac summa rerum et recuperatae provinciae gloria in ducem cessit, artem et usum et stimulos addidere iuveni, intravitque animum militaris gloriae cupido, ingrata temporibus quibus sinistra erga eminentes interpretatio nec minus periculum ex magna fama quam ex mala. (*Ag*. 5.1, 5.3)

In his first lesson in the ways of the camp, in Britain, he passed the test with Suetonius Paulinus, an industrious and temperate general: Agricola was singled out to be tested on the general's staff . . . (3) All of this [i.e., the suppression of the Boudiccan revolt], though it was effected by the plans and leadership of another, and the command and glory of winning back the province fell to the general, still gave the young man skill and practice and an urge, and a desire for a soldier's glory entered his heart – not a welcome ambition in times in which observers respond with suspicion to men who stand above the rest and there is no less danger to be had in a great than in a bad reputation.

Agricola's first experience in the camp left him, as had Massilia, with an "urge" and "a desire for . . . glory" (§3). This glory, however, is of the sort won by promoting the limits of the empire.[61] Though not at first glance arresting, this episode is crucial. It supplies both the aetiology and the persistent motivation for his career: the reappearance of the phrase "a soldier's glory" (*militarem gloriam*) at what is to be the end of that career (39.2) makes desire for that glory seem to have characterized all the intervening years as well. Furthermore, the episode gives a full and coherent explanation of how Rome's empire works: young men, bursting with desire, learn from examples of military achievement rewarded with glory to seek

[59] R. Evans (2003: 264) also sees here "sexual implications in the precise regulation of the young mind."

[60] In the Latin, you are not sure whether Agricola said he *had* or he *would have* drunk more deeply of philosophy until you reach the "had not his mother" clause.

[61] On the limitation in the early Principate of the concept of *gloria* to "influential philosophers, to military victors, and to the princeps," see Habinek (2000: 270). On the glory of imperial expansion, see Harris (1979: 17–34), Brunt (1990: 291–3), and Mattern (1999: 162–71).

that glory for themselves. In his first turn in Britain he is no more than an observer, but his observation of Paulinus matters, because it shows that by advancing empire he could gain the sort of glory that might sate his desire. If we extrapolate this experience to the whole population of young elite men, we can imagine empire as an inexhaustibly self-renewing process of expansion: each new achievement rewarded with glory inspires emulators who press on ardently to more achievements, which in turn inspire more emulators.[62]

As *Ag*. 5.3 continues, however, we encounter a force that threatens that process: "not a welcome ambition in times in which observers respond with suspicion to men who stood above the rest and there was no less danger to be had in a great than in a bad reputation." Though we had perhaps supposed Agricola had finally discovered an appropriate enthusiam, we quickly learn that it too presents problems, though of a different sort. "The times" here means the political atmosphere under Nero: though here they are just *tempora*, "times," in the next chapter (6.3) they are the *sub Nerone tempora*, "the times under Nero." As Bastomsky puts it, here "the harsh world of the Principate intrudes" into Agricola's provincial life, and into our narrative.[63] The *princeps*' place in Agricola's early career is emblematic of the threat that *principes* pose to proper functioning of empire in the biography. Young men's desire for recognition drives empire, and if they learn that military achievement meets not only with glory but also with the regime's hostility, their efforts to satisfy their desire may well follow some other path.

Ogilvie and Richmond plausibly sense the fate of Domitius Corbulo behind "not a welcome ambition" (*Ag*. 5.3).[64] It is a stretch, though, to bring up political conditions at Rome as a potential obstacle to Agricola's career in its early stages: the young tribune will not have loomed quite so large in Nero's field of vision as did the considerable Corbulo. The effect is rather to portend Agricola's fate, to link his youthful "desire for a soldier's glory" (5.3) to Domitian's eventual hostility to him for usurping "soldier's glory" (39.2). This narrative might have gone quite differently: the problem of the jealous *princeps* does not fit here, and in fact does not really explain any event in the work before Agricola's final return to Rome, in *Ag*. 40.[65] By introducing it at this point, Tacitus refuses to separate the issues of

[62] On what we could call the "chain" of exemplarity, best and handiest is Roller (2004: 3–6). Cf. Sal. *Cat*. 7.3–7, with Guerrini (1977: 499n51).

[63] Bastomsky (1982: 53).

[64] Ogilvie and Richmond (1967 ad loc.). Domitius Corbulo: *RE* Domitius (50, *Suppl*. 3). On Tacitus' depiction of him, see Ash (2006).

[65] If indeed it explains anything there, either: it is not at all clear that Agricola ever experienced any hostility whatever from Domitian.

military glory from the regime's stake in limiting it, impressing upon us that everything that happened after Agricola's first experience in the camp was merely the unfolding of the consequences of the moment when he first conceived his desire. It is especially urgent that we encounter a "proto-Domitian" to serve this purpose so early in the narrative because, as we will see, Tacitus mainly excludes *principes* from his depiction of how things work in the provinces.

Agricola's first opportunity to win his own "soldier's glory" does not come till much later in his career, but again in Britain, as legionary legate (*Ag*. 7.3). His term here equips us with an exemplary pattern for the proper circulation of glory and shows how that circulation serves the end of conquest and smooth administration.

The first governor under whom Agricola serves, Vettius Bolanus, is not energetic (*Ag*. 8.1), but the arrival of the next, Petilius Cerialis, allows him to display his "virtues" (§2). While under Bolanus Agricola had been tempted to act, he might have been tempted under Cerialis to say something about his actions, in order to kindle some sparks of glory for himself. He is immune to the temptation: "nor did he ever for his own reputation's sake exult over his accomplishments; being, as he was, a subordinate, he credited success to its author, his general" (*nec Agricola umquam in suam famam gestis exultavit; ad auctorem ac ducem ut minister fortunam referebat*, §3). Earlier, during his quaestorship in Asia, when his proconsul had tried to entice him into collusion and corruption, he instead exercised a proper relationship to the exploitation of the financial resources of the province (6.2). Glory, like Asia's cash, is a product of empire and, like that cash, is not properly available for general exploitation, but rather has its appropriate repository in the person of the highest provincial authority. In the same way, as legate, Agricola redirects praise that comes in his direction toward Cerialis instead, but the very fact that he does not lay claim to glory gives him a share in it: "in this manner, by the exercise of excellence in deference and of modesty in pronouncements, he kept away from resentment, but not from glory" (*ita virtute in obsequendo, verecundia in praedicando extra invidiam nec extra gloriam erat*, 8.3).

The pithy turn of phrase is nice, but it is not just restraint that wins Agricola glory. In Asia he had declined his proconsul's offer of a "mutual cover-up of malfeasance" (*mutuam dissimulationem mali*, *Ag*. 6.2) in regard to the province's wealth. In Britain, by contrast, Agricola and Cerialis do appear to collude, but by enriching each other's reputations, not purses: Agricola praises Cerialis (by redirecting all credit to his superior [*fortunam referebat*, 8.3]) and Cerialis praises Agricola (by sharing with him his own

glory [*gloriam communicabat*, 8.2]). Thus Agricola both directs glory to and receives it from Cerialis. Yet Tacitus avoids identifying this as an exchange: the transfers of glory occur in separate sentences and would appear to be unrelated acts, each man giving the other glory not in expectation of return, but rather simply because the other man's deeds merited the glory he was given. So, while the outcome of the two transmissions of glory – that is, that each man receives the glory he deserves – is unintended, it is anything but fortuitous: it is the healthy byproduct of the system of empire as correctly executed by two men who know their business.[66]

Justified praise is nothing to be ashamed of, but it matters a great deal where the praise comes from. The preface imagines a bygone era in which autobiography did not inevitably incur suspicion and envy. If you wrote a biography of a great man, you praised him – indeed, simply to commemorate his achievements, without adornment, was to praise him.[67] A great man's autobiography, then, necessarily contained self-praise – if it did not, it would be false, and bad biography. But that era in which Rutilius Rufus and Aemilius Scaurus had written their own lives and "did not fall short of credibility or encounter criticism" (*Ag.* 1.3) is now only a memory. In the present, resentment reliably follows self-praise, however true that praise might be; Agricola's inadvertent exchange with Cerialis escapes that resentment ("he kept away from resentment [*invidiam*], but not from glory," 8.3); by analogy, we may also infer that the glory he gives Cerialis is free of the resentment that boasting attracts. By authoring each other's praises, Agricola and Cerialis find a happy relation between men that at once is enabled by and enables empire.[68]

In Agricola's term as legionary legate, then, we see in action the mechanics of that glory he seeks. This glory is a correct depiction of military success and, as such, depends on attaining that success. It comes, moreover, with an approved mode of circulation that makes it an attainable, and therefore useful, aspiration for others in the administration beyond the Imperial legate. Later, during the narrative of his governorship, we see articulated more clearly the wrong way of doing things: "Agricola never greedily snagged the credit for what had been done by others: everybody, centurion or prefect, had in him an uncompromised witness to his deeds" (*nec Agricola umquam per alios gesta avidus intercepit: seu centurio seu praefectus incorruptum facti testem habebat*, *Ag.* 22.4). This arrangement is desirable not simply because

[66] On reciprocity of honor, see Lendon (1997: 63–9); on honor in the army, see Lendon (1997: 237–66).
[67] See *Ag.* 2.1: *cum Aruleno Rustico Paetus Thrasea, Herennio Senecioni Priscus Helvidius laudati essent* . . .
[68] Aubrion (1985: 421) implies that Cerialis wrongly pilfered glory from Agricola; I would argue rather that this is an example of correct circulation of credit.

it is fair, but rather because equity ensures that, when calculating whether or not to undertake "risk and toil" (*labor et periculum*, 18.5), all actors can rely on receiving glory if they succeed in their endeavor. The ideal function of the governor, the apex in the provincial hierarchy, is to a degree paradoxical: on one hand, credit must not remain only with his name but percolate back down to his subordinates; on the other, it is his example alone that determines the character of the economy of glory during his administration, and his decision whether to intercept glory due to others or to pass it on to them that controls how the rest of that economy works.

In Britain this economy is a closed system, in that the prestige of the *princeps* never comes into view. If an "exchange" of glory between Cerialis and Agricola was both possible and correct, we might have expected to hear of a similar exchange higher up the chain of command, between Vespasian and Cerialis, who, as Imperial legate, was his deputy. The omission is striking, especially since Tacitus has alerted us to the problematic of "a soldier's glory" only a few paragraphs before. In fact, I would say that this is precisely the point: portraying the province as hermetic enables us to see how the economy of glory works when it is not thrown out of balance by the presence of a *princeps*.

Elsewhere in *Agricola* too Britain is marked as a special space. Schwarte shows that Tacitus depicts the activity of its governors almost entirely without reference to *principes*, and that the governors indeed take on the appearance of independent leaders.[69] The capsule history of the conquest of the island (*Ag*. 13–17) is, from Julius Caesar through Claudius (13), articulated by individual *principes*; after Claudius makes Britain a province, the narrative's structure shifts (14–17). Time is now marked not by Imperial reigns but the tenures of the consular governors, a shift advertised at the opening of *Ag*. 14 ("the first consular governor installed was Aulus Plautius," *Consularium primus Aulus Plautius praepositus*). With one exception (17.2), we hear no more of *principes* in this "pre-history" to Agricola's governorship.

In the list of governors Britain is a patrimony handed from one generation to the next, managed with varying success by each heir, but with little apparent involvement of *principes*. Although every reader knows, of course, that the island is an Imperial province, the point is that in this presentation it *looks* as if it is not. Schwarte argues that Tacitus here creates

[69] Schwarte (1979: 162–3): " . . . werden auch Titus und Vespasian in Zusammenhang mit Agricolas Tätigkeit in Britannien nicht erwähnt, und überhaupt fehlt in den 29 Kapiteln, die mit der Ernennung Agricolas zum Statthalter einsetzen und über die Darstellung der Geschichte der Provinz hinweg bis zur Schilderung der Schlacht am mons Graupius reichen, für Agricola selbst wie für seine Vorgänger jede Andeutung der Abhängigkeit eines Statthalters vom Kaiser" (162).

the tendentious impression that the governors work under essentially the same norms and conditions that informed Republican provincial administration.[70] This technique entertains a fantasy that *principes* can be written out of the machinery of empire, that, for the purposes of conquest and administration, the authority back in Rome – *princeps* or Senate – has nothing to do with advances and successes. Thus, in the roll of governors, the only effect a *princeps* is even indirectly reported to have had is disruptive: Agricola's predecessor Frontinus was, Tacitus writes, "a great man – to the degree that it was permitted" (*vir magnus quantum licebat*, *Ag*. 17.2). The passing observation conjures up Nero's relationship to Agricola's early career (5.3). There, the *princeps*, while he menaced the very foundations of empire, nonetheless did so as an intruder into a realm he had little to do with: Agricola has been made away from the city and Nero's other haunts, and he conceived his desire for glory without ever, so far as we know, having seen Rome. Within the biography the empire works autonomously and without presupposition of movement from center (the *urbs*) to periphery (frontier); Nero's influence is external and disruptive. It is implied here, then, that a *princeps* might in theory be written out of the equation of empire, even if in practice he writes himself in.

When Agricola arrives in Britain, he is not so much Vespasian's latest vicegerent as the heir of a proud elite tradition reaching back to the principate of Claudius. Tacitus' narrative of his governorship sustains that impression. Not one piece of information suggests, even tangentially, that Domitian issued an order, requested a report, made a decision, or contacted Agricola in any other way. We do hear a little about Agricola's reports to Rome, at the very beginning of the narrative of his governorship (*Ag*. 18.6), and then again after that narrative is over (39.1).[71] At no point do we see him concerning himself with how his actions would be received in Rome, although at *Ag*. 18.6 we in fact see him ignoring at his own peril the consequences of great fame.

As Clarke has shown, it is symbolically significant that Britain is an island.[72] Its separation from the Continent expresses in physical form its independence from the structure of power on the Continent. This symbolic function is at work in the report of Agricola's leaving his command to return to Rome. Tacitus explains that Domitian feared Agricola because

[70] Schwarte (1979). Consequently, Tacitus' depiction of the governors as independent is not very useful evidence for saying how independent they actually were: cf. Mattern (1999: 11).

[71] The two references are the reports that he did not attach laurel to the letter in which he reported his storming of Anglesey (*Ag*. 18.6) and that his letters had not been boastful (39.1).

[72] Clarke (2001).

of his successes, but refused to act because "he was yet in possession of Britain" (*Ag.* 39.3). Domitian consequently has honors voted to him (40.1) and Tacitus then reports:

> credidere plerique libertum ex secretioribus ministeriis missum ad Agricolam codicillos, quibus ei Syria dabatur, tulisse cum eo praecepto ut, si in Britannia foret, traderentur; eumque libertum in ipso freto Oceani obvium Agricolae, ne appellato quidem eo ad Domitianum remeasse, sive verum istud, sive ex ingenio principis fictum ac compositum est. (*Ag.* 40.2)

> Very many people were of the belief that a freedman, one of Domitian's special agents, was sent out to Agricola with papers giving him Syria and with instructions to deliver them should Agricola still be in Britain when he found him. This freedman, the story goes, encountered him at the very strait of Ocean [i.e., the Channel] and without a word went back to Domitian, and this is either true or was fabricated in accordance with Domitian's character.

Now, the nature of a province does mean Agricola is different when he is in it from when he has left: once outside the province, he no longer commands its legions. Even so, the importance of the Channel crossing is exaggerated here. When he left, formal command had already passed to his successor (40.3); on the other hand, his informal influence with the men had not expired simply because he had crossed to Gaul, and he might still have turned around and made a bid for empire, especially after this affront from the freedman.[73] Rather, the story makes the difference between sides of the Channel almost magical: it seems to mark two wholly different kinds of relationship between governor and *princeps*. As we will see below, once Agricola has returned from Britain, the tenor of his conduct shifts dramatically.[74]

Tacitus' marking Britain off does, to be sure, enable him to depict his father-in-law with greater dignity than frequent reference to the *princeps*' supervision would permit, which alone is probably enough to recommend the strategy. More importantly, though, it lets Tacitus show a system of glory operating with full freedom from the distorting pull of Rome's center of gravity.

[73] Cf. the advice given to Piso to return to Syria after Germanicus' death: *Ann.* 2.76.1, *Adfluebant centuriones monebantque prompta illi legionum studia: repeteret provinciam non iure ablatam et vacuam*.

[74] Tacitus reprises some of these themes in his treatment of Britain in *Annals*. After Suetonius Paulinus has suppressed the revolt of Boudicca, Nero sends his freedman Polyclitus to Britain in response to some letters from the procurator (*Ann.* 14.39.1–2). Polyclitus brings in his train the skewed social hierarchy of the Principate, symbolized by the informal outranking of a consular by a former slave. Bringing that hierarchy across the Channel then upsets the order of things in Britain, where the men who, in the natives' eyes, were on top now stand puzzlingly beneath a mere risible slave. On the Boudicca episode, see Roberts (1988).

Conquest and representation

With *Ag.* 9 draws to a close the narrative of Agricola's career before the governorship of Britain; with *Ag.* 10 begins the ethnography of the island, which itself initiates the build-up to the narrative of the governorship. At the margin between these sections Tacitus enters the story, as the betrothed, then husband, of Agricola's daughter:

> consul egregiae tum spei filiam iuveni mihi despondit ac post consulatum collocavit, et statim Britanniae praepositus est, adiecto pontificatus sacerdotio. (9.6)
>
> During his consulship he pledged to me his daughter – she was a girl of exceptional promise, I only a young man – and gave her to me in marriage after he left office, and straightaway he was placed in charge of Britain and invested with a pontificate as well.

It is only fitting that we learn of this first binding link between Agricola and his son-in-law here because, as we will see, an important subtext of the ethnographical and historical digressions is the collaboration of the men in conquering Britain and writing *Agricola*. Agricola's daughter is only one of several bonds that unite them; as by this point we have guessed, and as becomes clearer at the end of the work, the biography itself reunites the two men whom death has separated. In juxtaposing the reports of this marriage and of the appointment to Britain, Tacitus hints at another point of contact: subjugating Britain, making it into a province, is the shared task of father-in-law and son-in-law. In this section we look first at the ways in which the projects of the pair are portrayed as complementary and inseparable; then, at their relationship to the figure of Julius Caesar, who both invaded and represented Britain; finally, we turn to ways in which the work urges restoration of Agricola's achievement by encouraging the reconquest of his now lost gains.

The opening of the ethnographical section links the activities of general and writer:

> Britanniae situm populosque multis scriptoribus memoratos non in comparationem curae ingeniive referam, sed quia tum primum perdomita est. ita quae priores nondum comperta eloquentia percoluere rerum fide tradentur . . . (3) formam totius Britanniae Livius veterum, Fabius Rusticus recentium eloquentissimi auctores oblongae scapulae vel bipenni adsimulavere. (*Ag.* 10.1, 10.3)
>
> The layout and peoples of Britain have been recorded by many writers; I shall give an account of these not by way of competition with their care or talent, but because it was subjugated completely for the first time at this point. In this way, what things earlier writers polished with eloquence because they were not confirmed will be

handed down with the security of fact . . . In describing the shape of the island in its entirety Livy, most eloquent of older authorities, and Fabius Rusticus, most eloquent of recent ones, have likened it to an oblong shoulder blade or to an axe.

The passage divides ethnographies of Britain into two categories, to one of which belong all previous accounts, and to the other of which we may assign the impending section of *Agricola*. Conquest makes the difference. Knowledge is the companion of control: what is "subjugated completely" (*perdomita*) is also "known" (*cognita*, §1), and what is not yet subjugated does not count as fully known. What, then, were the many earlier writers doing, if they were without the benefit of Agricola's act of domination and cognition? If facts confirmed by conquest allow Tacitus' treatment not to be an entry in a competition of style and rhetoric, then by implication his predecessors' accounts were just such entries, old material repackaged in slick new form.[75] Usually "most eloquent author" (§3) is a compliment, but here eloquence is a poor substitute for "control of the material." At the same time as Livy and Fabius Rusticus earn praise for their literary skill, they are dismissed for the serious business of describing Britain, for while their axes and shoulder blades were fine as far as they went, Agricola and Tacitus have the whole island under control:

transgressis inmensum et enorme spatium procurrentium extremo iam litore terrarum velut in cuneum tenuatur. (4) hanc oram novissimi maris tunc primum Romana classis circumvecta insulam esse Britanniam adfirmavit, ac simul incognitas ad id tempus insulas, quas Orcadas vocant, invenit domuitque. (10.3–4)

To those who have crossed the huge, boundless space of the lands that continue along from [what one thought was already] the absolute end of the shore, it tapers off into a wedge-like shape. Then for the first time a Roman fleet sailed round this shore of the most distant sea and determined Britain was an island, and at the same time it discovered and conquered islands unknown up till that time, which are called the Orcades.

Transgressis, "to those who have crossed" (§3), here does more than indicate spatial perspective: it divides all participants in the history of the conquest of Britain into two groups, one of which comprises those who have *not* yet crossed, who wrongly conjectured that the unseen parts of Britain would continue on to form the apex of a triangle, and the other of which includes those men who have actually crossed the huge, boundless space and have seen how the northern tip of the island keeps retreating (for this is the path

[75] See Nesselhauf (1986: 214). Aubrion (1985: 18) describes Tacitus here as "parlant un peu ironiquement des écrivains qui ont déformé la réalité, ou du moins laissé libre cours à leur imagination." It is then hard to see this passage also as an instance of Tacitus' humility (Aubrion 1985: 65).

of Agricola's campaign in his last year).[76] The shape Tacitus is describing here is no longer just a triangle or a modified triangle; it is what the island looks like when it has been conquered from one end to the other.[77]

Agricola's own predecessors in the governorship are the equivalents of Tacitus' Livy and Fabius Rusticus. Though some had been timid or lax, there were also figures who inspired emulation, especially the vigorous and accomplished Cerialis and the equally impressive Frontinus (*Ag*. 17.2). Even as we read the catalogue of predecessors in *Ag*. 17, though, we already know none was as good as Agricola will be: it was during his tenure, and not before, that Britain was fully comprehended, and the catalogue itself appears in a work whose reason for being is that he went further and did more than anyone else.[78] His predecessors' achievements may have been steps in the right direction, just as "shoulder blade" or "axe" may have been a step toward putting Britain in the correct shape, but they do not really signify because they were not total.[79] His task is both to assume the legacy of these men and to put them in the shade: he will make his version of the island definitive, since it is the only one guaranteed by autopsy and control. Tacitus, too, has a relationship to Agricola's predecessors: it is their failure to be Agricola that allows Tacitus' account to exist, and at the same time as he reports what Agricola discovered and conquered, he also gives an implicit reckoning of all that the predecessors did not find out and did not bring into subjection. As we will recall, only "those who have crossed" (10.3) know what Britain looks like.

The distinction between those who have crossed and those who have not parallels that between well-informed and merely eloquent ethnographers. This parallel forms part of Tacitus' pervasive insistence on the entwinement of writing with empire. Assimilating their functions and showing their interrelationship is not a clever but empty trope; it is rather a gambit to separate his work from literary efforts that are "mere talk" and to associate

[76] On the history of the conquest of Britain, a large subject, see, e.g., Ogilvie and Richmond (1967), A. A. R. Henderson (1985), Hanson (1987), Hanson (1991, with much bibliography), D. Braund (1996).

[77] See Rutledge (2000: 79): "Tacitus presents his readers with a map – abstract though it may be – as a first step in the final narrative conquest of the island . . . Agricola's act of giving a complete shape to Britain and Tacitus' description of its form constitute acts of domination." On the function of Agricola's circumnavigation, see Clarke (2001: 110–11).

[78] Nesselhauf (1986: 215) sees Agricola's predecessors as a foil for Agricola, and McGing (1982: 17–19) identifies an extended implicit comparison between Agricola and his predecessors, to the former's advantage. Some suspect Tacitus of underestimating the contributions of Agricola's predecessors: cf. e.g. Aubrion (1985: 418) and Hanson (1991: 1754–6). Contra Martin (1998). On the centrality of Agricola's conquest of Britain to the program of *Agricola*, see Nesselhauf (1986: 213–24).

[79] Ostorius Scapula ("Mr. Bony Shoulderblade") no doubt had supposed that Britain was shaped like a *scapula*.

Agricola more closely with the realm of activity, to push the work beyond the category of "words" and to make it part, at least, of a deed.

The links between Agricola's and Tacitus' kinds of work are also evoked in the list of Julio-Claudian *principes* (*Ag*. 13) who advanced the conquest of Britain, most obviously in the reference to Claudius, who by sending across his legions became the "author of so great a work" (*auctor tanti operis*, §3). By imagining invasion and pacification as a literary endeavor, the phrase also manages to make literature an inseparable part of empire: the end of the project of conquest, it is hinted, is not the successful invasion, but the ratification of the conquest by its enshrinement in a literary work.

Julius Caesar's role in this list is significant too. We are told only that he "may be seen as having pointed [Britain] out to posterity, rather than as having handed it down to them" (*potest videri ostendisse posteris, non tradidisse*, *Ag*. 13.1); on this view, his contribution to the conquest is quite small, well below Claudius', to say nothing of Agricola's. Yet Caesar is much more to the program of *Agricola* than a failed predecessor of Agricola, for he is also an uncited predecessor of Tacitus' ethnographical work on Britain (Caes. *Gall*. 5.12–14), and Tacitus' version improves on his, implicitly. Just as Caesar did no more than indicate what others were actually to conquer rather than "pass it down to posterity" (***posteris*** . . . ***tradidisse***, *Ag*. 13.1), so he is to be ranked with those "earlier writers" who "polished things up with eloquence because they were not confirmed," not with Tacitus, who promises his new, confirmed information "will be handed down with the security of fact" (*rerum fide* ***tradentur***, 10.1). We find an additional suggestion that *Agricola* succeeds literarily where Caesar failed in the resonance between the handing-down in which Caesar did *not* succeed and that in which Tacitus does, both at the work's opening ("*passing down* the deeds and ways of famous men *to posterity*" [*clarorum virorum facta moresque* ***posteris tradere***, *Ag*. 1.1]) and at its conclusion ("Agricola, narrated and *passed down to posterity*, will be a survivor" [*Agricola* ***posteritati*** narratus et ***traditus*** *superstes erit*, 46.4]). In this sense, Caesar is a predecessor whom both Agricola and Tacitus best.

Their sharing a predecessor is further proof of the synergy of their projects, but it has more interesting implications as well. Janus-like, Caesar stands at the boundary between two historical eras and the two representational systems characteristic of them. On one hand, he is expressly the first *princeps*, the head of a list in which the only other items are the *principes* of the Julio-Claudian line (13).[80] In this sense, he belongs to the present age

[80] So too Suetonius, who begins with the life not of Augustus but of Julius Caesar.

of disjunction of reality and representation, of suppression of elite honor and magnification of that of the *princeps* – a conclusion made the more obvious by the inevitable appearance of the title *divus* ("the divine," 13.1), a superlative honor characteristic of the new scale of prestige under the Principate.[81] On the other, as both agent and writer, author of his own deeds and of his own praise in his *Commentaries*, he also partakes of the lost, lamented age in which men could write their own biographies because the relationship between reality and representation was without complication. What he could do by himself at the end of the Republic now requires the combined partial efforts of both Agricola and Tacitus, and these separated by years and, more importantly, a change of regime.

It is a basic premise of Tacitus' ethnography of Britain, and indeed of the whole biography, that Agricola had conquered the whole island.[82] By the time of publication, however, Agricola's gains had been lost.[83] If even his "total" conquest had left parts of Scotland untouched (a fact Tacitus hardly emphasizes), in 98 CE the island was for certain a potential object of conquest again: some Britons have been defeated, but "the others . . . remain as once the Gauls were" (*ceteri manent quales Galli fuerunt*, *Ag.* 11.4).[84] For this combination of reasons, the ethnography assumes a double function, as at once a final record of a completed task and a step in a work-in-progress. Its role is protreptic, but not simply so: it promotes the conquest of Britain simply by dramatizing its own obsession with conquering Britain.[85] To see what I mean, we need to pay attention to the pattern that the ethnographer's thoughts follow.

In *Ag.* 11 Tacitus attempts to pin down the origins of the island's inhabitants. We begin with the question of the deep past: it is unclear who first lived there and whether they were indigenous – we are, after all, talking about barbarians ("as tends to be the case among barbarians, it is not really known" [*ut inter barbaros, parum compertum*, 11.1]). Since these barbarians have nothing useful to say for themselves, you have to look at them in order to learn anything. Fortunately, they are covered in signs:

[81] It also associates *divus* Caesar (*Ag.* 13.1) even more closely with *divus* Augustus (§2) and *divus* Claudius (§3). On the big topic of Imperial cult, see Price (1984), Fishwick (1987–2002), Galinsky (1996: 312–31), Lendon (1997: 160–75), and Gradel (2004).

[82] Nesselhauf (1986: 213–24).

[83] *Hist.* 1.2.1, *perdomita Britannia et statim missa*. Agricola's last year in Britain was probably 84; in time for the war against the Suebi and the Sarmatians in 92–3 CE, and perhaps before that, Domitian extracted the Legio II Adiutrix from Britain, and the occupying army fell back from its northern positions. On the date, see Strobel (1989, with bibliography at 86n23).

[84] The British chieftain Calgacus assists in creating this impression, by claiming that his people live at the furthest point of Britain (*Ag.* 30.2–3).

[85] Rutledge (2000) argues cogently that *Agricola* portrays Britain as needing Roman form and order imposed on its shapelessness.

habitus corporum varii atque ex eo argumenta. namque rutilae Caledoniam habitantium comae, magni artus Germanicam originem adseverant; Silurum colorati vultus, torti plerumque crines et posita contra Hispania Hiberos veteres traiecisse easque sedes occupasse fidem faciunt; proximi Gallis et similes sunt, seu durante originis vi, seu procurrentibus in diversa terris positio caeli corporibus habitum dedit. (3) in universum tamen aestimanti Gallos vicinam insulam occupasse credibile est. eorum sacra deprehendas <ac> superstitionum persuasionem; sermo haud multum diversus, in deposcendis periculis eadem audacia et, ubi advenere, in detrectandis eadem formido. (4) plus tamen ferociae Britanni praeferunt, ut quos nondum longa pax emollierit. nam Gallos quoque in bellis floruisse accepimus; mox segnitia cum otio intravit, amissa virtute pariter ac libertate. quod Britannorum olim victis evenit: ceteri manent quales Galli fuerunt. (11.2–4)

Their physical characteristics are various, and thence comes evidence. For the red hair and the great limbs of those who live in Caledonia argue for a Germanic origin; the Silures' colored faces, their (usually) curled hair, and the proximity of Hispania suggest that Hiberi of long ago crossed over and took over these areas; those nearest the Gauls are also like the Gauls, whether the force of origin remains or whether, though the actual land masses go in opposite directions, the shared position under the sky lent their bodies their characteristics. (3) Yet if one looks at the big picture, it is believable that Gauls took over the island neighboring them. You can tell the rites and the kinds of superstition are the Gauls', the language is not so different, they have the same boldness in seeking out dangers and, when they have arrived at them, the same timidity in trying to back out of them. (4) The Britons, though, display greater ferocity, as long peace has not yet made them soft. For the tradition is that the Gauls too were once accomplished warriors; then lassitude came in hand in hand with leisured peace, and they lost their virtue as they lost their freedom. This has happened already in cases of British peoples that were subjected some time ago; the others remain as the Gauls once were.

You can see things about Britons they cannot themselves see, or at least cannot themselves understand. One reason for this is that, as Tacitus has said, as barbarians they have no proper history of themselves.[86] Another reason is that they are not in a position to make inferences from appearance as Romans can, because Romans have the historical records of their own empire-building, which can function as an anthropological archive.[87] Having invaded Germany, Romans can compare Scots with Germans; having long since subjugated Spain and Gaul, they can see a Spanish origin in the Silures, and a Gallic one in the nearest of the Britons.[88] Initial

[86] Rutledge (2000: 79–80): "Tacitus essentially deprives the Britons of their past. Value is placed instead on Roman sources . . . for the knowledge and history of the Britons."

[87] On the record-keeping of empire, see Nicolet (1991).

[88] On comparison and analogy in Herodotean description of non-Greek peoples, see Hartog (1988: 225–30). On military activity as the primary Roman means for acquiring geographical and ethnographical knowledge, see Mattern (1999: 24–80).

interpretation of signs – limbs and color and geography – is, at least in theory, purely ethnographical: these properties of the Britons might have been recorded and filed away without further Roman action. Here, however, interpretation breeds more interpretation. Reflection introduces a diachronic perspective: the Britons are similar not simply to the Gauls, but only to what the Gauls once were. From here, the thought runs to what has made the difference between Gauls then and now: the difference, of course, has been made by Rome.[89] Taking another step, we wonder whether, if a difference was made between the two eras of Gaul, one might also be made between the present Britons and those of the future. This train of thought is encouraged by initial experiments: the difference *has* been made in the case of those Britons who have been conquered (§4). The conclusion at which this process of interpretation ends – an unsubtle hint about what Romans must do with Britain – also inevitably seems to be the goal of that process, so it reaches back to characterize the whole project of ethnographical interpretation as essentially imperial.

From the observation that the Gauls had once been like the Britons, Tacitus goes on to assess the military characteristics of Britain. Again, the drift of thought is informative:

In pedite robur; quaedam nationes et curru proeliantur. honestior auriga, clientes propugnant. olim regibus parebant, nunc per principes factionibus et studiis trahuntur. (2) nec aliud adversus validissimas gentes pro nobis utilius quam quod in commune non consulunt. rarus duabus tribusve civitatibus ad propulsandum commune periculum conventus: ita singuli pugnant, universi vincuntur. (*Ag*. 12.1–2)

Their strength is in infantry; some tribes fight with the chariot as well. The noble drives the chariot, the clients fight in his defense. They used to pay heed to kings; now they are divided between lords, in faction and contention. (2) Nor is there anything more useful for us against the sturdiest peoples than that they take no common counsel. Only rarely is there a convention between two or three polities to repel a shared danger. In this way, they fight one by one and are beaten all together.

As in the previous chapter, thought idles briefly on more objective characteristics of the inhabitants, then winds around to the relevance of the facts collected about them to the project of conquering and ruling them. The topic of military equipment and tactics leads, through the social connotations of the chariot, to the matter of social organization, which in turn leads

[89] It is worth noting here that it is not simple proximity to Greek and Roman culture that has caused the softening of the Gauls – as Lund (1982: 847) takes Tacitus to say – but rather the imposed *pax* of conquest.

to the question of political organization, which finally brings up the issue of conquest. The sequence here is not inevitable: we might have begun with the "constitutional forms" of Britain and gone from there to the issue of armaments and tactics (the topic at first glance most relevant to the project of conquest). Instead, we move from the most obviously military subject to the least, the internal political structure of the island, and it is this that leads Tacitus to thoughts of empire. The movement is also spatial: we move from the Britons as encountered on the limited space of the battlefield, to the social structure of the tribes that informs the battlefield appearance, to the larger architecture of political organization at the island-wide scale, to the totality of the island as viewed from the outside, by "us."

After the remark that internal divisions in Britain were useful to the Roman cause, we seem again to retreat from the issue of conquest and to go in the direction of geography. Here we see the same pattern unfold. The sky is foul with rain and clouds, but the cold is not bitter; the days are long, and the sun does not even set in the northernmost part of the island (*Ag.* 12.3–4). The passage continues:

solum praeter oleam vitemque et cetera calidioribus terris oriri sueta patiens frugum pecudumque fecundum: tarde mitescunt, cito proveniunt; eademque utriusque rei causa, multus umor terrarum caelique. (6) fert Britannia aurum et argentum et alia metalla, pretium victoriae. (12.5–6)

Apart from the olive, the vine, and the other produce accustomed to grow in warmer lands, the soil will endure crops and is fertile in livestock: these [the crops] ripen slowly, but grow quickly. The reason for both effects is the same, a great deal of moisture in the earth and in the sky. (6) Britain bears gold and silver and other metals, the wages of victory.

From celestial phenomena, to the moisture of the sky, to the earth and the plants that come out of it, to the metals it hides, to the owner of those metals: the victor in the contest between Rome and Britain. Like the bodies and the social characteristics of its inhabitants, the island's climate too leads to thoughts of empire.

We have already seen how Tacitus sets up control as a precondition for reliable knowledge of foreign lands, and so, when we were reading the introduction to this ethnographical section, we might have been ready to see knowledge as a simple extension of conquest: it completes conquest, but only when it is already authorized *by* conquest. But over the course of the excursus, the function of knowledge comes to look different. Reporting facts about Britons does not coolly finalize Agricola's conquest; rather, it excites thoughts about conquering Britain. This is possible because of the multiple demands *Agricola* places on this ethnographical section.

As a treatment that claims to be the sole ethnography authorized by the total conquest of the island, it should not still be obsessed with its potential conquest. Such an obsession is, however, entirely appropriate to a second function of this ethnography, that is, making the reconquest of Britain the focus of the reader's desire.[90] As Agricola had provided the material – that is, Britain – that enabled the writing of *Agricola*, so now that that material has been lost through Domitian's incompetence, Tacitus can in turn try to reinstate Agricola's *magnum opus* by encouraging its recuperation by force of arms. Here the book is not just a retrospective record of past fact but seeks to insert itself into a chain of causality, to bring about additional new facts; or, in other words, to transcend its character as mere discourse and become, in a way, political action.

Gloria *and the imperial project*

In the biography Agricola's governorship is portrayed differently in different venues. In this first part of this section we look at how he manages reception of his own achievement during his governorship. In the next, we examine how his return to Rome leaves in the hands of Domitian the office of representing his conquests, and at how the tyrant's execution of that office encapsulates the perversity of representation under his rule. The fundamental difficulty is that while Agricola can represent himself within Britain, he cannot do so back at Rome; in the section that follows this one, we will see that the task of representing Agricola at Rome belongs to Tacitus.

In Agricola's Britain, representation works correctly, and words correspond to things. The crisis we know is going on at, and being generated from, Rome is kept out of the province not only by its governor's attachment to absolute meaning and to correct circulation of glory but also by Tacitus' vigilance in sealing off communication between the province and the Continent.

In the way Agricola handles an early success we can see Tacitus' special interest in how his father-in-law managed his own reputation during his governorship:

[90] Another explanation deserves airing too. It has often been noted that Tacitus' placement of the ethnography creates a dramatic pause in the movement of the work, underscoring the importance of Agricola's governorship to his life, and also that it serves to establish the character of his antagonists in the central episode of his life: see, for example, Sablayrolles (1981: 55). To do this most effectively, though, it should be written from the perspective of Agricola's entry into Britain, a time when partial knowledge of the island had not yet been confirmed and completed by force of arms and could still work as an enticement to action. In this sense, the "dramatic date" of this section should be 78 CE, when the conquest lay in the future, and not 98 CE.

ita petita pace ac dedita insula clarus ac magnus haberi Agricola, quippe cui ingredienti provinciam, quod tempus alii per ostentationem et officiorum ambitum transigunt, labor et periculum placuisset. (6) nec Agricola prosperitate rerum in vanitatem usus expeditionem aut victoriam vocabat victos continuisse; ne laureatis quidem gesta prosecutus est, sed ipsa dissimulatione famae famam auxit, aestimantibus quanta futuri spe tam magna tacuisset. (*Ag.* 18.5–6)

And so, when the enemy had sued for peace and surrendered the island [sc. Anglesey], Agricola began to be thought great and conspicuous, in that upon his arrival in the province – a period of time that others spend in showing off and in soliciting services – he had preferred perilous exertion. (6) Nor did he turn his success to vanity by calling it an "expedition" or a "victory" to have kept in check those who had already been conquered; he did not even follow up what he had done with laureled letters, but rather, by the very fact of his acting as though there were no reason for him to have fame, he increased his fame, as people reckoned what high expectations he must have for the future, to have remained silent about accomplishments as great as these.

Success comes with a story about it, a *fama*. As legionary legate under Cerialis, Agricola had shown no interest in glory for himself, passing it all on to his superior, but still received a share of that glory back (8.2–3). In a similar way now his neglect of repute brings him repute, a paradox underscored by the chiastic *dissimulatione famae famam auxit* (18.6). The norms of empire demand that what has been done (*gesta*, §6) also be recorded, and he accordingly portrays the Anglesey action in letters that reflect a correct understanding of the relationship of signifiers and signifieds. To his mind, the semantic range of the word "victory" is neatly defined: it includes defeat of previously unconquered foes, but not reacquisition of territory already subdued. This attitude to words and their meanings causes a stir. He is using denominations no longer current, and observers must convert to the contemporary scale: if, by his reckoning, accomplishments "so great" (*tam magna*) do not count as "victory," you have to calculate the amount (*quanta futuri spe*) that *would* correspond to the term "victory" in his lexicon (§6). The results of this calculation are impressive and create a supplementary story beyond what he would have garnered had he attached the term "victory" to his deeds and a laurel to his report of them.

Observers here interpret both what Agricola does and how he talks about what he has done. Now, to speak generally, you can overvalue, undervalue, or correctly value what you have done. Though he chooses the last option, his observers, who are accustomed to a debased system of value, wrongly suppose that he is undervaluing what he has done and making a show of calling it correct valuation. He in turn acts as if he does not know, or does not care, how these observers will see his choice (for if he knew and cared, he would have chosen what to his mind was overvaluation but would have

looked to observers like correct valuation). When he tries to play down his reputation, he does not merely assert that what he has done is no big thing, but also disregards the presence of an audience that will interpret and judge his playing it down.

The point here is not that Agricola cannily acquires greater repute than he would have otherwise, but rather that his conduct is entirely determined by his commitment to absolute meaning. Earlier, Tacitus referred to the conditions under Nero, "in which observers responded with suspicion to men who stood above the rest and there was no less danger to be had in a great than in a bad reputation (*fama*)" (*Ag.* 5.3). Now the *princeps* is different, but the perils of renown are the same. If playing down fame in the event augments it, the result is not merely a rich return but also possibly a magnet for resentment.[91] So far, our impression of Agricola has been that he is anything but stupid or reckless, but now he lets interpretation of his actions run out of control. The reason for his uncharacteristically risky behavior is that empire, his *raison d'être*, is too important for compromise: its meanings must stay fixed, even at the price of danger.[92] Participating in an inflationary economy of language about empire would do harm to the imperial endeavor, because empire cannot work without a rational, reliable system for distributing credit. If "to have kept in check those who had already been conquered" (18.6) becomes a victory, an act that produces glory, then the idea of empire as eternal expansion dies and empire becomes static. Though Agricola has always wanted "a soldier's glory," what he allows to be done with his *fama* here is not a matter of self-seeking; the only glory he will accept is one that corresponds exactly to achievements within his own scale of value (which we are also to take as the objectively correct scale), and his refusal to accept any other serves not himself but the system of value that sustains empire.[93]

This sort of enforcement of correct usage is a theme of Agricola's governorship. In the narrative of his command we see the wholesome effects of right distribution of glory and of correspondence of words to deeds. Just as he depicts his own achievements exactly as they are, so (as we have seen) he is an unimpeachable witness to the accomplishments of others (*Ag.* 22.4). We also see an extension of the lesson he learned under Cerialis: now he remits to the deserving among his men a part of the sum of credit that

[91] Tacitus will later call this kind of behavior, in the case of Tiberius, *adroganti moderatione* (*Ann.* 1.8.5).

[92] Here Strocchio (2001: 23) does not quite capture what is at stake in the passage when she sees Agricola's *dissimulatio* as motivated by his desire to avoid attracting Domitian's envy. There is a long-standing, general misconception that as governor in Britain Agricola is trying to "keep a low profile" for the same reasons as he later does in Rome: cf. e.g. Liebeschuetz (1966: 127).

[93] There is a comparable calculation, involving different factors, at *Ag.* 9.4.

accrues to him for his own achievements in Britain. This deal is, again, honest, because it is apparently not a deal at all, but rather an independent, straightforward compensation of deeds with praise. In this manner, as governor Agricola establishes the sort of circulation of glory in which he himself participated as a subordinate, and right representation is here again shown to be indispensable to prosecution of empire.

The system of glory in Britain bears a close resemblance to the description of the "Golden Age" of biography outlined in the preface. Agricola distributes praise not according to any calculation of how it will be received, but because praise is deserved: that is, not for *gratia* or in *ambitio*, but for "the sole reward of a satisified conscience" (*Ag*. 1.2). Even though he makes no attempt to cultivate his own glory, he increases it nonetheless. In general, things are portrayed as they are – that is, virtues receive praise not censure.[94] In Britain, then, we see in action a historical era that on the Continent has already passed.

In *Ag*. 39, after Agricola has spent eight years in Britain, Domitian intrudes.[95] During the report of Agricola's command we have not heard from the *princeps*, who has held the power since 81, nor had we heard from his brother Titus, nor from their father Vespasian. His appearance in the narrative augurs no good. When Agricola leaves Britain and returns to Rome, he becomes subject again to the corrupt Domitianic system of representation, and it is the *princeps*, not he, who represents to Rome his achievement in Britain.

We begin with Domitian's celebration of his own conquests, in which Tacitus shows a keen interest. Agricola's victories in Britain have alarmed the tyrant because a correct portrayal of those victories – that is, "a soldier's glory" – seems to make the governor a better candidate for *princeps* than the tyrant himself.

id sibi maxime formidolosum, privati hominis nomen supra principem adtolli: frustra studia fori et civilium artium decus in silentium acta, si militarem gloriam alius occuparet; cetera utcumque facilius dissimulari, ducis boni imperatoriam virtutem esse. (*Ag*. 39.2)

The most frightening thing about it was this: the name of a private man was being elevated above the *princeps*. In vain had the pursuits of the Forum and the fair

[94] In this regard, my reading complements those that see *Agricola*'s Britain as a "Republican" space: cf. e.g. Rutledge (2000), Clarke (2001), and Tzounakas (2005).

[95] The abrupt transition from a Domitianless Britain to the Roman sphere dominated by the *princeps*, and from Agricola's governorship to the narrative of his residence at Rome, is underscored by *Ag*. 39.1, *Hunc rerum cursum . . .* [*Domitianus*] *excepit*, which echoes the opening of Agricola's governorship (*Ag*. 18.1, *Hunc Britanniae statum, has bellorum vices . . . Agricola invenit*).

appearance of the civic arts been driven to silence, if someone else occupied the glory of military achievement; everything else could more easily be hidden, but the excellence of a good general was a virtue for an emperor.

This problem is exacerbated by public derision of Domitian's own performance in Germany:

inerat conscientia derisui fuisse nuper falsum e Germania triumphum, emptis per commercia quorum habitus et crines in captivorum speciem formarentur: at nunc veram magnamque victoriam tot milibus hostium caesis ingenti fama celebrari. (39.1)

Eating at him was the knowledge that he had been the object of mockery for his recent sham triumph over Germany, for which he had bought people on the market whose garb and hair were arranged to make them look like captives; but now a true great victory, in which so many thousands of the enemy had been slain, was being celebrated with huge popularity.

A triumph displayed captives, as well as plundered treasures and images of the geographical areas brought under control, both describing to the urban populace the victory itself (in depictions of engagements from the campaign) and its direct profits (in wealth and in glory), and also offering a look at the more permanent characteristics of the territory and peoples acquired.[96] As in the course of Roman history generals began to celebrate triumphs for ever more distant conquests, the ceremony relied more and more on good faith: increasingly, what a *triumphator* presented for inspection in his procession was tokens of what only he had seen and done.[97] In this sense, he was not just a general, but a geographer too, as well as an ethnographer and a historian, presenting the results of a conquest that was also an act of investigation and recording.[98]

Domitian's cunning plan was to present a history of his conquest that corresponded to no actual conquest but would seem true.[99] This feat would

[96] On the triumph, see note 1 above.

[97] For the historical relationship between the distance of the conquest celebrated and the spectacular quality of the procession, see Hölscher (2006: 37–8).

[98] See Beard (2003b: 550–2), Murphy (2004: 154–64; "an instrument for educating the Roman people about the lands and nations newly added to its dominion," 23), and Dench (2005: 78–9).

[99] Pliny (*Pan.* 16.3) describes the triumph like this: *mimicos currus* and *falsae simulacra victoriae*. It is not clear to modern historians that Domitian had no achievements to celebrate: see Rives (1999: 281–2). On the war with the Chatti, see Strobel (1987, with extensive bibliography at 423n1) and Jones (1992: 128–31). Given the competitive nature of elite culture and the centrality of military achievement to public esteem, it is no surprise that the idea of fabricating victories was around long before the Principate: the elder Cato (*ORF* fr. 97) gave a speech *ne spolia figerentur nisi de hoste capta*. Rawson (1991: 585) plausibly infers that he was objecting to people buying weapons and affixing them to their houses as though they had been taken as spoils. With good reason Rives (1999: 280) doubts whether the story about Domitian's counterfeit Germans is true, given that Suetonius records a similar story about Gaius (*Cal.* 45.1; see Dench [2005: 37–41]).

be truly in keeping with the present age's economics of historiography as outlined in the first chapter of *Agricola*. In the past, historical writing was unimplicated in relationships of exchange and so was unaffected by "favor" and "ambition" and "rewards" (*Ag.* 1.2–4); conversely, no part of Domitian's story is unimplicated, as the whole affair is an endeavor to convert cash into a credible story (*emptis per commercia*, "bought . . . on the market," 39.1). Just as he thought he could erase reality by destroying its representations, by burning books and killing their authors, so he thought that with his false triumph he could create a false reality by supplying a representation that would be taken for fact. But as we already know, he did not understand historiography, and mastery of truth here again eludes him.[100] His Rome thus complements Agricola's Britain, and we can see each place as embodying one of the eras of representation sketched out in the preface.

The triumph Domitian celebrates for victories that did not occur is precisely balanced by the triumph Agricola does not celebrate for victories that did. The inverse correspondence typifies the crisis over which the tyrant presides, a crisis captured in the danger that Agricola faces upon his return to Rome:

causa periculi non crimen ullum aut querela laesi cuiusquam, sed infensus virtutibus princeps et gloria viri ac pessimum inimicorum genus, laudantes. (*Ag.* 41.1)

The reason for his peril was not any charge, not any complaint of someone who had been harmed, but a *princeps* hostile to virtues, the man's glory, and the worst type of enemies, people who praise.

It is not clear whether "the worst type of enemies, people who praise" envisions people who praise ingenuously and only become *de facto* "enemies" because of the *princeps*' perverse reaction, or people who praise maliciously because they expect that reaction. This ambiguity makes a dramatic point: in this case, it does not matter *what* is intended by those who praise, because it is the bare correspondence of act to commemoration, however meant, that Domitian cannot abide.[101] We are here alerted to the programmatic importance of his treatment of Agricola. It is not just the verbal echo ("a

[100] Tacitus' report of the *situs* and the *populi* of Britain as compared with previous accounts (*Ag.* 10.1) stands in an analogous relationship to Agricola's conquests as compared with Domitian's. The *scriptores multi*, while not as sinister as Domitian, nonetheless resemble him in that they decorated with flair what they had not in fact mastered and claimed credit for it (*nondum comperta eloquentia percoluere*); by contrast, Tacitus and Agricola boast a representation validated by conquest, investigation, and control.

[101] See Plass (1988: 63–4): "an odd as well as clever thing to say, because it is trying to speak to a situation in which normally antithetic terms (friend/enemy) are in apposition to each other."

princeps hostile to virtues" [*infensus virtutibus princeps*, 41.1] recalls "times hostile to virtues" [*infesta virtutibus tempora*, 1.4]) that brings the preface back to our minds, but the notion of a whole system of values upturned, in which virtues may be attacked but not praised (1.4).

Shortly after reporting this farce of a triumph, Tacitus tells us that, as the *princeps* was trying to entice Agricola away from Britain, he had the governor showered with honors: "[Domitian] ordered to be decreed in the Senate the triumphal insignia and the honor of a conspicuous statue and whatever is given instead of a triumph, all piled up with many honorific words" (*Igitur triumphalia ornamenta et inlustris statuae honorem et quidquid pro triumpho datur, multo verborum honore cumulata, decerni in senatu iubet*, *Ag*. 40.1). Here Tacitus turns a signal honor into a dirty trick, an attempt to suppress rather than enhance Agricola's fame. "Whatever is given instead of a triumph" becomes cheap, as soon as he uses the term "instead"; not enumerating these honors – what he tells us amounts to "decorations, a statue, and so on" – adds to this effect.[102] A triumph, a traditional means of presenting to the city the exploits, researches, and gains of the conqueror, was denied Agricola; through these insignia, his victories were instead rendered by the tyrant, on the tyrant's terms.[103]

Agricola did, however, have one opportunity to describe for Romans what he had done and found in Britain: "this course of events [sc. his latest successes in Britain], though magnified by no overblown rhetoric in Agricola's correspondence, Domitian received, as was his wont, with a pleased expression, and an anxious heart" (*Hunc rerum cursum, quamquam nulla verborum iactantia epistulis Agricolae auctum, ut erat Domitiano moris, fronte laetus, pectore anxius excepit*, *Ag*. 39.1). The correspondence envisioned here is purely administrative, a single dispatch or a series, apprising the *princeps* of progress.[104] These reports are undoubtedly *for* Domitian, even if they in fact met with an audience or readership beyond him.[105] He takes the information he receives in these letters and converts it, as we have seen, into his own, insufficient version of Agricola's achievements. Even if we conjecture that, in instructing the Senate to decree these honors, the *princeps* read the correspondence aloud to it, the correspondence when put into his voice means something different from what it would have meant had it been addressed directly to the Senate: it risks no longer being a general's

[102] Nesselhauf (1986: 218–19) suggests that Tacitus means us also to understand that Agricola deserved the title "Britannicus." On *agnomina* of this type, see Kneissel (1969) and Campbell (1984: 128–33).

[103] See note 2 above.

[104] On correspondence between *principes* and governors, see, e.g., Millar (1977: 313–41) and Eck (1995: 1.55–79).

[105] As Imperial legate, Agricola would have reported directly to the *princeps*: on *legati pro praetore Augusti*, see Mommsen (1952–3: II.244–6).

report to the state but the remarks of one of the tyrant's functionaries on the progress of one of the tyrant's imperial undertakings.[106]

The inadequacy of Domitian's commemoration finds gloomy confirmation in Agricola's reentry into Rome:

ac ne notabilis celebritate et frequentia occurrentium introitus esset, vitato amicorum officio noctu in urbem, noctu in Palatium, ita ut praeceptum erat, venit; exceptusque brevi osculo et nullo sermone turbae servientium inmixtus est. (*Ag.* 40.3)

So that his entrance would not be made conspicuous by the press of throngs eager to hail him, avoiding any welcome by his friends, he came by night into the city, by night to the Palatine, as he had been instructed; greeted with a hasty kiss and not a word of conversation, he was mixed in with the crowd of lackeys.

This homecoming is a humiliating inversion of the triumphal procession. The populace does not come to see the conqueror, nor do his own friends. Far from entering in the glare of the sun and of the spoils of victory, he steals in under cover of night. Like a triumph, this "procession" does go through the city, but it ends not on the Capitoline but on the Palatine, always a place of private residence and by now the exclusive residence of the *princeps*.[107] When he arrives there, it no longer suffices that he should be alone and unadmired; he is rather intermingled with the very crowd that by all rights should be standing apart from him, beholding his glory. Tacitus is careful to note that this injustice is not merely the result of Agricola's self-restraint but of official policy: "as he had been instructed" (*ita ut praeceptum erat*).[108]

The denial of a triumph to Agricola is only a variation on the problem that, earlier in this chapter, we have seen presented by autobiography and by the figure of Julius Caesar. For to be *triumphator* was both to have deeds to your credit and to present your own account of them, to be at once an agent of history and a historian. In this way, the particular case of Domitian's abuse of Agricola links back to the historical problematic of representation on which the preface turned. What happened in Agricola's case was not, then, merely a consequence of the perversity of rulers who

[106] Especially since Agricola forswore *verborum iactantia* on his own behalf. And in his letters Agricola must surely have addressed Domitian as "*domine*," "master," as Pliny addresses Trajan in his official correspondence as governor of Bithynia (on which see Noreña [2007: 247–50]). On *domine* as a term of address for *principes*, see Sherwin-White (1966 ad 10.2.1), Alföldi (1970: 209–12), Roller (2001: 254–8), and Dickey (2002: 94–9).

[107] Strictly speaking, as Wiseman (1987b: 394–5) shows, the last stop for the *triumphator* was his own house (Prop. 1.16.1–4), where he disposed of his booty.

[108] Woodman and Martin (1996 ad 9.1) adduce this passage as a contrast to Piso's indiscreet return to Rome in *Ann.* 3.8–9; they also refer to a few other instances of people entering the city at night in order not to attract attention to themselves.

follow the "tyrant model" – though it is surely that in part – but somehow stemmed from a historical difference between "then" and "now," between "time past" (*antiquitus*, *Ag*. 1.1) and "our time" (*nostris temporibus*, 1.1).[109]

The sequel to Agricola's return is complicated. While Domitian's continuing misrepresentation of him keeps him from public view and so from his glory, Tacitus also asserts, paradoxically, that his father-in-law never lost his distinction during the remainder of his life. The reason for this apparent contradiction is that each of these positions serves a central agenda of the work.

In one sense, Agricola's life at Rome is presented as the result of Domitian's successful effort to stifle his glory. The description of Agricola's return fades into a characterization of his later life:

> ceterum uti militare nomen, grave inter otiosos, aliis virtutibus temperaret, tranquillitatem atque otium penitus hausit, cultu modicus, sermone facilis, uno aut altero amicorum comitatus, adeo ut plerique, quibus magnos viros per ambitionem aestimare mos est, viso aspectoque Agricola quaererent famam, pauci interpretarentur. (*Ag*. 40.4)

> In order, however, to soften with other virtues his military repute, an awkward and uncomfortable thing among men who have nothing but inactivity, he drank deep of peace and inactivity, unassuming in appearance and agreeable in conversation, attended by only a friend or two, to the degree that most (for the majority of people are accustomed to evaluate great men by their ambition) when they had had a thoughtful look at Agricola wondered about his fame; and few figured it out.

It is hard to say exactly what happens here. Since "a soldier's glory" disturbs Domitian, Agricola aims to comfort him by "tempering" (*temperaret*) his military repute. *Temperare* has various possible meanings: it may mean that he adds additional, "compensatory" virtues to his glory, or, rather differently, that he acquires virtues that *dilute* it. "Peace and inactivity," moreover, have dubious claim to association with virtues – one is almost forced to translate with "qualities" – since they are exactly the properties that characterize those who have not distinguished themselves. In fact, Agricola seems to become, through assumption of *otium*, "inactivity," just another of those whom he expects to be put off by his fame, the *otiosi* ("those who have nothing but inactivity").[110] Strange too is the public scene Tacitus

[109] In *Agricola* the essential characteristic of the rule of a *malus princeps* is persecution of those whose *virtutes* he imagines to interfere with his dominance. Caligula had Agricola's father killed (*Ag*. 4.1), Nero appears in the narrative as a source of peril to *magna fama* (5.3), and Domitian becomes jealous over Agricola's reputation (39).

[110] The translation is not quite good enough here: *otium* is "time not devoted to (public) responsibilities," so the *otiosi* are "men who spend their time in activity that does not bear on the good of the community."

imagines in which others observe and evaluate Agricola. While he seems to have a "(good) reputation," a *fama*, the point of the remark is that Agricola's own person has been detached from it: for most people, running into him is no different from running into anyone else, and only a discerning few can draw a meaningful link between his glory and him.[111] His *fama* is, then, one bereft of its most gratifying features, the opportunity to see oneself admired.[112]

In the narrative of Agricola's governorship, the British chieftain Calgacus had protested that even unassuming obedience was no safeguard against the insolence of " . . . the Romans, whose arrogant abuse one would in vain try to avoid by *obedience and an unassuming manner*" (*Romani, quorum superbiam frustra per* ***obsequium ac modestiam*** *effugias*, *Ag*. 30.3). It has long since been observed that Tacitus' "lesson" about Agricola's life echoes this passage: "let them know . . . that *obedience and an unassuming manner*, provided there be also hard work and spirit, attain the same degree of praise . . ." (*Sciant* . . . ***obsequium*** . . . ***ac modestiam***, si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis excedere, 42.4). At the least, the echo makes an analogy between the conditions of Romans' existence under Domitian and those of subject peoples under Roman rule.[113] Calgacus may be wrong to say "obedience and an unassuming manner" cannot placate the Romans – for Agricola expects no more than that out of Britain – but he is right that these qualities are a basic requirement of the administration – for neither could Agricola accept any less. In Agricola's case, the modes of behavior required of good subjects of empire do not explain the praise he receives; it is rather in spite of them, by the crucial addition of "hard work and spirit," that he makes his mark. As Schwarte points out, however, he never displays all of these characteristics at any one time. "Hard work" and "spirit" cannot refer to his life at Rome, precisely because its constant theme is his lack of any duties at all. Similarly, "obedience and an unassuming manner" do not fit his governorship very well: there is a kind of *modestia* at work there, but there is no one present under whom to exercise *obsequium*, because Tacitus has written the *princeps* out of the narrative of Agricola's governorship, and almost out of Britain altogether.[114] Without the "Britain" part of his

[111] The odd expression *quaererent famam* that I have translated "wondered about his fame," because it most naturally means "sought after his *fama*," may also hint that *fama* is somehow missing.

[112] Cf. Cic. *Fam*. 5.12.1, 9.

[113] See Liebeschuetz (1966) and McGing (1982). Cf. Roberts (1988: 127) on the speech of Boudicca (*Ann*. 14.35): "the implication . . . would appear to be that the Britons are in the same relation to their Roman rulers as Rome itself is to the emperor." For a complementary argument about the implications of the speech of Cerialis at *Hist*. 4.73–4, see Keitel (1993: 51–7).

[114] Schwarte (1979: 168). In an unpublished paper delivered in 1997 at the American Philological Association annual meeting in Chicago, William Fitzgerald acutely observed that "the domestic

character, Agricola is just another face in the "crowd of lackeys" (40.3), another *otiosus* among the *otiosi* – and indistinguishability from the mob is the elite man's nightmare. In this analysis, then, Domitian does in fact succeed in pressing Agricola into obscurity.

As is already suggested by the passages we have looked at, though, there is also a strong sense in which Agricola's renown is irrepressible and Domitian's efforts are consequently in vain.[115]

Crebro per eos dies apud Domitianum absens accusatus, absens absolutus est. causa periculi non crimen ullum aut querela laesi cuiusquam, sed infensus virtutibus princeps et gloria viri ac pessimum inimicorum genus, laudantes. (2) et ea insecuta sunt rei publicae tempora, quae sileri Agricolam non sinerent: tot exercitus in Moesia Daciaque et Germania et Pannonia temeritate aut per ignaviam ducum amissi, tot militares viri cum tot cohortibus expugnati et capti; nec iam de limite imperii et ripa, sed de hibernis legionum et possessione dubitatum. (3) ita cum damna damnis continuarentur atque omnis annus funeribus et cladibus insigniretur, poscebatur ore vulgi dux Agricola, comparantibus cunctis vigorem, constantiam et expertum bellis animum cum inertia et formidine aliorum. (4) quibus sermonibus satis constat Domitiani quoque aures verberatas, dum optimus quisque libertorum amore et fide, pessimi malignitate et livore pronum deterioribus principem extimulabant. sic Agricola simul suis virtutibus, simul vitiis aliorum in ipsam gloriam praeceps agebatur. (*Ag.* 41)

Again and again during those days he was accused in absence before Domitian, and absolved in absence. The reason for his peril was no charge, no complaint of someone who had been harmed, but rather a *princeps* hostile to virtues, the man's glory, and the worst type of enemies – those who praise. (2) Then times fell upon the state that would not allow Agricola not to be discussed: so many armies lost, in Moesia and Dacia, in Germania and Pannonia, through rashness or cowardice of their generals, so many military men and so many cohorts taken by siege and captured, so that now what was at stake was not the riverbank and the frontier of empire but rather the legionary camps themselves, and the prospect of keeping the provinces. (3) So as one loss came after another and every year was marked by funerals and disasters, the lips of the crowd asked for Agricola to be general, everyone contrasting his vigor, determination, and character experienced in war with the lethargy and fear of others. (4) It is well known that the ears of Domitian, too, were pummeled with this kind of talk, as the best among his freedmen because of their affection and loyalty and the worst out of malice and envy incited a *princeps* who was already inclined to the worse. In this way Agricola, both on account of his own excellence and through the degeneracy of others, was being borne away headlong into glory.

and the external spheres of Agricola's career have become two different worlds between which no negotiation is possible."

[115] Thus, for example, Hedrick (2000: 155) is right to say Agricola "perished in obscurity," but the effect of *Agricola* can only be fully rendered if we recognize that Tacitus shows the opposite to be true as well.

To judge from this passage, year after year Agricola and his victories are always on Rome's mind. This popularity persists to the end:

> Finis vitae eius . . . extraneis etiam ignotisque non sine cura fuit. vulgus quoque et hic aliud agens populus et ventitavere ad domum et per fora et circulos locuti sunt . . . (*Ag.* 43.1)
>
> The end of his life . . . did not fail to affect even those outside his circle, even strangers. The mob, too, and people here for some other purpose kept coming to his house, and talking about the matter in the fora and in groups here and there . . .

While the idea does not strictly contradict our sense of Agricola's severance from his own reputation, its emphasis leans in the opposite direction: far from treating him as an indistinguishable part of the broader population, the public marks him as different from all others ("everyone contrasting his vigor . . ." 41.3). Suppressing Agricola's glory is here beyond Domitian and Agricola alike, and in the end it is the irrepressibility of his name that leads to his death: although, as I will discuss in more detail below, Tacitus does not flatly assert the tyrant's involvement in the death of his father-in-law, the expression "was being borne away headlong into glory" (41.4) strongly suggests a relationship between his renown and his end. This is a version of Agricola's life, then, in which Domitian's attempts to control representation at Rome failed altogether, and the general was every bit as conspicuous as he deserved to be. The real losses, on this view, were only that Rome was deprived of the services of a man who could have rescued the empire from its crisis, that Agricola was denied more chances at conquest, and, if we choose to follow the hints, that he was deprived of his life.

We can attribute these different stances on what sort of recognition Agricola received during his lifetime to differing demands to which the book must answer. In order for *Agricola* itself to serve a purpose and to take a role in the creation of the new political order, its subject must be the victim of a successful Domitianic program of misrepresentation that the present book now sets aright. For a variety of reasons, however, it is also good not to let his last years pass in the obscurity he seeks for himself. A work composed in praise of the dead Agricola should shrink from showing its subject as having ever lived without great repute; similarly, one composed in condemnation of the dead Domitian ought to show its subject failing in all the endeavors nearest his heart, including his attempts to suppress his rivals. From this latter standpoint, the *princeps* had celebrated a triumph but in effect was denied it by widespread knowledge that it referred to fictitious victories, while Agricola was denied a triumph but in effect celebrated one because everyone knew he deserved one. But the status of Agricola's repute

during his lifetime affects more than our estimate of Agricola: if part of the task of Tacitus' biography is to establish the viability of a path to distinction alternative to that followed by the martyrs, the work cannot afford to sacrifice the notion that Agricola's glory, like theirs, was irrepressible and that public attention was drawn to him constantly.

As we had occasion to remember above, Tacitus presents Agricola in a state of subjection to Domitian similar to the Britons' subjection to Agricola. The converse is true as well: we are also given the impression that Agricola somehow governs Domitian. These contradictory features of Agricola's life at Rome are due to the same pressures that produce the opposed stances on whether he enjoyed renown. We may begin with this instructive passage:

> proprium humani ingenii est odisse quem laeseris: Domitiani vero natura praeceps in iram, et quo obscurior, eo inrevocabilior, moderatione tamen prudentiaque Agricolae leniebatur, quia non contumacia neque inani iactatione libertatis famam fatumque provocabat. (*Ag.* 42.3)

> It is inherent to human nature to hate the one you have harmed: but the character of Domitian, swift to anger, and the more inscrutable the more inexorable, nonetheless was softened by the moderation and circumspection of Agricola, because he was not trying to call forth fame – and fate – with recalcitrance and empty boasts of freedom.

In Britain Agricola cultivated a *fama* ("reputation") that preceded his movements, spreading fear (18.4, 20.2, 22.1, 29.2, 38.3); as this *fama* reaches Rome after Mons Graupius and keeps circulating, the result is fear in the *princeps*' heart ("uneasy in his heart" [*pectore anxius*, 39.1]; "frightening" [*formidolosum*, 39.2]).[116] Anger, the passion that fires British resistance (20.3), is also the tyrant's inclination; in either case, the solution is to mitigate the ire on the basis of a thorough knowledge of the enemy's nature and habits ("with understanding of the minds of the provincials" [*animorum provinciae prudens*, 19.1]). The appropriate technique for pacifying Domitian, however, is to try to refute the reputation Agricola deliberately propagated in Britain – that is, that he was an irresistible conqueror – and to allay the fears it induced in the *princeps*: he now had to make clear he was not returning from the conquest of Britain in order to conquer the Palatine.

[116] Ramondetti (1974: 403) notes that the vocabulary of fear is applied to Domitian and not to Agricola and that this breaks the general pattern in *Agricola*, in which fear is a characteristic of Imperial subjects. On the relationship between fear and tyranny in the Neronian books of *Annals*, see Mastellone Iovane (1989: 64–144); on the fear that Tacitus attributes to Tiberius and Nero, see Schmidt (1982).

Yet Domitian is a conqueror and pacifier, too.[117] From his perspective, Agricola, like the Britons, needs to be softened by urban life and leisure; Agricola knows the path prescribed for him is to take on a mode of inconspicuous inactivity ("he drank deep of peace and inactivity [*tranquillitatem atque otium*, *Ag*. 40.4]; "they pointed out the advantages of peace and inactivity [*quietem et otium*, 42.1]; cf. "accustom to peace and inactivity [*quieti et otio*, 21.1] through pleasures"). As for Agricola in Britain, so for Domitian at Rome, where compliance is not assured, application of fear and provision of illustrative examples are useful. When lots are to be drawn for the proconsulships of Africa and Asia, there is a danger that Agricola might accept a command, so a delegation of court insiders pays him a visit: they begin by pointing out the advantages of life at Rome, proceed to offer their services in helping him beg off the assignment, move on to open pleading with him and attempts to frighten him off, and end by hauling him up before Domitian (42.1). On one hand, then, it is Domitian's crime to have created a relationship of domination with Agricola, with all of the indignity that implies; on the other, Agricola is portrayed as holding the reins of the wild, impassioned *princeps*.

This same tension characterizes yet another alternative question, whether Domitian did or did not in fact envy and hate Agricola. Liebeschuetz writes that "the qualities of Agricola so much emphasized by Tacitus can be summed up as deliberate and consistent shunning of the limelight, with consequent avoidance of envy and enmity on the part of superiors, inferiors, and most of all the emperor himself," and he appropriately cites *Ag*. 42.3, quoted above.[118] From another perspective, however, Agricola's "softening" (*leniebatur*, 42.3) of Domitian fails, because the *princeps* is in fact clearly envious, hateful, and hostile: "Again and again during those days he was accused in absence before Domitian, and absolved in absence. The reason for his peril was no charge, no complaint of someone who had been harmed, but rather a *princeps* hostile to virtues, the man's glory, and enemies of the worst type – those who praise" (41.1; Latin printed above). This very glory is implied to have precipitated his end: "thus was Agricola by his own virtues and by the flaws of others [i.e., incompetent generals] borne headlong into that very glory" (*sic Agricola simul suis virtutibus, simul vitiis aliorum in ipsam gloriam praeceps agebatur*, 41.4). The image of glory as a

[117] In his APA paper that I referred to above, William Fitzgerald observed that Domitian plays "the role both of the invading ocean and of the island itself, mysterious and in this case sinister" (citing *Ag*. 25.2, 31.4, 39.4). Laruccia (1980: 408) draws a connection between the *solitudo* achieved by Agricola's victory at Mons Graupius and the effects of Domitianic tyranny at Rome.

[118] Liebeschuetz (1966: 127).

precipice (*praeceps*, "headlong") in fact brings Agricola rather near the martyrs, who, we learn in the next paragraph, became prominent (*inclaruerunt*) "on precipitous terrain" (*per abrupta*, 42.4). Tacitus here again prefers to interweave contradictory tendencies, both showing Agricola to have been the victim of the regime's malice and saving him from appearing victimized, or even really affected, by the regime.

The rehabilitation of Agricola

To the extent that Domitian is imagined to have suppressed Agricola's glory, it is the function of the book to reinscribe glory over that silence, to make the distinction won at the edge of Roman dominion prevail over the urban nightmare.[119] On this view, the biography becomes an act of direct competition with the representational strategies characteristic of Domitian. Its reconciliation of the truth about Agricola with public representation of him is a matter of familial duty, as the work announces at the start, but has claims to be much more as well. For the reconciliation does not seek to undo that injustice alone but makes itself the first entry in a society-wide, epochal restoration of correct representation. That restoration in turn also has the ambition of restoring both traditional elite life and the health of the empire.

The question of genre has figured prominently in the scholarship on *Agricola*.[120] As we approach the work's end, however, its narrowly literary affiliations – history, biography, ethnography, *commentarius* – give way to reminiscences of social practices of commemoration. Above all, we are asked to think of the book as the triumph Agricola did not celebrate and as the funeral laudation Tacitus never delivered. What is more, just as the work serves in lieu of these memorializations of Agricola, so too it takes part in the memoralization of Domitian that followed upon his assassination.

With *Ag*. 43 we shift from narrative to an epilogue that will seal our interpretation of Agricola and his biography. The thought runs quickly to his good fortune. Though his life was cut short, it was long in glory: "What more could fortune have heaped upon a consular and a man invested with the triumphal insignia?" (*consulari ac triumphalibus ornamentis praedito quid aliud adstruere fortuna poterat?* 44.3). Convention implies the answer "Nothing!" But after Tacitus' depreciation of the *ornamenta triumphalia* ("whatever is given instead of a triumph," 40.1), we could as easily answer, "A

[119] Hedrick (2000: 166) also speaks of *Agricola* as a "rehabilitation" of Agricola.
[120] Beck (1998: 64n105) reviews discussions of the "genre question"; see too Marincola (1999a: 318–20).

triumph!" The way in which Domitian had honored Agricola's achievement was woefully inadequate: the conqueror of Britain deserved better than honors *in absentia* and a disgraceful homecoming. It was no surprise that he did not celebrate a triumph – you might as well fault the *princeps* for not surrendering command of the legionary provinces – but in 98 CE no grounds for indignation at the tyrant's conduct were too far-fetched, and the unlikelihood that anyone outside the Imperial house would ever again celebrate a triumph did not forbid nostalgia and lamentation of the present circumscription of glory. Tacitus is present, to try to make up the loss. His book itself is something "more" that "fortune could have heaped upon a consular and a man invested with the triumphal insignia" (44.3). If the failure to give Agricola's achievement proper contemporary credit is crystalized in Domitian's denying him a triumph, then *Agricola* is a posthumous triumph, or, at least, what Tacitus gives "instead of a triumph" is much better than what Domitian did.

We have already come across two points at which Tacitus implicitly ties the deficiency in Domitian's representation of Agricola to the triumph, first when the *princeps* secures him "whatever is given instead of a triumph" (*Ag.* 40.1) and again in his distinctly untriumphant return to the city; Agricola's unrealized triumph is also the unspoken but obvious contrast to Domitian's sham triumph. Anything, therefore, that makes up for the deficiency begs to be read as a sort of triumph. But we can say more. *Agricola* is also triumphal in that it shows to the public for the first time, in an unmediated way, the conquest of Britain as it in fact was. As we have seen, a triumph acted as a résumé of the research that had been enabled by conquest, above all by presenting the physical properties of the conquered and of their territory. In this regard, the ethnographical section of *Agricola* fits neatly with the triumphal program: just as the *triumphator* provided his fellow citizens with images of what he had seen and acquired for them, so this work contains the first correct version of Britain and Britons that Romans receive.

By supplying the triumph that his work constitutes, Tacitus in a serious and meaningful way corrects Domitian's bad faith. Yet the credit, as it were, for the restoration of credit does not go to the biographer alone; there is a greater authority. A sad consequence of the timing of Agricola's death, Tacitus observes, is that he did not live to see the happy event he had long foreseen and prayed for, the accession of Trajan (*Ag.* 44.5). For our estimate of Trajan, though, this works out well: he is never confronted with Agricola's case for a triumph, and he needs only to smile benevolently on Tacitus' praise of a dead man. Of course, he could not have let that man celebrate a triumph, any more than Domitian could, but to admit

this was to confess that there were respects, however elementary, in which the two *principes* were not categorically different, a suggestion not at all decorous at the historical moment.[121] Rather, through the deaths of Agricola himself and of his persecutor, the three men become a happy society of mutual supporters: Tacitus and Trajan join in supplying Agricola with the recognition due to him, Tacitus and Agricola praise in tandem (and, in the latter's case, with astonishing foresight) the felicity of Trajan's new age, and Trajan and Agricola serve as the twin authorities behind Tacitus' book, the former providing the conditions under which it is possible to speak and the latter furnishing something to say.[122] The triumph Agricola was denied is now encouraged, the book Tacitus could not write becomes welcome, and the general sundering of reality and representation under Domitian becomes reconcilable; it is then the job of *Agricola* and of the authorial project that Tacitus outlines in the preface to make that reconciliation, to return reality ("memory") to representation ("voice").

As has long been seen, the other important commemorative practice evoked by Tacitus' treatment of Agricola is the funeral, and especially its eulogy. In fact, the funereal mood may fit well with the triumphal, as funeral and triumph were related in important respects.[123] In *Agricola* Tacitus now gives the eulogy he had not given under Domitian.[124] He was kept apart from Agricola in the last days, as he and his wife were elsewhere. This, too, is somehow Domitian's fault: presumably Agricola would have survived to see his son-in-law again, had it not been for his involvement. Tacitus' absence will have meant not only that he had not been at the deathbed, but also that he had not given the eulogy, and, as we perceive the rhetorical markers of the funeral oration, we realize it is being given now, an effect that will have been all the more impressive if the work was read in recitations. Here it is useful to think of what Pliny says about listening to Titinius Capito recite his "Deaths of Famous Men":

[121] Yet the prospect of restoring the triumph might not have seemed totally absurd: Claudius had allowed A. Plautius an *ovatio* for Britain in 47 CE, though that had never happened before under the Principate.

[122] Syme (1958) reasonably contends that, at base, Tacitus' presentation of Agricola's career is a commendation of the origins and career of Trajan: "a vindication of the new men from the provinces, setting them up against effete aristocrats and the parochial Italians" (29).

[123] They were similar above all in that they were two of the three kinds of great parade celebrated at Rome (*pompa triumphalis*, *pompa funebris*, *pompa circensis*; see Versnel [1970: 94–131]). On specific associations between *pompa triumphalis* and *pompa funebris*, see Versnel (1970: 115–29) – though he is concerned to show that they were unrelated in origin – and Flower (1996: 101, 107–9). If the practice of Polybius' day remained, Agricola may have worn his triumphal insignia to his funeral (Plb. 6.53.7–8).

[124] On the *laudatio funebris*, see Kierdorf (1980) and Flower (1996: 128–58).

videor . . . fungi pio munere, quorumque exsequias celebrare non licuit, horum quasi funebribus laudationibus seris quidem sed tanto magis veris interesse. (*Ep.* 8.12.5)

I feel I am carrying out a rite demanded by duty, and practically attending the funeral orations of these men whose funerals it was forbidden to celebrate – orations that were delivered too late, to be certain, but that were all the truer because of it.

At the least, this seems to show that Roman readers would have been equipped to draw that link between *Agricola* and *laudatio* as well.

Tacitus' absence is to be taken literally, but it works metaphorically as well. The physical separation symbolizes the estrangement created by hostility to virtue under Domitian. In other circumstances, had Tacitus been present, he would not simply have mourned but would have praised his father-in-law and celebrated his deeds; under the late tyrant, however, we will recall, to praise was the part of an enemy, indeed one "of the worst type" (*Ag.* 41.1). We might hesitate to allow this perverse condition to apply even to the period after Agricola's death, but in fact, in the preface, Tacitus has already insisted that the hostility to virtue that required him to beg pardon did not care whether the virtuous man was dead or alive: "when I was going to relate the life of a man who had already passed, there was need for asking pardon" (*narraturo mihi vitam defuncti hominis venia opus fuit*, 1.4). *Agricola* goes some way toward mending the separation. At *Ag.* 45.3 the eulogist shifts from referring to the dead man in the third person to addressing him in the second; those last conversations stolen from Tacitus and his wife are here restored, at least from Tacitus' end.[125]

As Hedrick sees, the concluding paragraph of the work reprises the themes and reintroduces the vocabulary of the preface.[126] In fact, it does so to an extent that has not been recognized, and in ways pertinent to our interpretation of the work.

Si quis piorum manibus locus, si, ut sapientibus placet, non cum corpore extinguuntur magnae animae, placide quiescas, nosque domum tuam ab infirmo desiderio et muliebribus lamentis ad contemplationem virtutum tuarum voces, quas neque lugeri neque plangi fas est. (2) admiratione te potius et laudibus et, si natura suppeditet, similitudine colamus: is verus honos, ea coniunctissimi cuiusque pietas. (3) id filiae quoque uxorique praeceperim, sic patris, sic mariti memoriam venerari, ut omnia facta dictaque eius secum revolvant, formamque ac figuram animi magis quam corporis complectantur, non quia intercedendum putem imaginibus quae marmore aut aere finguntur, sed, ut vultus hominum, ita simulacra vultus imbecilla

[125] I like Rhenanus' proposal to read *amissus es* for *amissus est* at *Ag.* 45.5, since the phrase is surrounded by second-person singular verbs and pronouns and by vocatives.

[126] Hedrick (2000: 165).

ac mortalia sunt, forma mentis aeterna quam tenere et exprimere non per alienam materiam et artem, sed tuis ipse moribus possis. (4) quidquid ex Agricola amavimus, quidquid mirati sumus, manet mansurumque est in animis hominum in aeternitate temporum, fama rerum; nam multos veterum velut inglorios et ignobiles oblivio obruet: Agricola posteritati narratus et traditus superstes erit. (*Ag.* 46)

If there is some place for the shades of the dutiful, if, as the philosophers judge, great souls are not snuffed out with the body, may you rest in peace, and may you call us, your household, away from feebly missing you and from womanish wailing, toward consideration of your virtues, which it is not right to lament nor mourn. (2) Rather let us pay homage to you with wonder and words of praise and – should our natures be up to it – likeness to you: *that* is real honor, *that* is the means of fulfilling duty for those closest to you. (3) I would offer the following piece of instruction to his daughter, too, and his wife: that it is in this way they should revere the memory of father and husband, that is, by keeping his deeds and words ever in their minds and by clinging to the shape of his spirit, not his body. Not that it is my judgment that images shaped from marble or bronze need something else to take over their task, but rather, as the faces, so the images of faces of men are weak and bound to die, but the shape of a mind is everlasting, which you can capture and bring to expression not through some other material and through technique, but in your own character. (4) Whatever we have loved in Agricola, whatever we have marveled at, abides and ever will abide hereafter in people's hearts, by the fame of his achievements: for many of the ancients will be overrun by oblivion, as though without glory and without nobility, but Agricola, narrated and handed down to posterity, will have survived.

The durable and immaterial is here contrasted, again, with the ephemeral: souls do not die with the body, *imagines* are not "the shape of a mind" (46.3). This thought summons up *Ag.* 2.2 ("one can only suppose they thought in those flames the voice of the people of Rome and the freedom of the Senate and the conscience of the whole human race would be wiped out") and 2.3 ("We would have lost even our memory itself, together with our voice, if it had been as much within our power to forget as to keep silent"). Its language also recalls *Ag.* 3.1 ("and just as our bodies [*corpora nostra*] grow slowly and quickly are snuffed out [*cito extinguuntur*], so you would find it easier to suppress literary talents and pursuits than to revive them." In the preface, that sentence had sinister overtones of the quick snuffing out of bodies under Domitian; here, the persistence of Agricola's "great soul" defies that snuffing out ("are not snuffed out with the body [*non cum corpore . . . extinguuntur*, 46.1]). Again it is "greatness" that determines whether you deserve perpetuation: in the preface, it is "great and noble excellence" (*magna . . . ac nobilis virtus*, 1.1) that manages to win commemoration, and here they are "great souls" (*magnae animae*, 46.1)

that attain the afterlife. Here again Tacitus raises the question of correct response to virtue: in the preface, praise was set off against envy, hostility, and indifference; here, it is contrasted with lament (46.1–2). That praise, together with emulation of virtue, is articulated as an "honor" (*honos*) and "a fulfillment of duty" (*pietas*) for "those closest to you" (*coniunctissimi cuiusque*, 46.2), while the preface ends with the pronouncement that "in the meantime, this book, dedicated to the honor (*honori*) of Agricola my father-in-law (*soceri mei*), will for its claim to fulfill duty (*pietatis*) meet either with praise or at least with pardon" (3.3). Tacitus' wife and mother-in-law are supposed to keep in mind always the "deeds and words" (*facta dictaque*) of Agricola, and you are able to replicate him through your own "ways" (*moribus*, 46.3); the work begins with the question of handing down "deeds and ways" (*facta moresque*, 1.1). The book closes with an echo that proclaims the work's complete success in its aims: "Agricola, narrated and *handed down to posterity*, will have survived" (46.4) as we have seen calls to mind *Ag*. 1.1, "the practice of handing down to those who come after us the deeds and ways of illustrious men."[127] Last, Agricola as "survivor" (*superstes*, 46.4) parallels the preface's "survivors (*superstites*, 3.2) of our own selves."[128]

These reminiscences are dense with meaning. The preface defines the work as a reaction to wrong modes of reading, of representation, and of responding to virtue: there, we learn that *Agricola* will not obey the economics of Domitianic representation, or meet the expectations of an audience that regards great men with envy and intolerance, or assign blame when praise is called for. In *Ag*. 46 Tacitus assigns a gender to approved and disapproved varieties of reaction to Agricola. The women are inclined to lament him; Agricola ("may you call us," §1) and Tacitus urge them instead to marvel (*admiratione*, §2) and to keep "all his deeds and words" in mind (*omnia facta dictaque*, §3), to praise (*laudibus*, §2) him, and to emulate him (*similitudine colamus*, §2). What Tacitus tells them to do is, in effect, to memorize the biography ("keeping his deeds and words ever in their minds"), agree with its tenor ("with wonder and words of praise"), and conduct themselves accordingly ("with likeness to you"). Deprecation of feminine lament is a commonplace of ancient consolation literature, but its implications in this context are quite precise.[129] To miss and mourn the deceased is to allow that he is dead, and to allow that he is dead is to ratify Domitian's murder of him, which was the ultimate consequence of that

[127] For the echo, see Ogilvie and Richmond (1967 ad loc.). [128] Hedrick (2000: 165–6).
[129] "Deprecation": cf. Ogilvie and Richmond (1967 ad loc.) with references; discussion at Wilcox (2006: 74–6).

tyrant's attitude toward virtues. By contrast, by producing *Agricola* – that is, by praising Agricola and not grieving, by depicting his "deeds and ways" and not missing his presence – Tacitus undoes his murder and restores him to life: "Agricola, narrated and handed down to posterity, will have survived" (§4).

The womenfolk resemble Domitian in their failure to understand virtue, and in their confusion about the relationship of representation and reality. As he burned the biographies of the martyrs, supposing that their memory and what they stood for could thereby be repressed, so the women cling in vain to images that reproduce Agricola's appearance, not his mental constitution (*Ag.* 46.3). Against the perishability of "what is shaped in marble or bronze" is set the "mental shape" that "you can bring out in your character/ways" (46.3; this "mental shape" is, then, effectively equivalent to *mores*). Though their intentions differ from the tyrant's, then, these women nonetheless inhabit a Domitianic, pre-*Agricola* world. When Tacitus first entered the narrative, as the fiancé of Agricola's daughter, she was the link between him and his father-in-law (9.6). Now, at the end, the biography itself has superseded her as the link, in that it is now the son-in-law's book that truly understands Agricola and truly revives him, while she, in her confusion, simply accepts his murder as irreversible.[130]

At first glance it is puzzling that the closing paragraph reintroduces the antithesis of reality and representation. For if it is memory, and not the monument, that guarantees immortality, here at the conclusion *Agricola* would seem to confess that it itself is merely ancillary, that it is not after all the crucial intervention in Agricola's posthumous repute. Militating against this impression is the strong assertion of its centrality conveyed in the last sentence: "*narrated* and handed down, he will have survived." Narrative here *is* the "handing down" that separates him from the inglorious, and that makes the difference between memory and forgetting. We can account in other ways for the reappearance of this antithesis. Part of what is going on is that, by virtue of being correct representation, *Agricola* has itself become indistinguishable from memory: it is not just a voicing of memory, but memory itself, that is, the imprint left by the past. Thus it seems to forget its own materiality, its own consignment to papyrus, and in that way rather to form a contrast to the *imagines*. We find a similar mode of thinking in Sallust, in a passage that *Agricola* may ask us to recall:

[130] Along the way, the narrative has made clear that Agricola had no son who survived to adulthood, leaving Tacitus as the sole male heir to Agricola's legacy: he loses one boy at *Ag.* 6.2, then a second one at 29.1.

nam saepe ego audivi Q. Maxumum, P. Scipionem, <alios> praeterea civitatis nostrae praeclaros viros solitos ita dicere, quom maiorum imagines intuerentur, vehementissume sibi animum ad virtutem adcendi. (6) scilicet non ceram illam neque figuram tantam vim in sese habere, sed memoria rerum gestarum eam flammam egregiis viris in pectore crescere neque prius sedari quam virtus eorum famam atque gloriam adaequaverit. (*Jug.* 4.5–6)

For I have often heard it said that Q. Maximus, P. Scipio, and other luminaries of our society were accustomed to say that, when they beheld the *imagines* of their ancestors, their spirits were set burning with the most intense ardor for virtue. (6) Clearly they did not mean that that wax, or the shape, had so much power in itself, but that it was by the memory of deeds that that flame grew in the hearts of these excellent men and would not be abated till their virtue had equaled the fame and glory of their ancestors.

Here, too, the *imagines* are reduced to their material substance and shape, which are said not to matter in themselves but because they point to something else, to a memory of deeds. So too Agricola's *imagines* matter not – as the women wrongly suppose – on their own account but as handy yet dispensable pointers to a narrative account, the biography itself. This is *narratio* become *traditio*, an act of telling that, because it is true, is also an act of passing on.

The other part of what I suspect is going on here is that, at the end, Tacitus takes for granted his work's consequentiality. Once published, or recited, it becomes the memory of Agricola that Romans will carry around with them, a narrative and ethically evaluative account of what he did and what he was like. In other words, unlike the *imagines*, the biography is *not* an expendable ancillary to a more important, non-monumental, non-discursive preservation "in people's hearts" (*Ag.* 46.4); it *is* what people will preserve in their hearts. This is not a confession that it is a mere book that cannot compare to memory, but rather a declaration that it will be more than a book, will affect the world outside itself, by becoming memory that will never be degraded or replaced ("whatever we have loved in Agricola . . . abides and ever will abide hereafter," 46.4).

In the report of Agricola's life at Rome, we saw Domitian force him to participate in an effort to make himself forgotten. The *princeps*, for purposes of maintaining his own, fabricated repute, and Agricola, for purposes of preserving his own life, of being "a survivor," strove to keep down his irrepressible reputation. These assiduous but vain efforts to control the effects of fame had in the end led to Agricola's death; in giving the true record of his deeds, the book, reversing the ultimate extension of Domitian's misguided logic of representation, makes him a "survivor." If his end was

only the last act in an attempt to create amnesia, then Tacitus' restitution of memory corrects even the last step in Domitian's efforts. After *Agricola* the reality of imperial achievement, the integrity of its system of signification, and, in the resurrected Agricola, the person who stood for these things, remain; it is the *princeps* who is gone. In this way, *Agricola*'s vindication of Agricola is not just a settling of accounts between the biographer and his father-in-law or between words and deeds; it is also Tacitus' victory over Domitian in a contest of representations.[131]

In 98 CE Domitian was no longer manipulating memory. In fact, his own memory had come under attack, in the *damnatio memoriae* we first encountered above. By the time of *Agricola*, then, Domitian was already receiving at the hands of the Senate what he had imposed on Agricola: denial of his glory. The biography is a further, particularized contribution to this general *ethos* of "remembering to forget" the tyrant.[132] Earlier in this chapter I observed that the conspicuous absence of Domitian's name from the preface signals the biography's association with the *damnatio*. The presentation of Domitian in the rest of the work bears out this impression: it is exclusively vilifying, vilifying in the sense that it rightly depicts him as a tyrant, a depiction that in this case itself focuses on the tyrant's own criminally incorrect strategies of representation.[133] But the effect of *damnatio memoriae*, as much as vilification of a man himself, was nullification of the arrangements he had made when alive, abrogation of his *acta*. To that end, too, this work contributes a lot. The humiliating image of the *princeps* trying to pass slaves off as German captives undoes both his triumph and the victories to which that triumph was supposed to refer.[134] His overwhelming of writers and literary activity (*Ag*. 3.1) is nullified by the free circulation of *Agricola*. Finally, his implied efforts to cause Agricola's death are confounded when his biographer ends the work with an assertion of his

[131] Hedrick (2000: 169) prefers to see in Tacitus' writing of *Agricola* the aim of assuaging his own guilt for his complicity with Domitian's regime; along these lines see also Haynes (2006).

[132] The phrase is Hedrick's (2000). On denigration of predecessors as an act of support for the new regime, see Ramage (1989).

[133] This is not to say that Domitian did not deserve the abuse. Cf. Wilson (2003), who argues that post-Domitianic representations of Domitian were accurate – which, of course, does not mean there was not also a huge incentive to make him look as bad as possible. See Saller ([1990] 2000) for reservations about how accurate a historical picture of Domitian can be achieved.

[134] Nesselhauf (1986) argued that a purpose of *Germania*, which depicts decidedly unbowed Germans, was to undermine Domitian's claim that he had conquered them. In this sense, *Agricola* has the opposite effect on Domitian's triumph that the Arch of Titus has on the triumph for the Jewish War: that monument made durable the ephemeral day of triumph, which itself represented the conquest of Judaea, while Tacitus undoes both the ritual and the conquest. For a survey of and reflection on scholars' ideas about the purpose of *Germania*, see Rives (1999: 48–56).

father-in-law's survival. While Tacitus and his fellows had survived Domitian's death but had died under his tyranny ("survivors not only of others but even of our own selves," 3.2), Agricola had died under the tyranny but survived his own death: in this way, the tyrant's arrangements concerning life and death are made invalid, with the living as good as dead, and the dead brought back to life. In turn, by means of general condemnation, Domitian is made dead once and for all, instead of attaining that "posthumous" immortality that was the ambition of any *princeps*, but above all of the one who wished to be called "master and god" while he was alive.[135]

The paroxysm of rage that followed upon the coup is one sort of *damnatio* and may be variously imagined as the unbottling of resentments long restrained by fear or as a prudent collective show of approbation for a *fait accompli*. *Damnatio* had another role to play, less heated and more durable, but no less political. "Remembering to forget" Domitian long remained important: the regime had no interest in seeing him fade from view, since his tyranny was the centerpiece in the new regime's legitimacy, performing the same function for Trajan as Nero had for the Flavians, or the civil wars for Augustus.[136] *Agricola* inserts itself into this expansion and perpetuation of the *damnatio*: rejection of Domitian here becomes not merely the imposition of just sanction, but a universal correction of representation as it has been under Domitian (and possibly longer) and a recreation of the public sphere at Rome as a blank page.

This restoration of correct representation has broad implications. The famous passage at *Ag*. 42.4, discussed in chapter 1, makes Agricola's early choice between a philosophical and a military career central to our interpretation of the whole work:

> sciant, quibus moris est inlicita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse, obsequiumque ac modestiam, si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis excedere, quo plerique per abrupta sed nullum in rei publicae usum ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt.
>
> Let those whose habit is to wonder at forbidden activities know that in truth there can be great men under even bad *principes*, and that obedience and an unassuming manner, provided there be also hard work and spirit, attain the same degree of praise that others have – but most of these have taken a precipitous course that was of no utility to the *res publica* and have become famous through a self-seeking death.

This passage assumes an audience that no longer awards glory for military victory, handing it out to the martyrs instead. We must, I think, infer in the

[135] Cf. Suet. *Dom*. 13.2; Plin. *Pan*. 2.3, 7.6. See also Mart. 5.80.9, 9.66.3.
[136] See Flower (2006: 262–5) on Pliny's *gratiarum actio*.

discussion of Agricola's childhood that he aimed at the "great and exalted glory" (4.3) of a "philosophical" career not like the professor's but, rather, like that of Thrasea and Helvidius, whose conduct is in the literary tradition inseparable from their Stoic affiliations.[137] In this way does his original choice of careers resurface at this crucial point, so the publication of *Agricola*, by securing for its subject recognition for his conquests, demonstrating that glory can accrue to a good general, and so affirming his choice of career, aims to rectify a situation in which young men looking for glory would not turn to a life in the empire – or, in other words, a situation in which empire simply could not last long.

In fact, the pernicious effects on the empire are pointed out right away. When Agricola has returned to the city after his governorship and is submerged in silence, in a passage we have seen above, Roman dominion begins to totter:

> So many armies lost, in Moesia and Dacia, in Germania and Pannonia, through rashness or cowardice of their generals, so many military men and so many cohorts taken by siege and captured, so that now what was at stake was not the riverbank and the frontier of empire but rather the legionary camps themselves, and the prospect of keeping the province. (*Ag*. 41.2; Latin printed above, p. 99)

The lone causal connection between the silencing of Agricola and this series of catastrophes is that, had he instead been given a command, some of the setbacks might have been averted. More important is the association by collocation: Domitian's perverse way of recompensing his general's extension of the empire is followed closely by a halt in the advance, and even possibly a reversal of direction, which of course, if unchecked, spelled the end of the empire. The very lack of close causal connection here promotes the impression that, in *Agricola*, there is more at stake in its subject's fate than just the fame of one man.

While Tacitus seems to assert parity of glory between the perilous but fruitless career path of the martyrs and that achieved by military success, his treatment of Agricola's death suggests that making this argument is harder than he admits, and that a soldier's glory is not by itself adequate.

[137] Tacitus has Cossutianus Capito call the Stoics revolutionaries when he criticizes Thrasea before Nero (*Ann*. 16.22.4) and, when Tacitus introduces Helvidius, he makes special note of his commitment to Stoicism (*Hist*. 4.5.2). We may compare to Agricola's choice of "a soldier's glory" Helvidius' devotion to philosophy: *Hist*. 4.5.1, *ingenium inlustre altioribus studiis iuvenis admodum dedit, non, ut plerique*, *<ut> nomine magnifico segne otium velaret, sed quo firmior adversus fortuita rem publicam capesseret*. But no sooner has Tacitus declared that Helvidius was not interested in show, than we are told this: *Hist*. 4.6.1, *erant quibus adpetentior famae videretur, quando etiam sapientibus cupido gloriae novissima exuitur*. Helvidius' desire for glory is not strictly limited to philosophical glory, but the resistance to Vespasian for which he earns his glory is obviously connected to the principles and *constantia* associated with his Stoic convictions.

As at the beginning, so at the end, Agricola is shadowed by Thrasea and Helvidius: their autonomy and authenticity, verified in their own blood, set a maddening standard. Tacitus' task in trying to elevate his father-in-law to that standard is hard, and it shows in the text. He strongly hints that Domitian had a role in his end but refuses to state that he had him killed, and he leaves a bare outline to the story that, when stripped of innuendo, indicates no foul play, and possibly even some genuine concern for him, on Domitian's part. This has been read variously as a sign of the biographer's malice (in that he imputes to the *princeps* a guilt not his) or confirmation of his basic veracity (because, though eager to give proof of the tyrant's involvement, he could find none, would not invent any, and therefore made do with suggestion and reports of rumors).[138] In this odd report, we can also discern a strategy for securing Agricola's prestige. For Tacitus is in the unenviable position of needing him both to have died at the hands of Domitian and *not* to have died at the hands of Domitian.[139] On the one hand, he needs Agricola to have been killed by the *princeps*, to prove that relations between the two were not too cozy. If they had been, undesirable consequences would follow. First, the conquest of Britain would then be a success that Domitian smiled on, which would ruin the impression that Agricola conquered the island against, and in the end paid the price for confounding, the *princeps*' will. This impression was vital if his case was to have any chance against that of the martyrs in the competition for prestige. Yet Tacitus also needs Agricola *not* to have been killed, in order to make a distinction between the paths of prestige, that is, in order to make clear that there is a glory that does not consist only in the moment of death at the hands of the *princeps*. If he is killed by Domitian, his path loses much of its appeal, and it is no longer true that there can be "great men under bad *principes*" (*Ag*. 42.4) – or not for very long, at any rate.[140] In the case of Agricola, then, Tacitus is not simply commending behavior like Agricola's; rather, he

[138] "Malice": see e.g., Fraenkel (1986: 27–8). On the relationship between Agricola and Domitian, see, e.g., von Fritz (1957: 74–7), Dorey (1960), J. K. Evans (1976), Büchner (1962–79: IX.212–25), Christ (1978: 453–6), Benario (1979), Döpp (1985), Städele (1988), De Filippis Cappai (1989), and Petersmann (1991: 1800–3). On this passage as an example of Tacitean innuendo through rumor, see, e.g., Shatzman (1974: 569) and Sullivan (1976: 322–3).

[139] See Liebeschuetz (1966: 131), who does not feel the contradiction keenly: "it may be that [Tacitus'] main answer to those who estimated the value of a man's way of life by his readiness to risk death for it was to point out that Agricola's more cautious conduct was in the long run no less dangerous than that of the opposition group." Of course, Helvidius and Thrasea had not got themselves killed in a day, either: their deaths were the fruit of years of independence, noncompliance, insolence, and defiance.

[140] Büchner (1962–79: IX.214–15). Büchner, however, sees no grounds for saying that Tacitus suggests Domitian's complicity; to my mind, it is hard for this argument to get around the ambiguity in *festinatae mortis* (*Ag*. 44.5): cf. Schwinge (1963).

needs it both to succeed and not to succeed. By leaving the true conditions of his death unspecified, Tacitus at least attempts to exploit two mutually exclusive stories, when fully to endorse or to reject either would have been problematic.[141] This tension is played out further in the way he handles the chronology of his subject's life in the city: as many have remarked, no one would guess from the text that Agricola in fact spent nine long years at Rome before dying in August of 93 CE (44.1).[142] This ambiguous chronology also allows two discordant impressions to coexist: that Agricola's death is a direct, if somewhat delayed, result of his victories, and that he managed, through circumspection, to survive for some time (though not necessarily for the unseemly span of nine years).[143] This paradox mirrors the one we encountered above, about whether Agricola was conspicuous or not when in Rome.

Tacitus does not, then, rely only on the argument that "a soldier's glory" (*Ag*. 5.3, 39.2) is just as good as the "great and exalted glory" (4.3) of a philosophical career, even if that seems to be the direction he takes at *Ag*. 42.4. Instead, alongside that claim to glory for conquest, he also creates the impression that Agricola's life had *ended* in the same way as those of the martyrs, by drawing the attention and violence of the regime. It is not enough just to restore to Agricola the glory Domitian had suppressed; rather, part of Agricola's glory derives from the tyrant's having tried to suppress his glory and finally having suppressed *him*. Had it been certain that the criterion for glory would be whether Agricola had benefited the community, simply commemorating his achievements would suffice; that Tacitus also tries to claim for him the martyrs' mantle shows how far the distribution of prestige was now governed by another, in theory distinct, standard: namely, whether you had incurred the regime's hostility. For this reason it is vital to the biography's program that Agricola's achievements be celebrated not in straightforward encomium but in a way that also evokes the modes of public commemoration in which Domitian, out of hostility, strove to misrepresent him.

As we have seen, by framing Agricola's repute in terms of Domitian's hostility to it, Tacitus in a way equates him with the martyrs. Perhaps more

[141] See Edwards (2007: 133), who writes that Tacitus' insinuations of Domitian's involvement "could easily be read as an attempt on Tacitus' part to have it both ways."

[142] An anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press is reasonably reminded of the gap between Ovid's publication of the *Ars Amatoria* and his exile, which the poet neglects (Ov. *Tr*. 2.1).

[143] It also highlights the difference between British Agricola and urban Agricola; his time in the province is all chronology, summers and winters in a meticulously kept annalistic record (Petersmann 1991: 1798–9), while time ceases to matter at Rome, where there is no history, only a constant, inconspicuous silence continually threatened by eruptions of Agricola's *fama*.

surprisingly, this strategy also aligns Domitian and the martyrs. Both he and the admirers of the martyrs observe value systems that are antithetical to Agricola's good repute, the former by attempting to suppress it and the latter by failing to recognize it and preferring to fix their gaze on the martyrs. Furthermore, the tyrant and the martyrs both lay claim to distinction for things that do not actually exist, the former for his German victories and the latter for a freedom not really theirs ("empty boasts of freedom" [*Ag*. 42.3]). Domitian's treatment of virtue and the public obsession with the martyrs have similar consequences too. As we have seen, the regime's threats and the attention to the martyrs alike weaken incentives to conquest. What is more, elite distinction comes under siege as well, both because of Domitian's inclination to consume all available glory and by the degree to which the martyr-cult lies, in an odd sense, in the hands of the *principes* who grant or deny martyrdom. In the previous chapter we saw that Tacitus' syncrisis of Antistius Labeo and Ateius Capito (*Ann*. 3.75) shows Augustus failing to adjust their repute in the manner he intended but nonetheless proving to be the deciding factor in how much they actually achieved. The same logic also makes the martyrs' fame problematic, because it is a variety of repute that can only be won by members of an elite already in subjection; without a *princeps* there could be no martyrs. By this logic, the inseparable companion of martyrdom was the implied degradation of all those who had not acheived their own deaths.

The generic identity of *Agricola* is a favorite topic of the commentators, for obvious reasons: it seems to wear its variety on its face. Syme's recommendation that we leave it in a class by itself makes sense, since there really is nothing else quite like it.[144] Even so, the question of genre matters to the work, which invokes multiple genres, pointedly, and even, as I have suggested, some modes of representation that are not strictly literary at all but cultural practices. The multiplicity of generic claims that can be made for the book might be thought useful for the special purpose of portraying Agricola's life, in that he was involved in events that merited treatment in a history, produced new knowledge that permitted better ethnography, and so forth; some part of the phenomenon might be attributed as well to Tacitus' supposed aim of "practicing" in this work the assorted modes into which historiography itself may be resolved. The present discussion has contributed another imaginable explanation: since the crisis of representation to which it responds is so broad, and its effects so pervasive, *Agricola* must respond on multiple fronts, in several genres, and in ways

[144] Syme (1958: 125).

that even transcend the narrowly literary. It is not simply the biography of Agricola that was forbidden from publication under Domitian, but rather all literary endeavor (*ingenia* and *studia*, in the language of the preface [*Ag.* 3.1]); but then, too, it was not merely literature that was suppressed, but *vox* of every sort, any representation that one Roman made before another. Just as for a catalogue of the Achaean hosts at Troy, perhaps not even ten tongues would suffice (*Il.* 2.488–90).

Yet despite the reference to the suppression of writers and literature, *Agricola* is not discernibly interested in a general renaissance of letters. The writing that piques its interest is, first, the biographies of Thrasea and Helvidius, together with the other martyrdom-focused material evoked in *Ag.* 42.3–4; this literature has already been written and is, more significantly, now to be superseded by *Agricola*. The second sort of writing in which the work is interested is more Tacitus, much more Tacitus. Though it is hardly fair to expect him to give equal time to other authors in his preface, the work's claims for its unique place in its era are striking. The reawakening of literature it imagines occurs, above all, in *Agricola* itself (such is the force of "now at last is our courage returning," 3.1); a future work by Tacitus will restore to public representation the memory of the Domitianic servitude; and, finally, under the auspices of the new regime, that work will also renew the long-lost practice of depicting the state of Rome in the present, rather than at a safe temporal distance ("an attestation to our present good fortune," 3.3). All of this points to the centrality of Tacitus himself in the new era, whether we imagine his career as merely the lone and sufficient literary complement to that era or as a factor that itself makes the era different from the one that had preceded it. The image of his authorial activity as something unexampled, and very different from other writing of the time, confronts us with regularity throughout the *œuvre*; I will investigate this image and its implications further in the next chapter.

Earlier, when we looked at the ways in which Tacitus distinguishes himself from previous writers of ethnographical accounts of Britain, I identified a sense in which *Agricola* contrasts itself with "mere" words and so seems to align itself implicitly with action. In a larger sense, when *Agricola* assumes the character of the broad range of representational practices that it does, in particular that of the triumph, it asks to be taken as a lot more than a book. To the degree that the biography claims to restore a healthy and correct system of representation and to restore to all what they are due, it encourages us to treat as negligible the obvious senses in which a little book is not a triumph. But, paradoxically, it also builds the moral force of its argument from the axiom that nothing that you could get "instead

of a triumph" (*Ag*. 40.1) is as good as a triumph. Even though observers were quite clear that Domitian's triumph referred to no actual victories – this is the point of the derision (39.1) – and the effort was therefore an utter failure, it still mattered that he had ridden in the chariot, had been seen in procession, and had dedicated the spoils. Likewise, even if everyone knew Agricola had been the author of real victories that merited a triumph and accordingly celebrated him with "massive fame" (*ingenti fama*, 39.1), it remains a crime that he was not permitted to "enjoy that day's harvest of popularity" (Liv. 4.20.3). On this analysis, there is a very great gulf between actually participating in the spectacle and merely getting non-spectacular recognition meant to affirm that a victory deserved a triumph, even if it did not receive one. At the same time as *Agricola* implies its equivalence to public celebration of successful conquest, it has also to insist that only a triumph is a triumph and therefore to suggest that writing, like *ornamenta triumphalia*, can only serve inadequately "in place of a triumph."

This tension is thematic in Tacitus' work: it tries to substitute writing, which is under his exclusive control, for various representational modes and media that have been taken over by *principes*, but it is able to do so *only because* it *is* only writing and not a temple or a triumph. The result is that his writing gives the impression not of smoothly substituting itself for other modes of representation but of straining constantly against its medium, acknowledging here and there that writing is, after all, only writing, but also regularly entertaining huge ambitions and hopes of transcending the page.

CHAPTER 3

The burdens of Histories

In many respects we can look at Tacitus' historiographical career, as represented by *Histories* and *Annals*, as the working out, in greater variety and detail, of the central concerns of *Agricola*. An important difference stands out, and it is from that difference that this chapter takes its cue. In *Agricola* and *Histories* alike, his writing is occasioned by a political problem, but it is a different problem in each case. In the biography he positions his project against Domitian's legacy. It was the late tyrant who caused the silence Tacitus now breaks, who suppressed Agricola's glory, who uncoupled representation from reality. As we have seen, by taking this position in *Agricola*, Tacitus aligns himself with the current regime: he and Trajan become partners in the labor of erasing the last Flavian and restoring the world. The preface of the biography does, significantly, establish that Tacitus has not written the book *for* Trajan, but the real antagonist of the book, for Tacitus as for Agricola, is Domitian. The recent coup made him an ideal opponent in 98 CE: everyone hated him (or at least that was the story now) and his memory was fresh, but he was powerless to retaliate.

His appeal as a target could only wane with time. It is true that attacks on Domitian remained an important element in praise of Trajan.[1] But to frame a whole career as an extended act of opposition to a dead man was something else altogether, and it is not the route that Tacitus' work takes. In the preface of *Histories* his career undergoes a real shift. He still confronts a menace to society, to representation, and to historical writing, but the menace has become bigger, and more diffuse, as he redirects our attention from the failings of a particular *princeps* to the Principate itself as an institution, or, better, as a total sociopolitical configuration.

We must not exaggerate this shift, since we have already seen that *Agricola* itself clearly views Domitian as the creature of an institutional problem.

[1] Ramage (1989); cf. Plin. *Pan. passim*, *Ep.* 8.14.2–3, 9.12.23, 10.2.2–3; Mart. 10.72, 12.6; Fron. *Aq.* 118; Juv. 4.

Whatever tendencies in that direction the work shows are, however, overshadowed by the vivid portrayal of the tyrant's personal wickedness, which we are encouraged to see as different in quality and degree from the faults of even his worst predecessors.[2] We might explain the shift as a reflection of the historian's maturing political judgment, and indeed some scholars used to believe they could see him souring on the Principate over the course of his work, from his high hopes for the new regime at the opening of *Agricola* to a grim resignation, by *Annals*, to the thought that Rome had always been doomed to monarchy. Yet *Agricola* is not what you would call a naive work. The author of its preface knows that the political circumstances it deplores could be construed as a function of the difference between "the old days" (i.e., the Republic) and "our era."[3] For good reasons, however, he proceeds in the rest of the work as if the difference that mattered most was that between good and bad *principes*, not between good and bad constitutions. The basic premise of *Agricola*'s historical moment was that the difference between one *princeps* and another could be total and could totally transform the relationship between *princeps* and elite. Illustrative is Pliny's proclamation early in his "Speech of Thanksgiving":

> Equidem non consuli modo sed omnibus civibus enitendum reor, ne quid de principe nostro ita dicant, ut idem illud de alio dici potuisse videatur. (2) quare abeant ac recedant voces illae quas metus exprimebat. nihil quale ante dicamus; nihil enim quale antea patimur; nec eadem de principe palam quae prius praedicemus, neque enim eadem secreto quae prius loquimur. (3) discernatur orationibus nostris diversitas temporum, et ex ipso genere gratiarum agendarum intelligatur, cui quando sint actae. (*Pan*. 2.1–3)

> In my opinion, it is incumbent not just on the consul but on each and every citizen to take the utmost care to say nothing about our *princeps* in such a way that one could imagine the same remark being made about another *princeps*. (2) Let us do away with the expressions that fear used to extort. Let us not say anything like what we used to say once upon a time, for we are not made to endure anything like what we were made to endure once upon a time. Let us also, then, refrain from making the same public pronouncements as before, for we do not now say in private what we used to say. (3) Let the difference between the eras be made clear by our speeches, and let it be understood from the very character of the thanks we offer to whom, and when, they were offered.

In this light, Tacitus' stance in *Agricola* makes good sense, without requiring us to postulate a later epiphany.

[2] See *Ag*. 45.2, which identifies an important respect in which Domitian's tyranny was even more oppressive than Nero's.

[3] Christ (1978: 455).

We can also explain the shift that *Histories*' preface effects in these terms. *Agricola*'s struggle against Domitian, which had proved so serviceable in launching a career, was no way to maintain one. Tacitus makes the problem over which his writing must triumph an institutional rather than a personal one and thus converts the act of resistance that is the biography into a durable career. So long as there are *principes* of any sort, there will be a need for Tacitus' writing.

This chapter looks at how *Histories*, and in particular its preface, goes about reconfiguring Tacitus' career. In the first part we look at the history of historiography that he constructs in the preface, keeping (for the moment, as he does) its implications for *Histories* at arm's length. His account serves, above all, to make the genre's development inseparable from the political history of the state. In the second part, with a firmer grasp of the nuances of his history of historiography, we turn to the central topic implicit in it: how does it bear on the program of *Histories*, and where do *Histories* and Tacitus' career fit into it? By tying generic change to the Principate's fundamental redistribution of power within society, Tacitus prompts doubts about whether his own work can exempt itself from its own narrative of the genre's decline. He ties *Histories*' prospects of success, I will argue, to his own rare ability to resist those forces that have corrupted every other history written since Actium. In the third part we will consider to what extent the specific concerns of the preface interact with the rest of the narrative. This discussion will propose that our reading of the preface is not organically separable from the narrative, and that the narrative insists on the enduring relationship between the narrated events, our access to those events, and the historian's decisive command over his book. The preface, though brief, matters a great deal for his construction of his career. In a sense, *Histories* and Tacitus' career seem to occur in a space that exists outside the Principate, as both historical era and political configuration. I proceed in a fourth section to suggest some Roman cultural models for conceiving what this space might look like.

ROMAN HISTORY AND THE HISTORY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

Initium mihi operis Servius Galba iterum Titus Vinius consules erunt. nam post conditam urbem octingentos et viginti prioris aevi annos multi auctores rettulerunt, dum res populi Romani memorabantur, pari eloquentia ac libertate: postquam bellatum apud Actium atque omnem potentiam ad unum conferri pacis interfuit, magna illa ingenia cessere; simul veritas pluribus modis infracta, primum inscitia rei publicae ut alienae, mox libidine adsentandi aut rursus odio adversus dominantes: ita neutris cura posteritatis inter <in>fensos vel obnoxios. (2) sed ambitionem

scriptoris facile averseris, obtrectatio et livor pronis auribus accipiuntur; quippe adulationi foedum crimen servitutis, malignitati falsa species libertatis inest. (*Hist.* 1.1.1–2)

The beginning of my work will be the consulship of Servius Galba (for the second time) and Titus Vinius. For the eight hundred and twenty years after the city was founded have been reported by many authors: while the affairs of the Roman people were being reported, it was with eloquence and freedom in equal measure; and after the battle took place at Actium and it was in the interests of peace that the totality of power be transferred to one man alone, those great talents withdrew, and at the same time the truth was shattered in numerous ways, first through ignorance of the *res publica* as though it were someone else's, and then through a lust for flattery or alternatively a hatred for those in a position of mastery: to such a degree has neither group had concern for posterity, when they were either hostile or subservient. (2) Now, one can easily dismiss ambition in a writer, but detraction and spitefulness are met with willing ears: for with flattery comes the sordid charge of slavishness, but with malice a false appearance of freedom.

Tacitus does not hold the surprise in reserve: before anything else, we learn that the present work begins some thirteen years before the "former servitude" (*prioris servitutis*), if at *Ag.* 3.3 we took that term to mean "the principate of Domitian." This change means the replotting of a career that seemed clear in the biography. When he predicted an account of that servitude and an "attestation to our present good fortune" (*Ag.* 3.3), that was a career centered on the Domitian event.[4] The program of *Histories* was bound to change, because of the problems of talking about Trajan under Trajan: as we will see, that was a book Tacitus could never have written. Yet the *memoria servitutis* changes as well: *Histories* treats not merely Domitian's principate but also the upheaval of 69 CE and the rule of Vespasian and Titus. This expansion of the project mattered, too. It changed the implications of Tacitus' work, and revised his relationship to the current regime. Criticizing Domitian inevitably seemed to be an act of solidarity with the new *princeps*, but it was less clear what it meant to write about Vespasian, or about anything other than the present or the previous *princeps*.

With confident authority, Tacitus first pronounces that his work will begin at the opening of 69 CE, and only then he seems to begin explaining why. *Nam*, "for" (*Hist.* 1.1.1), has much work to do, and the words that follow it assure us that the reasons for beginning here and not elsewhere are big and important and fit into a grand scheme. "The eight hundred and

[4] For the implied scope of this work, see Sage (1990: 864–5), although it seems strange to speculate about how much space Tacitus planned to give the *testimonium praesentium bonorum* relative to the *memoria servitutis* when the point of mentioning the *testimonium* was to avoid ever having to write it.

twenty years after the city was founded" (§1) takes us to the largest scale Roman history could embrace and implies that he has chosen his starting point for reasons of similarly great scope.[5] As the sentence proceeds, other associations emerge: we are soon made to feel we are beginning here because of important, long-term developments in the history of historiography and because of the epochal change from Republic to Principate. As we will see below, a harder retrospective look at this second sentence raises doubts about just how much any of these considerations has to do with the choice of starting date, but, on first reading, the preface fairly overwhelms us with weighty justification. Beginnings always matter, but these early exertions make the beginning of *Histories* into a question of deep importance for what Tacitus' work, and his career, mean.

In the discussion that follows in this section we will look at how Tacitus merges his history of historiography into the political history of Rome. On one hand, he situates generic change within the large-scale, institutional change in Roman society, the revolution that reassigned power and knowledge from the people of Rome to a single person. Yet the literary consequences of this reassignment are to be found in its creation of a new set of relations of reciprocity between individual historians and the new figure of the *princeps*: although historiography has declined for large, historical reasons, the decline has consisted in a series of individual literary failures brought about through the engagement of historians in exchange relationships with *principes*. These relationships have damaged the writing of history not simply because historians have falsified their narratives but also because historians have become involved emotionally in these relationships. Because Tacitus describes the relationship between historian and *princeps* in terms that evoke that between slave and master, this emotional engagement means that, in his portrayal, his predecessors in writing history under the Principate have in effect become slaves, hating or loving their master and writing accordingly.

Although Tacitus does not overtly set his own work into his narrative of the genre, the prospects of *Histories* are, inevitably, the subtext: he begins with a history of historiography not because of that subject's intrinsic interest, but because it bears on our interpretation of his book. While in this section I will focus on describing the history itself, then, and not yet on exploring its implications for *Histories*, it will be important to keep in mind

[5] At *Ann.* 1.1.1 Tacitus does this again, though he breaks up his history of historiography differently. For obvious reasons, Livy too achieves a "from the beginning" scope in his preface (*Praef.* 1), but even Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* (6.1) does this, going back even to the beginning of human society (2.1).

that it has been written not as an absolute exposition of the history of historiography but in order to produce in us a set of impressions of this particular work of history.[6]

Constitutional history

Though challenges have been voiced, most scholars would paraphrase Tacitus' periodization in *Hist*. I.I.I like this: "many writers have recorded the eight hundred and twenty years of the period before 69 CE. When the subject matter was Republican history, they did so with equal amounts of eloquence and freedom. After the battle of Actium, historians of that sort disappeared."[7] Though the thought seems tidy and clear, it is thick with significance and makes assumptions worth inspecting about the interrelationship of the history of the Roman constitution and the history of historiography.

Here the subject matter of historiography has shifted in two related respects: there were changes in what may be termed the "agency" and the "ownership" of history. Both are society-wide issues, having to do with the location of power within society and with the political form of the state. What distinguishes the two periods in the passage is the identity of the agent: after Actium, the agency of history was placed in the hands of one man and therefore a historical narrative of the post-Actium period necessarily became the *res gestae* of that man, or "things one man has done."[8] At Actium, then, Roman history changed from a Republican record of

[6] Marincola (1999b) has already taken an important step along these lines by attributing the change from *Histories* to *Annals* in Tacitus' periodization of the history of historiography to the rhetorical exigencies peculiar to each of those works, rather than to a shift in Tacitus' opinions. Though a lot of my discussion in this chapter turns on an explicit literary history, rather than one evoked allusively, Hinds' (1998: 124) formulation about Statius can, *mutatis mutandis*, serve to characterize what I mean this analysis to do: "rather than taking as given a tradition, viz. that of epic, which Statius inherits and against which his own *Achilleid* is to be measured, I want to read Statius not just as the creator of the *Achilleid* but also as the creator of the traditions which he himself calls into being to account for the *Achilleid*-ness of the *Achilleid*. Statius' epic is to be read not in 'the' epic tradition but in *Statius*' epic tradition, which looks very much like the epic tradition familiar from Quintilian to Conte but is not – indeed cannot be – quite the same."

[7] I will discuss below the different interpretation of Büchner (1962–79: IV.43–60).

[8] *Res gestae populi Romani*, for which *res populi Romani* is a kind of shorthand, acquires the meaning "Roman history" through the idea that the things that happened in Rome, in the empire, and in Rome's relations with foreign peoples, were the doing of the Roman citizenry. (Cf. e.g. Cic. *Inv*. I.27, *historia est gesta res, ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota*; Liv. 2.1.1, *populi Romani res pace belloque gestas*; Sal. *Hist*. fr. 1 Maurenbrecher, *Res populi Romani M. Lepido Q. Catulo consulibus ac deinde militiae et domi gestas conposui*.) The phrase has different connotations from those of the English "history," or even the German "*Geschichte*": the "history" of a period is a narrative of the things that happened during it, but *res gestae* are organized around a single actor who brought them about. The intimate relationship between *res gestae* and agency can also be felt in the common expression for "to engage

the achievements of the Romans into a post-Republican record of the achievements of the *princeps*.[9] Closely linked to this question of agency is that of ownership. Leeman captures the force of Tacitus' wordplay when he construes his statement that "truth was broken . . . through *inscitia rei publicae ut alienae*" as "truth was broken . . . through ignorance of the *res* of the *populus* because it was a *res* of someone else."[10] The phrase has to do with ownership of the apparatus of state and of agency within it: the truth was corrupted by historians' ignorance of what was no longer "the business of the citizenry" but "somebody else's business" – in effect, a *res privata*, "private property."[11] Leeman goes on to link the antithesis between *res publica* and *res aliena* to Tacitus' description of pre-Actium historical material as *res populi Romani*. Of course, in each case the word *res* means something different: the earlier, plural *res* means "achievements of the agency of the Roman people" while the later, singular one signifies something like "the institutions and activities of state." The kinds of *res* are, however, linked in a very obvious way: "the achievements of the people of Rome" is a relevant concept only when the "institutions and activities of state" belong to the people of Rome, and if the institutions and activities

in political activity," *rem publicam gerere*. To write *res gestae* is then to depict, in the present, completed acts of *rem publicam gerere*. The genitive *populi Romani* provides the notional subject to the verbal idea of the participle *gestae*; if we were to convert the nominal phrase to an equivalent clause, we would come up with *quae gessit populus Romanus*, "things the Roman people has done." Cf. Drexler (1970: 12). That narrative history under the Principate could be described in this way is seen in *Ann*. 1.1.2, *Tiberii Gaiique et Claudii ac Neronis res*.

9 "[Hier] bilden *res populi Romani* und *potentia unius* eine genau entsprechende Antithese," Drexler (1970: 14); similarly Häussler (1965: 239). It is often said – cf. e.g. Leeman (1973: 176) – that the first sentence of *Histories* invokes that of Sallust's *Histories*: fr. 1 Maurenbrecher, *Res populi Romani M. Lepido Q. Catulo consulibus ac deinde militiae et domi gestas conposui*. I would argue that it is further significant that Tacitus splits the allusion, so that the first three words of Sallust's work are used only later, to characterize Republican historiography (*dum res populi Romani* . . .). For Tacitus' engagement in the preface with Cicero's prescriptions for historiography, see Woodman (1998: 108–11).

10 Leeman (1973: 180–1). Scipio's explanation of *res publica* as *res populi* (Cic. *Rep*. 1.39) was obvious: the "state" is "the people's business" (for the difficulty involved in translating the expression, see Zetzel [1995 ad loc.]). Here in the preface of *Histories* the possessive adjective *alienus* ("belonging to someone else, '*alius*' ") causes us to feel *publicus* as a possessive as well ("belonging to the people, '*populus*' "). Older readings of the phrase *inscitia rei publicae ut alienae* take it as a jab at non-politicians who had written histories uninformed by practical acquaintance with government; the qualifications of the consular Tacitus stand out in implicit contrast, and the truth of *Histories* is therefore not at risk at least on this score. This misconstrual renders problematic part of each discussion of the passage prior to Leeman: see, for example, Steinmetz (1968: 261), but the problem remains at Fornara (1983: 55) and Marincola (1997: 144, 166).

11 Christes (1995: 145) refines Leeman's reading by pointing out that *ut* in Tacitus, like the Greek ὡς, does not usually attribute a cause for which the author vouches but instead assigns reasoning to an actor in the text (with which reasoning the author may or may not agree): Leeman's interpretation would then be modified to "through ignorance of the *res* of the *populus* because *it was thought to be* a *res* of 'someone else.'"

of state come instead into the possession of "someone else" then the material of history can only be articulated as "the achievements of someone else."

The period after Actium thus poses a politically inflected epistemological problem: limitation of access to *res gestae*. Full knowledge of what was done was available to the *princeps*, and, while he might not be able to produce total ignorance about what things had happened, historians might have access to, and therefore knowledge of, only a partial record of the *res gestae*, or might think some things had been done that had not in fact been done at all.[12] Under these circumstances, the lone person with adequate knowledge to produce a text that reported everything that really had been done – and nothing that had not – was the *princeps* himself. A historian of the Republic, it seems, had only to convert *res gestae* into text, while historians working on and under the Principate faced an important intermediate stage: in effect, for them the *princeps* becomes a historian on whose work they must draw at one remove. At the same time, of course, any *princeps* will from time to time have a positive interest in abusing his arbitership of the *res gestae* in order to promulgate an account more favorable to himself than the truth. This account in turn will corrupt the work of historians who take what the *princeps* says are the *res gestae* for the real *res gestae* and who simply do not know about those *res gestae* that the *princeps* has been able to keep from becoming public knowledge.[13]

For Tacitus, the watershed of Actium also expresses a shift in "mode," in the conditions under which historians converted the material of history into writing. The prior period was recorded with *libertas* and *eloquentia*; in the latter, the "great literary lights" left the scene and truth became compromised (*Hist*. 1.1.1).[14] *Libertas* here is usually taken to mean "candor"; in this sense, the word would indicate that external considerations do not prevent the author from saying what really happened, or correctly evaluating a person or event.[15] But whenever *libertas* is used to characterize Roman history before Augustus, it brings with it a broader range of meaning. With the establishment of the Republic, the Roman people had become "free,"

[12] Cf. Cass. Dio 53.19.4, discussed below.

[13] Fabia (1901: 66) points out that Tacitus also does not distinguish between true impartiality and good faith (which can unwittingly fail to be impartial); cf. also Flach (1973a: 71): "Est ist bezeichnend, daß er die Unzuverlässigkeit des menschlichen Gedächtnisses als mögliche Fehlerquelle keiner Erörterung würdigt." One explanation would be that, for the purposes of the preface of *Histories*, Tacitus has no interest in obstacles to representation of truth that do not have direct political causes.

[14] On the historians Tacitus dismisses here, see Klingner (1958b), Noè (1984), and Timpe (1987a).

[15] On candor in historiographical programmatics, see Avenarius (1956: 40–6). Sallust's prefatory remarks to his assessment of Sulla contain a good example: *Jug*. 95.2, *L. Sisenna, optume et diligentissume omnium qui eas res dixere persecutus, parum mihi libero ore locutus videtur*. Badian (1962: 50–1) expands on Sisenna's allegiance to Sulla.

a description that implicitly opposes an earlier condition of autonomy and self-determination to a present condition of subordination and servitude.[16] The antonym of this kind of *libertas* is *servitium* ("slavery") or, alternatively, *dominatio* ("rule by a master"); in this imagination of the difference between Republic and Principate, the Roman people, once a body of free citizens at least notionally equal by virtue of common citizenship, is now a collection of slaves belonging to a single master.[17] This pattern of thought is so pervasive in the literature of the Principate that this sense of *libertas* must be present here as well, an impression soon only reinforced by the words "that the totality of power be transferred to one man alone" (*omnem potentiam ad unum conferri*, 1.1.1). In Tacitus' formulation, the "candor" of the historians of the Republic is suspiciously coterminous with the "freedom" of the state.

Likewise, the violence done to truth begins with the Principate. While historians wrote with *libertas*, truth remained intact. At the least, it is implied that when a historian wrote only what he really thought for the sole reason that he really thought it, his work transmitted uncompromised truth.[18] And if we allow that there are additional connotations of "political liberty" contained in the word *libertas* here, we come away with the impression that the political sovereignty of the Roman people that allowed the subject matter of the history of that period properly to be termed the *res populi Romani* also guaranteed that a writer working in that period in fact placed the truth of those *res* into his book.

This pairing of *eloquentia* and *libertas* as phenomena of the old days is exampled in Tacitus' *Dialogus*. Maternus encourages Messalla to speak without fear: "'Go on,' said Maternus, 'and since you are talking about the people of yore, speak with the candor of the days of yore, from which we have sunk perhaps even farther than we have from their eloquence'" (*"Perge" inquit Maternus "et cum de antiquis loquaris utere antiqua libertate, <a> qua vel magis degeneravimus quam ab eloquentia," Dial.* 27.3).[19] Later, in the work's last speech (36–41), Maternus directly links the loss of great *eloquentia* to the political change since the late Republic:

[16] Cf. *Ag.* 2.3: *sicut vetus aetas vidit quid ultimum in libertate, ita nos quid in servitute*. For a full and persuasive argument for the pervasiveness in elite discourse of the metaphor of master–slave relations as a way of thinking through elite relations with the *princeps*, see Roller (2001: 213–87). For the Republic as freedom as opposed to slavery under the monarchy, cf. Liv. 2.1.1, *Liberi iam hinc populi Romani*.

[17] On the kind of equality implied by *libertas*, see Wirszubski (1968: 9–15).

[18] As we will see, at the close of the preface Tacitus again picks up on the close relationship between "saying what you really think" and successful historiography, but to different ends: *rara temporum felicitate, ubi sentire quae velis et quae sentias dicere licet* (1.1.4).

[19] For *libertas* here as "free expression," see Güngerich (1980 ad loc.) and Mayer (2001 ad 10.8).

"Non de otiosa et quieta re loquimur et quae probitate et modestia gaudeat, sed est magna illa et notabilis eloquentia alumna licentiae, quam stulti libertatem vocant . . . (4) . . . nostra quoque civitas, donec erravit, donec se partibus et dissensionibus et discordiis confecit, donec nulla fuit in foro pax, nulla in senatu concordia, nulla in iudiciis moderatio, nulla superiorum reverentia, nullus magistratuum modus, tulit sine dubio valentiorem eloquentiam, sicut indomitus ager habet quasdam herbas laetiores." (*Dial.* 40.2, 4)

"We are not talking about a pacific, gentle thing that loves rectitude and restraint; your grand, eye-catching eloquence is, rather, the nursling of license, which fools call liberty . . . Our state, too, while it strayed, while it wore itself down in faction, strife, and discord, while there was no peace in the Forum, no harmony in the Senate, no restraint in the courts, no respect for betters, no check on magistrates, then, to be sure, it brought forth an eloquence that was more robust, just as in an uncultivated field certain grasses may thrive."

The parallel with *Histories*' preface is not exact, since the *eloquentia* of *Dialogus* means something like "the practice of skilled public speaking" while in this passage of *Histories* it is "aesthetically appealing use of language."[20] Nonetheless it seems secure that, as in *Dialogus*, Tacitus portrays linguistic virtuosity, like *libertas*, as occurring with Republican government, and departing the scene at its end: "those great talents withdrew" (*Hist.* 1.1.1).

While it is easy to see what the revolution had to do with *libertas*, what we lack in the preface of *Histories* is any compelling reason, such as that furnished by Maternus' extensive explanation, why the political revolution should have meant the loss of *eloquentia*. It will not do to treat "with equal eloquence and freedom" (*Hist.* 1.1.1) as a more florid way of saying "well"; few words are wasted in this carefully wrought preface – for this reason we cannot just ignore *eloquentia* – and the adjective *pari* virtually binds the fate of *eloquentia* to that of *libertas*. Though later in this chapter I will offer a further explanation for this pairing, here I would suggest that the grouping fits into the preface's larger program of fusing the literary and the political. *Libertas*, as both "candor" and "political freedom," mediates these categories, and, by partnering with *eloquentia*, which is a primarily aesthetic matter, draws into the narrative of politically driven generic decline even those aspects of literature least obviously susceptible to political influence.[21] To return to *Dialogus* for more illustration, while it is perfectly possible to exclude Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus from having *libertas*, "independence," it is only by narrowly defining *eloquentia* as "political oratory"

[20] The two qualities are linked in Seneca's description of Cremutius Cordus' history in the *Consolatio ad Marciam* (*Dial.* 6.1.4).

[21] Accordingly, I agree only in part with Drexler (1965: 150) that the *eloquentia* theme is quickly forgotten in favor of matters of *libertas*: I would rather say *eloquentia* is enfolded into *libertas*.

and not "linguistic and performative skill" that Maternus can deny it to them, and *eloquentia* certainly cannot be taken to mean "political oratory" in the preface of *Histories*.[22]

This part of the preface also fuses the literary and the political in two other significant ways. For one thing, while the preface apparently offers a comprehensive picture of the history of Roman historiography, it nonetheless permits one sort of historical writing to slip through the cracks. Historical writing in the former era is defined by the time period narrated, that is, the Republic, but in the latter, by the time of narration, that is, the time during which historians wrote. Republican historians obviously wrote only Republican history, but historians after Actium wrote pre-Actium as well as post-Actium history. Tacitus' scheme thus confuses "post-Republican writing of history" with "the writing of post-Republican history." This formulation does not just conveniently avoid overspecificity, but confounds the political and the literary in a way consistent with the larger scheme of the preface: historiography is interwoven so closely with the life of the state that to distinguish between time of event and time of writing becomes irrelevant.

This combination of the literary and the political is, on reflection, exampled also in Tacitus' easy linking of the *res* of *res gestae* with the *res* of *res publica*: discretion over the *res publica* means control over what the state does (*rem gerere*), which is in retrospect "history" (*res gestae*) and is written up in a "work of history" (*res gestae*). What we initially distinguished as "subject matter" and "mode" are ultimately shown to be entangled and inseparable: it is not that a reader would not recognize that these are separate categories of analysis, but rather that Tacitus presents them as separate, then overwhelms them with points of contact.

The preface takes for granted that the history of historiography is related at the most basic level to the political development of the Roman state. To scholars this may seem not only correct but obviously so, but it was not necessarily self-evident at the time.[23] Historians writing in Latin between Livy and Tacitus are lost to us, for the most part, and we do not have a great deal more than Tacitus' own judgment in *Histories*' preface to tell us what they were like. Furthermore, while writing history was a venture political in color and might in fact seem to be "politics by other means," it was traditionally associated with, if anything, an adverse political environment: you took up history because things had soured for you in that arena, not because civic culture was healthy. In fact, we might construct a different narrative

[22] See Maternus on the precarious existence of Marcellus and Crispus (*Dial.* 13.4).

[23] So, for example, for Giua (1985) at *Ann.* 4.32–3 and in the preface of *Histories* Tacitus *discovers*, rather than argues, that the character of the government conditions how historians write.

altogether, in which historiography flourished only once the Republic had been dealt its last blow: Sallust and Asinius Pollio were post-Caesarian, Livy and Pompeius Trogus Augustan, and others followed. My point is not that Tacitus is wrong, but that he gives the appearance of inevitability to something he still has to prove, and that the rhetoric of the preface is part of a strategy for supplying that proof.

Dialogus shows that other stories could be told. Over the course of the dialogue the participants advance different perspectives on Fabius Justus' query that Tacitus says has occasioned his writing:

cur, cum priora saecula tot eminentium oratorum ingeniis gloriaque floruerint, nostra potissimum aetas deserta et laude eloquentiae orbata vix nomen ipsum oratoris retineat; neque enim ita appellamus nisi antiquos, horum autem temporum diserti causidici et advocati et patroni et quidvis potius quam oratores vocantur. (*Dial.* 1.1)

Why, though earlier eras flourished with the talents and glory of so many outstanding orators, our age in particular, barren and bereft of praise for eloquence, barely hangs on to the word "orator" – in fact, we do not use that term at all of anyone but the ancients, calling the men of these times instead "skilled speakers," "pleaders," "attorneys," "advocates" – anything but "orators."

Tacitus here implicitly rejects the notion that oratory has not declined, but he also sets up an interesting articulation of the possible explanations:

cui percontationi tuae respondere, et tam magnae quaestionis pondus excipere ut aut de ingeniis nostris male existimandum <sit> si idem adsequi non possumus aut de iudiciis si nolumus, vix hercule auderem . . . (1.2)

By Hercules, I'd hardly dare to answer your inquiries and shoulder the burden of so momentous an investigation, which would mean taking a dim view either of our natural gifts, if it is the case that we are unable to attain the same heights [sc. as earlier generations], or of our judgment, if it is rather a matter of our not wishing to attain them.

The rest of the work shows this to be a false choice. No one defends the position that people of "our age" (1.1) are naturally deficient, and two speakers advocate something like a "judgment" position: Aper says that oratory has not declined but that tastes have changed, while Messalla points to moral deficiencies and poor educational practices. But Maternus' speech, which closes the work, takes a different tack: the change in *eloquentia* is the result of the establishment of the Principate.[24] This explanation has

[24] The realization toward which *Dialogus* drives is not a general conclusion about "the change in morality from Republican times to Tacitus' day" (Champion 1994: 159) but rather a quite specific conclusion that the change in the history of oratory is directly related to the change in political form.

nothing to do with innate ability or with choice; it is, rather, a question of restraint imposed from above on the license that under the Republic permitted oratory to flourish. This thesis was not anticipated in what he has said before, in what his interlocutors have said, or even in Tacitus' opening "*ingenia* or *iudicia*" dichotomy. As is often noted, however, it is implicit in the very setting of the dialogue: Maternus has recited a *Cato* that has raised the hackles of "the powerful" (2.1) and his friends wish to know if he plans on expurgating the play (3.2). It has also nearly surfaced in the remarks of Maternus' interlocutors, as Levene perceives.[25] Neither Aper nor Messalla, however, ties the external factors that have affected the history of oratory to the Principate itself, and because of this Maternus' remarks acquire an air of revelation. By placing the Principate front and center in his analysis, he not only makes irrelevant Tacitus' introductory false choice but also shows us how to make sense of the unsatisfactory discussions of Aper and Messalla: tastes have changed in part because of the changed venues that are open to oratory, and education has changed because there no longer exist opportunities for the sort of engaged apprenticeship that Messalla extols. Each of them identifies epiphenomena of the problem, which only fit together when Maternus places them in their proper relationship to the basic cause, which is political change. Thus, from the perspective of Aper's speech, the death of Cicero is nothing more than a handy temporal marker:

> centum et viginti anni ab interitu Ciceronis in hunc diem colliguntur, unius hominis aetas. (4) nam ipse ego in Britannia vidi senem qui se fateretur ei pugnae interfuisse qua Caesarem inferentem arma Britanni arcere litoribus et pellere adgressi sunt. ita si eum, qui armatus C. Caesari restitit, vel captivitas vel voluntas vel fatum aliquod in urbem pertraxisset, aeque idem et Caesarem ipsum et Ciceronem audire potuit et nostris quoque actionibus interesse. (17.3–4)

> All told, it's one hundred and twenty years from the death of Cicero to today, the lifespan of a person. (4) I encountered an old man in Britain, whose story was that he had fought in that battle in which they tried to ward off and repel Caesar's invasion. So if that fellow who stood in arms against Caesar were brought as a captive, or by choice, or by chance, to the city, he might have heard Caesar himself and Cicero speaking and been present at our proceedings as well.

From the vantage point of Maternus' speech, by contrast, Aper's purely chronological argument is completely undermined by the details of his reference point: the brutal murder of Cicero is the very *exemplum* of the repression of oratory by strongmen, and while by the calendar Cicero may have been alive *only* one hundred and twenty years ago, in another sense his

[25] Levene (2004: 179, 185).

life belonged to another age altogether.[26] Not only does *Dialogus* demonstrate that unTacitean narratives are possible, it also shows that Tacitus has a record of revealing the Principate as an explanation of generic decline.

The case for radical change in the world of oratory after the establishment of the Augustan regime was far better, and more obvious, than for history: whole venues for its practice, after all, simply ceased to exist. Yet Tacitus constructs a whole dialogue on the premise that some people might not see it this way. This is all the more reason for us to regard the involvement of the history of historiography in political history not as axiomatic, but as a point that the preface of *Histories* is concerned to make, in much the same way as *Dialogus* does with the history of oratory.

These, then, are the characteristics and stakes of the large-scale historiographical change that Tacitus outlines at the opening of *Histories*. Generic development follows the movement of power: when "all power was placed [lit., 'was brought together,' *conferri*] in the hands of one man," the talents who combined eloquence and freedom were, correspondingly, displaced as well: "those great talents withdrew" (*Hist.* 1.1.1). His scheme defies, in advance, any imaginable attempt at a non-political interpretation of any facet of that development. The dangers, and advantages, of this rhetoric are perhaps beginning to emerge, but before we turn our attention to them, we must examine the small-scale mechanism through which the large generic shift has been effected.

Relations of reciprocity

At the opening of *Agricola* Tacitus argued that in previous generations biographical accounts used not to be affected by relations of interest and were not used as tokens of exchange. The basic thought here remains the same, and reciprocity plays a central role in his characterization of historiography since Actium, as one of the two factors that have harmed truth; it also comes to seem the more prominent factor, since in the remainder of the

[26] This effect will have been supported by the role that Cicero's death played in Roman rhetorical culture of the Principate: the day Cicero was killed was "the day eloquence died." Cf. Winterbottom (1982), Kaster (1998), and Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2003); there is further discussion in chapter 5 below. In different ways Aper and Messalla both miss the importance of Tacitus' sort of historical change, Aper by bouncing from Republic to Principate as though from Tuesday to Wednesday and Messalla by tying the change in *eloquentia* to corruption of *mores* and deterioration of the educational curriculum. The relevant bibliography on *Dialogus* is longer than needs listing here: excellent recent interventions with much bibliography are Mayer (2001: 16–18, 22–47), Levene (2004), and Gowing (2005: 109–20). See also Gowing (2005: 34–48) on Velleius Paterculus' periodization of Roman history.

preface he focuses on it, and not on the problem of knowledge. In the preface of *Histories* reciprocity is the mechanism through which constitutional change has affected the development of the genre, not simply by offering rewards for falsehood and deterrents to truth but by imposing a sort of psychological enslavement on historians.

A couple of aspects of reciprocity that Tacitus did not discuss in the preface of *Agricola* appear here in the preface of *Histories* and refine our picture of its effects on writing. First, he singles out "a lust for flattery" (*libido adsentandi*, *Hist*. 1.1.1) as a central factor in the corruption of historiography. *Adsentatio* may be translated as "flattery," but it is of a particular variety. "Flattery" more broadly, a semantic range covered well by *adulatio*, involves saying what you think the object of the flattery wants to hear, without regard for truth.[27] *Adsentatio* implies adopting as your own account the version of a story or circumstance promoted by the object of your flattery – say, about whether a war was successful or about the motives of a rebellious general. When a historian engages in it, then, he does not just produce a text he believes will meet with approval but rather accepts and repeats in his text an "official" version. Second, Tacitus here introduces the inverse of the "praise-for-reward" model of bad historiography we encounter at the opening of *Agricola* – that is, "blame-for-injury": "the truth was shattered . . . through hatred for those in a position of mastery" (*veritas . . . infracta . . . odio adversus dominantes*, *Hist*. 1.1.1). If favorable accounts could remunerate favorable treatment, then unfavorable ones could remunerate harm (the crucial language lies not in *odio*, "hatred," which of course can be unearned, but in *dominantes*, a word that conjures a master's relation to his slave).[28] The objective, *quid pro quo* relationship remains the same, regardless of whether the content of the exchange is benefit or harm; in either case, the book is engaged in relationships of interest that jeopardize its integrity.

From this point of view, Tacitus' predecessors wrote what they did because they saw a reward in it or wished to avoid retribution for insufficient adulation. Yet the system we observe is not purely economic: it is vital to perceive that he shows this system affecting historians in quite personal ways. That is, it is not simply the possibility of reward or harm that affects historians and their accounts, but also their psychological internalization of their own subjection. For, strictly speaking, after Actium it was not "flattery" (*Hist*. 1.1.1) or "detraction" (§2) that compromised truth, but

[27] Discussion of *adulatio* in Tacitus in Heinz (1975: 63–6) and Vielberg (1987: 80–113). On flattery and discourse about it as a locus of elite anxiety, see Roller (2001: 108–24).

[28] For χάρις and ἀπέχθεια in historiographical programmatics, see Avenarius (1956: 49–54).

rather historians' active desires to engage in these actions: a "lust for flattery" or "for detraction." Both "lust for flattery" and "hatred for those in a position of mastery" (§1) are phenomena of the Principate, the affective components of a relationship of reciprocity with the *princeps* when that relationship is imagined through the metaphor of servitude. Each kind of historian, flatterer and detractor, mirrors a particular (but not peculiarly) Roman cultural construction of slave behavior and psychology. "Good" slaves empty themselves of will and convert themselves into the vessels and instruments of their master's will; "bad" slaves resent their subjection and use the limited means at their disposal to frustrate their master's will, not for their own good, but to spite the master.[29] In either case, of course, they are still slaves, and their actions are oriented in relation to their masters' will.

Imagined as slaves, historians can either enjoy making their accounts conform to those provided by their master, or hate the master exactly because he is the master and misrepresent the truth in order to harm him. Both kinds of emotional response show prior historians' internalization of the conditions of Principate and acknowledgment of its rules. The compliant historian tacitly accepts and enjoys submission to the master and therefore actually wants to reinforce the official version of events, while the hostile historian tacitly accepts but despises this submission and therefore wants to refute the official version whether it is true or not. Both modes of behavior center themselves around someone else's account, so a work produced in *either* mode is not truly the writer's own: an *adsentator* merely mimics an original text, while an *obtrectator* is merely contrary and produces a photographic negative of that original. The version authorized by the *auctoritas* of the *princeps* sets the terms, and bad historians merely react.

Here we see the full implications of that *libertas* that had characterized Republican historiography. It was not *only* candor, though that was part of it, but rather a whole mental disposition: historians wrote as though they did not feel like slaves. Sallust's prefaces, generally considered primary intertexts for Tacitus', here again supply an important precedent:[30]

Igitur ubi animus ex multis miseriis atque periculis requievit et mihi relicuam aetatem a re publica procul habendam decrevi, non fuit consilium socordia atque desidia bonum otium conterere neque vero agrum colundo aut venando servilibus officiis, intentum aetatem agere; (2) sed a quo incepto studioque me ambitio mala

[29] See McCarthy (2000: 26–8 and *passim*) on *servi boni* and *servi callidi* in Plautus.

[30] On the relationship between Sallust and the preface of *Histories*, see Klingner (1928) and Flach (1973b).

detinuerat, eodem regressus statui res gestas populi Romani carptim, ut quaeque memoria digna videbantur, perscribere, eo magis, quod mihi a spe metu partibus rei publicae animus liber erat. (*Cat*. 4.1–2)

Thus when after much suffering and danger my mind found rest and I decided it must be my course to spend the remainder of my life far from the state, it was not my plan to waste useful free time in lazy inactivity, nor to spend my life dedicated to farming or hunting, which are activities fit for a slave. Rather, I decided to return to the plan that was the initial object of my enthusiasm, from which depraved ambition had held me back: writing the history of the people of Rome, in snatches, as topics seemed to me worthy of record – all the more so, since my mind was free from hope, from fear, from political faction.

The problem with the *res publica* is that it exposes you to positive and negative consequences of your actions, and emotions form around those consequences: desire to reap reward ("hope") and to avoid setback ("fear").[31] Like Tacitus, Sallust identifies danger specifically in the emotional effects of political form on personal autonomy: he did not merely take part in the *res publica* but *felt* it. Feeling the *res publica*, in turn, meant psychological enslavement: it was only when he left politics that his mind became at last "free" (*liber*). This liberation then becomes an important factor in enabling him to write as he does. But the relationship between cause and effect seems to work in the opposite direction as well, with writing history, in its turn, allowing him not to be a slave. In *otium* too, the polar opposite of engagement in public business, there is danger of not being free: farming and hunting are "activities fit for a slave." For Sallust in the *Bellum Catilinae*, historiography is the path between the public life that would enslave his mind and a private life that would mean living like a slave, an *otium* that is not *otium* and a *negotium* that is not *negotium*. Caught between servitudes, he can only attain freedom in the writing of history. By contrast, Tacitus' predecessors suffer from both the political subjection constituted by exclusion from the *res publica* and the mental constraint that consists in loving or hating the master.

It is to the affective component of negative reciprocity in particular that Tacitus calls our attention in *Hist*. 1.1.2. Works written with an eye to reward are, we are told, easily recognized and dismissed ("one can easily dismiss ambition in a writer") and, since it is a servile mode of behavior, flattery is unappealing on its face ("with flattery comes the sordid charge of

[31] For the negative connotations of *spes* in Sallust, see Scanlon (1987). For hope and fear in historiographical programmatics, see Avenarius (1956: 46–9).

slavishness").[32] But, Tacitus warns us, a book designed to harm poses even graver problems. The audience's eagerness to hear criticism stems from false reasoning: if flattery is servile, then its opposite, here specified as "malice" (*malignitati*), must be the mark of freedom. He insists, however, that malice is as much a mode of servitude as flattery, in as much as it acknowledges, and indeed constructs itself around, a master. The "false appearance of freedom" in fact overlies real "slavishness"; and malice, far from being the opposite of flattery, is really its partner.

Implied here is a distinction between critical and malicious treatment. Bad acts demand criticism as part of the transmission of truth, for, if they were truly bad, it can only be correct to criticize them, just as praise is the normal mode of historiographical depiction of good acts.[33] It is, more specifically, fabrication of bad acts, or criticism of neutral or good acts as though they were bad, that is the object of Tacitus' warning. Thus it is appropriate for the detached historian to criticize, and doing so might even signal his *libertas*; "malice," on the other hand, operates by assuming the outward appearance of *libertas* and perhaps suppressing what is known to be true. It is significant that, in this discussion, Tacitus does not use the word "detraction" to express the opposite of "flattery," but rather a noun that indicates not the action itself but the emotional state ("malice") that leads to detraction; the term then enables him to suggest that even apparent *libertas* can have its roots in the emotional states characteristic of domination and so can be included within the category "servile modes of writing history."

Despite the generally pernicious effects of the passions, there is in fact a solitary emotional response a historian may appropriately indulge; it is implied in the phrase "to such a degree has neither group had concern for posterity, when they were either hostile or subservient" (*Hist.* 1.1.2). The desire and hatred involved in historiographical activity have overwhelmed the one solicitude historians should actually feel: concern that future generations receive the past in written form.[34] On this construction, a good historian dismisses contemporary, in favor of diachronic, emotional

[32] Observe that *ambitio* here is "currying favor with the powerful"; *ambitio* for literary success is not felt as *ambitio* at all.

[33] Cf. Steinmetz (1968: 259): "Tacitus verzichtet . . . keineswegs auf Kritik oder gar auf die Benennung des Negativen als etwas Negativem. Er erklärt nur, falls er Kritik übe, sei er dazu nicht aus persönlichen Motiven bestimmt worden."

[34] As does Drexler (1965: 152), Luce (1991: 2917) reads *cura posteritatis* (*Hist.* 1.1.1) in a much more limited sense as referring to "the posthumous reputation of the historian." Naturally, Tacitus' reputation is bound up with this *cura*, but the emphasis here lies on the historian's feelings toward particular parties and how those feelings tend to produce particular kinds of account, so I think *posteritas* means not "*fama apud posteros*" but rather "*posteri.*" Heubner (1963–82 ad loc.) cites usefully in this

engagement. This may be seen as akin to Latin poetry's obsession with future repute over against contemporary reception: "the central criterion of literary autonomy is the work's orientation toward posterity, by contrast with an orientation toward immediate social uses in the present *saeculum* (age). The work's enduring relevance for future readers is understood as being proportional to its dissociation from immediate social and financial motivations in the author's own lifetime."[35] From this point of view, not to care about the *posteri* is to surrender your book to these immediate motivations, and so to abandon any claims to consequence.[36]

Since Actium, then, reciprocity has presented a problem for historiography not simply in that it has offered deterrents to saying, and incentives to say other than, the truth. Rather, it has permeated and structured the selves of historians, converting them from autonomous citizens into *de facto* slaves. Against this internalized condition of servitude, Tacitus sets up a different sort of emotional engagement that transcends the historian's lifetime and that is therefore not produced within power relations. The kinds of emotional response are mutually exclusive: to have the one is to lack the other, in the same way that to be a slave is not to be free. This is why he can write that truth has been harmed "through a lust for flattery or alternatively a hatred for those in a position of mastery: to such a degree has neither group had concern for posterity" (*Hist*. 1.1.1): the presence of the former motivations proves the absence of the last.

Reciprocity affects historians singly. Every bad history written since Actium was made bad by the choices, attitudes, and feelings of its author.[37]

regard Sen. *Dial*. 6.1.3: *optime meruisti . . . de posteris, ad quos veniet incorrupta rerum fides*. That Sallust (*Cat*. 3.1–2) and Livy (*Praef*. 3) seem to refer to their own fame does not mean Tacitus does so here.

[35] Roman (2001: 116).

[36] Since the crucial characteristic of appropriate emotional engagement is that it is not contemporary, it is also acceptable for the historian to care about those whom he commemorates in his work, since they are located in the past. Compare the preface of *Agricola*, where Tacitus uses *pietas* toward Agricola to exempt *Agricola* from contemporary relations of reciprocity (see chapter 2 above). Livy's preface too is interested in the psychological effects of different time frames and their relationship to contemporary reception. He imagines two sorts of rewards to be had from writing the *Ab urbe condita*. One (*pretium*, *Praef*. 1), he implies, is fame (1–2), but he will not say whether he will get it. The other "reward" (*praemium*, 5) he hopes for, like the "satisfied conscience" of *Agricola* (*Ag*. 1.2; cf. chapter 2 above), comes from no one but himself: turning his whole attention to the distant past, he will be *omnis expers curae quae scribentis animum, etsi non flectere a vero, sollicitum tamen efficere posset* (Liv. *Praef*. 5). Livy's "reward" of immersion in the past is freedom from the psychological engagement inevitably attached to writing about the present, an engagement directly related to the possibility of receiving rewards and punishments in return for what you write.

[37] This is not to say that it may not *also* have been ruined by ignorance and by literary ineptitude – there is no limit to the number of counts on which one book can fail. For a sense of how many bad ways of writing history Tacitus ignores in order to focus on the phenomenon of domination, see the hilarious overview of Lucian, *Hist. Conscr*. 14–32.

The histories may even, in fact, look quite different from each other: one may be violently hostile to the regime, and another abjectly sycophantic. Yet it is Tacitus' special concern to show that all of these histories were produced through a single process. Everything begins from the domination of Romans by the *princeps*, which engenders feelings that cause the historian to affirm or attack the regime's version of reality. Here the apparent diversity among historians that seems to reflect two completely different sorts of relationship between them and the regime turns out to be only a screen concealing actual uniformity. Notably, the "unmasking" mode that is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the narrator in Tacitus' work goes to work here in the preface not in order to demolish the hypocrisy of a *princeps* or of the Senate but to peel away the *falsa species libertatis* from his predecessors.[38] At heart, they have all been slaves.

Tacitus and Dio on the history of historiography

With good reason, scholars interested in the preface of *Histories* often compare it with a passage of Dio's history in which he reflects on the difficulties of giving an account of Roman history after the "Settlement" of 27 BCE.[39] It is a sunny, matter-of-fact exposition of what Tacitus only hints at darkly in "ignorance of the *res publica* as though it were someone else's" (*Hist.* 1.1.1), and it is on the problem of epistemology that the two historians' assessments are closest to each other.[40] Important differences between them, however, will help to sharpen our picture of the distinctiveness of Tacitus' history of historiography.

Ἡ μὲν οὖν πολιτεία οὕτω τότε πρός τε τὸ βέλτιον καὶ πρὸς τὸ σωτηριωδέστερον μετεκοσμήθη· καὶ γάρ που καὶ παντάπασιν ἀδύνατον ἦν δημοκρατουμένους αὐτοὺς σωθῆναι. οὐ μέντοι καὶ ὁμοίως τοῖς πρόσθεν τὰ μετὰ ταῦτα πραχθέντα λεχθῆναι δύναται. (2) πρότερον μὲν γὰρ ἔς τε τὴν βουλὴν καὶ ἐς τὸν δῆμον πάντα, καὶ εἰ πόρρω που συμβαίη, ἐσεφέρετο· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πάντες τε αὐτὰ ἐμάνθανον καὶ πολλοὶ συνέγραφον, κἀκ τούτου καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια αὐτῶν, εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα καὶ φόβῳ τινὰ καὶ χάριτι φιλίᾳ τε καὶ ἔχθρᾳ τισὶν ἐρρήθη, παρὰ γοῦν τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς τὰ αὐτὰ γράψασι τοῖς τε ὑπομνήμασι τοῖς δημοσίοις τρόπον τινὰ εὑρίσκετο. (3) ἐκ δὲ δὴ τοῦ χρόνου ἐκείνου τὰ μὲν πλείω κρύφα καὶ δι' ἀπορρήτων γίγνεσθαι ἤρξατο, εἰ δέ πού τινα καὶ δημοσιευθείη, ἀλλὰ ἀνεξέλεγκτά γε ὄντα ἀπιστεῖται· καὶ γὰρ λέγεσθαι καὶ πράττεσθαι πάντα

[38] On Tacitus' insistence on seeing beyond surface appearance to underlying meaning, see Lana (1989).

[39] See, for example, Flach (1973a: 59–60), Giua (1985), Timpe (1987b), and Clarke (2002). We do not need with Flach (1973a: 58) to hypothesize a single source for the remarks of the two historians.

[40] Cf. Flach (1973a: 59), although he takes both Tacitus and Dio to be talking about political experience, a lack of "feel" for politics, rather than about an epistemological problem.

πρὸς τὰ τῶν ἀεὶ κρατούντων τῶν τε παραδυναστευόντων σφίσι βουλήματα ὑποπτεύεται. (4) καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο πολλὰ μὲν οὐ γιγνόμενα θρυλεῖται, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ πάνυ συμβαίνοντα ἀγνοεῖται, πάντα δὲ ὡς εἰπεῖν ἄλλως πως ἢ ὡς πράττεται διαθροεῖται. καὶ μέντοι καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς μέγεθος τό τε τῶν πραγμάτων πλῆθος δυσχερεστάτην τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτῶν παρέχεται. (5) ἔν τε γὰρ τῇ Ῥώμῃ συχνὰ καὶ παρὰ τῷ ὑπηκόῳ αὐτῆς πολλά, πρός τε τὸ πολέμιον ἀεὶ καὶ καθ᾽ ἡμέραν ὡς εἰπεῖν γίγνεταί τι, περὶ ὧν τὸ μὲν σαφὲς οὐδεὶς ῥᾳδίως ἔξω τῶν πραττόντων αὐτὰ γιγνώσκει, πλεῖστοι δ᾽ ὅσοι οὐδ᾽ ἀκούουσι τὴν ἀρχὴν ὅτι γέγονεν. (6) ὅθενπερ καὶ ἐγὼ πάντα τὰ ἑξῆς, ὅσα γε καὶ ἀναγκαῖον ἔσται εἰπεῖν, ὥς που καὶ δεδήμωται φράσω, εἴτ᾽ ὄντως οὕτως εἴτε καὶ ἑτέρως πως ἔχει. προσέσται μέντοι τι αὐτοῖς καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς δοξασίας, ἐς ὅσον ἐνδέχεται, ἐν οἷς ἄλλο τι μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ θρυλούμενον ἠδυνήθην ἐκ πολλῶν ὧν ἀνέγνων ἢ καὶ ἤκουσα ἢ καὶ εἶδον τεκμήρασθαι. (53.19)

In this way, the constitution was reordered at this time, and it was a change for the better, resulting in enhanced security. Really, the Romans were past saving so long as they were living in a republic. Yet the history of the later era cannot be narrated in the same way as that of the prior. (2) For in the earlier era everything, even quite distant events, used to be reported to the Senate and people. A result of this custom was that everybody found out about everything, and many wrote histories, and because of this, even if some writers said some things with fear or favor, affection or enmity, the true account of events could at least be discovered in the works of others who had narrated the same events, or in the public records. (3) From this period on, however, most things began to happen out of view, in secret dealings; and, even if public announcements are made, no one believes them because it is not possible to find out whether they are true. And indeed, the general suspicion is that everything is said or done with an eye to what is desired by those who happen to be in power at a given time or by their associates. (4) In this way does it come about that there is much talk about things that are not in fact even happening and, conversely, total ignorance of things that are really taking place; in more or less every case, the account that gets around diverges in one way or another from what is actually going on. And, beyond this, the extent of the empire and the large number of events make it extremely hard to get the events right. (5) For at Rome a lot of things occur, and in the subject territories as well, and with our enemies there is always something or other going on almost on a daily basis. Clarity about these events is hard for anyone to attain, apart from those directly involved, and most people do not even hear of their occurrence in the first place. (6) For this reason I too, in the events I narrate from this point on, to the extent that I have to talk about them, will give the account that has been made public, whether or not it really happened in that way. You will also get my opinion, insofar as it is possible to offer one, in instances in which I have been able, on the basis of some of the many things I have read or of something I have heard or seen, to reach a conclusion different from what the common report gives.

In Dio's account, representation begins to depart from reality (§4) because events start to happen in secret (§3), and accounts of them no longer needed

to be rendered publicly to Senate and people (§2) because the Senate and people were no longer in power (§1). The result has been a dramatic change in the history of historiography, since in the prior period histories could contain truth but, in the later period, can at best contain something like the truth.

As Dio presents things, the form of government affects the knowledge of historians and thereby also the content of histories; this corresponds to Tacitus' "ignorance of the *res publica*" (*Hist.* 1.1.1). Observe though that, as Gabba points out, Dio is far less interested in changes in the *libertas* (whether as political freedom, personal autonomy, or candor) of individual historians.[41] Granted there is his remark that "the general suspicion is that everything is said or done with an eye to what is desired by those who happen to be in power" (Cass. Dio 53.19.3), but it is only because of the epistemological obstacle that observers have to rely on suspicion, not knowledge; in this formulation, the question of *libertas* enters the picture only indirectly. Furthermore, where Tacitus sharply distinguishes a present in which truth has been harmed by fear and favor from a past in which historians spoke their minds, Dio seems to allow that these have always affected how some historians wrote, under Republic *and* Principate, and that the difference between the eras is, again, epistemological: under Republican government, "everyone found out about everything, and many wrote histories, and because of this, even if some writers said some things with fear or favor, affection or enmity, the true account of events could at least be discovered in the works of others who had narrated the same events, or in the public records" (§2).[42] Tacitus' insistence in the preface of *Histories* on the difference in *libertas* replicates the structure of the literary history he constructs in the preface of *Agricola*, where the Republic was a Golden Age of representation in every respect the inverse of the Principate.

Dio also places less emphasis on the figure of the *princeps*, whose potency fundamentally determines Tacitus' history of the genre: it is present in "that the totality of power be transferred to one man alone," in "a lust for flattery or alternatively a hatred for those in a position of mastery," and in the naming of every *princeps* since the fall of Nero (*Hist.* 1.1.1, 3–4). Through the figure of the *princeps*, Tacitus makes the historical problematic of historiography at once institutional and personal. It is because of the transfer of all power to one man that the writing of history has (so far, at least) been ruined, but the mechanism through which the corruption of

[41] Gabba (1984: 75–6).

[42] Lucian (*Hist. Conscr.* 40) also imagines flattery as a problem that has always (πάλαι καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς) plagued the genre.

historiography is perpetuated across principates, civil wars, and dynasties is the personal relationship between individual *principes* and individual historians. This focus then also serves to articulate the historian's endeavor as a struggle with the version of the past emanating from the Palatine.

The differences between Tacitus' and Dio's histories of historiography underscore a distinctive Tacitean emphasis that might otherwise go unremarked: in the preface of *Histories* the history of the genre since Actium is marked by constant, degrading domination of historians. Its repercussions for writers are not merely literary – indeed, nothing in this preface is allowed to be *merely* literary – but social: the way that historians have written has been part of their individual reduction to the rank of slaves.

TACITUS IN THE HISTORY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

Equipped with a clearer picture of Tacitus' history of historiography, we can now begin to work out what it has to offer *Histories* and his career. In the first section that follows, we look at potential consequences of his stark division between pre- and post-Actium historiography. That division would seem to offer little hope that his work will not fall into the same trap that has ruined the work of his predecessors: why, then, does he insist on it? In the second section we look at how he goes about saving *Histories* from his own pessimistic history of historiography.

"His own historiography's grave"

The break at Actium has a disturbing implication: if the reasons for generic decline are related to a basic structural change in society, we are bound to suspect it might no longer be possible to write a good history, so Tacitus' work seems to be at serious risk of failure.[43] A paper by Büchner rejected the idea that Tacitus could be implying this, on the grounds that he would be "digging his own historiography's grave"; accordingly, Büchner repunctuated *Hist.* 1.1.1, unpersuasively, so as to avoid the impression of a sharp

[43] See Levene (2004: 161): "people writing about literature in historical terms are not only dealing with texts, they are themselves producing texts. In some cases it may be that they are not aware of or interested in the potentially self-referential nature of their task . . . But in the case of other writers, and particularly those where there is a close relationship of form or content between the works they discuss and their own writing, such blindness is less likely; the writers are usually going to be aware that their own works are susceptible to the same manner of interpretation and that this will be governed by the internal features they themselves include, features that allow – or resist – 'placement' of the sort they apply to other texts." These remarks, developed for a discussion of the *Dialogus*, fit the preface of *Histories*, if anything, even better.

break at Actium.[44] While he meant his remark as a decisive refutation of the received interpretation of the passage, it is actually, inadvertently, an ideal demonstration of how Tacitus' history of the genre works. For "digging his own historiography's grave" is something quite apart from actually burying it. I would argue that Tacitus here does not go through with the funeral, but rather only digs the grave, presenting a compelling case, rooted in historical precedent, for why we should expect *Histories* to fail in the same way as every other history since Actium.[45]

By setting out compelling reasons to expect failure, Tacitus sets a huge, potentially unsustainable burden upon his work just as it begins. This is all the more remarkable because *Histories* did not have to begin in this way. To be sure, ancient historians often underscored their predecessors' insufficiencies in order to justify their own work.[46] Yet there were other ways to do this, without putting *Histories* at risk. He might have made good historiography only more rare after Actium, or shifted the crucial date so as not to make the break coincide exactly with the elevation of Octavian to sole power. Neither option would have removed, or even limited significantly, opportunities for criticizing predecessors.

But Tacitus does not follow one of those routes, because, despite appearances, the primary point of his history of historiography is not to undercut his predecessors. Rather, it uses those predecessors to stalk bigger game, quarry for which it is worth imperiling *Histories*: the Principate itself. As

[44] Büchner (1962–79: IV.43–60, quotation p. 54). By repunctuating, Büchner produces a sequence of thought that would be translated "for the eight hundred and twenty years after the city was founded have been reported by many authors while the affairs of the Roman people were being recorded with equal degrees of eloquence and freedom; and after the battle took place at Actium and it was in the interests of peace that the totality of power be transferred to one man alone, those great talents began to leave us, and at the same time the truth was compromised in numerous ways." In this way, the entire period from 753 BCE through 68 CE receives the credit of having been treated by good historians, and the disappearance of the great talents after Actium becomes a gradual, century-long process. It is extremely difficult to read the Latin in this way, which Büchner knows perfectly well; in his view, however, we simply have to read it that way, precisely because the conventional reading seems to doom Tacitus' project. His paraphrase of what he thinks Tacitus must mean is illuminating: "Ich [i.e., Tacitus] sage mit Absicht nicht, 'solange die römische Republik dargestellt wurde', sei das mit gleicher Beredsamkeit wie Freiheit geschehen. Denn abgesehen davon, daß es unter den republikanischen Geschichtsschreibern auch welche gab, die weniger beredt waren und die Freiheit mißbrauchten, würde ich meiner Geschichtsschreibung von vornherein das Grab graben, wenn man etwa verstehen müßte, daß nur zur Zeit der Republik freie und wortgewaltige Geschichtsschreibung entstehen könnte" (54). This, in the end, is the real motive behind Büchner's exertions to make the Latin say what it cannot: it is not the language – which is rather clear – but the implication.

[45] An anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press points out that Tacitus' taking Actium as the fulcrum in the history of historiography is all the more provocative "in that his own history . . . narrates the 'second Actium' of AD 68–69."

[46] Marincola (1999b: 395–6) identifies four kinds of insufficiency: (1) incompleteness or overbrevity, (2) inaccuracy, (3) unworthiness (with a suggestion of literary insufficiency), (4) bias.

Giua observes about the digression on historiography at *Ann.* 4.32, "Tacitus' intent is to make a totalizing historico-political reconstruction, without shrinking from generalization and oversimplification, because his goal is to pin the blame on the Principate."[47] The sharper the break, and the closer to Actium, the clearer it is that we must blame the genre's collapse not only on the historians themselves but also on the deep causes that have made them into the sorry lot they are.

Fixing the blame squarely on the Principate, and not just on miserable historians, assigns remarkable importance to the genre and to Tacitus as well. For if the writing of history was routed at Actium together with Antony, we can only infer it was worth defeating for the same reason as Antony was: because it threatened the incipient Augustan order and could not be allowed to persist. Notice that, while Tacitus and Dio are often treated as though they locate the watershed in the genre's history at the same point, they do not. Dio gives Republican historiography a far more peaceful end: for him, the generic change was a secondary, and possibly even inadvertent, consequence of the "settlement" of 27 BCE that, to his mind, changed Rome for the better.[48] For Tacitus, by contrast, the end came by fire and sword four years before that, and what happened to truth was suitably violent for the date – it was "crushed" (*infracta*, *Hist.* 1.1.1).[49]

These implications of the break at Actium in turn color our impression of Tacitus' work: it is not idle scribbling, but a brave and noble endeavor that the political conditions of the Principate have been trying for eighty years to smother. And if *Histories* in fact turns out to be able to prove its own integrity, the work becomes an extraordinary accomplishment. With the odds stacked heavily against it for fundamental historical reasons, a history that managed to be uncompromised would rank with the monuments of Republican historical writing, or perhaps even above them, in as much as their authors had had the luxury of an age friendly to truth, while the author of *Histories* would seem vulnerable from every side and doomed by precedent. An achievement like that would confer no small prestige.[50] Furthermore, if Tacitus accomplishes in this book what no one has done since Actium, his value must rise, since he performs a role that is, apparently, unique to himself: placing uncompromised truth into historical writing

[47] Giua (1985: 12), my translation.

[48] On Dio's political outlook, see Millar (1964: 73–118), Rich (1989), and Reinhold and Swan (1990).

[49] Also, though I would not want to make too much of it, the verb (*cessere*) describing the departure of the "great talents" after Actium is, among other things, a normal way of expressing "to retreat" or "to give ground [in battle]."

[50] Marincola (1997: 251) makes a similar point about *Ann.* 4.32.

under the political conditions of Principate. Within the framework of his history of historiography, he will be, if *Histories* succeeds, not just a good historian but *the* good historian.

Tying the fate of historiography to that of the constitution puts Tacitus in an unusual position. As we have seen, what guaranteed the authenticity of Republican histories was the Republican order of society; or, in other words, it was the absence of the Principate before Actium that made the difference between good and bad historiography. When the Principate is added to the mix and when the contemporary political structure therefore does not guarantee but instead undermines authenticity, what takes the place of the Republican structure of society as the extra-textual guarantor that what is in *Histories* is true? The only answer Tacitus leaves us is "Tacitus": that is, absent a larger context that fosters the faithful conversion of truth into writing, that task must fall to an individual actor who is able to shield his work from the harmful effects of Principate.[51] If *Histories* succeeds as a history, it does so not (obviously) because it was written during the Republic nor (equally obviously) because it was enabled to do so by the Principate, but because the historian himself is able to make up the difference – at least for purposes of writing *Histories* – between Republic and Principate. Again, this is quite different from the way in which Dio represents how he means to handle the institutional challenge presented by the change in government: he implies he is no better equipped than his predecessors to solve the epistemological problem, and readily proclaims that, in his post-27 BCE narrative, he will be giving his readers only stories, "whether or not it really happened in that way" (53.19.6). He does promise to intervene when he thinks he has worked out that what really happened is not what the stories say (§6), but he offers no special reason to think his ability to do that is better than anyone else's, beyond that he has done considerable research. What Tacitus says in the preface of *Histories* is also quite different from his articulation of *Annals*' relationship to the history of the genre at *Ann*. 4.32. There, the thrust of his discussion would seem to imply that *Annals* suffers from the same literary challenges that would affect any post-Republican history:

Pleraque eorum quae rettuli quaeque referam parva forsitan et levia memoratu videri non nescius sum: sed nemo annalis nostros cum scriptura eorum contenderit, qui veteres populi Romani res composuere. ingentia illi bella, expugnationes

[51] Cf. Fabia (1901: 70–1) on Tacitus' profession of *fides*: ". . . quelle garantie nous donne-t-il de sa véracité? Il ne se laissera influencer ni par l'amour ni par la haine, étant de ceux qui font profession d'incorruptible bonne foi. En d'autres termes, il sera véridique, parce qu'il faut qu'il le soit, ayant promis de l'être."

urbium, fusos captosque reges aut, si quando ad interna praeverterent, discordias consulum adversum tribunos, agrarias frumentariasque leges, plebis et optimatium certamina libero egressu memorabant: (2) nobis in arto et inglorius labor . . . (*Ann.* 4.32)

That the majority of what I have reported and will report perhaps seems smaller and of less importance than to deserve commemoration, I am not unaware: but no one should bring our annals into comparison with the writing of those who have composed the Roman people's deeds of old. Enormous wars, sieges of cities, kings routed and captured, and, if ever they did turn to internal history, contention between consuls and tribunes, agrarian and grain laws, the struggles of the plebs and the *optimates* – these are what those authors recounted, with full freedom of movement. (2) Our efforts by contrast are confined to a narrow field, without glory.

His rhetorical objective here is different, however: for programmatic reasons, as we will see in chapter 5, it is desirable to contrast a merely entertaining Republican historiography with the brand of writing Tacitus practices in *Annals*, which, he asserts, makes up in utility what it lacks in fun (*Ann.* 4.33.3).[52] In the preface of *Histories*, by contrast, the advantages to be had lie in making the work seem like Republican writing.

Tacitus' discussion of *malignitas*, which establishes that even histories with a critical cast can also be entangled in relations of reciprocity, has an important role to play in magnifying his achievement. Although we would like to know more about the historians he dismisses, we can feel confident that not all of their books were sycophantic on the surface, and that some of them did in fact cultivate the impression of *libertas*. The work of Cremutius Cordus and of T. Labienus, both of whom we will return to in chapter 5, could not easily be dismissed as so much toadying.[53] If we use as our only criterion for judging a history's quality whether it feels sycophantic, then, Tacitus' history of the genre falls apart. If apparently autonomous or even outspoken history had been written since Actium, then the link between political history and the history of historiography seemed weaker: good historiography would then have survived the murder of political liberty because writing history, even writing it well, was not after all the same thing as political liberty. What is more, his *œuvre* itself would still count as good, but not as *uniquely* good. By expanding the range of books that might count as "corrupt" historiography in such a

[52] For the opposing positions on entertainment taken at the beginning of *Histories* and in *Ann.* 4.32–3, see Woodman (1998: 104–41).

[53] Servilius Nonianus probably did not write anything especially ingratiating, either: see the discussions of Syme (1970: 91–109) and Noè (1984: 83–4).

way as to encompass both histories that seemed like products of servitude and those that appeared to be exercises in *libertas*, he creates a theoretical framework in which even a reader who could point to earlier examples of apparent historiographical *libertas* could be persuaded that Octavian's side at Actium broke political freedom and historiography with a single stroke.

Imagining Tacitus

Although there is a considerable payoff to Tacitus' setting *Histories* up to fail, he is then left with the task, now all the harder, of showing that it does not. Before we go on to examine some of the rhetorical strategies he uses in order to rescue *Histories*, we should consider how the preface disposes us to think about him in relation to the history of historiography. First we will look at the interpretive problem posed by his refusal explicitly to state the relationship of his own work to that of his predecessors, then we will turn to the ways in which the preface seems to invite us to scrutinize him.

As Damon observes, it is striking that in the preface Tacitus does not directly characterize *Histories*; in fact, the discussion focuses on every historian of Rome other than himself.[54] Most interpreters have assumed that his critique of his predecessors implies that his own work is to be categorically different from theirs, that it will succeed where theirs fails. But this is only an inference: he is silent. With exemplary deconstructive technique, by contrast, Haynes uses this silence as a lever to argue that the "Tacitus" narrating *Histories* finds himself in a comparable bind with regard to truth to that in which the other historians have been caught, and that he professes to reproduce in his work ideology, not truth.[55] The interpretation is fair: silence is, after all, only silence. It is hard, however, to keep from inferring that we are supposed to see *Histories* as entirely different from other post-Actium historiography: he does not merely excoriate other historians for their failure but articulates that failure as a matter of servility and self-degradation; here, to fail in the historian's central task brings in its train the gravest possible consequences for his social self. At this point, however, rather than stopping in order to prevent his own degradation, he in fact forges ahead with *Histories*, implying an expectation of success, not disaster.[56] Doubtless Tacitus was no more conscious of his own ideological

[54] Damon (2003 ad loc.). [55] Haynes (2003: 34–41).
[56] Consider also that, in *Dialogus*, Maternus is sure that *eloquentia* is actually dead and that he consequently stops trying to practice it and turns instead to poetry.

implication than anyone ever is, but the preface of *Histories* does not foreground that implication.[57]

If it is not to suggest his own resemblance to his predecessors, what then is the effect of Tacitus' silence regarding his own work? I would point to a couple of ways of thinking about the problem. In the first place, any argument for autonomy works mainly by enumerating burdens that do not weigh on a work, rather than by attributing particular qualities to it. In that sense, *Histories* is really what is left over when conditioning factors are excluded: it is historiography of the Principate, but with *dominatio*, *amor*, *odium*, *adsentatio*, and *obtrectatio* all subtracted from the equation. Its ambition is to be, quite literally, unqualified: the opposite of *infracta* would have to be *integra*, "complete and undamaged," and *incorruptus* means "unaltered, undamaged" as well. In the historical vision of the preface, explaining what *Histories* is *not* completely and accurately describes what *Histories is*. Indeed, as we will see when Tacitus comes to deal with his personal relationship to past and present *principes*, even his explicit characterization of his own position has everything to do with extricating himself from existing entanglements and nothing to do with establishing specific propositions about himself.

A second consideration, possibly equally important, is the impressive scope of the role the preface implies for Tacitus. It is already an ambitious claim to say that one's own work stands outside the history of historiography. In the preface of *Histories*, moreover, this claim that, under other circumstances, might simply be a matter of literary history has social and political implications for its author. Here, writing good post-Actium history means, in a way, standing outside the relations of power that constitute the Principate as a political form. Rendered directly, that would be an assertion of startling grandiosity, and indecorous in the same way in which, as we will see below, it is indecorous for him to suggest that he does not owe Nerva and Trajan a debt of gratitude. Articulating what his own project means mainly by identifying how others' projects have failed, he can pitch the arc of his ambitions far higher than directness would permit.[58]

There is, then, an economical way of accounting for Tacitus' silence that does not ask us to suppose that the preface undermines the truth-status

[57] In fact, for something that is closer to a case of an author broadcasting the problematic epistemological basis of his narrative, we might turn back to the observations of Dio that were examined above, in which he simply states that, in his post-27 BCE narrative, he will usually be transmitting representation, not truth, because the truth is largely inaccessible to him.

[58] For Livy's similarly oblique registration of very ambitious aims, see Moles (1993) and Sailor (2006: 370–4).

and therefore importance of the work to follow. We may also feel comfortable inferring from his discussion of previous historians a picture of what *Histories*, and the historian, are like. Later, we will look at some models for thinking about his relationship to his work and to contemporary society; for now, it is important simply to have established that his difference from other historians who have written since Actium is total.

This is by no means to say that we simply grant Tacitus his success, but rather only that in the preface he looks as though he means his book to succeed. In fact, central features of the preface incline us to subject our historian to careful scrutiny. The pessimism of his history of historiography has supplied us with a variety of reasons to doubt whether anyone can conquer the obstacles that have determined its course so far. Furthermore, we know what to look for in order to allay our concerns. Though he touches only briefly on epistemological problems, the prominent role he gives to "ignorance of the *res publica*" (*Hist.* 1.1.1) does dispose us to look, if not for thorough discussion of the sources of his knowledge, at least for the appearance of confident command of the material. In addition, the experience of reading his history of historiography prepares us to watch for signs of his involvement in reciprocity of the sort that has affected previous histories. This means not simply that he must address his relationship to the *principes* his narrative will include and to the *princeps* presently wearing the purple – as he does later in the preface – nor even simply that we will look out for markers of favoritism, though readers will probably do that as well – but that we must supplement our reading with a sort of psychological examination of our historian. For, as we have seen, in Tacitus' presentation the pathology of historiography's corruption has been psychological: what has brought us to this pass is not the mere existence of structures of domination but historians' internalization of those structures, their mental subjection to the set of emotions experienced by slaves. Our interest in our author, then, goes beyond whether he seems to favor one historical figure or another to the harder, more nebulous question of what sort of a self his narrative projects, in particular what emotions, if any, his work seems to elicit from him.[59]

The weight placed on our scrutiny is heightened by Tacitus' remarks on malice. When he cautions us to look behind "the false appearance of freedom" (*Hist.* 1.1.2) and perceive the servility that lay behind apparently independent writing, in effect he sends us on from that point in *Histories* equipped with the interpretive principles that what looks like servility is

[59] For an examination of historians' display of emotions, see Marincola (2003: 302–12).

servility and that what does *not* look like servility can also be servility, but little guidance as to how we should distinguish between justified criticism, which is not servility, and malice, which is. This problem need not mean his readers here despair of discerning their historian's motives, only that their attention is directed to the task of working out what their historian is like and that they are warned that passive or superficial examination may not suffice for that task.

Despite the preface's apparent focus on everybody *but* Tacitus, then, its effect is to press him and his book into the limelight, to set him and his work off against those historians it criticizes and to make his own performance the object of our scrutiny. It is then the job of the remainder of the preface, and of *Histories* more broadly, to withstand that scrutiny.

One way in which the preface helps to answer questions about Tacitus lies in his language. Above, I argued that the pairing of "freedom" and "eloquence" might be more significant than is generally supposed, and I pressed the case that one of its effects is to entangle the literary with the political. Another important purpose, I would venture, is to make eloquence into a sign of freedom. The preface is an exercise in eloquence, if not in the sense of "aesthetically pleasing language," certainly in the sense of "linguistic potency." Since, in the preface's own terms, eloquence as a property of historiography has a particular place within the genre's history, its presence in *Histories* already tells us where the work fits in to that history: it does not belong within the period initiated at Actium but rather in that era in which "great talents" (*Hist*. 1.1.1) were still to be found.

In addition, the preface is also our first encounter with Tacitean style: even if we have read *Agricola*, this paragraph, together with what follows, is shocking.[60] The uncompromising brevity of his style, its insistence on variety and imbalance, its harshness, and its odd vocabulary are, in important ways, unlike any history you would have read before: the language, as much as the argument, makes us sit up and pay attention.[61] What is more, the mention of eloquence specifically draws our attention to language as a problem. When combined with Tacitus' express reference to the place of language in the history of historiography, the style is more than his way of putting his argument in the preface; it is part of the argument. What, then, is the place of this style in the history of historiography? We might observe

[60] Obviously, the more Tacitus writes, the less dramatic this effect becomes.

[61] "Unlike any history": as we will see, the closest relatives are Sallust and Thucydides. Though we have virtually none of the Latin historiography of the Principate between Livy and Tacitus, we do have a single, useful sounding of their styles thanks to the elder Seneca's excerption of various historians' treatments of the death of Cicero (*Suas*. 6.14–25). None is "Tacitean."

right away that it makes *Histories* feel like the break in the history of the genre it is supposed to be: whatever we are going to see in this book, we feel, it will not be what we are accustomed to see. After Actium, *eloquentia* went the way of *libertas*, and the "great talents" (*Hist*. 1.1.1) withdrew from the field where truth was broken. But now that *eloquentia* is back, and now that a "great talent" has begun to show himself, we might wonder if he has brought *libertas* back too, and will restore *veritas* to integrity.

Yet, although Tacitus' language is striking and strange, it is not utterly incomparable. If one were going to describe it in terms of another writer's style – and this is precisely the operation an ancient readership will have used in order to place him – our point of reference would be Sallust.[62] Indeed, Tacitus' language is "Sallustian," but in such a way as to suggest that, while perhaps Sallust was on to something important, he did not go far enough: this property of Tacitus' style allows it, paradoxically, to be at once a profession of Sallustianism and a declaration of uniqueness. Moreover, once you have established a link to Sallust, Thucydides comes with him, as there is no getting the Greek historian out of his Roman counterpart's style.[63] This affiliation bears obvious implications for Tacitus' place in the genre's history. Our only real model in Latin for thinking about his style is the last historian to belong entirely to the Republic, dying in 35 BCE; that is, we have heard nothing to which we may even begin to compare Tacitus since . . . before Actium.[64] In this way, his language itself registers from the beginning his work's anomalous relationship to the laws of writing history that have been imposed under the Principate.

Another, more tangible sense in which the preface responds to the scrutiny it invites comes in *Hist*. 1.1.3–4, where Tacitus deals with his relations with both the *principes* who will appear in *Histories* and those of the current dynasty. Since the history of historiography under the Principate has been shaped by personal relationships between historians and *principes*, we must expect Tacitus to confront whatever relationships he has with *principes* and to explain why these will not affect what he writes. As we have seen, part of the response is already implicit in his portrayal of other historians: unlike them, he will not feel like a slave. We do not yet have persuasive evidence that this will be so, but we begin to get it now:

[62] On Tacitus' style, there is extensive bibliography; probably the best place to start is Martin (1994: 214–35) but see also Hellegouarc'h (1991). See Syme (1958) for the style of *Histories* (191–202) and for Sallustian language in Tacitus (728–32).

[63] See Syme (1964: 260). The pairing of Thucydides and Sallust is ancient: cf. Vell. 2.36.2, Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.101. See Scanlon (1980) for Sallust's engagement with Thucydides.

[64] Jerome in fact uses Actium as the point of reference: *Sallustius diem obiit quadriennio ante Actiacum bellum* (p. 151 Helm).

mihi Galba Otho Vitellius nec beneficio nec iniuria cogniti. dignitatem nostram a Vespasiano inchoatam, a Tito auctam, a Domitiano longius provectam non abnuerim: sed incorruptam fidem professis neque amore quisquam et sine odio dicendus est. (4) quod si vita suppeditet, principatum divi Nervae et imperium Traiani, uberiorem securioremque materiam, senectuti seposui, rara temporum felicitate ubi sentire quae velis et quae sentias dicere licet. (*Hist.* 1.1.3–4)

My familiarity with Galba, Otho, and Vitellius is conditioned by no favor or injury. I cannot deny my standing was given its start by Vespasian, increased by Titus, and advanced rather further by Domitian: but for those who have professed uncompromised integrity, nobody is to be discussed with love or with hatred. (4) If my life lasts long enough, however, I have set aside for my old age the principate of the divine Nerva and the command of Trajan, richer and safer material, in these rare happy times when one is allowed to think what one likes and say what one thinks.

He turns first to those *principes* who appear in *Histories*. First, since concrete benefits or injuries are absent from his relationship to the *principes* of 69 CE, whatever might appear fawning or malicious in that part of the account cannot in fact be so; having no stake in any of them, he has no reason to say anything other than what he really thinks.

The Flavians pose a different problem, in that each of them in succession advanced Tacitus' standing, especially Domitian. Favors such as theirs might have inspired loyalty (*fides*) in the recipient that would require him to defend them, but he is bound by another *fides*, a fidelity to truth. This declaration seems designed to persuade readers not to suspect him of favoritism toward the Flavians, which is puzzling, since probably no one would have.[65] Contemporary pressure was strongly toward vilification of Domitian, and the real question was whether it was possible to say anything *good* about him. And Tacitus already had a published stance on that *princeps*, in *Agricola*; someone who had read that work would hardly expect him to start singing Domitian's praises now. In short, the last thing we should expect from Tacitus is an overly favorable treatment of the *domus Flavia*.[66]

This does not present a big interpretive problem if we imagine that Tacitus simply expected unusually supine readers.[67] In that case, we could get

[65] This sentence is sometimes read as Tacitus' honest, brave disclosure of his debt to the Flavians, and as a sober refusal to be led away from the truth by warm feelings he might have toward them. So, apparently, Syme (1958: 210) and Steinmetz (1968: 259).

[66] Nor in fact, to judge from the young Domitian's appearances in what is left of *Histories*, does he seem likely to have been treated gently in the later narrative: see Schäfer (1977) and Ash (1999: 138–43).

[67] In fact, that is what Fabia (1901: 70) supposes Tacitus must have thought of his readers, to have tried so inept a maneuver.

away with saying that he here sets very favorable terms for the evaluation of his book's integrity: by emphasizing the danger that he might reciprocate Domitian's favors, the risk that he might return his injuries fades from view.[68] Yet Tacitus' disclosure of obligations here can also serve other ends, which do not require us to see *Histories*' imagined readers as quite so susceptible. One affects our understanding of the relationship between his biography and his literary career, and the other how we regard his relationship with Trajan.

Marincola usefully proposes that the disclosure underscores Tacitus' senatorial credentials: where the historian seems to be promising impartiality, then, he is at the same time reminding everyone that he is an ex-consul with long experience of government and so, when recounting political history, knows whereof he speaks.[69] But this interpretation too presents difficulties. How many of Tacitus' contemporary readers will have forgotten who he was? Conversely, if we think of posthumous readers, how many would divine from the vague "advanced rather further" (*Hist*. 1.1.3) the all-important information that the author had attained the highest magistracy? We must rather assume a contemporary audience that was quite clear who he was, and we must also account for the discreet, allusive treatment of his own biography. Far from associating himself with his *cursus honorum* here, Tacitus is in a sense separating himself from it. We are in fact presented, delicately, with the whole *cursus*, from its beginnings (*inchoatam*) to its apex (*longius provectam*, 1.1.3); those offices in turn constitute his *dignitas*, the esteem in which others hold him or, in other words, his social identity. By his era the regular, almost compulsory way of indicating who you were was to give your *curriculum vitae*; if a monument was erected in your honor, in public or even at home, after your name came your political biography.[70] On *Histories*, which Roman literary history prepares us to see, almost reflexively, as a "monument," Tacitus does stamp his biography, as he would have done on an honorary statue.[71] In stone or metal, the practice associated the self to which the monument referred as closely as possible with a series of occasions on which *principes* had honored him. But at the beginning

[68] Cf. Vogt (1986: 42–3): "Nicht ohne Absicht erweckt er dabei [i.e., 'with this sentence'] den Anschein, als ob bei ihm eine Voreingenommenheit zugunsten der flavischen Kaiser zu erwarten wäre, denn der Leser kannte den Verfasser des Agricola als unerbittlichen Hasser Domitians." This position would also be helped by grouping Domitian with his father and brother: these two men were probably only *beneficio cogniti* to Tacitus, and it seems likely there was little contemporary pressure to criticize them, and indeed perhaps some gain to be found in holding them up as a standard against which Domitian had failed miserably.

[69] Marincola (1997: 144).

[70] Cf. Eck (1996: 227–49) and (2005).

[71] For the literary work as monument, cf. above all Liv. *Praef*. 10 and Hor. *Carm*. 3.30, and see Nisbet and Rudd (2004 ad 30.1). On the rhetorical uses of claiming monumental status for your book, see Habinek (1998: 109–14).

of *Histories* the effect is the opposite: the offices construct a self that the monument immediately discards. Within *Histories* the Tacitus who could be articulated as a series of acts of Imperial munificence is irrelevant; our new Tacitus is defined by a single event, his profession of "uncompromised fidelity" (1.1.3). That profession makes of our historian a new man, one who does not feel the traces of his own biography: he will feel neither the love nor the hatred that the life he has lived should inspire. This sense of apathy is enhanced by a shift to impersonal expressions: "by those who have professed . . . nobody is to be described" (§3). In this light, his disclosure becomes less an effort to persuade readers that *Histories* will not suffer from too much affection for Domitian than a means of canceling from the beginning the relevance of the "Tacitus" described by the *cursus honorum* to the "Tacitus" who will take us through the story of the civil war and the Flavian era.

The other important effect of Tacitus' disclosure affects our estimate of his relationship with Trajan; we will be able best to appreciate this effect within a broader account of how the preface manages Tacitus' relationship with the sitting regime. The list of *principes* that began with Galba is not permitted to extend past Domitian, and we are not told how Nerva and Trajan are known to the historian, because there will be no account of their era, just yet, that would require such a disclosure. If he does not die, though, he will write that up when he is old (*Hist.* 1.1.4). This sentence deals with two closely related problems that threaten the autonomy of *Histories*: it enables Tacitus not to write about Trajan in *Histories*, and it reassures us that even his narrative of the civil war and the Flavian era is his own, not a transcription of the story authorized by the regime.

The implicit question to which these sentences respond is: why wait to write the Trajanic history? Why not write it now? The answer seems to lie in the concluding phrase "given the rare happy time when you may think what you like and say what you think" (*Hist.* 1.1.4). It is not clear, however, just what this phrase explains: does it mean "I have set the topic aside for my old age [and *will* treat it then if I am alive] because I can think and say what I want to" or does it rather mean "I have set the topic aside for my old age [and have worked on this one instead] because I can think and say what I want to [and so *do not have to* work on the principate of Nerva and Trajan if I do not want to]"?[72] The former alternative, to which the characterization of the material of that era as desirable (§4) at first inclines us, will pass given an uncritical audience: the historian is, as it were, saving up a fine wine for

[72] Steinmetz (1968: 257) is right, I think, that this phrase explains *seposui* rather than modifies *uberiorem securioremque*.

later enjoyment. The latter is needed if someone, especially Trajan, whom the unfulfilled promise affects most, is dissatisfied with the explanation and rejoins, "If the material is so rich and so safe, why did you not just carry through with the whole plan outlined in *Agricola*?" That protest becomes harder to make when the explanation for what Tacitus has done in *Histories* is the very felicity of the age of Trajan: that is, if the *princeps* were to complain that Tacitus ought to have written something other than what he wanted to, he would also contradict the historian's characterization of his rule as a time when it is permitted to think what one likes and say what one thinks. In effect, Tacitus gives Trajan the choice between, on the one hand, satisfaction with the happy words "richer and safer material," the (we may conjecture) none too fawning treatment of the last Flavian, and the promise of a later account of his principate and, on the other, a protest that, however slightly, undercuts the all-important impression of radical difference between Trajan and all those other *principes* who made Trajan's "happy times" (§4) so "rare" an experience.[73] Or, if we put this ingenious argument in positive terms, Tacitus' not praising Trajan in *Histories* itself proves the *princeps*' praiseworthiness, which consists in his difference from other *principes*. What should be an explanation of why it *is* safe now to talk about Trajan here explains why Tacitus does *not* talk about him now, and an argument that would ordinarily be used to guarantee that a book's contents are true – that is, that the historian was free to say what he really thought – is here redeployed as a means of avoiding producing a book in which it would not be possible to give one's real opinion, or to be read as giving one's real opinion.

This much, then, helps us to account for how Tacitus gets out of writing a Trajanic history, but it does not explain why he has to do so. In the first place, it is because the *princeps* has every reason to want someone like him to write an account of his rule. We can see the dynamic in the same letter in which Pliny augurs immortality for *Histories*, and explains his reasons for wanting to appear in them:

Auguror nec me fallit augurium, historias tuas immortales futuras; quo magis illis (ingenue fatebor) inseri cupio. (2) nam si esse nobis curae solet ut facies nostra ab optimo quoque artifice exprimatur, nonne debemus optare, ut operibus nostris similis tui scriptor praedicatorque contingat? (3) demonstro ergo quamquam diligentiam tuam fugere non possit, cum sit in publicis actis, demonstro tamen quo magis credas, iucundum mihi futurum si factum meum, cuius gratia periculo crevit, tuo ingenio tuo testimonio ornaveris . . . (10) haec, utcumque se habent,

[73] Cf. Plin. *Pan.* 2.1–3.

notiora clariora maiora tu facies; quamquam non exigo ut excedas actae rei modum. nam nec historia debet egredi veritatem, et honeste factis veritas sufficit. vale. (*Ep*. 7.33.1–3, 10)

I divine – and my divination deceives me not – that your histories will be immortal; for which reason (I will honestly confess) I am all the more eager to be included in them. (2) For if we are normally concerned that our face be rendered by only superlative craftsmen, ought we not to hope our acts will get a writer such as you to publicize them? (3) Therefore I will give an account – not that it could escape your diligence, since it is in the public records! – still, I'll give an account rather so that you'll be the more convinced I would be pleased if my deed, whose appeal grew because of the danger surrounding it, should be decorated by your talent and your testimony . . . [Here he tells the story of his conduct after the trial of Baebius Massa.] (10) . . . This account, such as it may be, you will make better known, more distinguished, and greater – not that I am asking you to exceed the boundaries of what exactly was done. After all, history ought not to go beyond the truth, and for deeds done nobly the truth is enough. Take care.

Pliny knows the benefits of being on the good side of a historian producing an authoritative work.[74] The analogy with portraiture is striking: just as the sculptor takes a real appearance and renders it in the best possible light, so the historian takes a laudable deed and elaborates it so that it looks as good as possible. Pliny's protesting that he does not seek anything but the truth of course betrays that his request might seem aimed at something other than the truth.[75]

This friendly solicitation might not in itself seem momentous, until we realize that a similar request on Trajan's part is implicitly on file for any account Tacitus might give of the years after Domitian's death. The historian's deferrals, at the beginning of *Agricola* and again here in *Histories*, at least imagine Trajan wants him to write a history of his principate. That history is desirable to the *princeps* for personal, not scholarly, reasons: a text made by a "superlative craftsman" (Plin. *Ep*. 7.33.2) who approves of the things he has done would reflect well on him. This issue is at base unrelated to whether the historical Trajan wanted such a history or even cared what Tacitus was doing; the point is that the fact of the Principate brings with it the public assumption that the regime wants its versions of the past and the present replicated and reinscribed.[76] In other words, Trajan

[74] Pliny's main intertext here is Cicero's "Letter to Lucceius" (*Ep*. 5.12); cf. Woodman (2003: 200n32).
[75] Cf. Cic. *Ep*. 5.12.3.
[76] There is consequently a lot of room on the spectrum between what Janson (1964: 76) presents as our two alternatives: "In Tacitus' case we need not assume any active external pressure . . . to write on contemporary subjects. It is very conceivable, on the other hand, that Tacitus felt – like Vergil – a conscious responsibility for the commemoration of contemporary events, and at that time he may well have felt it his patriotic duty to record the fortunate period in which he lived."

may not have wanted a history from Tacitus, but the position of *princeps* he inhabited seemed to desire one fervently.[77] Indeed, like the preface of *Agricola*, the preface of *Histories* registers, as plainly as can be, a benefit Tacitus has received from Trajan and might be expected to repay in praise: together with every other Roman, our historian has for some years now been enjoying the unusual good fortune that Trajan's rule has bestowed (*rara temporum felicitate*, *Hist*. 1.1.4; cf. *felicitatem temporum*, *Ag*. 3.1). It is an additional brilliance of the rhetorical performance in this preface that a state of affairs that would seem almost to compel any work to be a work of praise is here deployed as a justification for *not* rendering praise.

At all costs Tacitus must avoid giving the account he predicts, and that is the reason for the delicate deferral that closes the preface. It has been suggested that he did not write about Trajan for fear of offending persons still alive, including the *princeps*.[78] That was not the only danger, and it is not one pondered in the preface; in fact, that subject is said to be "safer" or "freer from care" (*securiorem*, *Hist*. 1.1.4) than the matter of *Histories*, though we may justifiably entertain skepticism about that. As Flach perceives, an equally alarming prospect was that a positive treatment of Trajan could only seem to have been solicited.[79] Explaining to Titus why he has not published the *A fine Aufidii Bassi*, a historical work that would have touched on the rule of Vespasian, the elder Pliny writes:

Vos quidem omnes, patrem, te fratremque, diximus opere iusto, temporum nostrorum historiam orsi a fine Aufidii. ubi sit ea, quaeres. iam pridem peracta sancitur et alioqui statutum erat heredi mandare, ne quid ambitioni dedisse vita iudicaretur. (*Nat. praef.* 20)

I have of course treated all of you – your father, you, and your brother – in a work of the appropriate dimensions; it is a history of our times, beginning from where Aufidius Bassus stopped. You will ask, "Where is it?" It has been completely finished for a good long time now and is presently undergoing its "confirmation," and in any event it had been decided I would entrust it to my heir, lest my life be adjudged to have surrendered something to ambition.

This is probably the only way both to produce a historical work about a current *princeps* and to reserve for it some measure of integrity: because the book was produced with the intention that its reception would postdate its author's death, it cannot engage in reciprocity. The encyclopedist's concern here is not that his *history* will be thought to have "surrendered something to ambition" but rather his *life*: a corrupted history could bring his reputation,

[77] Historiography is prominent among the venues Pliny identifies as appropriate for dignified praise of the *princeps*: *Pan*. 54.2, *seria ergo te carmina honorque aeternus annalium, non haec brevis et pudenda praedicatio* [i.e., "from actors onstage"] *colit*.

[78] Fabia (1901: 45–6). [79] Flasch (1973a: 62–4).

and everything else he wrote besides the *A fine Aufidii Bassi*, under suspicion as well. The expectation that he would be thought to have written a corrupt work is firm enough that he is unwilling even to attempt publication.

In this sense, it is important that the Trajanic history not be written, but it is also essential to the integrity of *Histories* that its readers witness the deferral. Just as the terms in which Tacitus makes that deferral preempt any protest from Trajan, so do they display for readers the historian's capacity for resisting influence. In the same way as any observer would assume that a history of Trajan written during his lifetime was a compromised history, Tacitus' evasion of that task, if only for the moment, shows active commitment to uncompromised historiography.

Yet it is also important that Trajan appear to desire such a history from Tacitus. After all, if (as the younger Pliny has told us) "we are normally concerned that our face be rendered by only superlative craftsmen" (*Ep.* 7.33.2), what would it mean for a craftsman's services not to be in demand? There could be no better proof of Trajan's interest in engaging Tacitus' services than Tacitus' careful public deflection of that interest.

Deferring the Trajanic history does not merely relieve Tacitus of the burden of that work and its unpleasant consequences but also plays an important role in bolstering the autonomy of the work he does not mean to defer. As the important paper of Luce demonstrated, historians in antiquity imagined bias as a factor only in instances in which there was a relationship between the historian and those about whom he was writing.[80] In the case of *Histories*, then, when Tacitus has dealt successfully with the problem of his relationship to the *principes* of 69 CE and to the Flavians, there would seem to be no remaining cause for charging him with bias, since his narrative is not to extend past the Flavians. Yet to say historians focused on direct relations of reciprocity does not mean anyone will have failed to see that Trajan had a big stake in how his predecessor was portrayed, to say nothing of how his own actions under Domitian would be presented. It was possible as well for the narrative to touch on matters that reflected on the regime a great deal; quite early in *Histories* we encounter Galba's adoption of Piso Licinianus, a subject that critics have generally agreed is pertinent to Nerva's adoption of Trajan.[81] Even though Tacitus' subject in *Histories* was not Trajan's principate, then, there was still an outstanding need to show that the book was independent from his authority.

[80] Luce (1989).

[81] Syme (1958: 153–6) links Tacitus' narrative at the opening of *Histories* with the "facts or fears of 97" (153); see also Bruère (1954), Büchner (1962–79: IV.1–22), and Welwei (1995). Commentators often tease Syme for thinking the opening of 69 CE, rather than the death of Nero, was the obvious and natural place to begin. But we can allow that it was an excellent place to start if you wanted the first story you told to be about the adoption.

That need is met, in part, by the very dexterity of Tacitus' deferral: it exemplifies for us his larger ability to manage, through language, any pressures exerted on himself or on his book. I would argue that his disengagement from the Flavians, too, is an ersatz disavowal of obligations to the regime that succeeded them.[82] There was simply no politic way of declaring that you would not be swayed by love or hatred for the sitting ruler: the reasons for not professing hatred are clear enough, but it would also have been a tricky business to say you could set aside your affection for the *princeps*, since that would have projected an air of ingratitude for the happiness that his rule brought to every Roman, and for which Romans regularly gave thanks. Conversely, nothing whatever prevented making such a declaration about the Flavians, a declaration that then permits Tacitus to announce a general policy: "of course I have reasons to love Vespasian, but [that will not affect what I write, since] once you have pledged yourself to fidelity, you must not allow love or hatred to change what you say about anyone at all." After this declaration of principle, we encounter a connective of notable opacity (*quod*): "but if I live long enough, I will later describe the era of Nerva and Trajan." On the surface, the last sentence seems to mean that Nerva and Trajan are *not* to be considered as factors in the program of *Histories* in any way, but only in the planned work in which they will appear, which will not give the historian cause for distress (*securiorem*, *Hist.* 1.1.4) anyway. But that they appear immediately after his universal, categorical declaration of impartiality implies that they, too, are embraced by it; though *quod* makes no claims to logical connection, simple sequence disposes us to infer one. We can clarify the effect this has by continuing the paraphrase: "I have reasons to praise Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, but, once you have sworn fidelity, you must not allow love or hatred to change what you say about anyone at all. In a future project, about Nerva and Trajan . . ." In this way, a declaration that apparently serves no rhetorical purpose – no one expected Tacitus to shower Domitian with undeserved praise – but that Tacitus was entirely at liberty to make, does important work toward resolving the real, glaring obligation toward Trajan that anyone would have expected to affect *Histories*, but that the historian could not himself acknowledge as a threat.[83]

[82] Thus I agree with Steinmetz's rejection (1968: 255) of the strange thesis that *Hist.* 1.1.4 is a loose appendage to the preface.

[83] About Tacitus' declaration that he will write *sine ira et studio* (*Ann.* 1.1.3), O'Gorman (1995a: 101) writes that "far from being a claim to some sort of historical impartiality, [sc. *Ann.* 1.1.2–3] is a strong statement of authorial power. Leaving previous writers to one side, Tacitus takes issue with the subject emperors, announcing his intention to narrate their lives and reigns, but denying that he,

To see how important it is that he comes away from the preface with this obligation settled, picture the preface of *Histories* as an encounter, before an audience, between Tacitus and Trajan (again, what matters here is not that the *princeps* actually paid attention to literature or Tacitus, but that readers will inevitably have *imagined* Trajan as an audience). Now, turn to the interview of Seneca and Nero in *Ann*. 14.53–6. In 62 CE Seneca, who had been alerted that his enemies were slandering him before the *princeps*, and who could perceive Nero's growing alienation, asked him to take back the wealth he had bestowed on him and to give his blessing to a plan of retirement. Nero refused, insisting that his tutor's gifts to him, too, had been substantial, that he still had need of his aid, and that people would wrongly interpret his returning the wealth as evidence of his own cruelty. This is how the encounter ends:

his adicit complexum et oscula, factus natura et consuetudine exercitus velare odium fallacibus blanditiis. Seneca, qui finis omnium cum dominante sermonum, grates agit; sed instituta prioris potentiae commutat, prohibet coetus salutantium, vitat comitantes, rarus per urbem, quasi valetudine infensa aut sapientiae studiis domi attineretur. (*Ann*. 14.56.3)

To these words Nero added an embrace, and kisses, built by nature and habituated by practice to hide his hatred behind deceptively comforting words. Seneca – this is how every conversation with a master concludes – thanked him; but he changed his mode of living from that he had used when he was powerful, he turned away the crowds of those wishing him well, he avoided company, he did not make many appearances in the city, as though kept at home by adverse health or his philosophical pursuits.

From here, the narrative continues with a sentence beginning "now that Seneca had been struck down" (*perculso Seneca*, 14.57.1). Nero's gifts have imposed a debt on his adviser, whose attempt to return them is an effort to disengage himself from that debt and so from the tyrant's power; the refusal means the continuation of the domination the gifts constituted; the final "thank you" is Seneca's admission that he has not escaped.[84] We can think

a subject of the Roman Empire, is in any way controlled by them." While the formulation is good and useful, we can also take it a step further in light of the preface of *Histories*. In *Annals* his distance from Tiberius and the Julio-Claudians after him is contrasted with the emotional engagement of those who had written when they were alive, or shortly after their deaths. Tacitus' impassivity here is tied only to his temporal distance from them. While in *Histories* Galba and the rest lead him to a general statement of autonomy, his assertion of power over the *principes* of *Annals* is simultaneously a concession of weakness before the *princeps* of the present.

[84] To my mind, the interview is one of the best pieces of evidence that Tacitus knew Seneca's work well: here, Tacitus suggests, is that Imperial generosity Seneca had urged in the *De beneficiis*. For Seneca's focus on the *princeps*' generosity in that work, cf. Griffin (2003: 106–12).

of Seneca here as, after a fashion, trying to opt out of the Principate – that is, the order of society in which everyone owes the *princeps* for the felicity of the age – and of Nero as barring the door. In the preface of *Histories*, too, Tacitus acknowledges the *felicitas* of the age, but his final deferral of his account of Trajan's principate suspends, for as long as *Histories* continues, his obligation to express his gratitude. For a time, at least, and through a book, Tacitus effects the escape his Seneca could achieve only in death.

When Tacitus tends to his various obligations through these rhetorical strategies, he is not simply pointing to individual relationships that do not affect him. In a larger sense, he is also showing us how he deals with the scenario that has been imposed on every historian since Actium. To this end, it matters that he proclaims his own freedom from relations of reciprocity, but it matters even more that we are able to watch as he extricates himself. If the history of post-Actium historiography has made us pessimistic about the future of *Histories*, the display of rhetorical mastery at the end of the preface has given us reason to believe that this book, since it was written by this man, might constitute an exception to that history. When he exempts himself from the relations of reciprocity that have governed every instance of historical writing since Actium, he thereby also makes a strong declaration of authorial control and of authenticity: *Histories* is not really Trajan's version of the past rendered in Tacitus' words, but, rather, emphatically the creation and property of the historian himself. His rhetorical mastery is his seal of ownership and his certificate of authenticity.

Why Histories*?*

So far, we have taken seriously the idea that how Tacitus presents the history of the Roman state and of historiography is supposed to explain something important about what *Histories* is and does. Yet, in fact, his explanation of his starting point creates a useful ambiguity about the argument of *Histories* and the implications of his career. *Hist*. 1.1.1 began with a *nam* that seemed to explain the starting point of the work: "the beginning of my work will be the consulship . . . For the eight hundred and twenty years . . ." But to scholars it has been anything but clear how the succeeding discussion justifies that starting point.[85] This consular date is close enough

[85] Fabia (1901) sees sloppy argumentation as the problem. According to Heubner (1963–82 ad loc.), the *nam* begins an explanation of the starting point, but Tacitus' thought almost immediately wanders to the failings of historiography under the Principate, then again to his profession of impartiality. Büchner (1962–79: IV.43–60) thinks *nam* explains a thought implicit in the statement *initium mihi operis Servius Galba iterum Titus Vinius consules erunt* – namely, "I have changed my plans since I

to a historical milestone – the death of Nero – that a history *could* begin there, but it is not obvious why this history does, or has to. The eight hundred and twenty years bring us only to the starting date of the present work. The thirty or so years after Tacitus' starting point – that is, the period covered in *Histories* – receive no explicit characterization whatever. One way of fleshing out the argument here would be the following: "I begin at the start of 69 CE, for all of Roman history before that date has been written up (well before Actium, but badly afterwards) [but nobody has written up the years after it]." On this reading, the work's boundaries are entirely determined by the absence of a continuous account of the years after 68 CE and therefore are not related to the decrepitude of post-Actium historiography, which is the topic that has dominated the sentence.[86] The striking implication, then, is that Tacitus' work has *nothing to do with* the historical process he sketches. He is not strictly correcting the failures of all the bad historians since Actium but, rather less dramatically, only dutifully filling a gap they have left.[87]

At the same time, however, it is easy to come away from this sentence with the impression that Tacitus has done a lot more in it than to explain that he will be covering material never before treated and to make some parenthetical remarks along the way about the history of the historiography of other periods. After all, it is this set of logically parenthetical remarks that is picked up in the continuing argument with "now, one can easily dismiss ambition . . ." (*Hist*. 1.1.2). His assurances that he will engage in no flattery and indulge no malice presuppose that the same factors that had corrupted the historiography of the Principate from Actium down to 69 CE in the present threaten the integrity of his own work too. The historiographical emergency of the Principate identified in the *nam*-sentence and elaborated thereafter is a sufficient reason not only for a treatment of the years 69 to 96 CE but also for a corrective account of the years 31 BCE through 68 CE. So it is that Heubner comments that the *nam*-sentence in *Hist*. 1.1.1 would be more appropriate as a justification for a treatment of the period 31 BCE

wrote *Agricola*." For Steinmetz (1968), *nam* introduces the whole series of thoughts through *dicendus est* as an explanation of another thought implicit in the opening sentence – that is, "I am going to write history."

86 That assertion would also, apparently, be true: Cluvius Rufus and Fabius Rusticus may not even have reached Galba, and the elder Pliny's account necessarily ended at some point in the 70s CE. See the discussion at Syme (1958: 177–81). The most significant unknown is the dimensions of the work that Plutarch (in *Galba* and *Otho*) and Tacitus used as their main source for the narrative of 69 CE. That work may be identical with the work of one of the authors referred to above in this note.

87 Cf. Fabia (1901: 47): "Tacite se donne l'air, non de choisir le sujet qu'il préfère, mais d'accepter celui que le devoir lui désigne et lui impose." He also observes (51) that this period is attractive precisely because treating a new subject is more glorious than reworking an old one.

through 68 CE than for the account Tacitus has actually written.[88] In that sense, the *nam*-sentence, together with the succeeding thoughts, does not simply justify the period he covers but explains why there is an urgent need for uncompromised historiographical work on the Principate, and why he is the right man for the job.

The difficulty of the *nam*-sentence explains Fabia's often-quoted verdict of a century ago: "the writing in this preface is brilliant, but the thinking is weak."[89] Yet the ambiguity he deplores has a lot to recommend it, in that it allows Tacitus to advance otherwise contradictory claims. The bolder claim the preface seems to make is that all of Tacitus' work is deeply consequential and plays with high stakes. On this claim, he is reversing the whole course of historiography under the Principate: since that course has been determined not merely by the incompetence and sloth of earlier writers but by the structure of power under the Principate, to write histories that are unprecedentedly good carries the risk of placing the historian in the position of independence from and opposition to those structures of power. In other words, Tacitus presents himself as making a career out of writing books that may internally portray but do not externally recognize (in the sense of "submit to") the condition established after Actium: "all power transferred into the hands of one man" (*Hist.* 1.1.1).

The other claim that *Histories* seems to make is less ambitious but is the only one a scrupulously literal and logical reading extracts: this is, that the civil war and Flavian dynasty have simply never received one continuous treatment. Tacitus merely steps under a burden that *someone* had to shoulder – and that it will in fact be a burden, not a pleasure, is emphasized as *Histories*' second chapter begins: "I approach a work rich in calamities, harsh in battles, rent with sedition, vicious even in peace" (*opus adgredior opimum casibus, atrox proeliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace saevom*, *Hist.* 1.2.1).[90] This justification for the work is politically neutral and personally unassuming. Any audience will feel the first claim is being made, but if asked to point to the words where it is asserted, it will not be able to find them. It will, however, find the words "For the eight hundred and twenty years of the period preceding [my starting date] have been recorded

[88] Heubner (1963–82 ad loc.).

[89] Fabia (1901: 76), my translation. Fabia's article is outstanding, but it is too quick to explain interpretive difficulties (and in this he was neither the first nor the last) by faulting Tacitus' stupidity or carelessness.

[90] Cf. Fabia (1901: 47) and Aubrion (1985): "le deuxième chapitre des *Histoires* ressemble à un prélude musical où les mots *atrox*, *discors* et *saevum* donnent en quelque sorte le ton du récit. L'impression laissée par cette page, même si elle est corrigée dans le chapitre suivant, doit rester prédominante dans l'esprit du lecteur" (316).

by many authors" (1.1.1). The consequences of the more ambitious justification are sufficiently far-reaching that a way out from under them might be desirable. There is no way of taking back the reproachful remarks on the history of the historiography of the Principate, nor can the impression be erased that the Principate itself is the pernicious agent in that history, but so long as those observations are not expressly the cause of *Histories*, there remains a way of reading the book, however implausibly literal-minded, in which the historian is not in constant contention with the Principate as an institution. The Principate may be a problem, in other words, but *Histories* is not a response to that problem.[91]

THE PREFACE AND THE NARRATIVE

The implications of the preface extend into the work. I do not mean the preface is a good thematic introduction to *Histories*; that work is done in *Hist.* 1.2–3, where the coming narrative is articulated as a collection of good and bad *exempla*.[92] Rather, Tacitus gives the specifically historiographical concerns of the preface continued prominence in his narrative and in his personal interventions into that narrative. This is not surprising, since, as we have seen, the preface encourages us to look closely at our historian and assess what he is doing and why. Yet in *Histories*, and in *Annals* as well, he rarely shows himself at work, that is, making decisions between differing accounts offered by his sources, or dealing with situations in which he has only incomplete information. When he does, the results are not always striking: he avails himself of the tools most historians would have used, appealing to probability and to the reliability of individual sources.[93] His

[91] Cole (1992: 233–4) argues that, in the lost exemplars, the *octingentos et viginti* in the MSS was *DCCC et XX*, and that this itself was an error for the original *DCC et XX*, which would mean that the number only refers to Roman history down to Actium. If accepted, this solution would mean that Tacitus simply does not attempt to explain the starting date of *Histories* in the preface. Why Tacitus begins with the opening of 69 CE and not the death of Nero is another question: discussion at Syme (1958: 145), Hainsworth (1964), Shotter (1967), and Cole (1992). Tacitus' choice could be seen as resisting the Principate's pull toward "biographical" history structured by the principates of individual *principes* in favor of a "Republican" annalistic framework that obeys consular years. (On this generic development, see Dihle [1987], Pelling [1997], and Devillers [2003b].) Syme (1958: 145) dismisses this notion and argues instead for the inevitability of beginning with 69 CE. The suggestion of Hainsworth (1964), which Cole (1992) supports, has Tacitus avoiding giving an account of the activities of Verginius Rufus in the period around Nero's death. This may be so, but it seems strange to think that Tacitus would undertake a work that would only become more topical, and presumably less comfortable, as it approached 96 CE, but would adjust its *beginning* in order to avoid stepping on toes. There is a good summary discussion at Sage (1990: 871–4).

[92] On those chapters, see Woodman (1998: 109–11) and Damon (2003 ad loc.).

[93] For Tacitus' citation of sources, and of rumors, in *Annals*, see Devillers (2003a: 157–205). For his citation by name in the major works, see Mensching (1967).

ability to perceive the truth and his mastery of the laws by which human beings operate affect our estimate of the historian, certainly, but they do not bear explicitly on the concerns of the preface, apart from the epistemological concern highlighted in the phrase "ignorance of the *res publica* as though it were someone else's business" (*Hist.* 1.1.1).

Also, though we have been warned to scrutinize Tacitus, and in particular how he feels about and therefore represents his subjects, it is not clear what, exactly, we should look for in order to feel satisfied. We will not catch him indulging in *adulatio* in the case of any of the *principes* who appear in *Histories*, but we did not in any event expect to do so. On the other hand, given his deeply critical voice, we could more readily be persuaded of his *malignitas* – except, of course, that the preface has already inoculated us against this impression: since our historian understands the difference between *libertas* and its "false appearance" (*Hist.* 1.1.2), indeed since he alerted us to the problem in the first place, we can feel far more secure than we otherwise would that in *Histories* what looks like *libertas is libertas* and not its opposite. In this respect we are confronted with a preface that not only tells us what to look for in the narrative in order to be persuaded of its contentions about its author and his work, but also, rather more insidiously, sets us up to read the ensuing narrative with a strong predisposition to interpret whatever we may find there as a demonstration of those contentions.[94]

In terms of content, we do not know if Tacitus' narrative feels dramatically different from those of his predecessors. In those stretches of the work for which a parallel tradition is preserved, there are indeed respects in which his account is distinctive, but it resembles the other accounts much more closely than one might expect, in view of the forcefulness with which he repudiates his predecessors in the preface.[95] This is another way in which the contribution of the preface can be decisive for the work. What he does may not be wildly different, but the preface has told us that whatever he does *means* something wildly different, that his relationship to his subject is completely diverse from that of his predecessors.

This is not to say that the narrative of *Histories* is without features we could use specifically to support the image of Tacitus as unaffected by personal relationships. The best example might be his treatment of the *principes* of 69 CE. Their characters defy easy categorization, particularly in comparison with the parallel tradition. Galba might easily have been either

[94] Presumably, the section of the narrative in which this inoculation would have been most useful was the lost Domitianic books.

[95] For Tacitus' relationship to the parallel tradition in Books One and Two, see the good overviews of Martin (1994: 191–6) and Damon (2003: 24–30).

a heartless, murderous old fool or a lamented, benevolent proponent of a revival of Republican ways. Otho could have been a simple turncoat or, conversely, his suicide could be seen as an important act of heroism that dramatically reduced the violence of the civil war. Vitellius could have been a caricature of unfeeling monstrosity. Tacitus cultivates a more nuanced stance: each receives at least a moment that puts him in a better, or a worse, light.[96] You might suppose that this phenomenon is the consequence of Tacitus' sense of psychological complexity, which it may well be, but it also works as a perfectly useful demonstration of his unpredictability and therefore independence.

Again, there is also an important role here for Tacitus' language. The persistence of his style beyond the preface into the narrative means the extension of its historical connotations. His language promotes a sense of strangeness that demands explanation: why is his work written in *this* of all manners? This sense is renewed, to a degree, with each new linguistic audacity we encounter. His style is a translation of the political implications of the preface into the very code in which he represents history: it serves both as an ongoing reminder of where he fits in – or, perhaps better, as a reminder of his *not* fitting in – to the history of historiography and also as a constant marker of how his involvement makes his work different from everything else. In a sense, then, his style is constantly programmatizing his narrative.

Tacitus does not, however, leave the repercussions of the preface for his narrative entirely implicit. We return now to an often-cited passage, already discussed briefly in chapter 1 above, in which the concerns of the preface resurface in a more substantial way. At the end of Book Two he refers specifically to historians who have treated the same material as he has:

> Scriptores temporum, qui potiente rerum Flavia domo monimenta belli huiusce composuerunt, curam pacis et amorem rei publicae, corruptas in adulationem causas, tradidere: nobis super insitam levitatem et prodito Galba vilem mox fidem aemulatione etiam invidiaque, ne ab aliis apud Vitellium anteirentur, pervertisse ipsum Vitellium videntur. (*Hist.* 2.101.1)

> Historians of that era, who composed their accounts of this war when the House of the Flavii was in power, have handed down [that the reasons of Caecina and Bassus for betraying Vitellius were] solicitude for peace, and patriotism, motivations invented dishonestly for the purpose of flattery. My view is that, apart from their being naturally fickle, and fidelity's having become cheap after Galba was betrayed, it was in an envy-driven struggle not to let anyone else surpass them in Vitellius' good graces that they brought Vitellius himself down.

[96] On Tacitus' treatment of the three, see Ash (1999: 73–125).

There is more to this passage than meets the eye. A couple of features are designed to arrest our attention. Tacitus here picks a very prominent place to discuss a difference from his authorities.[97] What is more, in *Histories* his pattern is to refer to variants in his sources at especially dramatic or important moments.[98] At first glance, there is no compelling reason to invoke his authorities here. The variant in question is not even a difference of fact – no one disputes that Caecina and Bassus changed their loyalties and worked to undermine Vitellius – but only of motive; the events of the *narratio* are not at stake, but only our moral assessment of the actors. Yet even on that score, Tacitus' intervention does not change our opinion of the generals: the preceding narrative has made it clear that they are morally abased, betrayed Vitellius, and damaged his cause by competing with each other.[99] In other words, without Tacitus' remarks on these other authors, it would never occur to us from our reading of *Histories* alone that Caecina and Bassus had in mind anything nobler than back-stabbing self-promotion.

What is the notice doing here, then? Rather than Tacitus' remarks on his predecessors highlighting something important about Caecina and Bassus, the story of Caecina and Bassus elaborates our understanding of the history of historiography, and Tacitus' place in it. The themes of the preface are evoked. Tacitus' reference to "those who have professed uncompromised integrity" (*incorruptam fidem professis*, *Hist*. 1.1.3) is echoed here in "motivations that have been invented dishonestly" (*corruptas . . . causas*, 2.101.1); corruption of truth is again caused by "flattery" (*adsentandi*, 1.1.1 and *adulationi*, 1.1.2; *adulationem*, 2.101.1). This flattery is imagined as arising in historians' relationship to all three of the Flavians (1.1.3; "when the House of the Flavii was in power" [*potiente rerum Flavia domo*, 2.101.1]). By recalling the preface, this critique brings to mind what is wrong with *all* of Tacitus' predecessors since Actium, and also, necessarily, the ways in which he differs from them. This evocation elevates our passage from a local dispute to a question of programmatic import. But this is not just a concrete instance of a problem that Tacitus dealt with categorically in the preface. By linking the idea of corrupt historiography to the story of Caecina's and Bassus' betrayal, he explores in greater depth the consequences of historians' entangling themselves in reciprocity.

[97] Cf. the other final passages in *Histories*: Otho's departure from Rome (Book One), the end of Vitellius and hailing of Domitian as Caesar (Book Three), ruminations on Domitian's scheming (Book Four). On Tacitus' choice of final passages in *Histories*, see Sage (1990: 883–4).

[98] Martin (1994: 189–90).

[99] On the characterization of Caecina and Valens, see Ash (1999: 108–11).

The narrative at the end of Book Two, which traces the unraveling of Vitellius' support, thematizes loyalty and perfidy. In Africa the legate Valerius Festus was at first loyal (*cum fide*) but then began hedging his bets, backing Vitellius in his public communications, but in private letters to Vespasian supporting his cause instead (*Hist.* 2.98.1). Some emissaries from Vespasian were intercepted in Raetia and Gaul, killed, and sent on to Vitellius; a greater number, however, escaped detection (*fefellere*), concealed by loyal friends (*fide amicorum*) or by their own guile (§1). Tacitus broaches the idea that Caecina had sapped the army's morale "because even then he was planning to turn traitor" (*perfidiam meditanti*, 2.99.2). Shortly thereafter he reports that Caecina may have been influenced by Flavius Sabinus' warnings "to acquire favor and influence (*gratiam viresque*, §2) with a new *princeps*, since he was behind [Valens] in Vitellius' favor"; this amounts to advice to create one personal obligation by betraying another. When Caecina departs from Rome, ostensibly to march against the Flavian side but with treachery in mind, Tacitus emphasizes the imminent betrayal by having him leave directly from Vitellius' warm embrace (*Caecina e complexu Vitellii multo cum honore digressus*, 2.100.1). Caecina then proceeds to Ravenna, which turns out to be his place for "plotting his act of betrayal" (*componendae proditionis*, §3). There he allies himself with Bassus, the prefect of the fleet, who felt slighted by Vitellius because he had not been elevated to the command of the Praetorians and "was satisfying his unjustified resentment through outrageous treachery" (*iniquam iracundiam flagitiosa perfidia ulciscebatur*, §3). As we have seen already, at *Hist.* 2.101.1 Tacitus remarks "fidelity had become cheap after Galba was betrayed" (*prodito Galba vilem mox fidem*); in the next sentence, he tells us "the fleet was ready to switch loyalties" (*lubrica ad mutandam fidem classe*, §2). Although you would have a hard time treating this subject without referring to changes of allegiance, the frequent, insistent use of the vocabulary and imagery of loyalty and treachery is striking.[100]

Tacitus misses only one obvious opportunity to insert the vocabulary of faithfulness into these chapters, and that is in the discussion of his predecessors' work. They had corrupted their histories through flattery of the Flavians; in the preface Tacitus implied that his fidelity (*fidem*, *Hist.* 1.1.4) would be uncorrupted by flattery of those *principes*. The effect of these few chapters is to weave these historians into the same web of loyalty and

[100] The opening sentence of Book Three confirms through contrast the centrality of *fides* to the story that has just been told: *Meliore fato* ***fide****que partium Flavianarum duces consilia belli tractabant*. For Tacitus' concern with *fides* in the early books of *Histories*, see Ash (1999: 127), Damon (2006: 262–6), and Keitel (2006).

betrayal as the historical actors. After all, Caecina and the historians are both out to please the same master, the *domus Flavia*. And in both instances we see a substitution of one sort of fidelity for another: as Caecina betrayed his commitments to Vitellius in order to enhance his credit with Vespasian, so out of loyalty to Vespasian the historians have betrayed the sacred trust of their calling. Just as they supply Caecina and Bassus with the fair pretexts of "solicitude for peace and love of the commonwealth" (***curam*** *pacis et* ***amorem*** *rei publicae*, 2.101.1) that disguised their perfidy, so we may say the historians operate under cover of "solicitude for posterity" (***cura*** *posteritatis*, 1.1.1) when really it is Vespasian they "love" (*neque* ***amore*** *quisquam et sine odio dicendus est*, "nobody is to be discussed with love or hatred," §3). The sequence of presentation strengthens this parallel, by embedding the historians into the narrative of Caecina's activities: we hear of his contracting his alliance at Ravenna (2.100.3), then receive Tacitus' remarks on the historians (2.101.1), and finally, to close the book, return to the activities of Caecina and the prefect (§2). In a way, this disposition puts the historians *inside* the narrative about fidelity, and their faithlessness about the motives of Caecina and Bassus is shown to arise from the same cause as the men's faithlessness itself. The difference between the historians' *traditio*, or "handing down" (*tradidere*, 2.101.1), and Caecina's *proditio*, or "handing over" (*proditionis*, 2.100.3; *prodito Galba*, 2.101.1), becomes small.[101] By the same token, when "the House of the Flavii was in power" (*potiente rerum*, 2.101.1) it was also, through its historians, "in control of events" and "in control of history."

It matters as well that the previous book, too, ended with a setting-forth from the city (Otho's) and remarks on the topic of flattery. As Otho's train set out,

> clamor vocesque volgi ex more adulandi nimiae et falsae: quasi dictatorem Caesarem aut imperatorem Augustum prosequerentur, ita studiis votisque certabant, nec metu aut amore, sed ex libidine servitii, ut in familiis, privata cuique s<t>imulatio et vile iam decus publicum. (*Hist*. 1.90.3)

What the mob cried out was exaggeration and lies, out of habit of flattery: they attended his train as if he were the dictator Caesar or the commander Augustus, they strove in enthusiasm and prayers for success, not from fear or love, but from the pleasure they got from acting the slave: it was as it is among a household's slaves, when each of them has his own motivation, and what is consonant with public dignity counts for nothing.

[101] *Prodere* and *tradere* are not synonyms, nor am I deluded that *tradere* can mean "to betray," but it can come quite close: cf. *OLD* s.v. *trado* 3, "to hand over (to an enemy or opponent), surrender."

Here flattery is part of the mob's relationship to the *princeps* in a scene within the narrative. Again, Tacitus strips away professed, to reveal true, motive: it is no attachment to Otho, or fear for his fate, but only their desire to enjoy their own servitude and to secure their own well-being at any cost.[102] This revelation takes the problem of *fides* and *adulatio* all the way down the social scale: not only is historians' engagement in flattery like that of the urban mob, but that of the mob is in turn no different from that of the demeaned and groveling slave jostling for his master's favor.[103] While the Flavian historians may have sacrificed *fides* to truth in favor of *fides* to Vespasian, that fidelity to Vespasian is itself probably only an appearance, no more genuine than the allegiance of the mob to Otho, or of slaves to their master.

The aside at *Hist*. 2.101.1 is as momentous as it is brief. It shows us how big a difference Tacitus makes. If we had only the tradition that preceded him, not the reinterpretation he provides, we would completely misunderstand this narrative about perfidy and self-interest to be about fidelity and patriotism, because of the activity of writers who feigned fidelity and patriotism in order to break faith and advance their own interests. As we have already seen, he is not disputing any events, not even small ones: like his predecessors, he has Vitellius' generals secretly promoting Vespasian's interests. Yet, in retrospect, it is this insight that has allowed him to write the preceding narrative as he has, as a story of perfidy not patriotism. To see the real difference between Tacitus and his predecessors, consider the place of Galba in their respective constructions of the motives of Bassus and Caecina. Those writers saw a clean break between the motives at work in civil war – the betrayal of Galba – and those active in the establishment of the Flavian regime – preference of the public interest. By contrast, Tacitus sees continuity. For him, this event, like the betrayal of Galba, was a breach of faith, and Caecina and Bassus threw over Vitellius precisely as Otho had thrown over Galba. On that view, the victory of the Flavians originated in the same sort of squalid event as had Otho's. What then is the difference between them? The beginning of Book Three gives food for thought: "It

[102] This is a hard passage. *Amor* and *metus* as imaginable motives for *adulatio* should be "affection" and "fear for their own lot [sc. if they did not praise Otho]," so they should be contrasted with *libidine servitii*, "enjoyment of servile behavior [sc. for its own sake]." Yet in the next sentence Tacitus uses an analogy that suggests that he does mean the mob were acting from a desire for personal gain: *privata cuique s<t>imulatio*. My inclination is to take *amor* and *metus* here as the respectable motives of "attachment to and fear for the safety of their commander," which are then contrasted with their real motivation, which is their desire to act like slaves, a mode of behavior then explicated in the next sentence as looking out for your own hide, no matter how degrading and unseemly the acts that aim demands.

[103] On Tacitus' attitude to the mob, see Newbold (1976).

was with better fate and faithfulness that the leaders of the Flavian side were handling their counsels for the war" (*Meliore fato fideque partium Flavianarum duces consilia belli tractabant*, *Hist*. 3.1.1). This is more than a tidy transition from the narrative about the Vitellians' fidelity to that about the preparations of the Flavians. It directly connects failure and success to the integrity of loyalty on either side: there was perfidy on the one side, faithfulness on the other, and so was brought to pass what had been fated, the victory of the Flavians. This, at least, is what the sentence seems to mean.[104] But the narrative that closed Book Two raises questions about the superiority of the Flavians' fidelity to that of the Vitellians. The eventual Flavian victory is, after all, to be enabled by the adherence to Vespasian of precisely the same characters – Caecina and Bassus – who betrayed their former leader. Observe that, a few chapters later, Tacitus underscores the centrality of that betrayal to Flavian fortunes:

> mox Caecina inter Hosti<li>am, vicum Veronensium, et paludes Tartari fluminis castra permuniit, tutus loco, cum terga flumine, latera obiectu paludis tegerentur. (2) quod si adfuisset fides, aut opprimi universis Vitellianorum viribus duae legiones, nondum coniuncto Moesico exercitu, potuere, aut retro actae deserta Italia turpem fugam conscivissent. sed Caecina per varias moras prima hostibus prodidit tempora belli, dum quos armis pellere promptum erat, epistulis increpat, donec per nuntios pacta perfidiae firmaret. (3.9.1–2)

> Then Caecina built a camp between Hostilia, a suburb of Verona, and the marshes of the river Tartarus. He was in a secure position, as his rear was protected by the river, and his flanks were protected by the interposition of the marsh. (2) If he had had loyalty on his side as well, it was possible for two legions [of Flavians] to be beaten by the combined forces of the Vitellians, since the army from Moesia had yet to join up with them, or, driven back, they would have abandoned Italy in disgraceful flight. But Caecina, delaying for this reason or that, betrayed the first period of hostilities to the enemy, chiding in letters those whom he might readily have driven off by force of arms, till he solidified through messengers the terms of agreement to his betrayal.

In other words, at this point Caecina could have effected, rather than the beginning of the collapse of his side, a full defense of Italy and a united front to meet the advancing threats singly; his treachery makes the difference, treachery that, again, is constituted by his *contracting* a new relationship, involving an expectation of fidelity as well, to Vespasian ("agreeing on terms of betrayal" is always a dicey business). In Caecina and Bassus, loyalty and perfidy are thus merely two sides of the same coin, and the party built on

[104] Damon (2006: 262–6) shows that in Tacitus' presentation Vespasian in general has a healthier relationship to *fides* than his immediate predecessors.

the former could always end up undone by the latter. From this perspective, "with better fate and faithfulness" (3.1.1) means something rather different: the faith the Flavian partisans kept could as easily have turned into the betrayal that had brought down Vitellius, and it was only the intervention of fate, nothing intrinsic to themselves, that made their fidelity "better." If not for this force of fate, we might have seen Vespasian added to the chain of *principes* betrayed and killed.

Hence Tacitus is superior to his predecessors not in respect of a trifling difference of motive, but in one of the essential questions it is the historian's task to answer: why did the story he is telling go this way and not another? A primary interest of *Histories* lies in the order of the Principate: how does it come undone, as it does at the beginning of the work, and how is it put back together, as it is in Books Four and Five? On this question, Tacitus and his Flavian predecessors offer diametrically opposed insights: the latter see on their side a moral integrity that distinguishes them from the Vitellians and so ensures their victory and the end of civil war, while the former sees the same motivations operating on either side and shifts the difference between the losers and the winners, and between civil war and order, onto the shoulders of a fate strong enough to overcome the basic similarity between sides.

The important historical difference, then, is to be found not between Vitellians and Flavians, but between the Flavian historians, who fabricate a difference between Vitellians and Flavians, and Tacitus, who can demolish their fabrication. In this way, the essential insight offered by *Histories* into the causes of the events it records is tied directly to its author's personal autonomy, to his freedom from obligations of loyalty to *principes* and his uncompromised exclusive fidelity to truth. Because this regards a question absolutely central to *Histories*, this passage shows us the decisive role played by his involvement not only here but throughout the work. This is just one passage, but it teaches us what he is always doing with his authorities, and just how much is at stake.

OUTSIDE THE PRINCIPATE

At the chapter's beginning I commented that the preface of *Histories* translates Tacitus' career from one defined by the new regime of 96 CE into one that he positions, rather more sweepingly, against the order of society established after Actium; in fact, if from the perspective of *Agricola*'s implied literary and political history 96 CE is the decisive date, the date at which "everything changed," from the vantage of *Histories* that date is 31 BCE.

What determines the peculiar, and peculiarly good, quality of his writing is his implied personal exemption from those relations of power that govern the interaction of all other Romans with the *princeps*. His writing is such as it is because, for the purposes of his literary activity, Tacitus and his writing exist outside the Principate, if by "Principate" we mean "Roman society as it is when one man holds the power."

The idea that the historian must somehow be alienated from his society is familiar to the history of ancient historiography. We see it in the link that Lucian draws between writing history and alienation: the rhetorical position of the historian should be that he is, "in his books, a foreigner, without a city, a law unto himself, recognizing no sovereign" (ξένος ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις καὶ ἄπολις, αὐτόνομος, ἀβασίλευτος, *Hist. Conscr.* 41). As we saw in chapter 1 as well, the list of historians who wrote as exiles or outsiders is striking. Yet in all those cases, something rather different is at issue from what we see in Tacitus: Thucydides is quite literally an exile from the territory of Athens; Polybius, a hostage; Sallust, a disgruntled reject from the course of offices and honors. Tacitus' alienation from the Principate is not exactly any of these things – he does not write from outside the space of Roman sway (nor even probably from outside the city itself) and, as he acknowledges, he has gone from *princeps* to *princeps* and dynasty to dynasty without so much as stumbling in the *cursus honorum*. Although *Histories*' preface is quite insistent on the reality of his alienation, and on its basic importance to how his text comes into being and to what it offers its readers, it is much harder to envision what it would mean for Tacitus' work to be "outside" the Principate. In this ultimate section of the chapter I want to explore some ways in which the highly evocative antitheses and metaphors of the preface might allow us to imagine his alienation and the autonomy of his work in terms of familiar Roman cultural models.

Tacitus as sapiens

In 1971 Albrecht Dihle advanced the surprising thesis that the formulation "without anger or zeal" (*sine ira et studio*) at *Ann.* 1.1.3, far from being a variation on the stock historian's pledge to impartiality, in fact refers to the Epicurean conception of the gods, who live "without anger or favor" (χώρις ὀργῆς καὶ χάριτος, Phld. *Piet.* p. 122 Gomperz; cf. Cic. *N.D.* 1.45) toward human beings. To support the claim, he went to some lengths to show that Epicureanism enjoyed significant currency in the early second century CE, and he ended up arguing for Tacitus' Epicurean sympathies on not very solid grounds. I do not want to reprise that argument, but I do see

promise in a link with philosophical discourse. If we place less emphasis on specific verbal echoes for Tacitus' vocabulary of emotion and more on the general notion of a link between autonomy and the passions, we may see his construction of his peculiar mode of historiography as invoking the Stoic idea of the impassivity of the sage (*sapiens*); this connection has the additional virtue that, in contradistinction to Epicureanism, we can be confident that his contemporaries were conversant with its main lines of thought.[105] Stoic thought imagined its ideal person as ruled by reason not by violent passions; this independence from the passions was part and parcel of the autonomy of the sage from externals, in as much as the passions are aroused by attributing to external objects a value not properly theirs.[106] Seneca, at least, uses the vocabulary of freedom and servitude to talk about the relationship between reason and the passions:

> the role of other emotions [sc. in addition to anger] . . . is sometimes [sc. in Seneca's work] articulated in terms of social status. People who experience them may be described as slaves to the emotion in question, or to the emotions generally, since they do not display the serenity associated with freedom in the philosophical domain, the attitude by which one is free from *fortuna*. Conversely, those who do not have emotional responses are "free" or "masters." (Roller 2001: 281n112)

I do not mean that Tacitus' distancing himself from the passions literally suggests he has attained the status of sage, but rather that his stance in the preface aligns his conduct of his literary project with the image of the sage's self-control and autonomy. *Histories* will be an ongoing demonstration of his transcendent mastery of his own passions, which itself proves his independence from the external conditions – *fortuna*, in Seneca's terms – that would otherwise rule him; those external conditions are, in the preface, specifically the relations of domination that characterize political and social life under the Principate.

Critics have often treated Tacitus' profession to write "without anger or zeal" as little more than a sly wink. (In general, they have been kinder to *Histories*, although they might not be, if we had the rest of the work.) If we take the phrase as a claim of impartiality, much of the work may be enlisted as evidence for rebuttal: he seems strongly prejudiced against, notably, Tiberius, and perhaps unjustly appreciative of Germanicus. It is

[105] Stoic ideas so permeated Roman elite culture that Roman Stoicism cannot simply be looked at as a philosophical school with a discrete set of tenets and a distinct body of adherents, although there did, obviously, continue to be specifically Stoic philosophers. See the important discussion in Shaw (1985) and, further, on the ideological uses of Stoic ethics in Seneca, Habinek (1998: 137–50) and Roller (2001: 64–126).

[106] On the passions in the Stoa, see Long (1986: 206–7) and Nussbaum (1987).

not, however, a claim of global impartiality, which, as Luce has shown, is a concept alien to ancient historiography.[107] But even those who correctly read it as a proclamation of emotional distance from the *principes* whose rule he will narrate take it with a grain of salt: again, he seems from time to time to be stirred by what he writes, to be angry, even. This again, however, is to mistake the import of the claim. It does not forswear righteous indignation: indeed, part of the point of historiography was to register your own moral faculties by assessing the ethical quality of what you were reporting, and this sort of response, instead of detracting from the veracity of an account, actually contributed to it, by presenting that ethical quality correctly.[108] Rather, "without anger or zeal" declares personal immunity to those passions that arise within reciprocity and that thus threaten correct representation of empirical or ethical reality. When, in the preface of *Histories* and again in *Annals*, Tacitus puts himself forward as dispassionate, then, this is not an impression we will immediately discard when we see him at *Hist*. 1.2, in highly animated fashion, condemn the crimes he is about to relate, or when at *Ann*. 1.6.1 he leaps into the narrative with the rather prejudicial *primum facinus novi principatus*, "the first deed/crime of the new principate." Inspiration to moral censure is part of the job of the dispassionate historian, and his continuation in that mode is, paradoxically, ongoing proof of his autonomy from the external conditions likely to affect a historian's psyche and his writing.

Histories *as posthumous publication*

Above we saw that a historian's death could have a big effect on the impression of his book's integrity. The elder Pliny said he would reserve publication of the *A fine Aufidii Bassi* till after he had died (*Nat. praef.* 20), and T. Labienus is said to have skipped part of a history of his that he was reciting, explaining that this section could be read after his death (Sen. *Con.* 10 *praef.* 8). Death seemed to promise authenticity by exempting a writer from the potential for reciprocity: there is no coaxing or intimidating the dead. As Champlin writes of Roman wills, "the will was . . . perceived as a vessel of truth, a document carefully weighed and written free of ordinary constraints and without fear or favor, since it became public knowledge only when its author was past caring."[109] Tacitus' gestures to past, present,

[107] Luce (1989).
[108] For the occasional appropriateness of anger in historiographical discourse, see Marincola (2003: 308).
[109] Champlin (1991: 10).

and future in the preface partake of this testamentary mode of thought. His past is registered here as complete: the consulship attained, nothing more could be added to the *cursus honorum*, and *that* life has ended where *Histories* begins.[110] What life is left, if indeed any life is left after *Histories* (*si vita suppeditet*, *Hist*. 1.1.4), will be spent on writing, not adding to the roll of offices. This writing, *Histories* and whatever comes next, is the life that comes after his life.[111] Consequently, his eyes are turned toward posterity, which is the only audience about whom the dead man cares; by contrast, his predecessors have lost all "concern for posterity" (§1) in their enthusiastic pursuit of relationships with their contemporaries. The rhetorical strategy of speaking to posterity has effects on a contemporary audience, of course: it gives that audience the impression that they are not listening to an author telling them about history, but, rather, listening in as that author tells posterity about history. For the credibility of a historian's account, that offered advantages: there is no reason why a historian speaking to posterity should say anything other than what he thinks.[112] In the preface of *Histories* this rhetoric can have an additional effect. For Tacitus' and *Histories*' place in Roman history is already significantly destabilized. He writes in an era that follows Actium, but in a manner characteristic of the period that preceded it; he also writes in one "present" – the "rare happy time" (§4) – that is unlike the larger "present" that begins at Actium. Whatever acts of reciprocity he will engage in lie in the future: that is when he will write the Trajanic narrative, and when posterity will read *Histories*. His relationship with posterity complements his relationship to the Republic: while his predecessors were mired in the present and its oppressive relations of power, his own work anchors itself in the past, in the future, and in a present that is an exception to the present. A reader's approach to *Histories* will not only be on the lookout for the eloquence, freedom, and truth that characterized

[110] Though you could have further duties after a consulship (as Tacitus would), if you had been consul, "consul" was always the top item registered in your inscribed *cursus*.

[111] This is an idea put more explicitly in *Agricola*'s conceit that the survivors of Domitian's rule in a sense did not survive at all; in a sense, then, Tacitus' literary career starts only after he has died.

[112] The younger Pliny had had a look at some part of *Histories* while it was still in progress, and in a few letters he offers material he thinks Tacitus might want to include. Pliny's account of his uncle's death (*Ep*. 6.16, 6.20) evidently came at the historian's request; in *Ep*. 7.33, Pliny volunteers an account of his own role in the prosecution of Baebius Massa. He begins: *Auguror nec me fallit augurium, historias tuas immortales futuras; quo magis illis (ingenue fatebor) inseri cupio* (§1). Immortality is a conventional gauge of a literary work's quality; it can simply mean a work is sufficiently better than others of its type that it will forever be desirable reading. For a work, however, that professes *cura posteritatis*, the compliment could take on an additional meaning, that is, that it has in fact succeeded in its effort to be a book aimed at the *posteri* and that the *posteri* will receive it as such. Pliny's evaluation of what he has seen so far of *Histories* could then be read as taking into account not simply whether it is good but whether it is good at what it says it is supposed to do.

Republican historiography; it will also, to a degree, be listening to a Tacitus whose future is already here, a Tacitus who is not bound by the rules that govern their world, a Tacitus who might as well be speaking from beyond the grave.

Redeunt Saturnia regna

Since Actium, each instance of historical writing has been produced within a relationship between *princeps* and writer specifically figured as the relationship between master and slave. In the preface of *Histories* those conditions of domination are canceled, in two ways. Tacitus does not himself submit to any such relationship, and Trajan has removed compulsion from the sphere of public discourse: "these rare happy times when one is allowed to think what one likes and say what one thinks" (*Hist*. 1.1.4). Both men have created a window in what would otherwise be a period of unrelieved servitude; in *Histories* and in Trajan's principate, there are no slaves or masters.[113] Of course, Romans had precisely such a day in their calendar, December 17, when they celebrated the Saturnalia.[114] In the words of Versnel,

> The most remarkable and characteristic trait of the Saturnalia was the temporary suspension of the social distinctions between master and servant . . . One of the extraordinary aspects of the communal meals was that masters and slaves dined together or that slaves even took precedence over or were served by their masters. Slaves and servants were free to join their lords in gambling and to tell them the truth or criticise their conduct. (1993: 149)

For example, "December license" (*libertate Decembri*, Hor. *S*. 2.7.4) provides the context for Horace's *Satires* 2.7, in which Horace's slave, Davus, reproaches his master for moral hypocrisy. Temporarily and symbolically, the festival restored the conditions of the Golden Age over which Saturn had presided, before the ascent of Jupiter.[115] Suggestive is the account in Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus:

> Italiae cultores primi Aborigines fuere, quorum rex Saturnus tantae iustitiae fuisse dicitur, ut neque servierit quisquam sub illo neque quicquam privatae rei habuerit, sed omnia communia et indivisa omnibus fuerint, veluti unum cunctis patrimonium esset. (4) ob cuius exempli memoriam cautum est, ut Saturnalibus exaequato omnium iure passim in conviviis servi cum dominis recumbant. (43.1.3–4)

[113] Cf. *Ag*. 3.1, where Nerva has combined *res olim dissociabiles . . . principatum ac libertatem*.

[114] The festivities continued for a number of days, but officially the holiday lasted only a day: see Versnel (1993: 146).

[115] See Nauta (1987: 88–9).

Italy's first inhabitants were the Aborigines, whose king, Saturn, is said to have been so just that, in his reign, no one was a slave and no one had private property; rather, everything was held in common, and undivided, by everyone, as though it were one shared inheritance. In commemoration of this example, it was established that, during the Saturnalia, the rights of everybody were made equal and slaves reclined at table with their masters, without distinction.

As we saw in chapter 2, in the preface of *Agricola* Tacitus' periodization of the history of representation leans heavily on "Golden Age economics"; while *Histories*' preface does not reprise that vocabulary, it does draw a similar contrast between periods, conjuring a Republic under which conditions for writing history were ideal and setting against it a post-Actium world whose elements seem to conspire against good historiography. I do not at all mean that Tacitus presents his work as a revel, only that the preface parallels a basic Roman model for constructing a brief period of time when the ordinary rules of servitude that suppress speech do not apply.[116]

Res est publica scriptor

By enumerating the conditions that have affected historiography since the end of the Republic, tying those conditions to political change, and then demonstrating that those conditions do not apply to his own work, Tacitus might also be seen to make *Histories* into a specifically "Republican" production that obeys the rules of Republic not Principate. In the same sense as the Stoic martyrs conducted themselves as though they were living under the Republic, the historian's ability to shield his own person, and therefore his book, from the structures of power that characterize the Principate allows him to write as though he lived in the Republic.

From this standpoint we would have to construe Tacitus' historiographical career as deeply oppositional, as sympathetic to the idea that the Republic was, in principle, a superior political form to the Principate, and even as resisting important features of the Principate. One example is the domestication of historical knowledge: if he, unlike other historians, does not write about the *res publica* as though it were "someone else's business," then his work seems to promise to reward us with knowledge that might otherwise

[116] Several authors wrote works set in or projected for use in a Saturnalian context: cf. Hor. *S.* 2.7 (with Sharland [2005]), Sen. *Apoc.* (with Nauta [1987]), Stat. *Silv.* 1.6 (with Newlands [2002: 227–59]), Mart. 13 and 14 (with Citroni [1989] and Roman [2001: 130–8]), and of course Macrob. *Sat.* The Saturnalia was also used as a cultural point of reference: so with Claudius (Sen. *Apoc.* 8.2, *Saturnalicius princeps*; see Dickison [1977] and Nauta [1987]). For Nero as a *Saturnalicius princeps* as well, see Champlin (2003: 150–60). See also Mader (2005) on the *Life of Elagabalus* in the *Historia Augusta*.

not escape the Imperial household. As we will see in the next chapter, the action of *Histories* unfolds from the revelation of a principle that had not been general knowledge: "a secret of Imperial power had been made common knowledge – namely, that a *princeps* could indeed be made elsewhere than at Rome" (*evolgato imperii arcano, posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri*, *Hist*. 1.4.2). We do not owe that revelation to Tacitus – the point is that this "became common knowledge" (*evolgato*) at the time – but the appearance of the thought at this vital point in the work does thematize the problem of public versus private knowledge. In fact, an appealing feature of writing about the civil war is that domestic control of knowledge falters under those conditions, and the secrets that could be kept under wraps by a stable regime came spilling out as the contestants and their partisans scrambled for power. Even so, Tacitus moves quickly in *Histories* to give us an inside look at a scene that could scarcely be more arcane: the interview of Galba and Piso Licinianus. Reported present are only they themselves, the other consul T. Vinius, the Praetorian Prefect Cornelius Laco, the consul designate Marius Celsus, and the Urban Prefect Ducenius Geminus. As usual, Tacitus offers no indication how he knows what went on in this meeting but gives vivid detail: not only do we know exactly who is present, but we are given speech in direct discourse and we are treated even to minute physical details (we see Galba take Piso's hand [1.15.1], and we also watch the councilors turn their gaze to Piso and see his unmoved expression [1.17.1]). We may think also, for example, of the famous image of Vitellius utterly alone inside the palace, quaking at his sudden solitude (3.84.4), where the whole point is that no one at all was around, not even the slaves whose presence does not typically merit mention. In scenes like these, our author's narration does seem to change the sort of distribution of knowledge implied by the phrase "ignorance of the *res publica* as though it were someone else's" (1.1.1), and his book accordingly seems to work as though it had been produced under conditions of Republic not Principate. His confident presentation even of material that should be fairly recondite, we must observe, makes his own person the central factor enabling this "Republican" atmosphere: the broader political context is hostile to Republican writing, and it is only his unusual ability to acquire and publish what would otherwise be secret – like his unusual ability to shield his work from relations of reciprocity – that permits this sort of work.

Tacitus as princeps

Yet from precisely this impression of Tacitus' unusual knowledge and independence we can frame an altogether different way of looking at *Histories*.

For his exemption from relations of obligation, his emotional invulnerability, his unexplained capacity to acquire truth where others have failed all make him one special historian among historians, and, in fact, one special citizen among his fellow citizens. After all, in his challenge to "ignorance of the *res publica* as though it were someone else's" (*Hist.* 1.1.1), we are not in the first instance talking about a competition between the *principes* and the people of Rome over the ownership of the material of history, but rather one between the *principes* and *Tacitus*; restoring historical information to the public through *Histories* and *Annals* is a secondary, and conceptually not at all inevitable, stage of the process. He knows and happens to tell us as well. In this sense, he takes on the characteristics of a kind of alternative *princeps*; from this standpoint, the "opposition" imagined by his work is not one between Principate and Republic but between a Principate in which someone else, and a Principate in which Tacitus, is *princeps*.

Tacitus' publication of the material of history can, then, be read equally well as an "Imperial" or as a "Republican" gesture. Another "Imperial" characteristic in the project of *Histories* appears quite soon. In *Hist.* 1.4–11, he pauses before beginning the narrative proper in order to give an important survey:

> Ceterum antequam destinata componam, repetendum videtur, qualis status urbis, quae mens exercituum, quis habitus provinciarum, quid in toto terrarum orbe validum, quid aegrum fuerit, ut non modo casus eventusque rerum, qui plerumque fortuiti sunt, sed ratio etiam causaeque noscantur. (1.4.1)

> Before I treat the subject I have decided on, it seems appropriate to look back at what sort of situation the city was in, what the attitude of the armies was like, what kind of condition the provinces were in – what, in short, was healthy, and what sick in the entire world, so that not only the outcomes of events – which are mainly the products of chance – may be known, but also the reasons and causes.

From there, he proceeds to an overview of the protagonists, tensions, and attitudes at Rome (1.4.2–1.7) and in the empire (1.8–11), before looping back, with an echo of the work's opening, to begin the narrative. Everything about this preliminary survey is unusual and its role as a sort of extension to the preface is distinctive.[117] Damon aptly compares the *breviarium totius imperii* Augustus is said to have left to posterity.[118] According to Suetonius, this document described "how many soldiers were under the standards in each location, how much money there was in the treasury and in the various funds and in debts to the treasury"; for Tacitus, it contained "the public resources: how many soldiers and allies were under arms, how many

[117] Syme (1958: 146–7). See also the discussion of Fuhrmann (1960: 250–69).
[118] Damon (2003 ad 4–11).

fleets, kingdoms, provinces, how much tribute-income and how much tax-income there was, and the necessary expenditures and the lavishments"; Dio has it containing "an account of the soldiers, and of public income and expenditures, and the amount of funds in the treasuries, and everything else of that sort that was pertinent to the empire" (Suet. *Aug*. 101.4, Tac. *Ann*. 1.11.4, Cass. Dio 56.33.2).[119] I would not so much propose a reference to the *breviarium* as compare the impression of mastery projected by the very notion of producing such a survey. A *princeps* is to a logbook of the empire's resources as a *paterfamilias* is to a balance sheet of his household possessions: we might compare the elder Cato's advice for the man visiting his farm (*Agr*. 2.5–6). The purpose of Augustus' *breviarium* was to be read after his death, as though it had been a will disposing of his property: he deposited it with the Vestals, along with instructions for his funeral and an account of his *res gestae*. A few chapters later in *Histories* Galba will say that "under Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius we were like the inheritance of a single family" (*sub Tiberio et Gaio et Claudio unius familiae quasi hereditas fuimus*, *Hist*. 1.16.1); this image is wholly consistent with the notion that, under the Principate, everything that belonged to Rome, belonged to the *princeps*.[120] In this way, we can regard Tacitus' mastery of his material as having an Imperial quality about it; we could scarcely have any better indication that "ignorance of the *res publica* as though it were someone else's business" may not be predicated either of the writer or of his account. Yet it is not suggested that his command of information at this point is due to its being public information he has accessed along with everyone else; rather, the role of *Hist*. 1.4–11 is to impart an understanding that his readers do not already have, "so that not only the outcomes of events – which are mainly the products of chance – may be known, but also the reasons and causes" (1.4.1). The result of this gesture is a general distribution of Tacitus' knowledge, but that the gesture is in fact a *choice* underscores the priority of the historian's knowledge to our own, and so the dependence of ours on his. This is not a particularly Republican model but rather the model of the *civilis princeps* transposed to the historian, the equivalent of Augustus informing the people of Rome of the resources of the empire.[121]

On this reading, we might compare the civic role of Tacitean historiography not to that of the Stoic martyrs as their sympathizers imagined them but to the picture of Thrasea painted by Cossutianus Capito as he traduces

[119] On the *breviarium*, see Nicolet (1991: 178–83).
[120] On the theme, see Levick (1987).
[121] Cf. Pliny's remarks contrasting Trajan's openness with Domitian's secretiveness (e.g. *Pan*. 47.3–49, 83.1–2).

him to Nero: Thrasea's refusal to sacrifice for Nero's welfare, his truancy at the Senate, and other instances of noncompliance are not harmless acts but rather

> secessionem iam id et partes et, si idem multi audeant, bellum . . . ". . . et habet sectatores vel potius satellites, qui nondum contumaciam sententiarum, sed habitum vultumque eius sectantur, rigidi et tristes, quo tibi lasciviam exprobrent . . . (4) ut imperium evertant, libertatem praeferunt: si perverterint, libertatem ipsam adgredientur." (*Ann*. 16.22.2, 4)

> secession and faction and, if many dare to do the same, war . . . ". . . He has followers, or, better, courtiers, who do not imitate the arrogance of his voting but do emulate his bearing and demeanor, all grim and stiff, to reproach you for your *joie de vivre* . . . (4) to uproot Imperial government they proclaim the cause of liberty, and, if they have their way with empire, they will march on liberty itself."

In Capito's words, Thrasea and his adherents do not intend a more Republican government at all; rather, they are designing a new *princeps* and forming a new court under a phony banner of freedom.

We can understand these connotations of a Tacitean "principate" with reference to the reordered economy of social prestige under the Principate, which bore consequences for the configuration of literary prestige as well. One way of describing the change from Republic to Principate is as a dramatic circumscription of avenues to public distinction: under the former, members of the elite had all the opportunities for prestige that empire and leadership of state offered, while under the latter they could not rise above a ceiling fixed well below the status of the *princeps*. Yet there is another way of articulating this same phenomenon as an amplification and intensification of the old Republican competition for prestige: the difference was that under the Republic no one had been able to monopolize prestige for long, which meant that over time men of distinction would proliferate, while the Principate was in effect an institutionalization of a mode of competition in which one member of the elite won and enjoyed towering fame while everyone else went begging. Those fantasies of transcendent conspicuity, glory, and what Patterson calls "sovereignal freedom" that had *always* driven elite competition but had been restrained by the presence of other, equally enthusiastic competitors and by a civic decorum that frowned on and censured "overreaching" were, under the Principate, still present and now suddenly able to be realized, but only by one member of the elite at a time.[122] So, while at any given time under the Principate practically all of the elite lived in a condition of constant awareness that

[122] Patterson (1991: 3–4).

someone else was incomparably more conspicuous than they were, their horizons of possibility were actually far broader than under the Republic. The Republic's model of elite possibility realized to its full might be, for example, Scipio Africanus – but what was Africanus next to the majesty of a Roman *princeps*? "Freedom," "power," "authority," "sovereignty," "distinction," "glory," and a host of other concepts all needed to be recalculated and redefined in light of the heights reached by *principes*. We can regard these expanded horizons as affecting the arrangement of the economy of literary prestige as well. Under the Republic a historian had of course other authors, both his predecessors and his contemporaries, to compete with; under the Principate, as we have seen, there might be other *auctores*, but there was also, more importantly, the imposing *auctoritas* of the *princeps* himself. We should not, then, be surprised if Tacitus' authorial activity casts him as a kind of *princeps*; indeed, once we take into account the new possibilities of *auctoritas* explored by the successive *principes*, we should rather be surprised if serious historiographical endeavor did *not* present an authorial self that was modeled after, and that competed with, the *princeps*.

It is worth pointing out, however, that, as in *Agricola*, Tacitus' closest resemblance is not to just any *princeps* you like, but to Trajan himself. Both men constitute, as it were, an exception to the weight of history, political and literary; their personal interventions allow their respective endeavors to break the post-Actium pattern. In the earlier work, however, that sense of similarity was directed toward a common purpose; in *Histories*, Trajan has become something closer to a competitor.

It is with the preface of *Histories* that Tacitus achieves a historiographical career, not just in the obvious sense that he has now published two narrative works. I mean rather that here he recasts the oppressive power against which he asserts his work's autonomy in such a way as to permit this assertion to go on, in theory, infinitely – or, at any rate, so long as there are *principes*. This is not important simply because it allows him to continue writing, but also because it opens up his career as a means for making an argument about himself. *Agricola* permitted this, to an extent: it projected its author's *pietas*, together with his commitment to undoing Domitian's crimes. But after the preface of *Histories* his continued career signaled unmistakably something that *Agricola* had not: that Tacitus was a free man, that the conditions of Roman society as constituted after Actium, in a meaningful sense, simply did not apply to him. Every word he writes thereafter, if it is received as successful, independent historiography, in a sense projects not just a career, but a life, of freedom.

CHAPTER 4

"Elsewhere than Rome"

In chapter 2, we saw how *Agricola* served as an alternative means of representing Agricola to that employed by Domitian. Tacitus' literary celebration of his father-in-law took the place of the sort of celebrations that the Principate no longer permitted. In this chapter we will see how Tacitus' work in *Histories* competes with the regime in a bigger sense. As we have just seen in chapter 3, in the preface of *Histories* Tacitus establishes that his work is particularly desirable because of the nature of the Principate and because of his own unique ability not to be absorbed by the structures of power characteristic of that kind of government and society. In a way, what we see in chapter 4 is the operation of *Agricola* – competition with the regime's media of representation – extrapolated to the scale of Tacitus' new career as articulated in the preface of *Histories*. In effect, as we will see, *Histories* presents a textual medium through which Romans can relate to their city and to other Romans, insulated from the damage and distortions inflicted on the urban space by the *principes*. After a section containing some preliminary reflections that link Tacitus' representation of the city in *Histories* with questions of civil war and the Principate, my discussion will fall into three further sections.

In the first, I discuss some crises of signification during Otho's revolt and short rule. His bid for the purple requires him to encourage demolition of distinctions of all kinds; it is that demolition that allows civil war, which is at base the breakdown of conventional semiotic systems. Roman authors present the city as one of the central symbolic systems of their culture, and one that, when it works properly, structures and reproduces basic social distinctions: between elite and mass, male and female, Roman and outsider, civilian and military, free and slave, sacred and profane. As Tacitus depicts it, Otho helps to produce a situation in which observers either ignore or cannot perceive the signals the city projects. Our experience of this crisis, as readers, differs from that of the actors internal to the narrative: as we observe the semiotic failures, we are also reminded, powerfully, of what

contemporary actors failed to see. In this way, Tacitus' narrative becomes the medium for a successful communication of the city's meaning, or, in other words, takes upon itself the city's signifying function.

In the second section I offer a reading of the scene in Book Three in which the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus is destroyed, and I point out some ways in which this event resonates through the rest of the preserved work and possibly was an issue even in the lost books of *Histories*. That monument is made vulnerable to destruction because of the semiotic crisis that inevitably forms part of a competition between potential *principes*. At the moment of its destruction, *Histories* intervenes and takes over its power to transmit memory. In Tacitus the memory it projects is, above all, a memory of the social order of Rome under the Republic.

In the third section I look at some echoes of the conflagration of the Capitolium along the edges of the empire. The narrative shows Gauls and Jews drawing the conclusion that Rome's empire is at an end and that their own peoples will succeed to Rome's universal dominion. The work represents and reaffirms – at least, up to the point at which the manuscript tradition breaks off – the Flavian suppression of these alternatives to Roman imperial sway. The legitimacy of the Flavian regime was built on their vindication, through military victory, of the uniqueness and centrality of Rome: the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of its Temple played a key role in the regime's communication with the populace of Rome. Tacitus' narrative sympathizes with this reaffirmation, and to that extent may seem to allow that *principes* are able to protect, not erase, the singularity of the city. As we will see, however, he distinguishes between the Capitolium as symbol of worldwide dominion (which the Flavians can, through conquest, restore) and the Capitolium as product of the peculiar social configuration of the Republic (which the Flavians, as *principes*, are not able, and do not wish, to recreate, but whose function, at least, Tacitus' book can take over).

THE CITY, CIVIL WAR, AND THE PRINCIPATE

The Augustan revolution had changed the relationship between the city of Rome and its elite inhabitants. Under the Republic it had been customary for men to fund the erection of public buildings, and to associate their names with them, whether by convention or by actual inscription: so, the Basilica Aemilia and the Curia Hostilia, or the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus with the name of Q. Lutatius Catulus cut into the architrave. With the new regime, that had come to an end, quickly. Those not attached to the Imperial house could build, but not at Rome: their munificence still

adorned the towns of Italy, but the city was off-limits.[1] Rome was now where the regime spoke for itself and for Romans. Early in *Annals* Tacitus draws our attention to this shift:

Isdem diebus <M.> Lepidus ab senatu petivit ut basilicam Pauli, Aemilia monimenta, propria pecunia firmaret ornaretque. erat etiam tum in more publica munificentia; nec Augustus arcuerat Taurum, Philippum, Balbum hostiles exuvias aut exundantes opes ornatum ad urbis et posterum gloriam conferre. quo tum exemplo Lepidus, quamquam pecuniae modicus, avitum decus recoluit. (2) at Pompei theatrum igne fortuito haustum Caesar exstructurum pollicitus est, eo quod nemo e familia restaurando sufficeret, manente tamen nomine Pompei. (3) simul laudibus Seianum extulit, tamquam labore vigilantiaque eius tanta vis unum intra damnum stetisset. et censuere patres effigiem Seiano quae apud theatrum Pompei locaretur. (4) neque multo post Caesar, cum Iunium Blaesum pro consule Africae triumphi insignibus attolleret, dare id se dixit honori Seiani, cuius ille avunculus erat. ac tamen res Blaesi dignae decore tali fuere. (*Ann.* 3.72)

During those same days Marcus Lepidus asked the Senate for permission to strengthen and adorn the Basilica of Paulus, a monument of the family of the Aemilii, with his own funds. Even at that point public munificence was in use, nor had Augustus forbidden Taurus, Philippus, or Balbus to bestow spoils of the enemy or their own overflowing wealth for the adornment of the city and the glory of their descendants. Using these as his precedents Lepidus, though of middling means, restored his ancestral glory. (2) The Theater of Pompey, however, which had been consumed by a chance fire, Caesar pledged to rebuild himself, on grounds that none of that family had adequate resources for the restoration, but he said the name of Pompey would remain. (3) At the same time, he elevated Sejanus with praise, because, he said, it was by his efforts and alertness that the immense violence of the fire had stopped at a single loss. The fathers voted Sejanus a statue, to be placed at the Theater of Pompey. (4) Not much later, when Caesar was exalting with the triumphal insignia Junius Blaesus, the proconsul of Africa, he said he was doing so as an honor to Sejanus, whose uncle Blaesus was. Yet the achievement of Blaesus was itself worthy of that sort of distinction.

This report begins with continuity: in the early Principate, as under the Republic, those not related to the *princeps* could still erect or restore public buildings in the city. It is the Senate, the characteristic institution of Republican government and elite corporate identity, that grants the right to make public displays. As quickly becomes clear, however, we are made to see this event only from the perspective of imminent change ("even then [sc. but not for much longer]") and with the possibility of prohibition in sight ("nor had Augustus forbidden [sc. though he might have]," §1). So too, at first, Tiberius' treatment of the Theater of Pompey seems appealingly modest:

[1] Eck (1984: 139–42).

only the impecuniousness of the original builder's descendants caused him to undertake the rebuilding himself, and, in any event, Pompey's name was to be reinscribed on the restored structure. After that, however, the theater becomes entangled in other, more presumptuous representational acts linked directly to the *princeps*' inappropriate relationship with Sejanus. Taking the obvious cue from Tiberius' praise of the prefect, the Senate votes him an honorific statue, to be housed in the one building he had *not* managed to rescue: even if the *princeps* restored Pompey's name, then, we have nonetheless moved a step closer to making the building into the Theater of Sejanus.[2] So much was implied, at any rate, in the *bon mot* Seneca ascribes to Cremutius Cordus upon the issuing of the decree: "*now* the theater is *really* dying" (*exclamavit Cordus tunc vere theatrum perire*, *Dial*. 6.22.4). One instance of misplaced credit then leads Tacitus to another: Junius Blaesus should have been awarded his triumphal ornaments without attention being diverted onto Sejanus (*Ann*. 3.72.4). Thus even apparently "Republican" modes of elite relationship to the city are here undercut by the decisive new presence of the *princeps*, and the Principate is shown to have introduced an entirely novel state of affairs.

In this state of affairs the regime held monopolies on munificence that incurred the gratitude of the population, on public conspicuousness, and on the media of public representation. This last meant control over where and whether things were built, but also over the content of the programs of monuments; and this latter mattered not only because it allowed the regime to determine what meanings and messages were projected in the city but also because each exercise of control reinforced the impression that the regime had the exclusive *right* to projection of meaning in the city. Furthermore, as is suggested by the appearance of "the spoils of the enemy" in *Ann*. 3.72.1 (quoted above), the issue of public building at Rome was closely involved with the project of empire, and a large part of public building commemorated, depicted, referred to, or was built from the spoils of, empire, so the regime's monopoly on public building formed a vital part of its monopoly on military glory.[3]

[2] Augustus had moved Pompey's statue from the Curia Pompeii in the porticus of the theater complex to the theater itself (Suet. *Aug*. 31); we do not know what became of the statue in the fire.

[3] Orlin (1997) has challenged the traditional idea that Republican temple-building was largely funded with war spoils (though, somewhat problematically, the role of the spoils of Suessa Pometia in the construction of Jupiter Optimus Maximus [Liv. 1.53.3, 55.7; Tac. *Hist*. 3.72.2] is passed over, presumably because it is a regal foundation). Even if we accept the results, however, they affect only temple-building, not all public building, and our particular concern here lies not with how buildings were actually funded under the Republic but with how Tacitus and his readers will have believed they were.

The regime's relationship to the urban space explains a great deal about how Tacitus presents that space. Scholars have noted his reticence about monuments and building programs.[4] He ridicules the idea of reporting Nero's construction of an amphitheater with the same disdain Cato had applied to the recording of trivialities:

Nerone iterum L. Pisone consulibus pauca memoria digna evenere, nisi cui libeat laudandis fundamentis et trabibus, quis molem amphitheatri apud campum Martis Caesar exstruxerat, volumina implere, cum ex dignitate populi Romani repertum sit res inlustres annalibus, talia diurnis urbis actis mandare. (Tac. *Ann*. 13.31.1)

When Nero (for the second time) and Lucius Piso were consuls, little occurred worth recording, unless one likes filling bookrolls with praise of the foundations and beams with which Caesar had built up a hulk of an amphitheater in the Field of Mars, as it has been found to be consonant with the dignity of the people of Rome that signal matters be assigned to historiography, but things of that sort to the daily gazette.

Non lubet scribere, quod in tabula apud pontificem maximum est, quotiens annona cara, quotiens lunae aut solis lumine caligo aut quid obstiterit. (Cato, *HRR* fr. 77)

I do not choose to write what is on the tablet at the residence of the Pontifex Maximus: how often the price of grain has been high, or how often a cloud or some other thing has blocked the light of the sun or the moon.

But Catonian aversion to triviality does not fully explain Tacitus' general silence, which must be related to the problem of praise within historiography. Martial and Statius, for example, fit the architectural undertakings of the regime into their broader strategies of praise of the regime: to register and describe the *principes*' munificence toward the people of Rome risked turning the work being produced into a work of praise.[5] No historian who was serious about receiving credit for his work could afford part of his history to seem to perform a comparable function to that of Martial's *Liber spectaculorum*.[6] This is in fact the danger Tacitus' phrasing implies. In the first place, it assumes that depicting the building would amount to "praise" (*laudandis*). Second, it hints that, if admitted to the book, Nero's amphitheater might take over *Annals* from its author, filling its bookrolls to the exclusion of all else, much as his "Golden House" was imagined

[4] See especially the excellent Rouveret (1991). On Tacitus' near silence about painting and sculpture, see Turcan (1985: 784–6).

[5] On the place of ecphrasis in Statius' strategies of praise, see Newlands (2002: 38–45 and *passim*).

[6] Koestermann (1963–8 ad loc.) detects a reference to the elder Pliny. On the *Liber spectaculorum*, see Coleman (1998) and (2006).

as threatening to take over the city of Rome.[7] Tacitus does in fact discuss monuments, but mainly under certain conditions: when their construction dates to the Republic and so cannot be attached to a *princeps*, when (as we will see) they are destroyed, or when they are studies in ineptitude and so discussion of them cannot be mistaken for praise.[8] By restricting discussion to these categories, his work avoids promoting the regime's monopoly on urban signification.

While Tacitus avoids touching on the details of Imperial constructions, the city of Rome itself is of thematic importance to *Histories*. His expression at *Hist*. 1.4.2, "a secret of Imperial power had been made common knowledge – namely, that a *princeps* could indeed be made elsewhere than at Rome" (*evolgato imperii arcano, posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri*), carries deeper meaning than has generally been thought. Usually taken as a circumlocution for "the secret had come out that the army could pick the *princeps*," the formulation does not just locate the Principate's basis in the army's support but also poses striking questions about what the city itself means under the Principate.[9] If Rome is not needed in order to make a *princeps*, what *is* the city needed for, and by what other kinds of absence might it now be afflicted? As Edwards has shown, the city occupied a central place within Roman discourses about self and other; and, even if the power of the provincial legions may not in fact have been a great shock to Romans in 69 CE or to Tacitus' readers, the notion that there was a gap in the uniqueness of Rome could probably still surprise or unsettle.[10] On the one hand, it was often asserted that the city differed categorically from all other places, and was irreplaceable by any other city; but this "secret" identified a respect in which Rome was just like, or at least more like, every other place in the world: a *princeps could* be made there but did not have to be.[11] On the other hand, it was a characteristic of Rome to be, if anything, all things, at once the marble-covered capital of the entire world and the drain that collected the filth from every corner of the earth.[12] But, again, this "secret" insisted that events could happen elsewhere without happening

[7] Cf. Mart. *Sp*. 2.4 and Suet. *Nero* 39.2. On the *domus aurea*, see Coleman (2006: 14–15 and ad 2.3) with bibliography.

[8] Cf. Walser (1951: 15): "zu seinem [i.e., Tacitus'] eigenen Bilde der Stadt gehören die modernen Kaiserbauten nicht. Tacitus bewundert sie nicht und tut ihrer kaum Erwähnung. Wesentlich sind ihm nur die alten Tempel und die Monumente, welche an die unverdorbene römische Sitte erinnern."

[9] At *Hist*. 2.76.4 Mucianus uses a more limited formulation: *posse ab exercitu principem fieri sibi ipse Vitellius documento*.

[10] Edwards (1996). [11] "Irreplaceable": Edwards (1996: 45–52).

[12] For the filthy side of things, see Tac. *Ann*. 15.44.3 and Juv. 3.62–5; there is an essential paper by Gowers (1995). On Rome as extending throughout and containing the whole world: Edwards (1996: 99–100) and Edwards and Woolf (2003b).

there, and that people had been mistaken about what the city meant for Roman society, the empire, and the cosmos.

The importance of the phrase is heightened by its role in the background summary and overview of the empire (*Hist.* 1.4–1.11) that Tacitus prefixes to the narrative proper, which begins like this:

> Ceterum antequam destinata componam, repetendum videtur, qualis status urbis, quae mens exercituum, quis habitus provinciarum, quid in toto terrarum orbe validum, quid aegrum fuerit, ut non modo casus eventusque rerum, qui plerumque fortuiti sunt, sed ratio etiam causaeque noscantur. (1.4.1)

> Before I treat the subject I have decided on, it seems appropriate to look back at what sort of situation the city was in, what the attitude of the armies was like, what kind of condition the provinces were in – what, in short, was healthy, and what sick in the entire world, so that not only the outcomes of events – which are mainly the products of chance – may be known, but also the reasons and causes.

As Tacitus would have it, in order to understand these years, not just hear about them in sequence, we need a general characterization of the status of different parts of the world: the city, the camps, the provinces – in short, the whole face of the earth. That need is met by the sentence in which he reports the revelation of the secret: in the city as well as among all the legions and their generals, Nero's death aroused "divergent impulses" (*varios motus animorum*, *Hist.* 1.4.2). These impulses, then, are in effect the mental states of the whole world: the city, the camp, and the provinces (of which the "generals" were also the governors).[13] The immediate cause of these different attitudes was "Nero's end" (1.4.2), but not just that: it was also what attended the circumstances of that death – the revelation of the secret. If we are to understand the work, then, the essential fact to grasp is that all relevant actors in the entire empire were responding to the revelation of a gap in the significance of the city.

The centrality of this revelation to *Histories*' program justifies careful attention to how the city is represented in the narrative. For while this phrase explains the reasons for what is to unfold, it also poses troubling questions. In the surviving books of the history, the meaning of the city is in a sense the central question to be answered: is there still to be a Rome, sited at a particular place, a community of Romans with a cultural hearth at that place, and an empire centered on that city, or is the world, once organized around the city, to be broken finally into incoherence or, after the upheaval, recentered around some other place?

[13] For Tacitus' emphasis here on the "seelische Verfassung der verschiedenen Bevölkerungsgruppen als *ratio* und *causae* des kommenden Geschehens," see Fuhrmann (1960: 255).

The city's role in *Histories* has attracted the notice of scholars, with outstanding results. For Edwards Tacitus uses it to illustrate the effects of civil war; above all, the conflagration of the Capitolium is an astonishing expression of "the Roman capacity for self-destruction."[14] Yet it is not only about civil war. Keitel has shown that, in *Annals*, Tacitus lets the language of civil war intrude on the "settled" principates of the Julio-Claudians, and has argued that his use of this language "symbolizes the continuing unrest and potential for civil unrest . . . which the principate did not stop and which it indeed fostered."[15] In *Annals* civil war itself becomes a way of talking not about civil war but about the Principate, and the Principate thereby looks from time to time like permanent, institutionalized civil conflict. What is more, to say that the monarchy was like civil war was to undermine one of its central justifications, that is, that it had put an end to civil war: so, in the "Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre" (*SCPP*, ll. 45–7) the Senate deplores Piso's having tried to stoke the fires of civil war, although Tiberius and Augustus had "buried the evils of civil war" (*omnibus civilis belli sepultis malis*, 47).[16] O'Gorman builds on Keitel's insight to argue that, in the accounts of the German and Pannonian mutinies in Book One of *Annals*, Tacitus invites us to read a slippage between civil war as a metaphor for Principate and civil war as a characterization of Principate (i.e., between the ideas "the Principate is *like* a civil war" and "the Principate *is* a civil war").[17] Keitel's argument, and O'Gorman's, largely leave *Histories* out of consideration, with good reason: after all, what is left of *Histories* is mainly a narrative of a civil war, so, when the language of civil war appears, it is not a loaded intrusion. All the same, near the work's inception (*Hist.* 1.2–3), Tacitus tell us at length what to expect from the narrative of the civil war and the succeeding years of Flavian rule. From this, it is hard to get a sense of *Histories*' structure. There is only one "work"; within it, it is true, there is a "peace" (the Flavian era), but that peace is itself like the war: "The work I approach is rich in disasters, harsh in battles, rent with sedition, vicious even in peace" (*Opus adgredior opimum casibus, atrox proeliis, discors seditionibus,*

[14] Edwards (1996: 74–82, quotation p. 82). On the city in Tacitus, see also Walser (1951: 8–19) and Rouveret (1991); there are also now remarks on the relationship between center and periphery in Tacitus by Carré (2002), Malissard (2002), and Pomeroy (2003).

[15] Keitel (1984, quotation p. 309). O'Gorman (1995b) argues that in Book Five of *Histories* "the landscapes of Palestine and Germany are marshalled as physical manifestations of the moral/political/poetical discourse(s) of civil war" (117).

[16] Cf. *Hist.* 1.1.1 and *Ann.* 4.33.2 (if in the latter passage you read *rerum* <*salute*> not *re Rom*<*ana*>).

[17] O'Gorman (2000: 23–39); see O'Gorman (2000: 27): "The question . . . arises, when and by what means do we move from an account of mutiny as mutiny to an account of mutiny as metaphor? Take mutiny as civil war, for example: when is mutiny *like* a civil war and when *is* it a civil war?" On these narratives, see also Woodman (2006a).

ipsa etiam pace saevom, 1.2.1).[18] In the synopsis of horrors and *exempla* that these chapters provide, those produced in war and those in peace are not distinguished; most occurred during both. Civil and foreign wars are "for the most part combined together" (*plerumque permixta*). Civil war and the *delatores* posed the same threat, and the tests of constancy came both during and after the wars. Though most of *Histories* originally narrated the Flavian dynasty, not the civil war, these two paragraphs could almost equally well introduce only the preserved part of the work; the sense of static crisis is enhanced by the organization of the prefatory material in *Hist*. 1.4–11, which is geographical, not chronological. We are thus alerted here that Tacitus will begin assimilating Principate to civil war, just as soon as the civil war is over, and this is indeed what he does at the opening of Book Four, which should properly mark the end of the war and the beginning of Vespasian's rule: "with Vitellius' death, it was not so much that peace had started as that war had stopped" (*Interfecto Vitellio bellum magis desierat quam pax coeperat*, 4.1.1).[19]

As in *Annals*, then, in *Histories* Tacitus invites us to think about civil war as a figure for the Principate. If Edwards is right that, in *Histories*, the city provides a way of talking about civil war, we can also say that it provides a way of talking about the Principate: the ways in which civil war undermines the capacity of the city to signify are also the ways in which the Principate itself does so.[20]

On the basis of what was said above about the historical development of the relationship between elites and the city, we might have expected Tacitus to focus on ways in which *principes* had co-opted the urban space and used it to project their own images and memories. Interestingly, though, as we will see, that is not what he does: rather, he hints that the Principate tends to create a city that is essentially unable to project any sort of stable meaning, and to demolish the distinction between Rome and elsewhere.

[18] Cf. O'Gorman (1995b: 119–20): "The civil wars are framed by *pax saeva*, a portrayal of political stability in the same terms of Roman self-destruction as those employed to represent civil war"; see also (124): " . . . the Tacitean historical view, where it is no longer a case of civil war framed by dynasty, but rather a civil war framed by dynasties which are like civil war." Damon (2003 ad loc.) observes that the comparable passage at J. *BJ* 1.19–29 offers a similar survey but presents the events of his imminent narrative in sequence; by contrast, Tacitus confounds sequence. At *Hist*. 1.50.2 the Julio-Claudian period too is a *pax saeva*.

[19] Needless to say, portrayals of the Flavian dynasty as a continuation of the civil wars that emerged from the end of the Julio-Claudians would not be unwelcome in Trajanic Rome. The Neronian books of *Annals*, though of course composed well after *Histories*, show a blurring of war and peace before the civil war has begun (Keitel 1984: 307–8, 318–20) in the same way as *Histories* shows one after it has come to an end.

[20] Edwards (1996).

Although Tacitus' interest in historical failures to perceive difference is especially acute in *Histories*, it is not confined to that work, nor does it always specifically involve the question of the city: in Tacitus, the Principate corrodes the barriers between slave and free, elite and non-elite, male and female, Roman and non-Roman.[21] In these instances, sometimes simply by the outcome of the narrative and sometimes by producing disgust and rejection in its readers, the historian's work shores up the very distinctions he shows us being attacked.[22]

I do not consider Tacitus' emphasis on semiotic failures to be a gesture toward relativism, nor toward post-modern anxiety about the collapse of systems of signs into mere signifiers without signifieds. These failures are staged for us, and he invites us to share in his powerful disapprobation; the passages we will see below work by appealing to, and at the same time consolidating, a strong sense in the readership of the fundamental perversity of the actors. *Histories* interpellates a readership for whom the city *does* signify: unlike those who act in the narrative, it feels the disjunction, for example, between the slayings of the Galbians and the places where they are committed.[23]

OTHO'S ROME

In Book One of *Histories*, through Otho's rhetoric, the fabric of the city comes to seem to carry meaning only to the degree it is treated as doing so. His effect on the city stems from the rhetorical work required to make

[21] On the first score, take for example the fear inspired among the staff of the administration of Britain by a visit from the Imperial freedman Polyclitus juxtaposed with the utter puzzlement, on the Britons' part, as to why the army that had just defeated them was "taking its orders from slaves" (*Ann*. 14.39.2). On the second, see Agrippina's attempt to mount the dais and preside, side by side with Nero, over an audience granted to Armenian emissaries (13.5.2).

[22] So, for example, Tacitus' representation of Messalina at once reminds us insistently of the behavior appropriate to women by dwelling on her deviations from it and, by showing her end, reaffirms our sense of appropriate and inappropriate; see Joshel (1997).

[23] The challenging and vigorous interpretation of Haynes (2003) is closely concerned with systems of signs in *Histories*. The basic, characteristic difference between her approach and mine is that, in her argument, Tacitus' depiction of failures of signification would seem to indicate that *Histories* acknowledges that links between signifiers and signifieds are negotiable, whereas I think that Tacitus' literary project is deeply invested in absolute meaning and in its own ability to present it, and that it deploys failures of signification with the expectation that readers will feel the gap between, for example, the obvious implications of a monument and the incomprehension of observers internal to the narrative. In that sense, I am more sympathetic to approaches such as, for example, that of Manolaraki (2005), who juxtaposes "Tacitus' own visual and moral perception of the scene [at *Hist*. 2.70 when Vitellius observes the battlefield at Bedriacum], which constitutes the genuine and authoritative reading of Bedriacum" (251) with Bedriacum as it is imagined in the rhetoric of observers.

him *princeps*. Confronted with a situation of radical distinction, in which Galba and Piso Licinianus are clearly defined as *principes* and all other Romans, including himself, are, equally clearly, defined as *not principes*, he (or any pretender) must first call conventional definitions into question, effacing the distinction that makes Galba different from others, and then later restore a situation of radical distinction, but one in which he, and no one else, is defined by convention as *princeps*. "He had no prospects if things were settled; his whole design depended on things being murky" (*compositis rebus nulla spes, omne in turbido consilium*, *Hist*. 1.21.1).

Otho's first speech to the Praetorians

Accordingly, his first speech to the Praetorians casts the present order of society as an open question, and it places the power to answer that question into the hands of the Guard. Tacitus' barb that precedes the speech seems to show that Otho's strategy here is not mere talk but genuinely cedes to the mob the role of determining what form the state will take: Otho conducts himself "in every respect like a slave, in a bid to be master" (*omnia serviliter pro dominatione*, *Hist*. 1.36.3).[24] The image of the contender for the power subjected to the rabble hints that his mere appearance at the camp has inaugurated a period in which the essential distinctions of Roman society no longer hold: masters are now slaves, slaves masters. The tone of his address is consonant with this prelude.

> "Quis ad vos processerim, commilitones, dicere non possum, quia nec privatum me vocare sustineo princeps a vobis nominatus, nec principem alio imperante." (*Hist.* 1.37.1)
>
> "Who I am that appear before you, my fellow soldiers, I cannot say: since you have named me *princeps*, the term 'private citizen' no longer fits me, but nor does the term '*princeps*,' since another is the commander."

He has lost the power to speak his own name ("who I am . . . I cannot say") and the Praetorians now must do the naming ("since you have named me"). It will not be enough for them just to *call* him *princeps*, however, because there is still someone else who has already been given the name *princeps*, and that person remains in a position to perform his own consequential verbal acts ("another is the commander"). An old definition remains in effect at the same time as the new, and the result is confusion: neither Otho nor Galba is

[24] Neumeister (2000: 196) justifiably concludes that Tacitus presents Otho as a demagogue in this speech.

princeps or private citizen; each is, rather, an inarticulable self-contradiction. This state of affairs should alarm the Praetorians, Otho insists, because the danger to his identity imperils theirs as well: "the name for what you are will remain in uncertainty too, so long as there is ambiguity about whether it is a commander, or an enemy, of the Roman people that you have in your camp" (*vestrum quoque nomen in incerto erit, donec dubitabitur, imperatorem populi Romani in castris an hostem habeatis*, 1.37.1). He thus presents the Praetorians as caught between Roman and foreign identities, and ties their desire to affirm their own Romanness to their support of himself.[25] In order to establish who they are, then, the Guard must bring to an end that state of confusion they created when they named Otho *princeps* while another *princeps* was still alive: if a simple act of naming had been enough to throw the world into chaos, a simple act of violence – that is, the elimination of Galba – would bring back order, by affirming that only one signifier ("*princeps*") could apply to one signified (Otho). Otho here offers violence as the difference between chaos and order, as the secure means of creating definitions, rather than as the means for destroying them, as it is regularly imagined to be in *Histories* and in the rest of the literature of civil war.

Though it is in Otho's interest – for the moment – that difference should be effaced and distinctions fail, by the end of his speech it is Galba whom he has arraigned for cynical abuse of established definitions:

> quae usquam provincia, quae castra sunt nisi cruenta et maculata aut, ut ipse praedicat, emendata et correcta? nam quae alii scelera, hic remedia vocat, dum falsis nominibus severitatem pro saevitia, parsimoniam pro avaritia, supplicia et contumelias vestras disciplinam appellat. (*Hist.* 1.37.4)

> What province is there anywhere, what camp is there, that is not bloody and stained or (as he rather claims) "stripped of fault" and "set in good order"? For the things others call crimes he calls "cures," and it is his habitual practice, in a false use of terminology, to call viciousness "sternness," greed "thrift," punishing and insulting you "discipline."[26]

His displacing onto Galba his own egregious encouragement of separation of names from things might seem a mere ironic echo: his complaint that

[25] As Keitel (1987: 74) observes, Otho's speech seems to evoke part of a speech by Scipio in Livy (28.27.3–4) that recalls Romans to recognition of their Romanness; the recollection is ironic, in that Otho's aim is to remove the Praetorians' capacity to distinguish between Roman and other.

[26] The passage rehearses the pattern of thought in the speech of Calgacus, which it evokes: *Ag.* 30.5, *auferre trucidare rapere* [sc. *Romani*] *falsis nominibus imperium atque ubi solitudinem faciunt pacem appellant*. If a reader recalls that speech, the implications are various, depending on what he or she made of it in *Agricola*.

others are using language cynically is itself entirely cynical.[27] Its meaning runs deeper, though, in that, once he has erased conventional distinctions, he can himself take the designation "hypocrite" that is properly applicable to himself and attach it instead to his opponent, who is, even if not without a checkered past, nonetheless a person of better decency and dignity than he is.[28] Here, Otho is not merely advocating the collapse of distinction but is personally supplying the Praetorians with an example of how it is done.

By destroying distinctions Otho creates the necessary conditions for civil war: once the difference between Roman and other, between friend and enemy, is no longer recognized, nothing prevents Romans from killing those who, before the semiotic crisis, were fellow Romans. It is a striking irony of the speech, then, that his general program of liberating signifiers from their signifieds extends to the inability to fix the name "civil war" on what is to be a civil war:

"non ad bellum vos nec ad periculum voco: omnium militum arma nobiscum sunt. nec una cohors togata defendit nunc Galbam, sed detinet: cum vos adspexerit, cum signum meum acceperit, hoc solum erit certamen, quis mihi plurimum imputet." (*Hist.* 1.38.2)

"it is not to a war that I call you, nor to any danger: every last soldier's arms are with us. Nor is that one toga-clad cohort defending Otho, but holding him back. When they see you, when they receive the signal from me, the only 'struggle' will be over who claims the most credit for the services he has rendered me."

The Praetorians' response shows Otho has succeeded in putting them into a deconstructive frame of mind:

rapta statim arma, sine more et ordine militiae, ut praetorianus aut legionarius insignibus suis distingueretur: miscentur auxiliaribus galeis scutisque, nullo tribunorum centurionumve adhortante, sibi quisque dux et instigator. (*Hist.* 1.38.3)

Immediately arms are taken up, without regard for standard military procedure that ensured Praetorian and legionary could be told one from the other by their insignia. The men are mixed in with the helmets and shields of the auxiliaries, and none of the tribunes or centurions provides guidance, every man his own leader, his own instigator.

We learn first of the effacement of the important difference between two kinds of military service, the Praetorian Guard and the regular army; we

[27] See Keitel (2006: 236): "closer examination of Otho's charges and the language he uses to make them shows that he, not Galba, is the perverter of language and values."

[28] For the argument that Tacitus overlooks Galba's flaws, see Shochat (1981a); that he exaggerates Otho's, see Shochat (1981b) (but see the reservations of Ash [1999: 85–93]). On Tacitus' representation of Otho, see Ash (1999: 83–93) with bibliography at 194n48, to which add Haynes (2003: 54–70).

proceed to the collapse of distinction between Roman citizen service and non-citizen auxiliary units (a distinction that suggests a larger one, between Roman and foreign); we then discover that distinction between high and low has gone the way of that between inside and outside, as the soldiers have begun to operate as their own officers.[29] Before his speech Otho's dilemma was that Galba was still giving commands (*imperante*, 1.37.1); now he has caused each soldier to recognize no one but himself as a commander ("every man his own leader, his own instigator," 1.38.3).

The slaughter in the Forum

The way in which the soldiers treat the city after Otho's speech is a direct consequence of the outlook with which he has equipped them.[30] Galba's regime meets with a specifically topographical end. He proceeds from his Palatine residence toward the Forum (*Hist.* 1.39.1). A crowd sweeps him back and forth (1.40.1) – back to the Palatine? The Capitoline? The rostra? It did not matter: time had run out. Otho gave the word, and the men moved in:

> igitur milites Romani, quasi Vologaesum aut Pacorum avito Arsacidarum solio depulsuri ac non imperatorem suum inermem et senem trucidare pergerent, disiecta plebe, proculcato senatu, truces armis, rapidi equis forum inrumpunt. nec illos Capitolii adspectus et imminentium templorum religio et priores et futuri principes terruere, quo minus facerent scelus, cuius ultor est quisquis successit. (1.40.2)

> So, as though it were Vologaesus or Pacorus they were going to dislodge from the ancestral throne of the Arsacides, as though it were not their own unarmed, aged commander they were making their way to cut down, soldiers of Rome shoved aside the *plebs*, trampled the Senate, and menacing with their weapons, spurring on their horses, burst into the Forum. And the sight of the Capitolium, and the religious scruples urged by the temples that stood over them, and the *principes* who had been before and those who would be did not frighten them from committing an atrocity whose avenger is whoever succeeds to the power.

The elderly *princeps* was dropped unceremoniously from his litter next to the Lacus Curtius, and a soldier stabbed him in the throat (*Hist.* 1.41.2). Then they went after Titus Vinius, cut him down, and ran him through

[29] For another way of construing *miscentur*, see Damon (2003 ad loc.). For soldiers becoming their own officers, cf. the description of Vitellius' march at *Hist.* 1.62.2 and of the mutiny of the German legions at *Ann.* 1.32.3.

[30] Keitel (1987: 75) observes that the indiscipline Otho fosters here continues to present problems in the remaining narrative.

before the Temple of the Divine Julius (1.42). They found Piso hiding in the Temple of Vesta, dragged him out, and butchered him in the doorway (1.43.2).

In their invasion of the Forum, the soldiers' blindness to social distinction develops into incapacity to respond to those features of the city within which that distinction is encoded. Thinking they are elsewhere than at Rome, they treat as of no account the characteristic elements of the Roman state: the trampled Senate and violently displaced *plebs* together recall the formulation "Senate and People of Rome" (SPQR) that expressed the state in its executive capacity, and the social distinctions SPQR signifies (both difference between Roman [R] and other and superiority of some Romans [S] to others [P]) become negligible. The loss of distinction proceeds further. The trampling of Senate and displacement of *plebs* also make the biological component of the city equivalent to the city's inert fabric: what matters now is how the bodies of Senate and people affect the Forum as a military topography. Similarly, because the Othonians regard the structures of Rome not as repositories of memory but as nothing more than the sum of their materials, they do not feel the restraint (*religio*) that the temples overlooking the Forum were supposed to encourage, nor do they give thought to the uniqueness of Rome and its empire that the sight should have induced (*Capitolii aspectus*, 1.40.2).[31] When Piso hides in the Temple of Vesta, Tacitus observes pointedly that it was not because his pursuers respected the sanctity of the temple that he remained safe for a time, but simply because the building concealed him from view (1.43.2).

Both Rouveret and Edwards have shown that the topographical presentation of the murders is fraught with irony: the Lacus Curtius, site of Curtius' self-sacrifice to save the state; the Temple of the Divine Julius, a memory of the tyrannicide; the Temple of Vesta, inviolate hearth of the Roman people.[32] The whole episode conveys the pollution of civil war: arms and

[31] See Rouveret (1991: 3071): "les édifices du forum, véritables symboles de l'*urbs* et de son empire, auraient dû jouer leur rôle de *monumentum*, avertir le soldat romain de ne pas violer l'espace civil . . ." Relevant is the scene (*Hist.* 2.70) in which Vitellius beholds the carnage-strewn battlefield at Bedriacum but can feel no pity for the dead, and so, not having drawn an analogy between himself and the dead, he is unable to understand that the scene has implications for himself. By contrast, as O'Gorman (2000: 50–1) explains, Germanicus' viewing and burial of the remains of Varus' army (*Ann.* 1.61–2) – a scene that Woodman (1998: 70–85) demonstrates is a refashioning of the Vitellius episode – shows correct, and contemporary, interpretation of the scene's implications for its viewer. Cf. the visit of Lucan's Caesar to Troy and his complete immunity to its memory-charged spaces (9.964–79), with Ahl (1976: 209–22), Bartsch (1997: 131–5), Rossi (2001), and Gowing (2005: 88–92).

[32] Rouveret (1991), Edwards (1996). For a different take on the significance of Galba's murder by the Lacus Curtius, see Carré (2002: 223–4).

violence inside the city; monuments losing their capacity to signify; difference everywhere effaced and elided. Yet, in another sense, the soldiers are not wholly blind, for they *do* see the city as a military space, a battlefield, and use it accordingly.

This is, in effect, their argument about what the city is: it is where they dispose of one *princeps* and make another, if that is what they choose. Here is the civilian response:

> Alium crederes senatum, alium populum: ruere cuncti in castra, anteire proximos, certare cum praecurrentibus; increpare Galbam, laudare militum iudicium, exosculari Othonis manum; quantoque magis falsa erant quae fiebant, tanto plura facere. (*Hist.* 1.45.1)

> You would have thought it was a different Senate and a different people: everybody ran for the camp, hurrying to get ahead, racing with those in front of them, cursing Galba, praising the soldiers' judgment, kissing Otho's hand; and the falser that what they were doing was, the more they did it.

From what Tacitus has said already in the narrative, Senate and people may not actually see what is wrong with the Praetorians' argument: earlier that day the *plebs* were having their own problems with perception and had been on the Palatine baying for Otho's blood "as though they were in the circus or the theater, demanding something for their amusement" (*ut si in circo aut theatro ludicrum aliquod postularent*, 1.32.1).[33] Even if they do, however, it is clear enough that they could not have responded much differently, even if that response is undignified. Presented with the soldiers' representation of the city, they assent without complaint: what the soldiers thought was just right ("praising the soldiers' judgment," 1.45.1), and the city was a fine place for a bloodbath. This assent is of course "false" (§1) but because of the soldiers' ability and willingness to apply violence the Senate and people have no safe option to assert a rival interpretation.[34] Thus the soldiers' impression that they are elsewhere than Rome makes the Senate and people of Rome, too, into what seems like "a different Senate and a different people" – and "a different Senate and a different people" would presumably live "elsewhere than at Rome" (*alibi quam Romae*, *Hist.* 1.4.2). They then ratify their own conversion into "a different Senate and

[33] More generally on the motif of spectacle in *Histories*, cf. Borzsák (1973) and Keitel (1992).

[34] O'Gorman (2000: 23–39) discusses the German and Pannonian revolts as a competition of sign-making between soldiers and commanders: these episodes "stage a series of attempts by the various army commanders to control the mutinous armies through the use of definition . . . [T]he commanders seek to define the mutiny *as* mutiny, sedition, disorder, almost-civil war . . . [T]he commanders' definitions are resisted by the mutineers, who seek to impose and promulgate their own meanings of their actions" (26).

people" by abandoning the city and its signs for the camp, where Otho's hand waits to be kissed. At this point, then, while the physical features of Rome persist, in practice there are not actually any Romans among them.

Otho's second speech to the Praetorians

Otho was able to switch the definition of *princeps* from "Galba" to "Otho" only through the Guard's immunity to ordinary signification, and their ability to compel others to ignore it as well. But after the redefinition he needs to conclude the era of deconstruction and ensure that he himself is not in turn redefined out of his principate. This is the problem he faces in his second speech to the Guard. A crisis had arisen from a silly misunderstanding and "nearly destroyed the city" (*prope urbi excidio fuit*, *Hist.* 1.80.1). Otho had summoned the seventeenth cohort from Ostia, and a tribune of the Praetorians, delegated the task of arming them, had opened and begun emptying an armory at night, so that there would be no interference from the daytime bustle of the camp (§1). Drunk and frightened (but some were just eager to plunder), the Guard rose: the weapons, they said, were going to senators' slaves, who were to kill Otho (§§1–2).[35] Cutting down the tribune, and those centurions who resisted, they headed for the city and the Palace (§2).

The scene then shifts to the Palace, where Otho is entertaining persons of rank (*Hist.* 1.81.1). Word of what is on the way terrifies him and his guests. Fearing for the Senate's safety as much as his own,

> abire propere omnes e convivio iussit. tum vero passim magistratus proiectis insignibus, vitata comitum et servorum frequentia, senes feminaeque per tenebras diversa urbis itinera, rari domos, plurimi amicorum tecta et ut cuique humillimus cliens, incertas latebras petivere. (§2)

> He told everyone to leave the party, fast. Then the scene: insignia of office cast to the ground, the throngs of companions and slaves shunned, old men and their wives sought out dark paths through the city in all directions, few heading for their homes, most for the dwellings of their friends and of their clients – the humbler the better – as their uneasy places of hiding.

The soldiers' rush does not even stop at the doors of the Palace (*Militum impetus ne foribus quidem Palati coercitus*, 1.82.1). They burst in on the party,

[35] They had learnt from experience: the overthrow of Galba had begun with another armory being opened (*Hist.* 1.38.3). The Guard here seem to fear the same collapse of hierarchy in relation to slaves as they have themselves been promoting in their own relation to their superiors.

demanding to see Otho; a tribune and a legionary prefect are wounded. They threaten now the tribunes and centurions, now the whole Senate: blinded with terror, they cannot fix a single object for their rage, and "demand the right to do violence to everyone" (*licentiam in omnis poscentibus*, §1). Otho pleads with them from his couch and weeps. They return to the camp. The following day, it is "as though the city had been taken: houses were shuttered, hardly any traffic, the *plebs* was grim" (*postera die velut capta urbe clausae domus, rarus per vias populus, maesta plebs*, §2).[36] The soldiers, too, are grim but not contrite. Otho has a donative paid out, then he goes out to visit the camp (§3).

In this scene the soldiers have taken the lesson of Otho's first speech to heart: the *pomerium* means nothing to them and, by extension, neither do the doors of the Palace. The city remains only a military space, no different from the rest of the world. Social difference here again goes the way of spatial: the frenzied soldiers now identify the senators not as the Senate, nor even as physical impediments, but as a positive military foe. The senators, once again of necessity engendered by violence, accede to the soldiers' interpretation: shedding the markings of social difference (insignia, entourages, their homes), they assume as much ordinariness and inconspicuousness as possible. Distinction of place and distinction of rank and honor thus dissolved, the mutineers "attend" the weeping Otho's banquet in place of the leading citizens who had fled.

As Otho comes to address the Praetorians, then, his task is to "re-place" them, spatially and hierarchically.[37] In a long period Tacitus reports his planning for the speech, and the last consideration we hear of is his anxiety about the "crisis of the city" (*discrimine urbis*, *Hist.* 1.83.1) and the danger to the Senate. In one sense, there is of course a *discrimen* of the city – that is, "a crucial point at which it will *either* stand *or* fall" – but, in another, the problem is precisely that there is no *discrimen urbis*, that is, "no distinction of the city" (*OLD* s.v. *discrimen* 5, 2). He has to lift the one *discrimen* by instilling the capacity to "discern" in the Guard; but this discernment is one he has already shown to be rooted in usage, not reality. At this moment, the city and the Senate are for practical purposes whatever you treat them as.

[36] On the *urbs capta* motif in Latin literature, see Paul (1982) and Keitel (1984: 307–12).

[37] Keitel (1987: 76): "Otho . . . is now ironically forced to defend the things which his own usurpation threatened – discipline and the constitution." Otho's new position as *princeps* presumably explains the understandable impression of Neumeister (2000: 198–200) that Otho's speech is more like that of a statesman than his previous "demagogic" speech.

Otho's speech (*Hist.* 1.83.2–1.84) goes over well enough; he is wisely sparing of punishment, and generous in praising the Guard's loyalty. His theme is difference, in a variety of manifestations:[38]

"Vos quidem istud pro me: sed in discursu ac tenebris et rerum omnium confusione patefieri occasio etiam adversus me potest. si Vitellio et satellitibus eius eligendi facultas detur, quem nobis animum, quas mentes imprecentur, quid aliud quam seditionem et discordiam optabunt? ne miles centurioni, ne centurio tribuno obsequatur, ut confusi pedites equitesque in exitium ruamus. (2) parendo potius, commilitones, quam imperia ducum sciscitando res militares continentur, et fortissimus in ipso discrimine exercitus est, qui ante discrimen quietissimus. vobis arma et animus sit: mihi consilium et virtutis vestrae regimen relinquite. paucorum culpa fuit, duorum poena erit: ceteri abolete memoriam foedissimae noctis. (3) nec illas adversus senatum voces ullus usquam exercitus audiat. caput imperii et decora omnium provinciarum ad poenam vocare non hercule illi, quos cum maxime Vitellius in nos ciet, Germani audeant: ulline Italiae alumni et Romana vere iuventus ad sanguinem et caedem depoposcerit ordinem, cuius splendore et gloria sordes et obscuritatem Vitellianarum partium praestringimus? nationes aliquas occupavit Vitellius, imaginem quandam exercitus habet, senatus nobiscum est. sic fit, ut hinc res publica, in<de> hostes rei publicae constiterint. (4) quid? vos pulcherrimam hanc urbem domibus et tectis et congestu lapidum stare creditis? muta ista et inani<m>a intercidere ac reparari promisca sunt: aeternitas rerum et pax gentium et mea cum vestra salus incolumi<ta>te senatus firmatur. hunc auspicato a parente et conditore urbis nostrae institutum et a regibus usque ad principes continuum et immortalem, sic<ut> a maioribus accepimus, sic posteris tradamus; nam ut ex vobis senatores, ita ex senatoribus principes nascuntur." (*Hist.* 1.84)

"Now, I know you did that [i.e., invaded the Palatine] for me. In the rushing off, though, and the confusion of everything, an opportunity could arise for someone to attack me, too. If Vitellius and his lackeys were to get the choice of what attitude and what minds to curse us with, what would they prefer to sedition and discord? To soldiers not obeying their centurions, to centurions not obeying their tribunes, to us, infantry and cavalry confused together, rushing on to our own doom? (2) By obedience, my fellow soldiers, rather than by questioning generals' orders, are military undertakings held together, and that army is strongest in the crisis that before the crisis was most quiescent. Be the weapons and the courage with you; with me leave the planning, and the regulation of your manly virtue. A few were to blame, two will be punished. The rest of you, wipe out the memory of that foulest of nights. (3) And let no army anywhere hear remarks of that kind against the Senate. To summon for punishment the head of empire and the ornaments of all the provinces, not even those Germans, by Hercules, that Vitellius incites against us would dare. Would any nurslings of Italy, or any of the true Roman

[38] Most of the speech appears to be Tacitus' addition to the narrative source common to Suetonius, Dio, and perhaps Plutarch: see Keitel (1987: 75–6).

youth, demand for bloody slaughter that category of men by whose glorious sheen we outstrip the grubby ignobility of the Vitellian faction? He's got hold of a few tribes; he's got, really, only the appearance of an army. Yet the Senate is with us: and so it is that the state is on this side, and the enemies of the state have lined up on that side. (4) What's that you say? Do you suppose this fairest city is made of houses and roofs and stones laid one upon the next? Those, mute and lifeless, can fall and be put back together with no difference: eternal charge of affairs and the peace of the nations and my well-being together with yours is made sturdy by the safety of the Senate. This order was established under auspices by the father and founder of our city and has stayed, without cease and immortal, from the kings on down to the *principes*. Just as we have inherited it from our ancestors, let us leave it to our descendants: for as senators are born from you, so *principes* are born from senators."

In this part of the speech his argument begins from primordial chaos, *rerum omnium confusione*, "in the confusion of everything" (§1). We are back to the beginning of the world, and Otho has to explain to this anarchic crowd how difference has been established since then, and why it is a good idea.[39] The *princeps* who gently reminds his men that it is in their interest not to question his orders finds himself in the position of having to explain everything to them. A list of notable kinds of difference he must outline: degrees of authority within the military (§2), distinction between infantry and cavalry, times when a battle is going on ("in the crisis") and when one is not ("before the crisis"), the capacities of the body ("the weapons and the courage") and the leadership of the mind ("the planning and the regulation"), guilt and innocence ("a few . . . the rest"), the past and the future ("wipe out the memory"), foreigners and Italians, appearance and reality ("the appearance of an army," §3), lowness ("grubby ignobility") and nobility ("glorious sheen"), Vitellians and Romans, here and there, transience ("can fall and be put back together with no difference," §4) and permanence ("immortal"), physical materials and abstract meaning. The speech does not come without ironies, or without cost. He was of course eager to efface all these differences to begin with. Furthermore, he himself refuses to reassert that hierarchy in which he is urging his men to believe; after all, the speech is itself an acknowledgment of their continued power to impose definitions. For he does not let the majesty and sanctity of the Senate speak for itself, but explains why it is in the soldiers' interest not to destroy it: because it is the marker that enables them, and not the Vitellians, to be in charge of Rome. If it is gone, then their sons will not be senators, and their grandsons will not be *principes*. Distinction matters now, so it can

[39] Cf. the description of the primordial state of the universe at Ov. *Met.* 1.5–20 and of the end of the world at Luc. 1.72–80.

be corrupted later.[40] The city is not, he affirms, just the sum of its parts but is, rather, distinguished from all other places by being the home of the Senate. Here, however, that body itself has only a material capacity. It is structural, a "load-bearing" feature ("is made sturdy by the safety of the Senate," 1.84.4), and also decorative ("glorious sheen," §3). It is a material inheritance, a useful and prestigious possession that we have received from Romulus and must hand down to our descendants. On reflection, then, despite what Otho says, the Senate is in fact disconcertingly similiar to the material components of the city. It is also significant that the last image of it here is as a body constantly in flux and being filled with ever new, ever baser "materials" in the form of soldiers: its membership "can fall and be put back together" (§4) as easily as the bricks and stones of the city.

Built around the signifying mark of the Senate, Otho's argument for the city's uniqueness carries within it the basis for its own refutation. That body is not meaningfully distinguishable from other features of the city: the Praetorians began to make that case when they trampled senators on their way to murder Galba, and in the recent mutiny nearly closed the deal. As he shows by his speech, moreover, the only means of preventing the Guard from reducing the Senate to mere inanimate material – that is, corpses – is to persuade them to agree that it is what makes the city different.[41]

Signification, civil war, and the audience of historiography

We may take this state of affairs as yet another instance of the special circumstances of civil war and say that this *de facto* grant to the Praetorian Guard to make definitions is necessitated by the exigencies of competition among rivals for the supreme power. Civil wars do not just happen, however: they have causes, and Tacitus has warned us to be alert for causes. Civil war is attended by crises of difference, but it is equally true that civil war comes to be only through such crises: fellow citizens do not go to war against each other unless their ability to make significant distinctions has already failed. In other words, the civil war could not have occurred *unless* those propositions that Otho forwarded in his first speech and now must refute were already conceivable and tenable.

[40] In this sense, the speech could serve as further evidence in the argument of Levene (1999), since it shows an apparently moral argument about the sancitity of the Senate becoming, instead, an argument about expediency.

[41] Rouveret (1991: 3072) identifies the relationship between Otho's speech and the speech of Camillus at Liv. 5.51–4. The differences are important. Camillus' argument posits the radical difference of Rome from all other places, while Otho had earlier taught the Praetorians to neglect that difference. Furthermore, Camillus had emphasized the sense of *religio* attached to Rome's topography; here, it is not the Praetorians' sense of reverence that matters, but their estimate of their own advantage.

Earlier, when rumors of Otho's stirring had just surfaced, Piso had spoken to the cohort stationed on the Palatine. His words were not obsequious, but they entertained no illusions:

"Galbam consensus generis humani, me Galba consentientibus vobis Caesarem dixit. si res publica et senatus et populus vacua nomina sunt, vestra, commilitones, interest, ne imperatorem pessimi faciant." (*Hist*. 1.30.2)

"Galba was named as Caesar by the consensus of the human race, and I by Galba, with your agreement. If the *res publica* and Senate and people are empty names, it is in your interest, my fellow soldiers, that the worst people not make the emperor."

By making the soldiers' self-interest bear the greatest weight in his persuasive efforts, he concedes that he, like Senate and people, does not have the capacity to make the "names" of Senate and people refer to things if the soldiers will not accede to a reference.[42]

Piso's admission and the crisis of signification afflicting *Histories* more broadly do not, I think, encourage us to abandon our confidence in fixed meaning: you can only lament that "Senate and People" are empty names if those names have a real and strong meaning, and you can only present the Othonians' murder of the Galbians with terse irony if you can depend on your readership to feel the disjunction between the nearby monuments and the acts committed in and around them.

As readers, we have a different relationship to the city from that had by viewers of the city in the narrative. In our case, it is quite clear what was wrong with the Praetorians' perception. The image of the foreign monarchs shows us how things look through the soldiers' eyes while supplying us with certainty that the difference exists: the soldiers are, unambiguously, "soldiers of Rome," and Galba is likewise "their own commander." The meticulous topographical specificity of the impending narrative of the soldiers' rampage (1.41–3), too, reminds us insistently that it is in fact at Rome that the action is taking place, not at the Parthian capital or anywhere else. While in 69 CE the monuments could not cause anyone to respond to them because of the threat of violence, readers of *Histories* do not have to worry about Othonian cavalry riding roughshod over them.

The real ambiguity here resides in whether this historiographical – that is, retrospective and merely textual – vindication of signifying power can be

[42] Cf. *Hist*. 1.55.4, where the legions revolting against Galba pledge fealty to the *senatus populique Romani obliterata iam nomina*, and *Hist*. 1.57.1, where they lay aside the *speciosis senatus populique Romani nominibus* to declare their support for Vitellius, instead. On *nomina* in Piso's speech, see Haynes (2003: 57–60). For thematic responsions between the speeches in the first three books of *Histories*, see Keitel (1991). On the impotence of moral argument in Piso's speech, see Levene (1999: 209).

translated into signification *in contemporary practice*, that is, whether readers of *Histories* can use the relation to the city structured in reading to form a similar relationship to the real, lived city of the present. This question is urgent because the crisis of signification that we see unleash the civil war is not a problem unique to civil war, at least not in Tacitus. This is indicated to an extent by the prominence given early in the book to the uncivic relationship between *princeps*, or pretender, and his soldiers: there was no better narrative than 69 CE, unless it was the civil war between Antony and Octavian, to suggest that, at base, a *princeps* was best defined as "a man who could cause large numbers of armed Romans to harm other Romans in his name"; this violence is, in turn, the factor that in *Histories* destroys distinctions and perpetuates conditions of civil war. Recall also that, in Tacitus' portrayal, the civil war is not just an exceptional time of inversion but also the unfolding consequence of public discovery of something that had been true all along, that is, that a *princeps* could be made elsewhere than at Rome. In this light, the trials of the city in *Histories* do not simply raise questions about the city under conditions of civil war, but also, as I have argued, about the city under conditions of Principate; this impression will be confirmed in the next section, where we will look at Tacitus' treatment of the destruction of the Capitolium and its consequences.[43]

THE CAPITOL DESTROYED, THE CAPITOL REBUILT

The problems of distinction and definition we encounter in Book One form the backdrop against which we must read the destruction of the Capitolium in Book Three. In this section we look at how Tacitus represents the burning of the central temple of the Roman state, then at whether *Histories* imagines that that temple can be restored. In the first part we will pay attention to the political and historiographical implications of how Tacitus presents the temple's destruction; in the second, we turn to how he depicts its restoration.

The conflagration

The partisans of the civil war did their historian no greater favor than to reduce the house of Jupiter Best and Greatest to rubble and smoke. That

[43] The Neronian narrative that, once Tacitus had written *Annals*, preceded *Histories* clearly shows that the city could undergo crises of signification without civil war proper: witness the *domus transitoria* (*Ann*. 15.39.1), the *domus aurea* (which may, or may not, have been discussed in the lost, or unwritten, portions of *Annals*), the Great Fire of 64 CE, and the insinuation – identified by Woodman (1998: 168–89) – that Nero was trying to convert Rome into Alexandria.

temple was "the central symbol of Roman imperial power and Roman religion" (themselves two intertwined categories of discourse); the madness of the civil war culminated in a negation of Rome itself.[44] As Tacitus portrays it, before the temple is destroyed, it is at once a monument of imperial conquest and of the social order of Rome under the Republic. He traces its destruction not to one party or even to one moment, but rather attributes it to the peculiar kind of failure of signification that the Principate creates among Romans. For him, the pathos of the calamity is linked to its occurrence under the Principate: because the temple was a concrete expression of the relations between citizens that defined the Republican social order, and because that social order no longer exists, we fear it cannot truly be restored, even if a similar building can be erected on the same spot. Thus, in its depiction of the temple and its history, Tacitus' text becomes the monument: it, not the successive reconstructions on the Capitoline, restores the Republican temple most faithfully. I print both the narrative leading up to the ignition and the apostrophe:

Vixdum regresso in Capitolium Martiale furens miles aderat, nullo duce, sibi quisque auctor. cito agmine forum et imminentia foro templa praetervecti erigunt aciem per adversum collem usque ad primas Capitolinae arcis fores. erant antiquitus porticus in latere clivi dextrae subeuntibus, in quarum tectum egressi saxis tegulisque Vitellianos obruebant. (2) neque illis manus nisi gladiis armatae, et arcessere tormenta aut missilia tela longum videbatur: faces in prominentem porticum iecere et sequebantur ignem ambustasque Capitolii fores penetrassent, ni Sabinus revolsas undique statuas, decora maiorum, in ipso aditu vice muri obiecisset. (3) tum diversos Capitolii aditus invadunt iuxta lucum asyli et qua Tarpeia rupes centum gradibus aditur. improvisa utraque vis; propior atque acrior per asylum ingruebat. nec sisti poterant scandentes per coniuncta aedificia, quae ut in multa pace in altum edita solum Capitolii aequabant. (4) hic ambigitur, ignem tectis obpugnatores iniecerint, an obsessi, quae crebrior fama, nitentis ac progressos depellunt. inde lapsus ignis in porticus adpositas aedibus; mox sustinentes fastigium aquilae vetere ligno traxerunt flammam alueruntque. sic Capitolium clausis foribus indefensum et indireptum conflagravit.

[72] Id facinus post conditam urbem luctuosissimum foedissimumque rei publicae populi Romani accidit, nullo externo hoste, propitiis, si per mores nostros liceret, deis, sedem Iovis Optimi Maximi, auspicato a maioribus pignus imperii conditam, quam non Porsenna dedita urbe neque Galli capta temerare potuissent, furore principum excindi. arserat et ante Capitolium civili bello, sed fraude privata: nunc palam obsessum, palam incensum, quibus armorum causis? quo tantae cladis pretio? stetit, <dum> pro patria bellavimus. (2) voverat Tarquinius Priscus rex bello Sabino ieceratque fundamenta spe magis futurae magnitudinis quam quo

[44] Edwards (1996: 79).

modicae adhuc populi Romani res sufficerent. mox Servius Tullius sociorum studio, dein Tarquinius Superbus capta Suessa Pometia hostium spoliis exstruxere. sed gloria operis libertati reservata: pulsis regibus Horatius Pulvillus iterum consul dedicavit ea magnificentia, quam immensae postea populi Romani opes ornarent potius quam augerent. (3) isdem rursus vestigiis situm est, postquam interiecto quadringentorum quindecim annorum spatio L. Scipione C. Norbano consulibus flagraverat. curam victor Sulla suscepit, neque tamen dedicavit: hoc solum felicitati eius negatum. Lutatii Catuli nomen inter <tan>ta Caesarum opera usque ad Vitellium mansit. ea tunc aedes cremabatur. (*Hist.* 3.71–2)

Martialis had scarcely gone back into the Capitolium when the soldiers got there. They were in a frenzy, no leader, every man his own commander. In a mass they hurry through the Forum and past the temples that stand over it and form their battle line facing up the slope, right up against the gates to the citadel of the Capitoline. In the old days there was a portico on the side of the hill, to the right as you go up. The defenders came out onto its roof and showered the Vitellians with rocks and rooftiles. (2) They had only swords, and it seemed too long to wait for the engines or ranged weapons: so they cast torches into the nearest part of the portico and followed the fire. They would have burst through the gates of the Capitolium, which had burned, if Sabinus had not uprooted all the statues that stood there – the glories of the ancestors – and blocked off the entrance with them as with a wall. (3) Then the attackers try different approaches to the Capitolium, by the glade of the Asylum and where the Tarpeian Rock is approached by the Hundred Stairs. Both attacks were unexpected; the one through the Asylum came closer and was fiercer. There was no stopping them, either, as they climbed up through the adjacent buildings, which had been built up high during the long peace and now were even with the ground level of the Capitolium. (4) There is uncertainty here, whether it was the attackers who cast the fire, or rather the besieged – this is the more widespread account – used fire to drive the attackers away as they strove their way onwards. The fire spread from there into the porticos located by the temple, and then the "eagles" that held up the roof caught fire and fed it, their ancient wood the fuel. That is how the Capitolium, its doors shut, undefended and unsacked, went up in flames.

[72] That deed, the most sorrowful and most disgusting in the whole history of Rome, happened to the *res publica* of the people of Rome, not because of any foreign enemy, and though the gods would have been on our side, were that possible given our ways: that the house of Jupiter Best and Greatest, founded under our ancestors' augury as a guarantee of empire, which Porsenna had not been able to defile when the city was surrendered to him, nor the Gauls when they had taken the city, was now being demolished by the madness of *principes*. The Capitolium *had* burnt before in civil conflict, but through private crime: now in broad daylight it was laid siege to, and in broad daylight set ablaze – to what tactical advantage? What was the return for so great a disaster? It remained, while it was for the fatherland that we fought. (2) It was vowed in the Sabine War by Tarquinius Priscus, and he laid the foundations really in expectation of future greatness rather than to square them

with the modest dimensions of the Roman people's sway at the time. Then Servius Tullius with the enthusiasm of our allies, and Tarquinius Superbus with the spoils from the sack of Suessa Pometia, built it up. The glory of the work, however, was reserved for freedom: when the kings were thrown out Horatius Pulvillus in his second consulship dedicated it with such magnificence that the later huge resources of the Roman people could only adorn it, not increase it. (3) It was planted back in the same foundations after it burned in the consulship of Lucius Scipio and Gaius Norbanus, after standing for four hundred and fifteen years. Sulla, when he had won his victory, undertook its reconstruction, but he did not live to dedicate it: that alone was denied to his "felicity." The name of Lutatius Catulus among so many great works of the Caesars remained down to Vitellius. That was the temple that was being burned then.

The narrative's opening rehearses the tropes we saw when Tacitus described the Praetorians' reaction to Otho's speech. Hierarchy fails, anarchy reigns, every man is his own general. The resonance does not just establish that this event is like what happened earlier but also ties it to that initial rhetorical erasure of difference. At first glance, it would be easy enough to look at this as a stock "civil war" scene. The *furor* ("mad rage") here is also the *furor* of Lucan's hell-bent civil warriors, which is itself the *furor impius* (roughly, "mad rage that leads to, or is evinced in, neglect or transgression of obligations") of mad Turnus, resisting Aeneas in a needless war between nations destined in the end to be one.[45] The fevered partisans do not even see Rome: they see a citadel to be taken, not the Citadel; they see a good avenue of attack, not the Asylum where Romulus made Romans out of vagabonds and desperadoes; they see the makings of a barricade in the ancestors' pious offerings to the guarding gods of Rome. They lose their sense of time, as well: the centuries since the temple's origin mean nothing to them, but the time it would take to bring in siege engines seems too long. The incapacity to make important distinctions is the hallmark of civil war: a brother is just another enemy soldier, and the city is just another battlefield.

[45] Cf. Luc. 1.8: *Quis furor, o cives, quae tanta licentia ferri?* (with forty-eight further uses of *furor* in the poem, and thirty-one of the verb *furere* – not all, of course, of the soldiers and generals). See in this regard Ahl (1976: 274–9), Masters (1992: 142–5), and Hershkowitz (1998: 197–246). For Turnus' *furor*, cf. Virgil, *A.* 12.680: (Turnus to Juturna) *hunc, oro, sine me furere ante furorem*. On Turnus as embodiment of *furor impius*, see Pöschl (1962: 93) and Hershkowitz (1998: 68–95). On *furor* in Tacitus, see Miravalles (2001). On *furor* as a key term in Roman civil war narratives, see Jal (1963: 421–5); in the epic tradition, see Hershkowitz (1998) *passim*. Baxter (1971) sees the Virgilian reminiscences in Book Three as clustered around the sack of Cremona, the burning of the temple, and the death of Vitellius. He makes a strong argument for a relationship with the sack of Troy in Virgil, *A.* 2; the irony, of course, is that the consummate foreign war, between Greeks and Trojans, is here a civil war. For the sack of Troy as an important intertext for Livy's account of the Gallic sack, see Kraus (1994: 271–8).

I have suggested above, though, that civil war and the Principate are intimately linked in *Histories*, and that is in fact what we see here. The conflict of 69 CE was not Sulla's civil war. The fire was not the work of some stealthy arsonist; the crime was committed in the open, where everyone could see – the "crime" was "private" before (*Hist*. 3.72.1), but this one was public.[46] Nor is the *furor* quite what we thought. Walser remarks that Tacitus blames the fire on the collapse of public morality.[47] "Were that possible given our ways," indeed, implies collective guilt (3.72.1). We may also recall that, at the beginning of the work, the hands that lit the blaze belonged to citizens (*civium manibus*, 1.2.2). But here in Book Three, there are people more specifically culpable. The long and dramatic period that begins with "that deed" winds up with the words "demolished by the madness of *principes*" (*furore principum excindi*, 3.72.1). What foreign foes of Rome had never done was now achieved not (as this train of thought might have led us to expect) "by ourselves" or "at the hands of citizens" again but "by the madness of *principes*."[48] The expression does not imply that the *principes* now in contention were present and ordered the fire cast: Vespasian was far from Rome, Vitellius was inert (3.70.4), and the assault had at any rate recognized no commanders ("no leader, every man his own commander," 3.71.1). By highlighting that in some essential way this madness belonged to *principes*, however, it does make this conflagration into a phenomenon for which the existence of *principes* provides the necessary conditions. When this kind of thing happened in the Republic, a deranged independent agent did it; it was the special contribution of the advent of *principes* that a whole army of deranged independent agents could do the same thing in broad daylight.[49] Without *principes*, this fire was like the last one; with them, it was the most sickening event in Rome's history. This calamity speaks not just to Romans' capacity to destroy themselves, but to

[46] As Heubner (1963–82 ad loc.) notes, *fraus privata* is modeled after *fraus publica*, used in Livy (cf. 8.14.4, 21.10.6) to denote the culpability of a whole people for offenses against Rome; needless to say, in Livy the Romans themselves are never saddled with a *fraus publica*, and the implication here that Romans are somehow culpable for a crime against themselves is startling.

[47] Walser (1951: 12).

[48] Heubner (1963–82) does not comment; Edwards (1996: 80) translates the phrase as "was burnt down by the madness of Roman leaders." Yet these are not just any Roman leaders: they are *principes*, a kind of leader Rome had never had during any previous civil war. Grimal (1990: 232–3) and Newlands (2002: 250) spot the importance of the phrase.

[49] It also matters that the intertext in Sallust – cf. Heubner (1963–82 ad loc.) – describes a disaster that *almost* happened but was foiled by Catiline's poor timing: *Cat*. 18.7–8, *iam tum non consulibus modo, sed plerisque senatoribus perniciem machinabantur. quod ni Catilina maturasset pro curia signum sociis dare, eo die post conditam urbem Romam pessumum facinus patratum foret. quia nondum frequentes armati convenerant, ea res consilium diremit*. In 69 CE, by contrast, there was no shortage of armed men, and the contrafactual becomes all too factual.

the special role of *principes* in causing and facilitating this self-immolation. The historian's refusal to state conclusively which side was to blame serves this impression as well: it matters less whether it was the Vitellians or the Flavians than that the political context permitted there to be such things as Vitellians and Flavians.

We find support for this in Tacitus' tellingly precise capsule history of the temple. Its origins happen to fall under the monarchy, but the historian ties the beginning of construction not to the form of government but to the external imperial endeavor (the vow in the Sabine War, the contributions from the allies, the spoils of Suessa Pometia, *Hist.* 3.72.2). By contrast, he is quite clear that it was not dedicated until the Republic, indeed was dedicated almost at the same time as the Republic began.[50] In this way, his history splits the memory the temple conveys: it commemorates not only Roman conquest but also the Republican social order of which it is the exclusive creature and nursling. Furthermore, the narrative of its restorations, all of which occurred after the expulsion of the kings and before the end of the Republic, means that, in our passage at least, the temple reminds us of the tradition of building and rebuilding that perpetuated its existence under the Republic.

The city had forgotten the possibility of coming under foreign attack; in fact, as a symbol of dominion, the Capitolium seemed to broadcast Rome's security from this kind of assault. As the product of Romans who entrusted to each other the tradition of cultivating and protecting and adorning it, it could not imagine Romans vying to destroy it. Consequently, the city had grown up around it, and its hills were no longer valued for their defensive properties. When the partisans fought in the city in 69 CE, then, the temple suffered because it was the creature of, and so integrally tied to, one sort of civic context, but now found itself within a different, hostile context. This was not conflagration by torch, but conflagration by constitution.

Losing the temple hurts so much because of the implications of the Principate for how it would, or whether it could, be rebuilt. Although the previous temple had stood a long time, this was not the first time Jupiter Best and Greatest had burned. For four hundred and fifteen years it had survived, from its dedication by Horatius until the consulship of Scipio and Norbanus (83 BCE), but that fire does not concern Tacitus much. Catulus' temple had lasted not even a century and a half, yet this disaster was somehow incomparably worse.[51] In part this is because, for purposes

[50] For the importance of dedication in its own right, see Orlin (1997: 162–89). For the role played by the Capitolium in forming the Romans' early historical consciousness, see Purcell (2003: 26–33).

[51] Even then, we can say it had been there a century and a half only if we ignore, with Tacitus, the lightning-induced fire that required an Augustan restoration (Aug. *Anc.* 20.1; Cass. Dio 55.1.1).

of Tacitus' portrayal, the conflagration of a building meant something different under the Republic. It is the nature of buildings to burn down, and putting them back up again was part of the system. The charge of restoration was an honorable trust, not far off the original dedication in prestige; rebuilding and restoring honored not only the gods but also the ancestors and their care for the gods, and it reaffirmed the restorer's commitment to keeping alive through his own activity the *mos maiorum*, the "way of the ancestors." When Horatius' temple burned down, Sulla was there to vow a restoration. When Sulla died before fulfilling that vow, his man Catulus came forward to shoulder the burden – the same Catulus, this, who fought to secure Sulla the honor of a public funeral (App. *BC* 1.105). The old temple was a *pignus imperii*, a "guarantee of empire" (*Hist.* 3.72.1), but also a *pignus*, or "pledge-token," between men. The men who rebuilt and restored the temple under the Republic were following "in the same foundations/footsteps" (*isdem rursus vestigiis*, 3.72.3) of the ancestors, so, although the materials are new, the structure is the same, for it is not simply the sum of its parts but rather figures a set of relations between men and will therefore be replicable so long as those relations persist.[52]

In important ways the temple Catulus built was not the same at all. Addressing Catulus himself, Cicero talks about the new structure: "*you* must assume this charge, *you* must undertake this labor, that, just as the Capitolium has been restored in a grander fashion, so it be more copiously adorned, than it was" (*tibi haec cura suscipienda, tibi haec opera sumenda est, ut Capitolium, quem ad modum magnificentius est restitutum, sic copiosius ornatum sit quam fuit*, *Ver.* 4.69). The "adornment" refers to dedications Verres was said to have intercepted, which Catulus is now encouraged to take a role in recovering; the "restoration" refers to the structure itself. So far as the orator is concerned, the notable feature of the temple was to be its improvements, not the builder's scrupulous care for sameness.[53] Even when we allow for the rhetorical exigencies of the situation – for Cicero,

[52] Sulla was of course a highly problematic character; that is suppressed here (cf. *Hist.* 2.38.1 *nobilium saevissimus Lucius Sulla*). No stain attached to Catulus. There had been ugliness, though, which Tacitus ignores. Some part of the project must have been complete in 62 BCE, for in that year Caesar called Catulus to account for embezzlement of the restoration funds and proposed that the commission be turned over to someone else (Suet. *Jul.* 15). Dio says Caesar wanted it transferred to Pompey and was eager to take Catulus' name off the temple (37.44.1). In 46 BCE the Senate proposed replacing Catulus' name with Caesar's, on the grounds that he had completed the construction after the attempt to prosecute Catulus (Cass. Dio 43.14.6). Caesar did not decline, but we do not hear that anything came of the matter.

[53] It looks as though Cicero was not exaggerating. Sulla had brought back columns from the Olympieion in Athens, and these may have been incorporated into Catulus' temple (depending on how we take *Capitolinis aedibus* at Plin. *Nat.* 36.45); Dionysius of Halicarnassus notes the sumptuousness of the material (4.61.4). The elder Pliny remarks that the gilded rooftiles were seen as excessive (*Nat.* 33.57).

magnification of the temple as well as an emphasis on its new aspects (for these dedications were new) were required – it is clear that, in that era, you could make a different structure, put your own name on it, and be praised for having done so.[54] Along with the rhetorically trained in his readership, Tacitus may have known this passage in Cicero's star-making performance, but in his own history of the building he ignores the historical nuance and writes only that that version of it was placed "on the same foundations" (*Hist*. 3.72.3). By treating Catulus' temple as though it were *essentially* the same thing, though of different materials and possibly even of greatly altered appearance, he underscores the overriding importance of the relationships and context within which it was rebuilt over against its physical properties.

In 69 CE these relationships and this context are no more. So long as it stood, however, the temple that bore Catulus' name was the physical symbol of those relations, a signifier that had no signified in the present age but, by virtue of its concrete, transgenerational durability, still referred to the relations that produced it. To an observer before the fire of 69 CE, this monument offered immediacy to the dedication of Catulus and, through it, to the dedication made at the dawn of freedom. When in the Fourth *Verrine* Cicero appeals to Catulus to feel himself not only the judge, but also the enemy and accuser, of the defendant, he binds together the building, the name, and the man for all eternity:

> Hoc loco, Q. Catule, te appello; loquor enim de tuo clarissimo pulcherrimoque monumento . . . tuus enim honos illo templo senatus populique Romani beneficio, tui nominis aeterna memoria simul cum templo illo consecratur . . . (*Ver*. 4.69)
>
> In this place, Quintus Catulus, it is you I address: for I am speaking of your monument most illustrious and splendid . . . For it is your honor – by the good grace of the Senate and people of Rome – and the eternal memory of your name that are consecrated together with that temple.[55]

Eternity came to an end in 69 CE, and Catulus' name disappeared with his temple. But until then, the building held the power to recall Catulus that Cicero had predicted for it. Tacitus invests the building with far more memory than Cicero does, for in *Histories* Catulus' temple recalls Horatius', which in turn recalls the foundations of the first Tarquin. The historian's version of the temple, however, ends just where the orator's does: the last name in the memory the monument transmits is that of Catulus. The

[54] On Catulus' temple, see *LTUR* s.v. "Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, Aedes (fasi tardo-repubblicane e di età imperiale)."

[55] Rouveret (1991: 3052) quotes this passage as a demonstration of the power of *monumenta* but does not connect it to the burning of the Capitolium.

memory you used to experience when beholding Jupiter Optimus Maximus contained nothing after him: no Pompey, no Caesar, no Antony, no Octavian, no *principes*.[56] While these men came and went, Catulus' name stood. Around his temple, Imperial monuments sprang up like mushrooms after a rain. The memory these offered was no more than a blaring repetition, "Caesar, Caesar, Caesar" – that is, a recent memory, a bad memory, no memory at all.[57] The temple acknowledged none of these works. When in 69 CE you looked at the Capitoline as an aggregate of spaces and structures, it was impossible to forget that the Republic was over and that the Caesars had come. But if you stood before the temple and experienced only the memory it conveyed, the other buildings hushed, and there were only Catulus and his forebears.

Near the beginning of *Annals* Tacitus will reflect on the shift constituted by the Augustan era:

domi res tranquillae, eadem magistratuum vocabula; iuniores post Actiacam victoriam, etiam senes plerique inter bella civium nati: quotus quisque reliquus, qui rem publicam vidisset?

[4] Igitur verso civitatis statu nihil usquam prisci et integri moris . . . (*Ann.* 1.3.7–1.4.1)

At home things were calm; there remained the same names of the magistracies as before. The younger folk had been born after the Actian victory, and even most of the elders had been born among the wars between citizens: what part of them was left that had seen the *res publica*?

[4] So, at the change in the character of the state, there was nothing left whatever of the former uncorrupted ways . . .

Here, personal experience of the Republic is everything. When examples of the behavior characteristic of the old society were taken from view, when citizens' memories comprised only the Augustan Principate or the civil wars to which it succeeded, Roman "ways" (1.4.1), lacking a model, inevitably changed as well. It is the peculiar property of memory, however, to inhere not only in the minds of citizens but also in things: the concept of a monument is predicated on the idea that it can transmit a memory that ignores the passing of time. For example, Livy's preface presupposes that

[56] Tacitus enhances this effect by ignoring the Augustan restoration. We can look at the *spes* of the first Tarquin (*Hist.* 3.72.2) and the *memoria* of the Catulan temple as forming a closed loop – that *memoria* was simply a reification of what was already implicit in Tarquin's *spes*, and the *spes* simply an anticipation that there would later be a *memoria*.

[57] In the phrase *Lutatii Catuli nomen inter tanta Caesarum opera*, *Caesarum* for *principum* preserves what the inscriptions would have said. The term will also serve to include those builders and honorands who were members of the Imperial house.

exempla can work even when readers have not seen the acts that became *exempla*.[58] At that grim moment of *Annals* Tacitus seems to say that hope is lost when the memory achieved through autopsy is gone. In our passage of *Histories*, though, the pathos derives from our knowledge that, before the fire, there did in fact remain active and signifying memory embodied in the temple. You could go there and, after a fashion, *see* the Republic.

With this we may compare Tacitus' report of the Neronian fire and of the rebuilding that followed it.

vetustissima religione, quod Servius Tullius Lunae, et magna ara fanumque, quae praesenti Herculi Arcas Euander sacraverat, aedesque Statoris Iovis vota Romulo Numaeque regia et delubrum Vestae cum penatibus populi Romani exusta; iam opes tot victoriis quaesitae et Graecarum artium decora, exim monumenta ingeniorum antiqua et incorrupta, <ut> quamvis in tanta resurgentis urbis pulchritudine multa seniores meminerint, quae reparari nequibant. (*Ann.* 15.41.1)

[there were destroyed] sites of the most ancient religious observance: the temple Servius Tullius dedicated to Luna, and the great altar and shrine the Arcadian Evander had consecrated to Hercules God among Us, and the Temple of Jupiter the Stayer vowed by Romulus, and the Regia, dedicated by Numa, and the Temple of Vesta together with the household gods of the people of Rome, all were burned; and now the wealth acquired in so many victories, and the glories of Greek art, and also the ancient, uncorrupted monuments of literary talents were burned as well, so that, although the beauty of the city was considerable as it arose from the ashes, the elder generation recalled many things that were unable to be restored.

Peculiar, and often noted, is that Tacitus concedes here, and again later (15.43.5), the excellence of the Neronian rebuilding, not despite but indeed because of its difference from what it replaced.[59] Different, more useful, even better-looking things could be made, but that does not lessen the scene's sorrow, which derives from the loss of the memory that had inhered in the structures. Now that the buildings are gone, the job of preserving the memory they had transmitted falls to the elders who can remember them, but, when the elders are gone, what then will transmit it? Only just now, during the report of the Neronian fire, Tacitus has said that some took a dim view of the second fire that flared up after the great conflagration seemed to be under control:

plusque infamiae id incendium habuit, quia praediis Tigellini Aemilianis proruperat videbaturque Nero condendae urbis novae et cognomento suo appellandae gloriam quaerere. (*Ann.* 15.40.2)

[58] Livy's emphasis on vision and immediacy, over against writing and distance, seems to run in the contrary direction, aiming at recreating autopsy through the medium of writing: see Feldherr (1998).

[59] See Hanslik (1963: 95), for whom the unexpectedly appreciative remark is the consequence of Tacitus' *contaminatio* of a source friendly, and a source hostile, to Nero.

That fire was a greater source of ill repute for Nero, because it had broken out on the Aemilian estates, which belonged to Tigellinus, and Nero seemed to be aiming at the glory of founding a new city and bestowing on it his own name.

Nero's alleged building program aims to replace the particularity of Roman history (Servius Tullius dedicated this, Numa that) exemplified in the old city with generality (Nero built this, Nero built that). In fact, he is thought to mean to restart Rome from the beginning and erase what has come before (that is, all Roman history): at least, so much is implied in "founding a new city and bestowing on it his own name," that is, replacing Romulus' "Roma" with his own "Neropolis."[60] The idea inverts the rebuilding of Rome at Rome in 390 BCE: Livy's Camillus is a "second founder" (*conditor alter*, Liv. 5.49.7), but of the same city, and his "second foundation" lies in his having ensured that Romans did not forget their special and specific connections to the site of Rome, while Nero's program appears to entail a general amnesia of pre-Neronian Rome.[61] This dream was not realized, nor does Tacitus even say in his own voice that the *princeps* meant to do this, but his merely broaching the idea encourages us to consider to what degree this characterization captures how Nero actually affected the city. On reflection, he does seem to have built a Rome that does not remember its past: not only does the "Golden House" inscribe as private what was once public, but, as we have seen, the memory that once inhabited the ancient buildings of the city, and that remained valid across generations because of the durability of those monuments, was now housed in the minds of people who would age, die, and take the memory to the grave.[62] Here we mourn not so much because we never saw the Republic as because we never saw the monument that bore the memory of a time before the Principate.

When the partisans saw the monuments of the Capitoline in 69 CE, there was still memory to activate, but that observers *could* see it did not mean they always did. As we saw above, in their frenzy the soldiers saw nothing of the city. Spaces and structures failed to have their monitory effect as the combatants rushed through the Forum beneath the prospect of the many temples. Their rampant course bears a disturbing resemblance to that of the fire itself as it proceeds from structure to structure, and at one point their tracks are the same ("they followed the fire," *sequebantur ignem*, *Hist.* 3.71.2).[63] Each man was again a Catiline, unmoved in his madness by the

[60] See Feeney (2007: 106).

[61] Kraus (1994: 286–7) links the end of Livy's Book Five and the Neronian rebuilding; see also Champlin (2003: 194–200) and Feeney (2007: 106–7).

[62] On the continued domesticization of the Palatine from Nero to Domitian, see Wiseman (1994: 111–13).

[63] Cf. the excellent observation of Rouveret (1991: 3081) that the march of the Vitellians undoes the path that imperial conquest had long ago taken.

civic architecture looming over him.[64] Likewise, the Capitoline itself was only a military topography and a set of defensive structures, signifying only in its most basic, material capacity. Catulus had known that the Capitolium was not just about its materials but about the relationships it contracted and the memory it contained – the very fact that he placed the temple on the same foundations proves he had felt the memory of the older instantiation. The soldiers – this new and uncomfortable "third estate" to the old dyad of Senate and People – not seeing the memory, destroyed it.[65]

After this, the temple could not transmit the same memory as before, for the matrix of relations between men that might have allowed it to burn countless times and still be replaced, and have the same memory replaced in it, existed in 69 CE *only in the temple itself*, as part of the memory it conveyed. The relations that earlier the structure had only figured – for they existed outside it and could be used to resurrect it – it now also embodied. If its materials had not mattered before, now they were all that mattered, because they were all that was left, the residue of the vanished relations that made them. So it is now the case that, when the partisans see only what the monuments of the Capitoline are made of, their actions also affect the memory stored in the temple, for that memory is now as vulnerable as the temple's materials. The "ancient wood" (*Hist*. 3.71.4) that sustained the edifice symbolizes the vulnerability of building and memory alike: its very antiquity caused it to catch and hold the flames all the better, just as the anachronistic irrelevance of the relations the temple signified to the prevailing civic context allowed it to be burned in neglect. The wood's antiquity harmed the temple just as Galba's "ancient rigor harmed him, his overgreat severity, to which we are no longer equal" (*nocuit antiquus rigor et nimia severitas, cui iam pares non sumus*, 1.18.3). Again we may compare Tacitus' reflections, on the occasion of the Neronian calamity, on the vulnerability of the city to fire: the city was still "as old Rome used to be" (*qualis vetus Roma fuit*, *Ann*. 15.38.3), and the curious, archaic, close arrangement of the buildings and streets had made it good fuel; Nero's new city would not burn so easily, indeed was designed to prevent fires, but that very non-flammable newness also seemed to indicate that fires could only be avoided if what was characteristically Roman about the city was removed.[66] The temple, Galba, and the Neronian city all here stand

[64] On Cicero's evocations of place in the Catilinarian speeches, see Vasaly (1993: 40–87). The Othonians had been similarly heedless when they slew Galba by the Lacus Curtius: *nec illos Capitolii adspectus et imminentium templorum religio . . . terruere*, *Hist*. 1.40.2.

[65] Cf. *Ann*. 1.7.2, *senatus milesque et populus*, with J. Henderson (1998: 263n22).

[66] O'Gorman (2000: 174) comments, brilliantly, that, in one sense, Nero's fireproofing does not even stop the burning: the new, open streets mean there is no shade, and people lament that now they "are *really* burning up" (*graviore aestu ardescere, Ann*. 15.43.5).

metonymically for the Republican social order, which had been vulnerable for the same reasons as it had been desirable: its mess and noise seemed to have made it fragile, but they were also what had made it different.

Watching the Capitolium burn, then, is like watching the Republic destroyed all over again. Still, all is not lost. Just as we are told that the temple burned, Tacitus pauses to reflect on the enormity of the crime. He relates the history of the building and its builders, bringing us from the vow of the first Tarquin to the reconstruction by Catulus, and there we stop. This digression underscores the pathos of the disaster, marking it as an important moment that deserves a pause in the narrative; the compositional effect is like that of inserting a necrology upon the death of a notable person. Yet it does more as well: it preserves, in text, the memories the temple has just lost the capacity to transmit. It is not an ecphrasis; it does not put back together in retrospect the building's physique: the scholarly argument over what is meant by "eagles" at *Hist.* 3.71.4 shows the deficiencies of this treatment as an architectural account.[67] Tacitus knows as well as Catulus did that the materials were not the chief thing. Rather, he reconstructs the sequence of relations between men that brought it to physical manifestation, and he ends by cutting the name of Lutatius Catulus back up on the architrave. The experience, still possible in 69 CE, of looking at Jupiter Best and Greatest and feeling a memory that ended in the Republic – the historical era and the political configuration – cannot be recovered, but now you can unroll Book Three of *Histories*, read this account, and receive that same memory, monumentalized in text, not in stone. "That," Tacitus writes, "is the temple that was being burned" (*Hist.* 3.72.3). The demonstrative *ea*, "that," refers to the historical temple whose destruction is described in the narrative. Yet it also refers to the "temple" he has just written: not "that temple that existed at the time" but "that temple that you have just read, that I have just recreated for you in my book, *that* is the temple that was going up in flames." The imperfect *cremabatur*, "was being burned," leaves us with the impression that the fire was still going on as Tacitus rescued its memory with his digression, while the Flavians and Vitellians stood around blind to their crime. In this way, *Histories* replaces the monument, *becomes* the monument.[68] Textualizing the Temple of Jupiter Best and Greatest is the only possible response to the disappearance of those conditions that once had enabled that same structure to be made in stone and to keep transmitting the same memory it once had done. The charge of restoration

[67] Cf. Heubner (1963–82 ad loc.) on the *aquilae*.

[68] Syme (1958: 311) observed that we may read many of the digressions in *Annals* as attempts to preserve the memory of the Republic, and Rouveret (1991) applies that insight to a discussion of Tacitus' treatment of monuments throughout his *œuvre*.

has fallen to the historian. It is lucky that the materials of this monument do not matter, for he can only use papyrus.

Tacitus is equal to the task. Like his predecessors, he "follows in the same footsteps." Like Augustus (in the restoration Tacitus omits), he will not put his own name on the temple: that honor is reserved for the "name of Lutatius Catulus" (*Hist.* 3.72.3).[69] Even so, as Augustus' *Res Gestae* (*Anc.* 20.1) on his mausoleum, in trumpeting this exercise of moderation, only displaced to another monument his claim to be the most recent restorer, so we too know that the sole surviving version of the temple as it was in 69 CE really should bear the inscription:

P CORNELIVS TACITVS RESTITVIT
REBUILT BY PUBLIUS CORNELIUS TACITUS

The connection I propose between Tacitus' literary monument and the physical monument whose function it assumes is well supported by Roman discourse about literary activity, which comfortably refers to an author's work as his "monument" (*OLD* s.v. *monumentum* 5). In particular, the term was closely associated with works of history, especially since Livy's preface to the *Ab urbe condita* had defined as the chief benefit of history its constituting a "monument" that displayed instructive examples of good and bad behavior (*Praef.* 10). Striking about Tacitus' implicit claim for his work's "monumental" function is not the fairly familiar equivalence drawn between the written and the physical monuments, but the reversal of the familiar interreliance: the origin of literary claims to monumentality would seem to be the durability of stone and metal, while here it is precisely the physical properties of the temple that have limited its life and required rescue in writing.

Replacing the temple

By contrast with Tacitus, the new regime was not at all persuaded that there was no point in restoring the building in stone. Vespasian was eager to start. Months before returning to Rome he delegated the restoration to an equestrian: clearly the project was to begin as soon as possible (*Hist.* 4.53.1). From somewhere came a story that the new *princeps* himself had

[69] It is worth saying that at *Ann.* 2.49 Tacitus records the restoration of a number of Republican temples by Tiberius and Germanicus; with each, he takes care to name the original dedicant. For Rouveret (1991: 3088), Tacitus' central concern is with the inscription on a monument and not with the monument itself, "parce que c'est elle qui consacre avec exactitude le processus, hérité des *viri triumphales* de l'époque républicaine, du *monumentum*, signe visible des *honores* dus aux *res gestae*."

inaugurated the clearing of the wreck and even carried off some of the ruin on his own shoulders (Suet. *Ves*. 8.5.). Whether or not he really did this, someone clearly thought he wished people to believe he had.[70] In fact, he had every reason to be sensitive about the Capitolium: Tacitus reports that most blamed the fire on the Flavian side (*Hist*. 3.71.4). The pressure was all the more acute given that, while their legitimacy depended in part on distinction from Nero, the Flavians were implicated in a disaster that resembled the conflagration of 64 CE, which was widely believed to be one of the crimes of the last Julio-Claudian.[71]

In this section we examine how Tacitus deals with the restoration of the Capitolium. The later history of the temple as it appears in *Histories* seems to suggest that the Flavian restoration was not adequate, and that the building could not indeed be properly replaced, for reasons directly related to the effect of the Principate on the city of Rome; *Histories* seems then internally to confirm that Tacitus' own restoration is needed after all.

In the sequel to the account of the fire there is another notice about monuments, which affects how we view the post-69 CE fate of the temple. While the fighting was still going on, Tacitus relates,

> Domitianus, prima inruptione apud aedituum occultatus, sollertia liberti lineo amictu turbae sacricolarum immixtus ignoratusque apud Cornelium Primum paternum clientem iuxta Velabrum delituit. ac potiente rerum patre, disiecto aedituui contubernio, modicum sacellum Iovi Conservatori aramque posuit casus suos in marmore expressam; mox imperium adeptus Iovi Custodi templum ingens seque in sinu dei sacravit. (*Hist*. 3.74.1)

> As for Domitian: at the first attack he was concealed in the attendant's quarters, fitted out (at the device of a freedman) with linen garments, included in a crowd of devotees, and passed over; he went and hid in a house, located just off the Velabrum, that belonged to Cornelius Primus, a client of his father. When his father became ruler, Domitian got rid of the attendant's apartment and put up a shrine of middling size to Jupiter Savior with an altar depicting in marble his adventures; when he himself took up the power, he consecrated a giant temple to Jupiter Guardian, and [an image of] himself in the god's shielding embrace.

Some of this makes sense as part of the historical narrative, but the rest of it is a pointed digression. Domitian's folly, as usual almost artistic in its

[70] See Wardle (1996: 215–16).

[71] On Vespasian's political stake in the rebuilding, see Levick (1999: 126). Briessmann (1955) has shown that Tacitus goes against our other accounts of the burning of the Capitolium in one significant respect: he leaves unanswered the question of who actually set it on fire. The other tradition blames the Vitellians and asserts that the temple was burned only after it had been captured and the fighting had stopped. Briessmann sensibly attributes the other tradition to the pro-Flavian historians whom Tacitus dismisses at *Hist*. 2.101.1.

misguided nuance, can only be fully appreciated if we are aware that, after the Capitolium burned again in 80 CE, he had overseen the construction of and dedicated a new temple. Our sources present this building as a vast departure from its predecessor. Three features are enough to capture the difference: its façade was made of Pentelic marble, it sported much gold, and its architrave bore only Domitian's name.[72] This building is not mentioned here, but the passage anticipates it in a couple of ways. In the first place, we are told what the future *princeps* was doing while the central temple of his future realm was being destroyed. In light of this story, the reconstruction after the fire of 80 CE would seem to be the result of a newfound concern for the Capitolium; it had moved him to no acts of courage in 69 CE.[73] Second, his understanding of monuments here foreshadows the harm we know he will do to the Capitolium as soon as the opportunity arises to restore it. Uprooting the quarters of his concrete benefactor – the slave who had protected him – he attributes his salvation to a greater author, Jupiter himself, wrongly supposing that the god cared at all for a reprobate who was going to stamp his own name on a gaudy, disrespectful temple to him and prohibit any statues of himself placed there that were not of silver or gold (Suet. *Dom.* 13.2).[74] On the altar he erects here, he places a depiction of – of all things – the truth.[75] Faithful representation was not characteristic of Domitian, but here it serves him no better than his accustomed fictions. Apparently finding nothing unseemly in the cowardice and turpitude he had evinced that day, he set it out in lasting marble for all to see, as proof of Jupiter's favor. The relief that Tacitus describes has the social tone-deafness of Trimalchio's explicit depiction of his journey from servitude to freedom (Petr. 29.3–7), and Tacitus does not need to deride it, because it derides itself.[76] Not satisfied at this, Domitian then constructed a mammoth temple to Jupiter Guardian on the Capitoline, complete with a cult statue group

[72] Domitian's name: Suet. *Dom.* 5. Sources on and discussion of Domitian's temple at *LTUR* s.v. "Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, Aedes (fasi tardo-repubblicane e di età imperiale)."

[73] Briessmann (1955: 78).

[74] On Roman discourses about appropriate and inappropriate building, see Edwards (1993: 137–72). See Packer (2003: 174) on Domitian's temple, though: "in many ways reassuringly traditional."

[75] Tacitus presents it as the truth, not as an ameliorative account demonstrating the gods' favor for the *gens Flavia* (which is probably what the relief really was: cf. Briessmann [1955: 79]).

[76] Cf. Turcan (1985: 785): "allusion teintée d'humour, plutôt qu'évocation verbale ou même esquisse linéaire à proprement parler." Rouveret (1991: 3073–4) compares the report of the relief to Tacitus' accounts of Vespasian's visit to the Serapeion of Alexandria (*Hist.* 4.81–2) and Titus' to the sanctuary of Venus on Paphos (*Hist.* 2.2.2–4.2): "si ces consultations oraculaires conféraient aux deux futurs empereurs l'aura prophétique qui justifiait leur accession au pouvoir, avec le recours à des symboles monarchiques destinés, en particulier dans le cas de Vespasien, à combattre les thèmes de la politique néronienne, Domitien au contraire commémore l'endroit où il s'est caché, sans gloire, pour repartir déguisé en dévôt d'Isis" (3074).

that included himself; by virtue of its location and size, this temple must have looked like a competitor to Jupiter Optimus Maximus – a competitor urgently needed, since at that point Domitian did not know he would be given the chance to claim that temple too, for his own glorification.[77] Building Jupiter Guardian did not merely seem to mean that he preferred one Jupiter to another, but that his own safety was more important than the god's; that impression is intensified by our awareness that (after his murder, at least) the current story was that Domitian had been trying to usurp Jupiter's throne.[78]

Even before the Flavians have had the chance to start rebuilding the Capitolium, then, Tacitus has drawn our attention to the ineptitude of Domitian that would later come to mar the second Flavian incarnation of the temple. This reminder has to affect how we read the refoundation ceremony recorded in Book Four.

Curam restituendi Capitolii in Lucium Vestinum confert, equestris ordinis virum, sed auctoritate famaque inter proceres. ab eo contracti haruspices monuere, ut reliquiae prioris delubri in paludes aveherentur, templum isdem vestigiis sisteretur: nolle deos mutari veterem formam. (2) XI kalendas Iulias serena luce spatium omne, quod templo dicabatur, evinctum vittis coronisque ingressi milites, quis fausta nomina, felicibus ramis; dein virgines Vestales cum pueris puellisque patrimis matrimisque aqua e fontibus amnibusque hausta perluere. (3) tum Helvidius Priscus praetor, praeeunte Plaut<i>o Aeliano pontifice, lustrata suovetaurilibus area et super caespitem redditis extis, Iovem Iunonem Minervam praesidesque imperi deos precatus, uti coepta prosperarent sedesque suas pietate hominum inchoatas divina ope attollerent, vittas, quis ligatus lapis innexique funes erant, contigit; simul ceteri magistratus et sacerdotes et senatus et eques et magna pars populi, studio laetitiaque conixi, saxum ingens traxere. (4) passimque iniectae fundamentis argenti [et] aurique stipes et metallorum primitiae, nullis fornacibus victae, sed ut gignuntur. praedixere haruspices, ne temeraretur opus saxo aurove in aliud destinato. altitudo aedibus adiecta: id solum religio adnuere et prioris templi magnificentiae defuisse credebatur. (*Hist*. 4.53)

Vespasian assigned the project of restoring the Capitolium to Lucius Vestinus, a man of equestrian rank, but among the foremost in terms of reputation and influence. The haruspices he had hired warned that the remains of the former temple should be carted away to the marshes, and that a temple should be planted in the same foundations: for the gods, they said, did not want the former arrangement

[77] An instructive comparandum for "competition" between Jupiter Optimus Maximus and other temples to Jupiter is given by Suet. *Aug*. 91.2.

[78] Plin. *Pan*. 52.3 has him encroaching on the cult of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, and putting too many silver and golden statues of himself into the temple. The evidence is consistent with Domitian's having fostered the cult of Jupiter as had his father and brother (Jones 1992: 99–100), but what matters for our purposes is what people were saying about Domitian under Trajan.

altered. (2) On the twenty-first of June, on a clear, sunny day, the whole area that was being consecrated for the temple was tied off with fillets and garlands, soldiers who happened to have auspicious names proceeded inside with good-omened boughs, and then Vestals together with boys and girls whose fathers and mothers were alive sprinkled it with water drawn from springs and rivers. (3) Then the praetor Helvidius Priscus, with the pontifex Plautius Aelianus leading him in the rites and prayers, purified the precinct with the sacrifice of a boar, a ram, and a bull, and placed the animals' innards on the turf; he prayed to Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, and the warding gods of empire that their undertaking should prosper and that they should raise up with divine aid their own home, begun with the piety of human beings, and he grasped the fillets wrapped round the stone and entwined in the ropes; and at the same time the rest of the magistrates and the priests and the Senate and the equestrians and a great number of the people, surging forth with joy and enthusiasm, hauled the giant rock. (4) Into the foundations were cast offerings of silver and of gold and unworked metals, mastered in no forge but as they occur in nature: the haruspices announced that the work should be unspoilt by stone or gold that had been intended for another purpose. Height was added to the temple: that alone was believed to be approved by religious caution and to have been lacking to the previous' temple's magnificence.

Tacitus almost never describes a religious rite in such detail; the scene is therefore striking.[79] So bright and serene is the mood that we may begin to wonder whether we were wrong about what the end of Catulus' Capitolium seemed to entail. For this tableau seems to rectify that perverse relationship to the city that had led to the temple's destruction. Here the sun shines, the virgins proceed, the new construction's shape is staked out to agree with its predecessor's: everything is done by the book. Actually to use the Latin keyword "*rite*" ("with everything done according to ritual prescription") here would have been superfluous; Tacitus shows us "*rite*."[80] Where the partisans' inability to perceive distinctions permitted the temple's destruction, this ceremony at once observes and enacts distinctions, of several kinds. Once again society has leaders and followers, and, while soldiers have a role, it is a circumscribed one. The participants move with order, calm, and peace, and do not merely haul Terminus in unison but, in their common joy, exemplify the "concord of the orders."[81] The materials

[79] As Townend (1987: 244) points out, only the account of the funeral rites of Germanicus (*Ann*. 3.1–4) is treated at greater length. As a *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*, Tacitus could have given us detailed and informed accounts of all sorts of ceremonies.

[80] I accept the view of Townend (1987) that the *lapis* is the aniconic Terminus being rescued.

[81] Fredrick (2003: 199–200): "each in their proper rank, Rome's people seem to rediscover a sense of purpose rooted in the sequence of sacrificial actions and the place itself." Similarly J. P. Davies (2004: 209–10), who takes the refoundation ceremony to indicate Tacitus' optimism about Romans' moral improvement; he does not, however, remark on any of the considerations that suggest this might be a false dawn.

cast into the foundations reassert the total difference of this temple from all other places in the world: nothing that had been designated for any other purpose could be used in its construction. The relations between Romans that had produced Catulus' temple seem here to have coalesced around the project of reconstruction, so there would seem to be a chance that the structure might in fact be able to be replaced as it had been. But this ceremony comes with a history, and I will argue that it used to come with further consequences now lost to us through the manuscript tradition.

Domitian's building habits, which we saw come into alarming focus shortly after the report of the disaster, are evoked again in *Hist.* 4.53, in Tacitus' observation that, unlike Domitian's notorious rebuilding, the reconstruction effort headed by Vestinus preserved the previous building's aspect and presented no innovations of architecture or décor, beyond an increment of height. If the haruspices Vestinus contracted were right, moreover, Domitian's rebuilding was not just crude, but also impious ("the gods did not want the former arrangement altered," *Hist.* 4.53.1).[82] Moreover, in addition to this reminder of Domitian, the restoration has become an issue in the narrative twice since then. To assess the impact of this ceremony, we must look back.

Vitellius was dead and Vespasian's man Antonius Primus ruled at Rome. The Senate was busily accommodating the new regime and rewarding its partisans. The Fathers concealed their resentment of Mucianus' superciliousness behind adulation: he gained the triumphal insignia (professedly for an engagement with the Parthians, but really it was for the civil war), then Antonius Primus was given the consular, and Cornelius Fuscus and Arrius Varus the praetorian, insignia (*Hist.* 4.4.1–2). "After that," Tacitus reports, "they took thought for the gods: it was resolved that the Capitolium be restored" *(mox deos respexere; restitui Capitolium placuit*, §2). This sequence was wise, but not brave: surely the wreck of Jupiter Best and Greatest was more important than praetorian insignia for Fuscus and Varus? All these items, we are told, had been proposed by the consul designate Valerius Asiaticus and won assent from the senators, mostly by nods and hand-signals, but a few spoke, notable personages or experienced toadies (§3). Not the praetor-designate, Helvidius Priscus: he spoke with respect for the *princeps*, but there was no fiction in his words.[83] His demonstration aroused the Senate. It was the beginning of his *aristeia*: "that day above all was the

[82] Fredrick (2003: 200) remarks also that the preceding report of the murder of the proconsul of Africa (*Hist.* 4.48–50) and the succeeding report of the revolt of Civilis (4.54) undercut ironically the apparent implications of the refoundation ceremony.

[83] Textual corruption prevents us from knowing exactly what Tacitus had Helvidius say.

beginning of his great offense and his great glory" (*isque praecipuus illi dies magnae offensae initium et magnae gloriae fuit*).

On the same day the Senate debated the appointment of emissaries to congratulate the new *princeps*.[84] A dispute arose between Helvidius and the dangerous Eprius Marcellus: Helvidius wanted the emissaries chosen by name; Marcellus, by lot. They had a history: under Nero, Marcellus had laid information against Thrasea Paetus, and Helvidius had tried to bring an action against Marcellus under Galba, though nothing came of it (*Hist.* 4.6.1).[85] By choosing its legates, argued Helvidius, the Senate could give Vespasian a lesson in whom he should approve, and whom regard with caution (4.7.3). His opponent should be satisfied, he said, with his Neronian body count and leave Vespasian to his betters. Marcellus responded: he had not been the only one to play Nero's slave (4.8.3). He urged Helvidius not to exalt himself over the *princeps*: Vespasian was a grown man, and distinguished, and Helvidius had no business playing his schoolmaster (§4). Even a good *princeps*, he said, could stomach only so much liberty.

There was then another dispute (*Hist.* 4.9). The praetors of the treasury asked for a limit on expenditures, since funds were low. The consul designate hesitated: this was a big, difficult question and should be left for the *princeps*. Helvidius proposed that the Senate assume the task. A tribune stopped the motion: the *princeps* should be present for any such decision to be made. After this report we learn Helvidius had also proposed that the Senate undertake the restoration of the Capitolium at public expense, and that Vespasian should assist (§2). The proposal was absurd – Vespasian given a merely ancillary role in the rebuilding? – and more restrained senators ignored it; it was then forgotten (*oblivio transmisit*). But, Tacitus adds ominously, "there were those who remembered it, too" (*fuere qui et meminissent*).

Helvidius appears once more before the ceremony at *Hist.* 4.53; again the scene is the Senate, again Marcellus his antagonist. Curtius Montanus inveighed against Aquilius Regulus, who was thought to have undertaken for reasons of ambition a vicious prosecution of three consulars. He compared Regulus' offense with those of Marcellus and his noxious comrade Vibius Crispus, and he demanded Regulus' punishment as an example to informers. The Senate agreed (4.43.1). Helvidius saw his chance: Marcellus might be brought down, too. He began by praising Cluvius Rufus, who

[84] Same day: Briessmann (1955: 94–5).

[85] Goldberg (1999: 228–9) gamely defends Marcellus and Vibius Crispus, but I think we should probably assume that a Roman audience will already have had a negative view of them.

was as wealthy, and as notable for eloquence, but who had never endangered anyone under Nero, and he hounded Marcellus with specific charges and with Rufus' example. The Fathers were enthralled. Marcellus saw the danger and made a show of heading for the door: "We're going," he said, "Priscus, and we're leaving your Senate to you. Play king while Caesar's here" (*"imus" inquit, "Prisce, et relinquimus tibi senatum tuum: regna praesente Caesare,"* §2).[86] Vibius Crispus followed him. Their friends flocked round them and hauled them back in. The remainder of the day was spent in escalating contention.

This feud between Helvidius and Marcellus hangs over the account of the ceremony, and I suspect that the ceremony was not the last time we were going to hear of Helvidius and the Capitolium in *Histories*. Tacitus presents him as choosing the beginning of Vespasian's principate as the opportunity at once to assert senatorial prerogatives and to give his old foe a beating. The debate over limiting expenditures is especially significant. After the report of his proposal that the Senate take the lead in the matter, we found out that a tribune had interposed his veto and that the matter had ended there (*Hist*. 4.9.2). Yet the further proposal to rebuild the Capitolium at public expense, despite being advanced during that same discussion (see the pluperfect *censuerat*), is displaced in the narrative to the end of the account, with emphatic effect, and we are left with that worrying comment, "there were those who remembered it, too."[87] In this arrangement it is the proposal about reconstruction, and not the one about expenditures, that becomes the defining event of the day that began Helvidius' "great offense and great glory." It seems as though the historian is laying the groundwork for the matter of the Capitolium to reappear later as part of the accusations of Helvidius later in Vespasian's rule.

The details of Helvidius' martyrdom are unclear. Probably in 74 CE, he was prosecuted and forced to commit suicide. Anecdotes show him needling Vespasian; these all revolve around the Senate's prerogatives, but none claims to describe the decisive offense.[88] Marcellus was probably not the prosecutor, since in *Dialogus* he is said to have retired from the courts by this time; he was, however, consul for the third time in 74 CE, and he and

[86] Imputing pretensions of replacing the *princeps* is part of the fund of rhetorical challenges to Helvidius and Thrasea: cf. *Ann*. 13.49.3 and 16.22.

[87] Wellesley (2003: 211) apparently takes this phrase to refer to the biographer of Helvidius. I prefer Briessmann (1955: 95): "Die Bemerkung *fuere qui et meminisset* . . . legt . . . die Vermutung nahe, daß man später Helvidius diese Äußerung verwarf."

[88] Collected and discussed by Malitz (1985); on Helvidius' career, see also MacMullen (1966), Pigón (1992), and Wardle (1996). Further thoughts on the death of Helvidius at Levick (1999: 192).

Vibius Crispus were long Vespasian's close advisers (Tac. *Dial.* 8.3).[89] There is ample room here for Tacitus to attach the prosecution of Helvidius to his rebuilding proposal, as words whispered in Vespasian's ear. The charge was treason, and any occasion on which Helvidius had seemed to usurp the *princeps*' prerogatives would be fuel for the fire. We have already seen that Marcellus takes special note of those occasions and forces the interpretation of treason on his proposals ("let him not elevate himself above the *princeps*," *ne super principem scanderet*, *Hist.* 4.8.4). If there were "those who remembered, too" (4.9.2) we must count Eprius Marcellus among them.

We do not know the full background or sequel to the refoundation ceremony. There is nothing odd about Helvidius' role – the consuls were away, and Helvidius was a praetor – except one thing: Domitian too was a praetor, and son of the *princeps*, and should have performed Helvidius' function. Townend offers two explanations: either Domitian was too young to perform the ceremony, or he had already left for Gaul by this time.[90] Wardle dismisses the first as an explanation: it would not be too hard to make an exception for the son of the *princeps*.[91] Whatever the reason, there were ways of connecting Domitian's not presiding with Helvidius' earlier, offensive proposal. There were praetors other than Helvidius: was he then making the Capitoline restoration his special concern? If Domitian had already left for Gaul, had Helvidius delayed the ceremony to coincide with that absence? Whether or not this was all innocent, there were ways of making it look bad when you put it together with Helvidius' other activities – and Marcellus was clever and unprincipled. Or possibly Helvidius himself would not drop the issue. The ceremony that Tacitus describes exemplifies the point Helvidius lived to make, that the Senate and people could manage without a Caesar directing everything. If he could be said to have excluded Domitian, that too could form a piece with an anecdote transmitted by Dio that suggests Helvidius may have taken a public stance against Vespasian designating Titus his successor.[92]

We have already seen that Vespasian had a big stake in the restoration of the Capitolium. Suetonius' testimony that Domitian posted only his own

[89] The accuser's identity is withheld at Plin. *Ep.* 9.13: see Sherwin-White (1966 ad loc.).

[90] Townend (1987); cf. Malitz (1985: 238n44).

[91] Wardle (1996). Immediately before the description of the ceremony, Tacitus has explained for us Vespasian's reason for heading back to Rome: *Hist.* 4.51.2, *Vespasianus in Italiam resque urbis intentus adversam de Domitiano famam accipit, tamquam terminos aetatis et concessa filio egrederetur*. Perhaps Vespasian had sent orders that the young Domitian should maintain a low profile at official functions, in keeping with the spirit of a new, "Republican" regime?

[92] Cass. Dio 66.12.1: "because of this [i.e., Helvidius' constant abuse of Vespasian] he was once arrested by the tribunes and handed over to their assistant, and Vespasian lost his composure and left the Senate-house in tears, saying only 'Either my son will succeed me, or no one at all.'"

name on the temple (*Dom.* 5) presupposes that Vespasian had not posted only his. If Dio's statement that Vespasian "placed [on the buildings he restored] not his own name but that of their first builders" (66.10.1a) is right, and true in all cases, Vespasian had Catulus' name put back on the new temple. That is consistent with the rebuilding Tacitus describes: the new construction stood in the same place and orientation and was altered only by an increase in height (*Hist.* 4.53.4). Vespasian was trying to put the fire behind him by blaming Vitellius (and, to an extent, Antonius Primus), by demonstrating his own enthusiasm for rebuilding, and by avoiding the appearance of glorifying himself.[93] Any instance in which Helvidius had seemed to interfere with this narrative was ammunition for his enemies.

Since there is conjecture in this, it will help to summarize what is needed for my argument. First, Tacitus sets up Helvidius' proposal that the Senate take the lead in restoring the Capitolium as a moment that would come back to haunt him. Second, Helvidius' trial, conviction, and death must have appeared in the lost books of *Histories*. Tacitus warns us to expect a lot more about him later on: at *Hist.* 4.5.1 he is a "man who will require our attention rather often" (*viri saepius memorandi*). Even if in the lost books Tacitus never again specifically mentioned that proposal, it has already been made part of the repertoire that Helvidius' enemies would use in representing him to the *princeps*.[94] Third, there are many ways in which Helvidius' role in the ceremony described at *Hist.* 4.53 could be attached to that proposal by his accusers, by Vespasian, by himself, or by Tacitus.[95]

If only the first two counts hold, we can still say that our impression of the ceremony was to be colored in retrospect. The peaceful sunlight of that day did not shine on a happy restoration of the old social relations of the Republic; it was, rather, the eye of the storm. Helvidius did not take up Catulus' burden as Catulus had taken up Sulla's. The restoration was to become part of the ugly combat between citizens under Vespasian's eyes, so this new temple was clearly not part of the same tradition. If the third count seems plausible too, and we are persuaded that Helvidius' role in the rebuilding appeared again in the narrative, then this effect would have been magnified.

[93] Primus: Briessmann (1955: 70). On inscriptional practice in Imperial monuments, see Horster (2000); although the book nominally treats only Italy and the provinces of the West, pp. 1–38 are relevant to the city of Rome as well.

[94] Cf. Tacitus' treatment of the charges that preceded the sentence of Thrasea Paetus (*Ann.* 16.21–2, 16.28; see especially 16.21.3, *quae obliterari non sinebat Capito Cossutianus*).

[95] It is also worth recalling that there had been a biography, by Herennius Senecio (Tac. *Ag.* 2.1). Malitz (1985: 232) thinks it was a source for Tacitus' narrative of these years. If *Agricola* is any guide, there was leeway in this kind of work for drawing connections that otherwise might not seem sinister.

When we link the Capitolium's possible place in Helvidius' fate and the foreshadowing of Domitian's vulgarity, it becomes hard to imagine that the temple could ever really be restored to its pristine condition, since both of these considerations underscore that its matrix of production was gone. Far from minimizing Tacitus' preservation of its former memory-function, then, the history of the temple after the fire would seem to prove the necessity of that preservation.[96]

It is worth considering that the Domitianic temple would not have been a reader's last point of reference. What had happened after his fall? His Capitolium was sumptuously appointed, and there was little to be done about that: the images of him could be melted down to enrich the public coffers, but who was to say the wealth of the new materials was unbefitting the Capitoline Triad?[97] Significant reconstruction was impossible without another fire, and none occurred. Nonetheless, one crucial feature demanded, and permitted, correction: Domitian's name. It was disappearing from inscriptions all around Rome, in the spirit of *damnatio memoriae*.[98] Leaving it on Jupiter Optimus Maximus would have been impossible. It would be good to know what replaced it.[99] It would have affected our reading of *Histories*: what the temple meant was not an idle question. By experience and necessity Nerva and his advisers were sensitive to the politics of the urban space. Near the beginning of *Histories* a crowd surrounds the Palatine residence awaiting the news of Galba's adoption of a successor (*Hist*. 1.17.2). The adoption was first announced in the Praetorian camp: the Forum and the Senate had been options too, but this seemed a dignified

[96] We may compare, again, the function of *Annals* after the Neronian fire: it records buildings that can never be restored (*Ann*. 15.41) and refuses to let us forget that the city is no longer as once it was (15.43).

[97] For the Romans' gentle treatment of public buildings erected by people subjected to memory sanctions, see P. J. E. Davies (2000: 34–7).

[98] See Jones (1992: 160–1). On how memory sanctions look in the epigraphic record, see Flower (2000a); on how the *damnatio* of Domitian looks in that record, see Flower (2006: 240–56).

[99] In most cases it was appealing simply to leave the area of erasure, without a new inscription. I strongly doubt that it was possible to use the blank architrave of this temple as an advertisement to "remember to forget" Domitian: that was fine for a monument that honored Domitian, but this building was too important. So an inscription was probably cut to fill in the blank. A new regime intent on establishing its own legitimacy by asserting total difference from the tyrant it had supplanted was unlikely to repeat one of his most conspicuous excesses (especially since it could do little to alter the other Domitianic features of the temple). I would therefore guess that the name of Nerva did not replace that of Domitian. *Senatus populusque* may have been an option, but the name of Catulus had once been good enough for Augustus, and it might have reappeared on the temple after the fall of Domitian. There are comparanda: Hadrian had seen fit to replicate Agrippa's name on the Pantheon, though the Pantheons of Agrippa and Hadrian have little more in common than a name and a general location. On Agrippa's Pantheon, see Shipley (1933: 55–65) and Coarelli (1983); on Hadrian's, see de Fine Licht (1968), MacDonald (1976), and Boatwright (1987: 42–7).

way of courting the soldiers. Nerva had been shrewder. His adoption of Trajan was not a private affair carried out in his residence, and emphatically had nothing to do with the Praetorians. Instead, he effected it on the Capitoline, inside the Capitolium itself.[100] The venue's advantages transcended the moment: even when Pliny delivered his "Speech of Thanksgiving," in 100 CE, this seemed to him a good and serviceable foundation myth for the new regime.[101] In other words, within a couple of years of when Tacitus was writing *Histories*, Trajan's regime could still be thought to have a positive interest in what Jupiter Optimus Maximus meant.

We cannot say how Tacitus' written version would have interacted with the contemporary building on the Capitoline, but it must have done so. The question was, had the new *principes* restored it to the function it performed before the fire of 69 CE – that is, by restoring the conditions under which the Catulan temple had been produced – and did Tacitus' temple complement that? Or was Tacitus' work an alternative to that building's continued, essentially Domitianic character? The status of the Capitolium is thus a variation on the problem of the "rare happy times" conjured in *Histories*' preface (1.1.4): is it really because of the new *princeps*' exceptional personal qualities that memorialization of the past can work as it once had? Or is it instead the case that, because of the Principate's institutional character, the difference between *principes* is negligible, so that we must rather credit Tacitus' decisive intervention, enabled by his own unique qualities, for restoring the temple's ability to transmit memory?

ECHOES OF THE CAPITOL

We may see the Flavian program for the restoration of the Capitolium, as Tacitus depicts it, as the regime's best effort at replacing the edifice; that effort, we have seen, fails, and we are given to understand that it is the historian's representation, and not the successive physical reconstructions and restorations, that best replaces its memorializing function. The rebuilding was, however, only part of the Flavian argument that they had replaced Rome at the center of its empire and reestablished its difference from every

[100] On the divine election of Trajan, see Fears (1977: 145–58, 226–42).

[101] Pliny does say that Nerva turned to Trajan because of the uprising (*Pan*. 6.2), but nowhere is Nerva said to have aired his choice with the Guard. By the date of the delivery of the *gratiarum actio*, it was no great harm if Nerva seemed like a frightened old man, so long as Trajan was the manly general who had come to his rescue, and therefore also to the rescue of the state. For the historical circumstances of the adoption, see recently Eck (2002b) and Grainger (2003: 66–108).

other place. The centerpiece of that case was that they had restored internal order by suppressing the revolt of Civilis and stifling the Jewish uprising. For the Flavians, victory was itself a means of reasserting the Capitolium's centrality, as we will see below. Tacitus' narrative of the beginnings of Vespasian's principate seems to concur with the Flavians on the importance of victory and empire for upholding Roman identity, but it also points to important reasons why, as *principes*, they can only partly restore the Capitolium's meaning through conquest, and why Tacitus' written version outshines even a Temple of Jupiter confirmed by Flavian victory. To see how this is so, we must examine the ways in which, in *Histories*, the consequences of the fire of 69 CE spread beyond Rome and Italy to the distant places of the empire.

The Druids' prophecy

Immediately after describing the refoundation ceremony, Tacitus reports on the revolt of Civilis:

Audita interim per Gallias [et] Germaniasque mors Vitelli duplicaverat bellum. nam Civilis omissa dissimulatione in populum Romanum ruere, Vitellianae legiones vel externum servitium quam imperatorem Vespasianum malle. Galli sustulerant animos, eandem ubique exercituum nostrorum fortunam rati, volgato rumore a Sarmatis Dacisque Moesica ac Pannonica hiberna circumsederi; paria de Britannia fingebantur. (2) sed nihil aeque quam incendium Capitolii, ut finem imperio adesse crederent, impulerat. captam olim a Gallis urbem, sed integra Iovis sede mansisse imperium: fatali nunc igne signum caelestis irae datum et possessionem rerum humanarum Transalpinis gentibus portendi superstitione vana Druidae canebant. (3) incesseratque fama primores Galliarum ab Othone adversus Vitellium missos, antequam digrederentur, pepigisse, ne deessent libertati, si populum Romanum continua civilium bellorum series et interna mala fregissent. (*Hist*. 4.54)

In the meanwhile, the news of Vitellius' death, once received in Gaul and Germany, had caused a redoubling of the war. For Civilis dropped his pretense and attacked the people of Rome, and the legions of Vitellius preferred even servitude to foreigners to having Vespasian as commander. The Gauls' hopes had been roused, for they supposed our forces were suffering the same setbacks everywhere: the rumor had gone around that the winter-camps in Moesia and Pannonia had been invested by Sarmatians and Dacians, and similar stories were being made up about what was happening in Britain. (2) Their belief that the end of the empire was nigh was encouraged by nothing so much as by the burning of the Capitolium: "the city was once taken by Gauls, but the empire continued because the house of Jupiter was left alone. Now a fire of fate has given a sign of the gods' anger, and it portends ownership of the world for the nations that live beyond the Alps." That is what

the Druids chanted in empty superstition. (3) And a report had reached there that chieftains of the Gauls who had been sent against Vitellius had, before they left, made a compact that they would support the cause of freedom, if the unremitting sequence of civil wars and internal ills should break the people of Rome.

Their conclusion is that Rome's empire is at an end: the language *finem imperio adesse* ("the end of the empire was nigh," 4.54.2) undoes Jupiter's proclamation *imperium sine fine dedi* ("I have granted empire without end," Virgil. *A*. 1.279).[102] They even go a step further, asserting that a new *imperium* will fall into Rome's place, an empire of the Gauls; the Druids would then be the Virgils (*canebant* [*Hist*. 4.54.2], "they chanted," calls to mind *carmen*, "song, poem") of Gaul.

Clearly, we are supposed to feel that this prophecy is mad; less clear is precisely what is absurd about it. What they say has a kind of plausibility, so much so that scholars regularly explain the story as a product of Roman fears at the time.[103] Indeed, we might even take Tacitus' presentation of the fire as licence to agree with the Druids: recall the bitter sense of finality and irrecoverability, the wreck of the "pledge-token of empire" (3.72.1), the broad bounds of Roman sway telescoped to that hill that had not had to serve as a citadel in a long time. At the beginning of the work, moreover, we were alerted to the gods' anger toward Rome (*Hist*. 1.3.2). With the information about the temple's fate, the Druids assemble a historical account (Gallic sack of Rome, present conflagration) in order to make a projection about the fate of Rome's empire. We are rescued from having to place faith in it, because we know how much stock to put in barbarian historiography – they can scarcely render account of their own past, let alone of the past of other peoples.[104]

Yet even if they speak only nonsense, they do give Tacitus the opportunity to distinguish what the burning of the Capitolium did, from what it did not, mean: it had to do with relations between Roman and Roman, not with relations between Romans and others. As we have seen, that distinction is written into his history of the temple: the building had its origins as a commemoration of regal conquests, but its dedication did not occur till the beginning of freedom at the opening of the Republic (*Hist*. 3.72.2). He has written his temple for Romans, to signal what they have lost as well

[102] For the case that Virgil's Jupiter when he speaks these words is specifically imagined as Jupiter Optimus Maximus, see Feeney (1991: 141).

[103] Whether there was such a prophecy is irrelevant to the discussion here; what matters is the plausibility of its content and the effect attributed to it. Zecchini (1984) defends its historicity.

[104] Cf. Tacitus' dismissal of the Britons' account of their own origins (*Ag*. 11) and his less than deferential treatment of the Germans' account of theirs (*Ger*. 2–4).

as to offer a way of recouping those losses. The Druids had no business listening in and will regret that they have done so. The painful historical difference between when Catulus' temple was built and when it was burnt is obscured by a bigger difference, that between Roman and non-Roman. There was once the Republic, there is now the Principate, but during both there has been Romanness defined by imperial command over others.[105] Nothing had changed that. So when the revolt of Civilis fails – as we know it will do – we see also a space recovered in which the temple can signify. Perhaps it is not the pledge-token between men that once it was, but it remains a guarantee of empire.

Jerusalem and its Temple

We see a similar recovery of difference in Tacitus' description of the Jewish War. Though *Histories* breaks off before it can occur, the narrative once related how the Romans sacked and burned the Temple of Jerusalem. Though I will not speculate much on how Tacitus treated that fire, it will be useful to read his narrative as far as the manuscript tradition permits, keeping in mind that the sack of the Temple was imminent. We can be sure that his readers knew this because the Flavians had been deeply invested in the capture of Jerusalem, and that investment had left its mark on the city of Rome. Before we approach Tacitus' treatment of the Jewish War, we must come to grips with Flavian representations of that war, with which it seems in most respects to sympathize.

Titus took the city, looted and burned the Temple, and celebrated a triumph. That the achievement was commemorated loudly, often, and in a number of ways gives an idea of its value to the regime.[106] The Flavians were obsessed with the symbolics of this war, and, in retrospect, their handling of it looks like a coherent complex of meaning. In an important treatment of their policy towards the Jews, Rives has argued that the Flavians' particular interest lay in suppressing Temple cult, not in generally oppressing Jews: their efforts focused on what could be construed as "pseudo-Roman" about Jews (though if you were a Jew, the distinction no doubt felt entirely

[105] Cf. Quint (1993: 157) on Lucan: "the outer frame of the empire had remained standing while the Republic crumbled from within."

[106] In general on the monuments of the Jewish War, see Millar (2005) and (more broadly on Flavian building programs) Darwall-Smith (1996). In poetry, see Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.138–42, 5.2.138–9 and Sil. 3.600. The description of Titus' triumph in Josephus (*BJ* 7.123–57) performs a similar function in text to that performed in stone by the reliefs in the Arch of Titus: both make perpetual the triumph that is by definition the event of a single day. On Josephus' account, see Beard (2003b). On the IUDAEA CAPTA coin issues, see Cody (2003: 105–10).

academic).[107] A salient component of the policy was a new tax on Jews: in 70 CE Vespasian ordered annual payment of two drachmae per person to Jupiter Best and Greatest, a tax explicitly imagined to redirect the funds Jews had until then contributed to the Temple of Jerusalem.[108] The measure surely had fiscal appeal, but was also symbolic. As the head of empire, the city of Rome was the proper center for centripetal movement of the world's wealth, and the Jewish tax demonstratively enacted an annual recancellation of a phantom order of reality in which Rome was not the center of an empire.[109] That the Jews could be used to figure what Rives calls a "shadow *civitas* [i.e., political community]" explains their propaganda value: since the Flavians had been elevated to the mastery in a civil war, under conditions in which the strength and even existence of the Roman *civitas* was at its least secure, it was good to show with all firmness that the only future the gods had in mind was a unified Rome, a pacified empire, and the primacy of the house of the Flavii.[110] On this interpretation, the policy was tailored to the aim of ruling the Jews, to be sure, but was to an equal or possibly greater degree designed with an eye to the Roman public.

We know of two arches erected at Rome in commemoration of the achievement. One seems to have been built to memorialize the triumph itself, though it is for obvious reasons to be dated to Titus' principate; it probably stood at the eastern end of the Circus Maximus. The arch is gone, but the dedicatory inscription is recorded:

senatus populusque Romanus | Imp Tito Caesari Divi Vespasiani F Vespasian[o] Augusto| Pontif Max Trib Pot X Imp XVII [C]os VIII P P Principi Suo | quod praeceptis patri[is] consiliisq et auspiciis gentem | Iudaeorum domuit et urbem Hierusolymam omnibus ante | se ducibus regibus gentibus aut frustra petitam aut | omnino intemptatam delevit. (*CIL* 6.944 = *ILS* 264)

The Senate and people of Rome [erected this arch] to Imperator Titus Caesar, son of the Divine Vespasian, Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, invested with tribunician power ten times, hailed as Imperator seventeen times, consul eight times, Father of the Fatherland, and their own Princeps, because at the instruction, with the counsel, and under the auspices of his father he mastered the nation of the Jews and, as for the city of Jerusalem, which every previous general, king and nation had assaulted in vain or simply left unattempted, he destroyed it.

[107] Rives (2005).

[108] On the *fiscus Iudaicus*, see J. *BJ* 7.218 and Cass. Dio 66.7.2. Bibliography and brief discussion at Goodman (1989).

[109] The argument of Schwier (1989: 317–30) that the tax symbolized the victory of Jupiter over the Jewish god is wholly reconcilable here: Jupiter's preeminence over other gods is intimately linked with Rome's *imperium*.

[110] Rives (2005: 163).

Emphasized is Titus' role in satisfying Romans' imperial desires.[111] Every other power that had formed designs on Jerusalem had either confessed by inaction its own impotence or had proved it in the attempt. Titus, though, was irresistible; for him, desire conceived was desire satisfied. This is more than simple glorification of him, though the monument was of course honorific: Senate and people dedicate the monument to him because in the war he was the agent of the imperial power of all Romans, and he satisfied vicariously their desire. With him at the helm, we understand, no Roman's desire for mastery need ever be in vain. The notion that a Roman commander mediates his people's experience of its own conquests is characteristic of the project of empire under Republic and Principate alike: this is the most basic function of the triumph, and it seems to have been that of Agrippa's map in the Porticus Vipsania, as well.[112] Observe also what has happened to Pompey's capture of Jerusalem: to judge from this inscription, you might think it had never happened.[113] Perhaps the monument's proposers omitted it for the greater glory of Titus, supposing few would know the difference, or care. A viewer who did know the story, though, could try to form an interpretation of Pompey's activities in Jerusalem that conformed to the idea that none but Titus so far had taken the city. As we will see below, *Histories* provides us with one such possible interpretation. Pompey, we will learn, had reduced and entered the city and leveled its walls (*Hist*. 5.9.1). He had only had a look inside the Temple, and had seen nothing; but he had permitted it to remain, and to continue to contain nothing. His failure to master stands out as a distressing error that urgently demands correction; the conquest would be made complete only when the physical face of Jerusalem was made to agree with what it stood for – nothing. This links well with the contention of Rives that destroying the Temple was a central aim of Titus' policy, not an unfortunate mistake or unavoidable step.[114]

[111] This inscription, of course, formerly acted within the visual program of the whole monument: there were certainly reliefs and decoration, and possibly statuary, which would have affected our reading of the achievement commemorated. The figural program may have differed significantly from the tenor of the inscription: after all, the inscription on the preserved Arch of Titus carries none of the overtones of its sculptural program.

[112] For the map's triumphalism, see Nicolet (1991: 110–14). Cf. also the "title" of Augustus' *Res Gestae*: *rerum gestarum divi Augusti, quibus orbem terrarum imperio populi Romani subiecit*. See the remarks of Hölscher (2006: 35) on Roman representation of victory as "an enormous effort of transmission and transformation: from a particular success, limited in space and time and achieved by a specific small group of people, to an unlimited good, universal and eternal for the population of the whole empire"; cf. Hölscher (2003).

[113] As Millar (2005: 122) observes, Josephus registers seven prior captures of Jerusalem, if Vespasian and Titus were bothering to read what was being produced under their patronage (*BJ* 1.141–54, 1.345–57, 6.435–7).

[114] Rives (2005: 150).

The other arch, the Arch of Titus familiar to visitors to Rome, forms an axis between the restored Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the Flavian amphitheater, which, we have only recently learned, bore the inscription that it had been built "from the spoils [of Jerusalem]."[115] On the internal friezes is depicted Titus' Jewish triumph: in it, his men bear through a gate the rich spoils of the Temple (the great menorah, the Table of the Presence).[116] The direction of the depicted procession replicates the actual path, through the Forum and up the Capitoline, to the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. We see here Titus' restoration of the directionality of empire: the wealth that the Jews, in perverse mockery of empire, poured into their own center, his victory reorients back to empire's true center. From this perspective we might see the arch not merely as complementing but even as referring to the Jewish Tax, which was nothing more than annual renewal of the initial redirection of wealth represented in the frieze.

If the view to the northwest through the arch shows the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus triumphant over the Temple of Jerusalem and so concerns the relationship between Rome and other spaces of the empire, the view to the southeast, which catches the southwestern part of the amphitheater, speaks to the repercussions of empire for the internal politics of the city. The amphitheater was advertised as reappropriating the space formerly occupied by "Nero's lake," part of the "Golden House" complex (Mart. *Sp.* 2). The message was that, while the last Julio-Claudian had stolen public space for his private enjoyment, Vespasian and Titus had reappropriated his source of pleasure for the enjoyment of the people of Rome: "Rome has been restored to herself and under your watch, Caesar, | delights belong to the people that once belonged to their master" (*Reddita Roma sibi est et sunt te praeside*, *Caesar*, | *deliciae populi*, *quae fuerant domini*, Mart. *Sp.* 2.11–12).[117] As we now know, this reappropriation was overtly presented as underwritten by the capture of Jerusalem: in this way the victory of Vespasian and Titus became closely linked with the restoration of the city to the people, and similarly the two *principes* became the proxies through whom the populace of Rome participated in the permanent worldwide dominion symbolized by the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. Empire thus became at once the means by which the Flavians replaced Nero and the argument why Romans should find that substitution legitimate. The

[115] Alföldy (1995a). There is debate whether the arch actually straddled the Via Sacra or stood beside it: see *LTUR* s.v. "Arcus Titi (Via Sacra)" for discussion and bibliography. Full publication of the monument in Pfanner (1983).

[116] On the spoils and their depiction on the arch, see Yarden (1991).

[117] The whole poem is germane; see also the commentary on it in Coleman (2006). For the relationship between the *Liber spectaculorum* and the inauguration of the amphitheater, see Coleman (1998).

implicit case of the Flavian program, then, was that the destruction of Jerusalem had replaced everything satisfactorily after the civil war, and that recuperation of meaning for the city of Rome could be achieved by real victory, erasure of Neronian excesses, and careful restoration of older losses, above all of the Capitolium.

In light of Tacitus' contrarian tendencies, his portrayal of the Jews and the Jewish War shows a striking degree of agreement with the Flavian program. In *Histories* the war does indeed seem to vindicate empire and reestablish the difference between Romans and others. The preserved parts of Book Five are home to a bit of narrative of Titus' prosecution of the war (*Hist.* 5.1, 5.11–13), a much-discussed ethnography of the Jews (5.2–5.8.1), and a history of the Jews' interactions with other powers, including Rome (5.8.2–10).[118] In this section, through formal resemblances to Rome, Tacitus' Jews represent a kind of phantom Rome that did *not* happen through the civil war, and that is *not* produced by the conditions of Principate that caused the civil war. Through a kind of sacrificial logic, the crisis that seemed to impend for Rome is instead averted onto the Jews, Jerusalem, and their Temple.

The anthropologist Victor Turner has pointed to the central role of sacrifice in resolving social crises. In "social dramas" that create a breach within a community, public ritual is a means of short-circuiting internal retributive violence; "such ritual involves a literal or moral 'sacrifice,' that is, a victim as scapegoat is offered for the group's 'sin' of redressive violence."[119] The sacrificial victim must bear adequate resemblance to the members of the sacrificing community to make it an appropriate substitute for them, and its death substitutes collectively for those of the community. It is also possible for the victim to be laden with the ills of the community and to take those ills with it.[120]

In Tacitus' treatment, resemblances are not far to seek, since he makes the Jews into an ethnographic Other that mirrors Rome.[121] His ethnography is peppered with observations on the oppositeness of various Jewish practices, but this early declaration sums them up ideally:

Moyses quo sibi in posterum gentem firmaret, novos ritus contrariosque ceteris mortalibus indidit. profana illic omnia quae apud nos sacra, rursum concessa apud illos quae nobis incesta. (*Hist.* 5.4.1)

[118] See, e.g., Wardy (1979), Rokéah (1995), Rosen (1996), and Bloch (2002) (the last with extensive bibliography).

[119] Turner (1980: 151); for fuller discussion, see above all Turner (1968). For an application to ancient substitution ritual, see Burkert (1979: 59–77).

[120] Turner's thesis is more widely known as developed and explored in the influential Girard (1977).

[121] Bloch (2002: 91–7, 170–6), Haynes (2003: 140–7).

Moses, in order to solidify that nation for himself for the future, gave them new rites that were the opposite of those that all other mortals have. There all things are profane that are sacred among us, and conversely all things are there permitted that we hold polluted.

Yet the "Otherness" of the Jews here is not merely an ideological construct to aid in thinking about Rome by analogy: their similarity to Rome has, as Bloch and Haynes show, to be read with knowledge of Rome's imminent violent conquest of them and destruction of their Temple.[122] For Haynes, the conquest of the Jews and destruction of the Temple serve in *Histories* as a solution to ideological tension between *religio* and *superstitio*: these unload the burden of *superstitio* onto the Jews and make Roman beliefs into *religio*. While the specificity of her argument makes it hard to enlist for our purposes, I agree that the ethnography is interested in the Jews above all as a solution to a problem internal to Rome. I would, however, argue that we can form a fuller view of the "Jewish excursus" if we treat it as a narrative of sacrifice.

Tacitus specifically links what the civil war threatened to do to Rome and what the Jewish War did to the Jews. "Since I am about to relate *the dying day* of an (in)famous city," Tacitus writes, "it seems fitting to expose its beginnings" (*sed quoniam famosae urbis* ***supremum diem*** *traduturi sumus, congruens videtur primordia eius aperire*, *Hist*. 5.2.1).[123] But when he opened the work, it was the Roman state that seemed to be on its last legs: "this was the condition of the empire when Servius Galba and Titus Vinius, consuls for the second and first time respectively, ushered in the year that was to be their last, and nearly *the dying year* of the state" (*hic fuit rerum Romanarum status, cum Servius Galba iterum Titus Vinius consules inchoavere* ***annum*** *sibi ultimum*, *rei publicae* ***prope supremum***, 1.11.3). "Nearly," but not quite: the impression is that the disaster has been averted onto the Jews, for Rome did not end, but Jerusalem did. Instead of Tacitus' history of the Capitolium becoming the necrology of Rome, the Jewish ethnography becomes the necrology of Jerusalem.[124]

[122] Bloch (2002: 168–70), Haynes (2003: 144–5). Cf. Bloch (2002: 169–70): "Der Judenexcurs des Tacitus ist die Choreinlage zur Tragödie vom Fall Jerusalems und ganz auf diese hin aufgebaut. Dieses Ereignis, der Bericht vom Untergang Jerusalems, wird durch eben diese Choreinlage eingeleitet, retardiert und so spannungsvoll aufgeladen."

[123] In Heubner (1963–82 ad loc.), Fauth asserts that *famosae* here means simply "famous" and not "notorious"; given what Tacitus goes on to say, though, it is hard to see how it could *not* mean "notorious."

[124] Bloch (2002: 83): "Der Judenexcurs . . . ist im Grunde ein vorgezogener 'Nekrolog' auf den zerstörten Tempel und die besiegten Juden."

Information Tacitus gives us about the Jews suggests that they have purificatory potential. In fact, we are told that, long ago, they had played just this role for the Egyptians:

Plurimi auctores consentiunt orta per Aegyptum tabe, quae corpora foedaret, regem Bocchorim adito Hammonis oraculo remedium petentem purgare regnum et id genus hominum ut invisum deis alias in terras avehere iussum. (*Hist*. 5.3.1)

The great majority of authorities are in agreement that a plague arose in Egypt that disfigured people's bodies, and that the king Bocchoris approached the oracle of Ammon in search of a remedy and was instructed to purify the realm by transporting that race of people into other lands, being, as it was, hated by the gods.[125]

Purgare is the *vox propria* for ritual purification, while we may read *remedium* here as evoking the Greek word *pharmakos*, or "scapegoat."[126] At *Hist*. 4.3.3–4 we learn that the rest of the world but Judaea had undergone a kind of purification:

sumpta per Gallias Hispaniasque civilia arma, motis ad bellum Germaniis, mox Illyrico, postquam Aegyptum Iudaeam Syriamque et omnis provincias exercitusque lustraverant, velut expiato terrarum orbe cepisse finem videbantur. (4) addidere alacritatem Vespasiani litterae tamquam manente bello scriptae . . .

Civil war, which had begun in Gaul and Spain and had then seen Germany take up arms, and then Illyricum, after it had traversed Egypt, and Judaea, and Syria, and all the provinces and all the armies, seemed now, as though the whole world had been purged, to have reached its end. (4) A letter from Vespasian, which was articulated as though the war was still going on, increased the enthusiasm [of the Senate] . . .

Here the violence of civil war has performed the work of purification (as fire? or as blood?) and reestablished sacred boundaries.[127] Judaea is listed among the lands that seemed to have been purified, but Vespasian knows better: his letter to the Senate recognizes that the war is still going on; the *lustratio* ("purification") cannot be complete until his war with the Jews has been brought to a successful conclusion.[128] The pollution of civil war may

[125] For plague as a symbol of the sacrificial crisis, see Girard (1977) *passim*.

[126] On the *pharmakos*, see Burkert (1979: 64–72).

[127] *Lustrare* can mean simply "to go all round" but very often indicates an act of ritually purificatory delimitation, which might involve blood sacrifice or fire: cf. e.g. Ov. *Met*. 7.257–61.

[128] We may also see Otho's suicide as a failed attempt to act as *pharmakos* and bring to an end the sacrificial crisis constituted by the civil war. As Plass (1995: 226) observes, *devotio* is the background; cf. Edwards (2007: 36–9) on Otho's emulation of Cato. Otho chooses death even though his defeat is not certain and his men are eager to fight Vitellius further (*Hist*. 2.46.1–2); his death is supposed to bring finality rather than repetition to the civil war and to short-circuit vengeance (2.47.2); it is

have been cleansed elsewhere, but it remains in Judaea, on the Jews, and in their Temple.[129]

The Jewish ethnography, too, is consistent with the notion of Jews as *pharmakoi*, and in several ways their inverted resemblances to Rome allow them to embody the attributes of Rome's internal crisis. They are a "city"-nation: despite their geographical dispersion, their (perverse) ways and sense of self are centered on one city, to a degree unequaled by other cultures within Rome's ken, except Rome itself.[130] Again, in a strange way, their relation to other peoples is imperial. They try constantly to expand, though not geographically: instead, they proselytize to make Jews out of others, and strive to increase their own numbers (*Hist.* 5.5.1, 3).[131] There is also the circulation of wealth: as Rome is the ultimate destination of the fruits of empire, so Jerusalem is the repository for the collection of wealth from elsewhere (§1). But the Jews' is an empire of weakness: while it is Rome's lot to rule over everyone else, it is the Jews' to be ruled by everyone else – Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Greeks, Romans (5.8.2–3). Though only one subject people among many in each of these empires, they are always beneath even the other subjects, "the most despised portion of their slaves" (*despectissima pars servientium*, §2). Their unique persistence after the civil war has been ended elsewhere (5.10.2) underscores that they are a sort of anti-empire to Rome: the war was now one city against one city.

also a token given in exchange for the lives of all other Romans and substitutes the life of Otho for his soldiers', rather than his soldiers' lives for Otho's (§3). That death spares the state from its dying day (*remisisse rei publicae novissimum casum*, 2.48.2). But the war does not actually end there. In fact, the failure of Otho's sacrifice is underscored by the reactions to it: first, we learn that Othonian soldiers began killing themselves in emulation of the glory their general had achieved, and that a rash of suicides spread to other camps (2.49.4; cf. Edwards [2007: 38]); then, mutiny breaks out at his funeral (2.51). Cf. Mart. 6.32, where Otho's hand cancels the huge cost in blood that further war would have meant (1–4). This is consonant with what is usually seen as Tacitus' less favorable view of Otho's suicide when compared with the renditions of Plutarch and Dio; cf. e.g. Sage (1990: 924). Ash (1999: 87–93) emphasizes the positive aspects of Otho's suicide. R. T. Scott (1968: 57–62) offers an intriguing analysis of Galba's murder as a sort of inverted *devotio* that symbolizes the reopening of the chasm in the earth into which Curtius had cast himself to save the state; in his reading, the recurrent references to the Lacus Curtius then keep before our eyes Romans' unexpiated guilt for civil war. On altruistic suicide in antiquity, see Grisé (1982: 83–7) and van Hooff (1990: 126–9).

[129] It is interesting to compare here the narrative at *Ann.* 1.48–9. Germanicus and Caecina resort to having many of the men of the mutinous Fifth and Twenty-first legions surprise and butcher the others within the camp. Tacitus explicitly compares this scene to civil war (1.49.1). After the slaughter has been carried out and Germanicus has arrived, Tacitus reports that the men were overcome by a desire to march on the enemy (that is, Germans) as a *piaculum furoris* and that they did not think that the shades of their fellow soldiers could be placated by any other means than receiving honest wounds on their impious chests (1.50.3).

[130] The long-since "deleted" city and empire of the Carthaginians is an instructive exception: *Karthago, Italiam contra* . . . (Virgil, *A.* 1.13).

[131] For Tacitus' use of the cliché of Jewish "Machtstreben," see Bloch (2002: 86n52).

They mirror Rome in other significant ways as well. Since the beginning of the current age, they have been Jupiter's opponents: the first information about their origins Tacitus gives is that one story holds that, when Jupiter overthrew his father Saturn, the Jews fled their original home on Crete (presumably because they were adherents of Saturn, *Hist.* 5.2.1). This inveterate enmity explains the imminent destruction of the Jews' Temple and their subjection to the reign of Jupiter. The Temple of Jerusalem even looks something like the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus: it is surrounded by porticos that can be used as defensive positions, and itself is built like a citadel (5.12.1).[132] Yet it is quite different in that, while, by virtue of Rome's empire, the Capitolium had forgotten that the city could be a space for combat (3.71.3), the Temple of Jerusalem had been built to endure the many wars in which its builders expected the Jews' distinctive ways to involve them and, because of Jews' constant humiliation at the hands of proper empires, it had never forgotten that it might someday need to serve as a citadel. What is more, the Jews were embroiled in internal strife analogous to Rome's civil war until the arrival of Vespasian and Titus caused them to rediscover their common identity:[133]

tres duces, totidem exercitus: extrema et latissima moenium Simo, mediam urbem Ioannes [quem et Bargioram vocabant], templum Eleazarus firmaverat. multitudine et armis Ioannes ac Simo, Eleazarus loco pollebat; sed proelia dolus incendia inter ipsos, et magna vis frumenti ambusta. (4) mox Ioannes, missis per speciem sacrificandi qui Eleazarum manumque eius obtruncarent, templo potitur. ita in duas factiones civitas discessit, donec propinquantibus Romanis bellum externum concordiam pararet. (*Hist.* 5.12.3–4)

They had three generals, and as many armies. Simon held the outermost, thickest ambit of walls; John held the city between the walls and the Temple; Eleazar had fortified the Temple. The strength of Simon and John lay in their numbers and arms; Eleazar's, in his position. There were battles, treachery, and arson among them, though, and a great amount of grain was burnt. (4) Then John sent men, on the pretext of making sacrifice, to kill Eleazar and his crew, and gained control of the Temple. Thus the city was divided into two factions, until at the approach of the Romans external danger created civic harmony.

Rome, that is, appeared to be undoing Judaea's civil war, not Judaea Rome's.[134] What is more, Jewish proselytizing creates conditions of civil war at Rome and elsewhere: "those who cross over into their ways do the

[132] Haynes (2003: 144–5). [133] Haynes (2003: 145).

[134] Bloch (2002: 109): "in der taciteischen Formulierung ist die ironische Spitze freilich nicht zu überhören: Es waren die Römer, welche den für ihre *concordia* so bekannten Juden zur Wiedergewinnung derselben verhalfen."

same [i.e., practice circumcision] and they are taught before all else to despise the gods, to disown their fatherland, to hold their parents, their children, their brothers cheap" (*transgressi in morem eorum idem usurpant, nec quidquam prius imbuuntur quam contemnere deos, exuere patriam, parentes liberos fratres vilia habere*, 5.5.2).

Our experience of the narrative leading to the sack of the Temple is governed by our desire for mastery; as Romans, we have a stake in how this story works out, and Tacitus manipulates our desire to see the Jews conquered, to have our crisis resolved, and to have our identity as conquerors confirmed. He tantalizes us with the Temple, raising it again and again as a subject of interest throughout the Jewish excursus.[135] The account began as Titus was setting up his camp just outside the city (5.1.2). In the discussion of origins (5.2–3) we find out that the Temple was built when Moses founded the city (5.3.2). After remarks on rites and customs (5.4–5) and geography (5.6–7), Tacitus comes back around to the Temple:

Magna pars Iudaeae vicis dispergitur; habent et oppida; Hierosolyma genti caput. illic immensae opulentiae templum, et primis munimentis urbs, dein <re>gia, templum intimis clausum. ad fores tantum Iudaeo aditus, limine praeter sacerdotes arcebantur. (5.8.1)

A great part of Judaea is scattered in villages, but it has towns, too. Jerusalem is the people's capital. There, there was a temple of tremendous magnificence, and the city was defended by one ring of walls, then the palace, and the temple was closed off by the innermost wall. Only a Jew might approach the door, and all were kept from the threshold save priests.

Editors place these sentences at the head of *Hist.* 5.8, which recounts the history of the Jews under the empires of the East; they fit better with the prior sections, as a piece of information about the "terrain and extent" (5.6.1) of Judaea. This matters, because, if we reorganize accordingly, it becomes clear that the last feature of the Jews' land we are shown is the Temple. We further note that it unites the three preceding sections: it was built (5.3.2) in the "first beginnings" (5.2–3) and the rules about access to it exemplify the Jewish insularity, misanthropy, and perversity highlighted in the section on rites and customs (5.4–5).[136]

Tacitus' way of looking at Judaea takes us on the conqueror's path: through the rest of Judaea, up to the city walls, through the walls, to the Temple's doors. We may compare the characterization of Vespasian's

[135] For Bloch (2002: 82–112), the excursus builds tension before the ultimate destruction of the Temple.
[136] See Bloch (2002: 101–2).

prosecution of the war – *Vespasianus . . . intra duas aestates cuncta camporum omnesque praeter Hierosolyma urbes victore exercitu tenebat*, "Vespasian . . . in only two summers held with his victorious army (1) all the flatlands, (2) all the cities, (3) except Jerusalem" (*Hist.* 5.10.1) – with the sequence: (1) "is scattered in villages"; (2). "it has towns, too"; (3) "Jerusalem is the people's capital" (5.8.1).[137] The narrative leaves us standing outside the Temple, itching to finish our journey and see what is inside.

Tacitus makes us wait, and he heads off on a tangent:

> dum Assyrios penes Medosque et Persas Oriens fuit, despectissima pars servientium: postquam Macedones praepolluere, rex Antiochus demere superstitionem et mores Graecorum dare adnisus, quo minus taeterrimam gentem in melius mutaret, Parthorum bello prohibitus est; nam ea tempestate Arsaces desciverat. (3) tum Iudaei Macedonibus invalidis, Parthis nondum adultis (et Romani procul erant), sibi ipsi reges imposuere; qui mobilitate volgi expulsi, resumpta per arma dominatione fugas civium, urbium eversiones, fratrum coniugum parentum neces aliaque solita regibus ausi superstitionem fovebant, quia honor sacerdotii firmamentum potentiae adsumebatur. (*Hist.* 5.8.2–3)

> While the Assyrians and the Medes and the Persians were in possession of the East, the Jews formed the most despised portion of their slaves. After the Macedonians became the power, King Antiochus tried to unburden them of their superstition and give them Greek ways, but was prevented from improving this foulest of peoples by war with the Parthians: for that was the time of the revolt of Arsaces. (3) Then the Jews themselves, with the Macedonians in a weakened state and the Parthians not yet grown to full stature – and the Romans were far away – set up their own kings. These were expelled by the fickleness of the crowd, but regained their mastery through force and, going so far as the exile of citizens, the destruction of cities, the murder of brothers, wives, and parents, and the other things that kings typically do, they fostered that superstition, because they took on the honor of the priesthood as a strut for their own power.

This is all frustratingly beside the point, to readers who were on the verge of breaking into the Temple. Assyrians, Antiochus, Jewish kings . . . but what is in the Temple? Tacitus has been teasing his readers: he has already "opened" Jerusalem's "beginnings" (*primordia eius aperire*, 5.2.1) but not its *arcana*, its sacred secrets. Even worse, though the topographical description brought us as far as the doors, now we are again "far away" (*et Romani procul erant*, "and the Romans were far away," 5.8.3), so we seem to be moving backward, not forward.

[137] On the layout of the Temple, see Heubner (1963–82: 109–16).

The next paragraph brings a kind of relief:

Romanorum primus Cn. Pompeius Iudaeos domuit templumque iure victoriae ingressus est: inde vulgatum nulla intus deum effigie vacuam sedem et inania arcana. muri Hierosolymorum diruti, delubrum mansit. (*Hist.* 5.9.1)

First of the Romans to conquer the Jews was Cn. Pompeius, and he entered the Temple, according to the victor's right. Thence it was made common report that there was no image of a god there, that the seat was empty, and that the *arcana* were empty. The walls of Jerusalem were razed. The Temple remained.

Pompey is our eyes: he crushes the Jews and, after the briefest of apologias for the sacrilege ("*vici*," "I won"), heads straight into the Temple. Now we expect to get an answer to the question, what is in there that is so important that only Jewish priests can enter? As Pompey emerges into the light of day, his answer is frustrating and bewildering: "Nothing. It's empty." Yet this only confirms what we should have known all along: superstition is always "empty" (to link *vana*, "empty," with *superstitio* is pleonasm). Here, though, we are confronted with an entire temple devoted to emptiness, to nothing whatever, and around that empty temple is built a city and a nation: all, it turns out, just empty in the middle. Pompey took down the walls but – inexplicably – did not raze that temple. The Druids' prophecy of a Gallic empire, if nothing else, has taught us the importance of destroying a people's central temple: for them, the failure of the Senones in 390 BCE to destroy the Temple of Jupiter had permitted Rome's empire to persist for the past four hundred and sixty years ("the city had long ago been taken by the Gauls, but, since the seat of Jupiter had gone unharmed, the empire [of Rome] had remained," 4.54.2). Still, as we read, the Temple of Jerusalem remains, for no apparent purpose other than to contain nothing; we cannot wait to see it annihilated, for its destruction means the end of alternatives to Rome's empire. To prove our mastery, we feel the need to do something the Jews clearly do not want us to do. Since their whole city seems to have been designed to prevent us from looking inside the Temple, it is all the more obvious that we should see what they do not want us to see. When we have seen the Jews' *arcana*, we will have mastered them.[138] Pompey tried to see them, though, but saw nothing. The mastery that lay just behind the doors was denied us, and this is why another avenue of mastery – total annihilation of the Temple – becomes both necessary and urgently desired.

[138] Thus Camillus at Liv. 5.51.9 can say that, upon the entry of the Gauls, Romans had hidden or taken elsewhere their sacred objects to keep them from the eyes of the enemy.

As it turns out, what looked as though it might be signaled by the destruction of the Capitolium – the end of empire – is not at all applicable to Romans; it is, however, applicable to Jews. The false sign – the burning of the Capitolium – has to be compensated for with a true sign – the burning of the Temple of Jerusalem. The Druids mistook the fire to mean the end of Rome's empire and the beginning of their own. On the approach of Titus, the Jews have a similar interpretive difficulty, though the Capitolium does not figure in their thinking:

> Evenerant prodigia, quae neque hostiis neque votis piare fas habet gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa. visae per caelum concurrere acies, rutilantia arma et subito nubium igne conlucere templum. apertae repente delubri fores et audita maior humana vox, excedere deos; simul ingens motus excedentium. (2) quae pauci in metum trahebant: pluribus persuasio inerat antiquis sacerdotum litteris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore ut valesceret Oriens profectique Iudaea rerum potirentur. quae ambages Vespasianum ac Titum praedixerat, sed volgus more humanae cupidinis sibi tantam fatorum magnitudinem interpretati ne adversis quidem ad vera mutabantur. (*Hist.* 5.13.1–2)

> There had been prodigies. The nation holds it impious to expiate them with sacrifices or with vows, subject as it is to superstition and hostile to relations with the gods. Armies were seen to clash in the sky, weapons flashing, and the Temple lit up with sudden fire from the clouds. The doors of the Temple opened abruptly and a supernatural voice was heard to announce that the gods were leaving, and there was a great commotion, as of ones leaving. (2) A few of them interpreted this as a reason to be afraid; most of them had the conviction that it was written in the ancient texts of the priests that now was the time when the East would revive and that men would come out of Judaea and become masters of the world. This enigma had in fact foretold Vespasian and Titus, but the rabble, as is the nature of human desire, interpreted this great destiny to be its own. Not even by their calamities were they being turned to the truth.

Like the misguided Druids, the Jewish crowd is convinced that *their* people is the heir to Rome's empire. The Druids misread the Romans' temple; the Jews misread their own: what could portend doom more clearly than the gods' abandonment of the Temple and its envelopment in flames? They do not see that their books and their city are not about them at all, but rather about the fate of Roman generals: what is written in their texts, in their sky, and on their Temple is a story not about a Jewish empire but about *Rome*'s empire. This impression is strengthened by Tacitus' evocation of a passage of the *Aeneid* (Virgil, *A.* 8.520–9).[139] In the poem the arms that flash in the sky are rightly taken by Aeneas to mean that he is called by the gods

[139] Cf. Bloch (2002: 111).

(8.533) and that Turnus and the Laurentians will pay the price for their resistance (537–8). As Bloch writes, "if one cares to extend the parallel, the Jews would even become a dishonorable equivalent of the Rutulians, the mythical archenemies of Rome."[140] This connection between the Jews and Turnus fits with the sacrificial narrative that I have identified in Tacitus' Jewish war: in Virgil's epic it is the sacrifice of Turnus (12.949, *immolat*, "sacrifices") that ends the "civil war" between Trojans and Latins and enables them to become proto-Romans.[141]

Tacitus' assertion of what the signs "had foretold" (*praedixerat*, *Hist*. 5.13.2) is striking, and important. Here there is no Tacitean reluctance to fix the meaning of signs or to assert single interpretations: those signs, he says, really *did* refer to Vespasian and Titus, and establishing that fact is important enough to him that he gives them a clear meaning. That the expression "had foretold" here signifies something closer to "had meant" rather than "had pointed to in advance (and happened by chance to be right)" is confirmed by what he says about the Jewish response to the signs, that "not even by their calamities were they being turned to the truth (*ad vera*)."[142] Nor should we forget that when he interprets the Jewish texts, he does so as a high-ranking religious authority, a *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*, one of whose areas of expertise was the handling of omens, especially through consultation of the Sibylline books.[143] His interpretation also fits with the other prophecies he has reported, about the Imperial futures of the Flavians (2.4.2, 2.78.2–4, 4.81–2).[144]

So, when at last Titus takes the walls and destroys the Temple, he will not simply be defeating the Jews; he will be offering an interpretation of signs that trumps the others that have been advanced. Though the burning of Rome's temple may have signaled something, it irrefutably did *not* signal the end of its empire. On the one hand, then, the burning of the Temple of Jerusalem restores truth to signs. The signs say that there is one empire, and that it is Rome's; the defeat of the Jews confirms that truth to which the signs pointed. We must also keep in mind that, at the same time, Tacitus is also sustaining the narrative of the revolt of Civilis, with its

[140] Bloch (2002: 111n152); my translation.

[141] For a reading of the *Aeneid* as a Girardian sacrificial crisis, see Bandera (1981); for the theme in later epic, see Hardie (1993: 19–26).

[142] Tacitus' stance on the Flavian omens seems different here from the implications of *Hist*. 1.10.3, *occulta fati et ostentis ac responsis destinatum Vespasiano liberisque eius imperium post fortunam credidimus*.

[143] On the *quindecimviri*, see Wissowa (1912: 534–49); on diviners, North (1990); on the books, see Scheid (1998). The books had been housed in Jupiter Optimus Maximus (and had been destroyed with the temple in the Sullan fire) until the principate of Augustus, when they were transferred to the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine.

[144] See also the signs reported at J. *BJ* 3.400–8; Suet. *Ves*. 5; Cass. Dio 66.1.1–4.

crazed dream of a Gallic empire: its eventual failure, hidden from us by the manuscript tradition, provides a similar assertion of truth. On the other hand, though, the burning of the Temple is a sign manufactured to represent truth. It proclaims the endurance of empire by signaling the demise of what Rome is not, but what we feared it was becoming: a worldwide "empire of weakness," mastered by everyone instead of mastering, stripped of all its identifying ways (as the Jews strip their converts of their ancestral ways [*Hist.* 5.5.2]), abandoned by the gods, and empty in its core. In this way, the semiotic thread of the narrative links up with the sacrificial: the potential end of Rome's empire (*annum . . . rei publicae* ***prope*** *supremum*, "*nearly* the dying year for the state," 1.11.3) is dispelled through the real end of the Jews' "empire" (*supremum diem*, "dying day," 5.2.1), and this people that rejects the practice of expiating omens with sacrifices (5.13.1) itself becomes the expiation.[145]

Just as earlier in the treatment of Judaea Tacitus teased us by taking us only as far as the doors of the Temple before veering off, so again we are made to wait to see the Temple burn. Titus prepares his works and engines outside the walls, and the historian takes us off to Germany: "but Civilis . . ." (*Hist.* 5.14.1). Our satisfaction will be so much the greater when at last it comes. Our enforced patience complements the deferral of gratification that characterizes the Roman experience of the siege:

> Romani ad obpugnandum versi; neque enim dignum videbatur famem hostium opperiri, poscebantque pericula, pars virtute, multi ferocia et cupidine praemiorum. ipsi Tito Roma et opes voluptatesque ante oculos, ac ni statim Hierosolyma conciderent, morari videbantur. (5.11.2)

> The Romans turned to the task of assault. It did not seem dignified to wait for the enemy to starve, and they were asking for the dangers of a fight, some out of manliness, many because of violent temper and desire for reward. Before the eyes of Titus, though, was Rome, and riches and pleasures: and if Jerusalem did not fall forthwith, these seemed to be delayed.

Gazing at the walls of Jerusalem, Titus has a vision of Rome. As we will be reminded in the discussion of signs (which comes after this passage), Jerusalem and its features are a sign that points to Rome. In fact, as Roman readers of the early second century CE, our ability to perceive the relationship between Jerusalem and Rome will have been conditioned by our experience of Rome itself, which had become the site of multiple monumental

[145] We have a limited indication, perhaps, of how the narrative of the destruction of the Temple went, from a so-called "fragment" of Tacitus (Sulp. Sev. *Chron.* 2.30.3): see Barnes (1977) and (2005). The passage has no discernible repercussions for the present discussion, but it does seem to make certain that, in Tacitus, the destruction of the Temple was intentional.

commemorations of the victory that were built from, housed, depicted, or referred to the spoils of Jerusalem.[146] Titus reads the sign and knows what is at stake here as well as we do: Rome will be restored to us just as soon as Jerusalem falls. Whatever happens in the meantime is only so much delay. In this sense, his desire dovetails with ours, in that destroying the Temple of Jerusalem means the recentering of Rome's empire on Rome, and the restabilization of difference between Roman and other. We are told, moreover, that the Jews' continued resistance, which endured long past what should have marked the restoration of peace, angered Romans: "war had been suppressed in Italy, and concern for external matters rearose; it was a cause for greater anger that only the Jews had not given in" (*pace per Italiam parta et externae curae redi<e>re: augebat iras, quod soli Iudaei non cessissent*, 5.10.2). Their perverse, lonely recalcitrance increases our bewilderment: if the rest of the world could concede our worldwide dominion, what business did one people, one city, even, have in postponing the celebration?

Titus' soldiers have normal imperial desires for glory and wealth extracted from the conquered: that is why they want to take the city immediately, and with the former, at least, we can sympathize. But Titus is different. He too wants to take the city and satisfy his desires immediately, but his wealth and pleasures will come not from a gold-stuffed city of the East but from Rome itself.[147] Just as quickly, Tacitus creates a rift in the program, and it turns out that what we are doing out here in Judaea is not quite what we thought. Jerusalem's fall and the Temple's destruction will indeed recreate Roman imperial sway, reassert Roman difference, and reestablish the existence of a Roman "us"; in that sense, we cannot help identifying with Titus.

Yet Titus is aiming at a prize we clearly cannot share with him: when he lays Jerusalem low, he will also be the conqueror of Rome and will exercise the conqueror's right when he returns. In fact, we have already been prepared for this dichotomy. Just now we reviewed the sentence "war had been suppressed in Italy, and concern for external matters rearose; it was a cause for greater anger that only the Jews had not given in" (*Hist.* 5.10.2). The next sentence expresses a very different consideration: "at the same time, it seemed a useful thing for all possible eventualities of the new regime that Titus stay with the armies" (*simul manere apud exercitus Titum ad omnes principatus novi eventus casusve utile videbatur*, §2). The first consideration is a matter of Roman mastery over the world; the second, a

[146] Millar (2005).

[147] Cf. Ash (1999: 144): "a disturbing tension between the young man's idealised image . . . and his materialistic concerns which manifest themselves in Jerusalem."

matter only of Vespasian's mastery over Rome. As we are eagerly awaiting our reassurance that we are a people of masters, ruling over the world, Tacitus rudely reminds us that we, too, have a master. As we have seen, this is precisely the impression the Flavians strove to dispel: "Rome has been restored to herself and under your watch, Caesar, | delights belong to the people that once belonged to their master" (Mart. *Sp*. 2.11–12).[148] From the point of view of *Histories*, Titus' triumph and the arches that commemorated his victory meant different things for the people and for the regime: for the people, they signified the conquest of the Jews in the name of Rome; for Titus, conversely, they celebrated the conquest of Rome in the name of the House of the Flavii. The move awakens the anxiety that surfaces from time to time in Tacitus' work: is the *princeps* to the Roman people as the Roman people is to the peoples of the empire?

This twist represented by Titus' vision of Rome reasserts the split we have already detected in the Capitolium's meaning. In one sense, it was a pledge-token between men, a link in the social configurations of the Republic; that building burned down and cannot be restored. In another, it was a *pignus imperii* (*Hist*. 3.72.1), a guarantee of rule everywhere and forever; that temple burned down but was replaceable. So we can partake of Titus' capture of Jerusalem as an attainment of empire as a living institution, but it does not mean we can escape our post-Republican condition of subjection. Our consolation for the loss of Republic was supposed to be the continuity of empire, but Tacitus will not permit us the consolation without reminder of the loss.

In the first three sections of this chapter we looked at the alienability of meaning from the city, and I argued that Tacitus underscores the centrality of reception in the process of signification: in order for the city to signify, there must be an observing public capable of acknowledging and responding to the "transmissions" broadcast by architecture and space. The evaporation of that capacity to respond to signs amounts to an absence in the city's significance: the city loses meaning because there is no one to whom it means what it is supposed to. At the same time, however, the very fact that Tacitus deplores in retrospect this loss of meaning – and expects us to join him in deploring it – recovers a sense in which the city does in fact signify. *We* (that is, Tacitus and the community of Romans his work constructs) can perceive and respond to the monitory function of the temples that loomed over the Forum even though *they* (that is, Romans of the time) could not. At one level, we may find comfort in this: despite crises of reception, there

[148] Cf. Coleman (2006 ad loc.).

is in fact a stable and inherent meaning to the city – we know this because we can deplore its neglect in 69 CE (and beyond).

At another level, though, it is hard to forget that our confidence in essential meaning is a historiographical one, that is, one separated from the events by time and text. We can acknowledge *now* what the signs of the city signified *then*, but can we acknowledge *now* what they signify *now*? Similarly, could we respond in practice to the city in the same way as we can respond in text? These are not idle questions if we think, for example, of the memory embedded in the Capitolium: a complete response in practice to that memory would, presumably, entail a restoration of the relations between men who made it. The civil conflict that tore the city apart in 69 CE – or, the gap in the meaning of the city that allowed the conflict to happen – was, after all, a problem of contemporaneity and of action: those monuments and distinctions of space in 69 CE needed to mean something in 69 CE, and in such as way as to cause Romans to act on those meanings. The function of a monument is to activate memory in the moment of experience; what historiography can offer, by contrast, is the recognition that there *was* something to be activated and that it should have been activated – and together with that assertion comes the proposition that it should also be activated in viewers of the present. To read Tacitus is not to become entrapped in the failures of signification but to observe and recoil from them, all the while recognizing that our ability to observe might be dependent on our not being present to observe the narrated events, that is, on our separation from the events by time and text. The question, given previous failures of signification, is whether memory *will* in fact be activated; the answer would seem to depend on whether historiography, as a monument, is subject to the same crises of signification as material monuments are, or whether it is itself a political act that can cause things to happen.

The problem of the gulf of time between occurrence – *res gestae* – and writing is here identical to that posed, most notably, by critical presentation of past *principes*. Tacitus can hammer a Tiberius, a Nero, or a Domitian with all of the considerable rhetorical resources and command of narrative and form he can bring to bear, but it is always too late. So he can articulate a city of meaning by highlighting the ways in which that meaning was neglected in the past, but nothing guarantees that this articulation will have consequences beyond the page; and, even if it creates in the text's readership the proper subjective relationship to signs, nothing guarantees that this readership can make its own interpretation of signs consequential.

CHAPTER 5

Tacitus and Cremutius

We do not know much about the posthumous ancient reception of Tacitus' work, beyond that his books did not disappear entirely.[1] One of our few data concerns the emperor Tacitus:

> Cornelium Tacitum, scriptorem historiae Augustae, quod parentem suum eumdem diceret, in omnibus bibliothecis collocari iussit; ne lectorum incuria deperiret librum per annos singulos decies scribi publicitus in †evicos archis† iussit et in bibliothecis poni. (*HA Tacitus* 10.3)

> He ordered to be placed in every library Cornelius Tacitus, the author of a *Historia Augusta*, because he said he was his ancestor. Lest for lack of readers' interest he cease to exist, he ordered the book to be copied out ten times annually at public expense . . . and placed into libraries.

As always, the testimony of the *Historia Augusta* calls for caution, but true or not, the story is interesting.[2] It presents the worst fate that Tacitus' work can imagine for itself, and an end it was designed to avoid. The historian who strove to show that his work owed nothing to the regime's authority and influence, indeed that he had produced it in the face of institutional obstacles presented by the existence of *principes*, had in the end to be rescued from oblivion by an emperor, whose supposed intervention is far too much like the authorizing signature Josephus sought from Titus (*Vit*. 363) as proof that he had been right in his portrayal of the Jewish War. What is more, far from achieving the impression of momentousness that the regime's hostility advertised, Tacitus' work here has simply ceased to interest readers, just as he tells us that Fabricius Veiento's "Codicils" had been forgotten as soon as the sanctions against having them were lifted (*Ann*. 14.50).

[1] For a short summary of the testimonia, see Martin (1994: 236).
[2] On the *Historia Augusta*, see Syme (1968), (1971a), (1971b), and (1983). Syme (1983: 72) detects the playful spirit of the imposter behind the anecdote.

This chapter is about how a much-discussed section of *Annals* – *Ann.* 4.32–8 – attempts to avoid the scenario the biographer's anecdote imagines. The discussion will fall into four sections. The first explores the problem of literary failure, and the various kinds of reception that might confront Tacitus' work. In the second, we look at the programmatic discussion at *Ann.* 4.32–3, in which, by executing the characteristic rhetorical maneuvers of "figured speech," Tacitus insinuates that what he has to say in this section, and in *Annals*, is so important, and so dangerous to himself, that he cannot articulate it in the public forum of a history. Scholars have tended to take at face value his maneuvers here and to assume he is trying to ward off real, impending danger; but I argue that this sort of rhetoric is also useful for creating the impression of consequence, and so for dealing with the whole range of possibilities of reception outlined in the first section. The third section investigates the cultural background to his presentation of the trial of Cremutius Cordus, a historian prosecuted for treason under Tiberius. Tacitus associates his own career with that of Cremutius, and in order to grasp the advantages and challenges of doing so, I argue, it is helpful to take account both of how other writers portray him and of a famous fictive episode that played a part in Roman rhetorical education, namely Cicero's deliberation whether to burn his *Philippics* in order to save his own life. The fourth section then shows how Tacitus exploits the figure of Cremutius Cordus in order to secure the impression of *Annals*' consequentiality: the punishment of Cremutius becomes a crucial event in the legitimation of Tacitus' historiography, and his trial, speech, and death work to lend Tacitus the prestige earned by Cremutius' experience without Tacitus having to replicate that experience in his own biography.[3]

This interpretation differs from important past readings of *Ann.* 4.32–8, which, for understandable reasons, have seen it as designed rather to defend Tacitus and his books from the regime's violence. While we should continue to regard hostile reception by the regime as a possible outcome of publishing *Annals*, it is also important to expand our field of vision to include *all* varieties of reception, including the regime's approval or indifference. The rhetorical strategies that defend an author can also function to demonstrate that he needs defense and so create the strong impression that his book matters. In other words, when we assume the regime's hostility to Tacitus and *Annals*, we grant without objection that of which *Annals* in fact labors mightily to persuade us.

[3] Cf. now Edwards (2007: 139–41, 143).

RECEPTION AND FAILURE

Publishing a big history implies that there was a point to writing it and that someone will want to read it. The reasons antiquity imagined for writing history were various: it might entertain or edify its readers; it discharged an obligation to the ancestors and to posterity; and it might confer glory on its author.[4] Publication seemed to spring from confidence; usually the alarming prospect of failure was passed over in silence: perhaps readers would think the work was bad; perhaps no one would care; perhaps the book would come out with a whimper, not a bang.[5] The possibilities for disaster and failure were no less real for not being acknowledged; in fact, their reality is one good reason for *not* acknowledging them.

Though failure comes in many forms, Tacitus focuses our attention solely on the regime's role in determining the interest or importance of books. As we will see, in *Ann.* 4.32–3 he self-consciously renounces hope that anyone will enjoy reading *Annals*, and he places his bets for the work's appeal on its utility: it offers its readers usable understanding of the nature of politics under the Principate. Furthermore, in this section of *Annals* and elsewhere, he is interested in the central role played in a work's reception by the regime's critical judgment. His focus makes a history's political potential into the only criterion by which it may be meaningfully evaluated and so makes the genre itself political; this strategy inevitably causes readers to look to the regime's response to it in order to judge whether a book is important.

Repression and hostility

There were really only two sorts of response the regime might make: it might take repressive action or do nothing. The regime knew it looked bad to repress free expression, and it had large responsibilities on its hands; if it put a book under sanction, then, it seemed to have judged that book dangerous enough to risk appearing tyrannical and to subtract its energies and attention from weighty matters such as war, finances, construction, public entertainments, the grain supply. The disadvantages attached to attracting the regime's hostility, though, are obvious. Even if it lay outside the regime's power to eradicate a text (a thought Tacitus advances with relish:

[4] "Entertain" or "edify": Avenarius (1956: 26–9), Fornara (1983: 120–34), and Woodman (1988: index s.v. "entertainment"). "Confer glory": Marincola (1997: 57–62).

[5] Livy's preface is an exception to the rule of silence, but may be seen to imagine the work's unpopularity only as a means of compensating for its big ambitions: cf. Sailor (2006: 372–4). Conversely, for poets there are ways to imagine their work's negligibility: cf. e.g. Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.264–70 with Habinek (1998: 114) and Roman (2001) on Martial.

Ann. 4.35.5), it was also attractive not to end up like Cremutius.[6] He had of course been driven to death, but his *History* had not survived unscathed, either. It had been made to lie in secret, far from the public attention that any literary work coveted; and, though the change of regime in 37 CE had ushered it back to the light of day, there had been no guarantee that that would happen, and certainly no clear idea of *when*. When it reappeared, moreover, there were passages conspicuous by their absence. As we will have occasion to discuss below, in the text Quintilian used, the statements that had made trouble for Cremutius were gone: "those parts have been trimmed the expression of which had brought him to harm" (*circumcisis quae dixisse ei nocuerat*, *Inst.* 10.1.104). Although no other source says anything about this alteration to the text, we may assume that the version available to Domitian's chair of rhetoric was also the one generally available in his time. If the post-trial version differed from the pre-trial one – and in the key passages, at that – then the supposed triumph of historical texts over "present power" (*Ann.* 4.35.5) was in fact closer to a draw.[7] The regime's ire might be able to harm not just the author but his books too.

Approbation

The regime's inaction presented a different kind of danger. Inaction could be explained in a couple of ways, neither appealing. One was that the regime approved of the work or even welcomed it. This impression was fatal, not to a book's existence, but to its importance. A history the regime embraced might also look like the regime's approved version of history: no self-respecting senator with literary ambitions could afford to be ranked with Velleius or Josephus.[8] From that perspective, Augustus' supposed teasing of Livy for his Pompeian leanings (*Ann.* 4.34.3), for example, might be

[6] "Outside the regime's power": cf. Finley (1985: 146–7), "The Roman emperors, lacking the resources of the modern police and secret services, could not possibly find and destroy all copies of condemned writings."

[7] As we will see below, Quintilian tries to recoup the excised sections in a different way: the *passages* were gone, he writes, but their *effect* was still present in the style.

[8] Cf. the striking passage at Vell. 2.41.1, in which Caesar "manhandles" Velleius and forces him to write more about him. This image captures what can work for Velleius – whose project is self-advancement through association with the regime – and what could never work for Tacitus, for whom alienation from the regime is everything. The same distinction between rhetorical strategies is what accounts for Josephus' proud declaration that Titus has personally "authorized" the *Jewish War* (*Vit.* 363): since the social consequences of writing are quite different for Josephus, he can wield the regime's authority as a cudgel in his polemic against Justus of Tiberias, who had written a competing treatment of the Jewish War.

seen not as a serious objection, but as a favor on the *princeps*' part to a work only too neatly in line with the new era (but a self-interested favor, to be sure, in that an independent voice striking the same notes was better than an obvious *porte-parole*).[9] So too, as I suggested in chapter 1, whether or not Pollio's history was dangerous, Horace (*Carm.* 2.1) only augments its prestige by presupposing it was. For there was nothing inherently wrong with the regime's approval, so long as a work did not seem to have it.

Like many historians, Tacitus had reason to show that his literary career was not underwritten by the regime – in fact, probably more than most. Consider the following. Bartsch outlines a curious feature of Juvenal's seventh *Satire*.[10] In apparently bemoaning the absence of patrons of literature, the poet includes, as examples of starvelings, two literati who did *not* go wanting for patronage, Domitian's protégés Statius (7.82–7) and Quintilian (7.186–90). Bartsch argues persuasively that this move critiques the corrupting effects of Imperial patronage on literature. Yet poetry and rhetoric are not the only two genres the poem surveys: history is there, too.[11] Directly after the lament for Statius, the satirist continues:

> vester porro labor fecundior, historiarum
> scriptores? perit hic plus temporis atque olei plus.
> nullo quippe modo millensima pagina surgit 100
> omnibus et crescit multa damnosa papyro;
> sic ingens rerum numerus iubet atque operum lex.
> quae tamen inde seges? terrae quis fructus apertae?
> quis dabit historico quantum daret acta legenti?
>
> (7.98–104)

> Is your work any more fertile [than poets'], histories'
> Writers? Here goes to waste more time, and more lamp oil.
> Without end, page one thousand sprouts up 100
> And grows, the cost of all that papyrus immense;
> That's what's demanded by the huge number of events, and the dictates of the genre.
> But what's the harvest to be had? What fruit of the open land?
> Who will give the historian as much as he would to the fellow who reads out the gazette?

[9] Surely much in Livy's project was congenial to the regime: its emphasis, for example, on the importance of traditional religious practice, and its apparent confirmation that sometimes the survival of the *res publica* had only been secured by the good offices of one great man. On the "*unus vir*" theme in Livy, see Santoro L'hoir (1990: 230–41).

[10] Bartsch (1994: 125–45).

[11] As are oratory (1–97) and grammar (215–43).

Birley has seen here a reference to Tacitus, and he may be right.[12] Juvenal knew of *Histories* – he may gesture to it in the second poem of his first collection – and Syme suspected familiarity with *Annals*.[13] We know of no one else writing a history at the time, though Fabius Rusticus had been active under Domitian and may still have been alive as late as 108; if there were others, the consular, advocate, and past proconsul of Asia will have been more conspicuous than all of them, and the first historian to leap to mind.[14] Statius' name has already alerted us that we are talking about prominent recent practitioners within the genres at issue, and that will be confirmed later on by the appearance of Quintilian.[15] The historians' presence here, among lap dogs of the regime, is striking.[16] If those two had "not" been supported by Domitian (read, "had been supported abundantly by him, and had paid him back in praise and compliance") then these "writers of histories" (Juv. 7.98–9), too, had "not" been supported, and in a comparable fashion. The satirist invites us to think out the difference between a historian and a slave who reads out the *acta senatus*: both of them put out the official line, and the only difference is that the latter is remunerated.

Even if we doubt reference to Tacitus here, the crucial point is that you *might* usefully mention him in the same breath with Statius and Quintilian. His political career had gone smoothly, bridging the transition from his benefactor Domitian to his benefactor Nerva to his benefactor Trajan; whether Hadrian snubbed him in not awarding a second consulship is not at all certain. His literary career had continued apace: his *Agricola* and *Histories* had praised, in passing but unequivocally, the men occupying the Palatine, and both had done thorough and timely violence to the last

[12] Birley (1997: 193).

[13] The relevant lines are Juv. 2.102–3 (about an Othonian anecdote); see Syme (1958: 776–8).

[14] Fabius Rusticus: Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.104 (not mentioned by name). Syme (1958: 293n6) cites *CIL* VI 10229, a will in which a Fabius Rusticus (l. 24) is listed as a legatee. At any rate, after Tacitus' *Histories*, there was not a lot left for Fabius to write about. From Plin. *Ep.* 1.16.4 we know that a Pompeius Saturninus was writing or had written a history under Nerva or in the earliest part of Trajan's rule, if we follow the dating of Sherwin-White (1966).

[15] If this passage looks to Tacitus, why does it not just mention him by name? "Juvenal does not attack any person or category that commands influence in his own time" (Syme 1958: 778) or, in Juvenal's words (1.170–1), *experiar quid concedatur in illos | quorum Flaminia tegitur cinis atque Latina*. Statius and Quintilian were dead; but, if Cornelius Tacitus was alive and you were going to talk about him, this is how you would have to do it.

[16] Courtney (1980 ad loc.) sees that it is odd that historians are included in this list: "Historians are given little space because Juvenal's case is weak here; they must be included to represent prose writers, since history was at this time the most prominent branch of prose, but they were usually aristocratic, retired politicians and the like, not poor men in need of patronage." But the oddness of the historians' appearance here is precisely the point; or, as Bartsch (1994: 133) writes: "Juvenal is either the weakest of rhetoricians or a man with some other point up his sleeve."

Flavian – just like Martial, Pliny, Juvenal, and Suetonius.[17] He did not die young, and when he did finally die he was memorialized at Rome, as we have seen, in a monument of healthy dimensions that registered his political successes. To the casual observer, the man was agreeable to the regime, and so was his work; if we had only his biographical information, no one would dream otherwise. This is an impression that the Cremutius Cordus episode in *Annals* fights relentlessly: close association with the martyred historian, along with the historian's evident solicitude to defend his work, discourages doubt.

We may wonder, though, just how dangerous *Annals* was. "No emperor could approve a work like the *Annales* of Cornelius Tacitus."[18] That is not at all clear. Syme made the case that *Annals* is full of hidden swipes at Hadrian, and he has found supporters.[19] There may be some digs at Trajan as well.[20] The book is suspicious of deformations of language and truth and traces their cause to the Principate; it radiates a seething resentment at the indignities that have come upon the senatorial aristocracy since the end of the free Republic; it makes of the history of the Principate a grisly and terrifying nightmare from which Romans cannot wake. Of course, this is all merely the general impression you get from reading *Annals*; it is impossible to point to a passage in which the author says something undeniably offensive. There is no "Cassius was the last of the Romans" (Cremutius Cordus: *Ann*. 4.34.1, Suet. *Tib*. 61.3) or "Thrasea Paetus was holy" (Arulenus Rusticus: Cass. Dio 67.13.2) or praise of someone so recently expired as Helvidius Priscus had been when Herennius Senecio wrote his biography.[21] And if "Tiberius" can read like veiled criticism of Hadrian, he can equally well be the tyrant Hadrian is *not*, and so an instrument of praise for the current *princeps*.

What is more, Tacitus' material in *Annals* was far older, and staler, than what he had discussed in the later books of *Histories*. A wag might say the present project was *less* topical than anything he had done to that point,

[17] On "denigration of predecessor" in Juvenal, and in other Trajanic and Hadrianic literature, see Ramage (1989).

[18] Syme (1958: 499). [19] Syme (1958: 492–503).

[20] See Rutledge (1998), though that article may take too seriously dubious notices about Trajan's personal habits.

[21] Nor does Tacitus say what he thinks about them in the report of the funeral of Junia (*Ann*. 3.76), apart from the apparently positive cast of *praefulgebant*. Moles (1998) writes: "Cordus is charged with . . . praising Brutus and describing Cassius as the last of the Romans, as in some sense Tacitus himself had done at *Ann*. 3.76.2," but an immense difference is elided with the words "in some sense." McHugh (2004) takes Cremutius' statement "Cassius is the last of the Romans" as a poor attempt at figured speech, but, if so, it may be so poor as not to be recognizable as such.

and was, if anything, a retreat to safety, rather than a bold step forward.[22] It was not obvious that dead *principes* of a dead line were still live wires; the case needed to be made – and, as we will see, *Annals* exerts itself to make that case, with Cremutius' help.

This is not to say that Tacitus was the court historian, or that his books parroted or even endorsed the stories the regime put forward. It is to say that *Annals* came with the biographical baggage of success, and the continued public circulation of his work must have seemed to advertise its acceptability and even welcomeness. Under those circumstances, it was a burden of this work – as of the previous ones – to show that Tacitus was not the *princeps*' man and his work was not in the *princeps*' service. That scholars do not regularly note this and talk instead about the ways in which he successfully negotiates the regime's potential *hostility* testifies to how well he has done his job.

Indifference

The other imaginable explanation for the regime's inaction envisions an altogether different relationship between historiography and the world from that assumed by the prospects of repression or approval. Both of these last prospects at least credit the genre, the former by supposing that a history can be taken to threaten some harm and the latter in its assumption that history is valuable enough to serve as a token of exchange with the *princeps*. But it was another matter if the regime failed to suppress a history because it saw historiography as negligible. In that instance, the people who were best equipped to understand the operation of power within society, and who daily made decisions with an eye to maintaining or strengthening their own grip on it, had determined that histories merited no real place in those calculations.

Annals does not imagine indifference as one of its own prospects but does imagine it readily in the instance of Fabricius Veiento (*Ann.* 14.50): once the regime seemed not to mind the existence of his works, they were forgotten. Even if Livy's preface is disingenuous in its professed concern that other historians of better pedigree will eclipse his *Ab urbe condita*, it still gives an image of what that eclipse would look like: the writer alone, in the dark, feeling sorry for himself while others enjoy the limelight (*Praef.* 3).

[22] We could argue that, in turning to a narrative that preceded *Histories*, rather than proceeding into the principates of Nerva and Trajan, Tacitus in fact protects his integrity by deferring the work of praise that, as we have seen in chapters 2 and 3, any such history would have needed to be. Yet to defer discussion of the present is always, also, in a sense to have admitted defeat.

In the section of *Satire* 7 quoted above, Juvenal is able to envision writing history as a costly waste of time and paper that can elicit no recognition of value from the public.[23] His historian goes on at such length because "the dictates of the genre" (*operum lex*, Juv. 7.102) demand it, but to the public this generic distinction means nothing, and historian and town crier become indistinguishable: "Who will give the historian as much as he would to the fellow who reads out the gazette?" (7.104).[24]

This is the very distinction Tacitus is concerned to uphold in a passage we had occasion to look at in chapter 4 (Latin p. 187):

> When Nero (for the second time) and Lucius Piso were consuls, little occurred that is worth recording, unless one likes filling book rolls with praise of the foundations and beams with which Caesar had built up a hulk of an amphitheater in the Field of Mars, as it has been found to be consonant with the dignity of the people of Rome that signal matters be assigned to historiography, but things of that sort to the daily gazette. (*Ann*. 13.31.1)

Tacitus shows himself here *not* doing what Juvenal's historian does: expending vast amounts of writing-material on matters inconsistent with his project's intended value.[25] In this way he conjures a trivial *Annals* that deserves no attention, but he dispels the specter before the sentence is over by appealing to the generic distinction the satirist undercuts, and by refusing Nero's amphitheater entry to his book.

Along lines similar to Juvenal's, Aper in *Dialogus* pities the fate of the poet Saleius Bassus:

> hi [sc. versus] enim Basso domi nascuntur, pulchri quidem et iucundi, quorum tamen hic exitus est, ut cum toto anno, per omnes dies, magna noctium parte unum librum excudit et elucubravit, rogare ultro et ambire cogatur ut sint qui dignentur audire, et ne id quidem gratis; nam et domum mutuatur et auditorium extruit et subsellia conducit et libellos dispergit. (4) et ut beatissimus recitationem eius eventus prosequatur, omnis illa laus intra unum aut alterum diem, velut in herba vel flore praecerpta, ad nullam certam et solidam pervenit frugem, nec aut amicitiam

[23] Cf. S. Braund (1988: 61): "an uncomplimentary image which seems to suggest that it is a worthless pursuit."

[24] See S. Braund (1988: 61): "the idea that historians are helplessly following the dictates of the genre (102) further detracts from their autonomy and dignity." The prospect of pay does not make the image any more attractive, nor does the ephemeral character of the gazette, as opposed to the monument of history. On financial motives as problematic, see Habinek (1998: 106) and Roman (2001: 115).

[25] For the image of "filling up pages" as depreciative of poetry, see Juv. 7.22–6. For the effect of references to the materiality of books, see Roman (2001) on Martial: "the concretely imagined, individual copy [of Martial's *Epigrams*] confirms the impression of specific social deployment of the book, as opposed to its materially indeterminate (and presumably immortal) existence as a work above and beyond individual use-contexts and physical manifestations" (113).

inde refert aut clientelam aut mansurum in animo cuiusquam beneficium, sed clamorem vagum et voces inanis et gaudium volucre. (*Dial.* 9.3–4)

Bassus grows his own verses, and they're pretty, pleasant things alright, but here is what they result in: he spends a whole year, all day long and much of the night, hammering out a book and burning the midnight oil, and then he is compelled to make the rounds and extend invitations, so that there will be someone who will deign to listen, and even that isn't free: he borrows a house and sets up an auditorium and rents benches and circulates flyers. (4) And suppose the most favorable outcome possible follows upon the recitation: all of that praise is restricted to a day or two, as if plucked too soon in the blade or in the bloom, and does not go on to become any definite, sturdy fruit, nor does he bring back from the event any newly contracted friendship, or any client, or any favor that will stick in anyone's mind, but only the inconstant cheering and empty words and fleeting joy.

His interlocutor Maternus refutes the idea that poetry has no harvest of glory (11.2, 12.4–13.3) and the hubbub generated by his recitation of his tragedy *Cato* seems to indicate that "the powerful" (*potentium*, 2.1) cared enough about a play's contents to take offense. *Dialogus* then resists the notion that literary production does not matter, but it can visualize irrelevance, too: labor, resources, and time expended without return, an indifferent public, a book that fails to advance your standing relative to your fellows.

The fate of Saleius Bassus as invoked by Aper is the abyss into which any prospective author gazes. By making the terms for evaluating historiography political, however, Tacitus assigns different degrees of importance (if I may) to different kinds of indifference. Vast circulation is not one of *Annals*' manifest ambitions: the difficulty of its language seems to advertise that it is for the consumption of the few and discerning, and, as we will see below, *Ann.* 4.32–3 constructs just that sort of readership. On the other hand, since Tacitus has renounced the ambitions of widespread glory and of recognition for the entertainment value of his work and, instead, gone in for the impression of political consequence, the regime's indifference would mean *Annals* has failed, utterly. It is that impression of indifference, and the similarly dangerous impression of the regime's approbation, that the complex at *Ann.* 4.32–8 aims to undercut. We now turn to that complex.

HOW TO USE *ANNALS*

In *Ann.* 4.32–3 Tacitus pronounces in his own voice on the utility of *Annals* and on what interpretive strategies we should apply to our reading. The

function of this pronouncement, I argue, is not merely to persuade us, by means of argument, of the history's importance but also to dramatize, through its behavior, its own status as an endangered book. This behavior in turn helps to explain to us why, despite the evident danger, it continues to be available to read: the historian's rhetorical dexterity, and not the book's basic innocuousness, is what has ensured its safety.

With *Ann.* 4.31 Tacitus draws to a close his account of the year 24 CE, which has, since *Ann.* 4.17, been nothing but a string of accusations and dirty tricks of the sort in which *Annals* is so rich. He ends the year like this:

Pleraque eorum quae rettuli quaeque referam parva forsitan et levia memoratu videri non nescius sum: sed nemo annales nostros cum scriptura eorum contenderit, qui veteres populi Romani res composuere. ingentia illi bella, expugnationes urbium, fusos captosque reges aut, si quando ad interna praeverterent, discordias consulum adversum tribunos, agrarias frumentariasque leges, plebis et optimatium certamina libero egressu memorabant: (2) nobis in arto et inglorius labor; immota quippe aut modice lacessita pax, maestae urbis res, et princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus erat. non tamen sine usu fuerit introspicere illa primo aspectu levia, ex quis magnarum saepe rerum motus oriuntur.

[33] Nam cunctas nationes et urbes populus aut primores aut singuli regunt: delecta ex iis et cons<o>ciata rei publicae forma laudari facilius quam evenire, vel, si evenit, haud diuturna esse potest. (2) igitur ut olim, plebe valida vel cum patres pollerent, noscenda vulgi natura et quibus modis temperanter haberetur, senatusque et optimatium ingenia qui maxime perdidicerant, callidi temporum et sapientes credebantur, sic converso statu neque alia re Rom<ana> quam si unus imperitet, haec conquiri tradique in rem fuerit, quia pauci prudentia honesta ab deterioribus, utilia ab noxiis discernunt, plures aliorum eventis docentur. (3) ceterum ut profutura, ita minimum oblectationis adferunt. nam situs gentium, varietates proeliorum, clari ducum exitus retinent ac redintegrant legentium animum: nos saeva iussa, continuas accusationes, fallaces amicitias, perniciem innocentium et easdem exitii causas coniungimus, obvia rerum similitudine et satietate. (4) tum quod antiquis scriptoribus rarus obtrectator, neque refert cuiusquam Punicas Romanasve acies laetius extuleris: at multorum qui Tiberio regente poenam vel infamias subiere, posteri manent, utque familiae ipsae iam exstinctae sint, reperies qui ob similitudinem morum aliena malefacta sibi obiectari putent. etiam gloria ac virtus infensos habet, ut nimis ex propinquo diversa arguens. sed <ad> inceptum redeo. (*Ann.* 4.32–3)

That the majority of what I have reported and will report perhaps seems smaller and of less importance than to deserve commemoration, I am not unaware: but no one should bring our annals into comparison with the writing of those who have composed the Roman people's deeds of old. Enormous wars, sieges of cities, kings routed and captured, or, if ever they did turn to internal history, contention between consuls and tribunes, agrarian and grain laws, the struggles of the plebs and the aristocratic faction – these are what those authors recounted, with full

freedom of movement. (2) Our efforts by contrast are confined to a narrow field, without glory. For the peace was either wholly unshaken or disturbed only in small degree, the situation in the city was sorrowful, and the *princeps* did not care about extending the empire. It will nonetheless not be without use to take a penetrating look at those things that are, at first sight, of less importance but from which great things are often set in motion.

[33] For every nation or city is ruled by a people, an elite, or an individual. A civic form made of elements selected from these and combined together is more easily discussed admiringly than actually created; or, if it does come to be, it can hardly be long-lived. (2) So, as formerly when the *plebs* was strong or when the Senate had the power, one had to know the nature of the crowd and by what methods it could be managed in a restrained fashion, and those who had come to the greatest knowledge of the characters of the Senate and the aristocratic faction were considered expert in the times, and wise, so when the state has been changed and the Roman government is not different from if one man were ruling, it will be relevant that these things be investigated and handed down, because few can tell *a priori* the nobler from the worse and the useful from the harmful, and the majority are taught by what has happened to others. (3) Nevertheless, helpful as these things are, they offer the smallest degree of enjoyment. For geographies of nations, the turning tides of battles, and conspicuous deaths of generals retain and refresh readers' minds: I by contrast string together vicious orders, constant accusations, treacherous friendships, the destruction of innocents, and always the same reasons for ruin – the similarity between events, and the attendant loss of appetite, get in my way. (4) And then there is the rarity of critics for the writers of old, and the fact that it matters little whether you give more enthusiastic praise to the Carthaginian battle-line or the Roman: but many of those who came to punishment or disrepute in the principate of Tiberius have descendants still around. And even if their lines themselves are now extinct, you will still find people who on account of the similarity of their character believe others' misdeeds are being used to criticize themselves. Even glory and virtue have enemies, supposedly indicting their opposites from too near at hand. But I return to the subject I set out on.

Unspeakable usefulness

Annals, Tacitus insists, is "not without use" (*Ann*. 4.32.2), "relevant" (4.33.2), and "helpful" (§3). On this idea of usefulness turn important questions of topicality, construction of community, and *Annals*' own reception; in particular, this emphasis plays a vital role in creating the impression that Tacitus, and his work, are in danger.[26]

Though the remarks in *Ann*. 4.32–3 take their cue from the preceding narrative and appear in the middle of a book, several books past the work's

[26] For Tacitus' interest in the utility of *Annals* in *Ann*. 4.32–3, see the ruminations of Marchetta (2004: 35–94).

opening, from the start they lay claim to programmatic importance: what Tacitus has to say here defines all of *Annals*, possibly even his whole career ("the majority of what I have reported and will report," 4.32.1). At issue is the false impression of the triviality of what is in his book: a reader setting it up against the spectacular narratives of those who wrote Republican history will see the contents of the former as "small" and "trivial" and of the latter as "big," but if you "take a penetrating look," you see that "big things are often set in motion" from "matters that only at first sight *seem* small" (§2).[27] Tacitus here disabuses one part of the imagined readership – the people whom we are to imagine making this comparison – of its misconception of "bigness." While campaign narratives in Republican history offered impressive bigness ("enormous wars," §1) that resulted in pleasure ("geographies of nations, the turning tides of battles, and conspicuous deaths of generals retain and refresh readers' minds," 4.33.3), in *Annals* it is by looking at what does *not* grab your eye that you can make out what is "big," in the sense of "important."[28] The kind of history Tacitus, as a post-Republican historian, writes makes up in utility what it lacks in pleasure: "helpful as these things are, they offer the smallest degree of enjoyment" (§3). Few know intuitively the ethical or more advantageous course; most people need the guidance of precedent ("the majority are taught by what has happened to others," §2). As a treasury of "what has happened to others," *Annals* here promises to offer that guidance; in order to receive it, to gain "relevant" (*in rem*) knowledge, you must correctly interpret the apparently "small things" it contains.[29] And while the project of this work may demand that its readers abandon the prospect of having fun, Tacitus creates a relationship with them by making sacrifices of his own: he knows, he says, that he is working in close quarters, and he anticipates no return in glory for his efforts. After this point, then, readers are no longer present for the conventional aim of pleasure, and the historian is not present for his conventional goal of recognition: something more important, something *bigger* is at stake.

We already have an indication that whatever is so important may have to do with the present nature of the constitution: both the kind of material and the mode of reading required to construe that material are now different, Tacitus says, from when historiography's subject matter was "the Roman people's deeds of old" (4.32.1). The suggestion is that *Annals* plays with unusually high, and specifically political, stakes. This rhetorical strategy

[27] On *introspicere* vs. *noscere* and *perdiscere* in this passage, see Lana (1989: 30–1).

[28] It is important to keep in mind that, *pace* Clarke (2002: 99), Tacitus does not describe his subject here as "'small and trivial to remember' [*sic*] (*parva et levia memoratu*)"; that is only how it seems at first glance (*primo aspectu*).

[29] Cf. the remarks of Lana (1989).

closely resembles the one Tacitus deploys in the preface of *Histories*, where, by tying historiography's decline to the historical development of the Principate, he enlarges the consequences of his own work. His way of talking about *Annals*' utility makes reading the book into a charged encounter between the selfless historian able to share important information as well as a mode of interpreting it, and a discerning audience with no other goal than correct interpretation leading to proper understanding. Tacitus' anticipating the charge of triviality or tedium efficiently defines what *Annals* is really about, forcing readers to reflect on their engagement with the work, and to accept their author's terms if they wish to proceed. As Sinclair argues, the rhetorical strategy creates two imaginary readerships: " 'them' (historians and readers with interests and tastes more easily satisfied by 'a good story' or panegyric) and 'us' (readers not content with romanticized stories about the distant past)."[30] And while by lamenting the inferiority of his material Tacitus may seem from one perspective to rank *Annals* below its Republican competition, from another he elevates it above the vain game of glory-seeking and situates it instead in the realm of serious business.[31] While other histories are mere writing, this work holds out the possibility that it will *do* something, as well: from this point of view, it does not merely surpass other entries in the genre but rather looks as though it may leave the genre, or even the medium of writing, behind. We may also – and, I think, significantly – construe Tacitus' claim to prefer usefulness to glory as parallel to his implicit claim that Agricola had been of use to the state while the martyrs had sought personal glory (*Ag*. 42.4; see chapter 1 above).

Up to *Ann*. 4.33.2 Tacitus' argument is perfectly lucid; in explaining the nature of his work's relevance, however, he proceeds with curious obliqueness, as important treatments have observed.[32] Breaking down all imaginable durable constitutions into the canonical types (democracy, oligarchy, monarchy), he begins to specify what kind of knowledge was important under each type as it had manifested itself in Roman history: so, when the *plebs* was strong, it was vital to know the character of, and strategies for managing, the *plebs*; and, when the Senate had the power, the people who seemed wise were those who understood the Senate and aristocrats.[33]

[30] Sinclair (1995: 60).

[31] Marincola (1997: 251) offers another attractive, and potentially complementary, interpretation: "The author seems to despair of true emulation with those earlier writers. Yet clearly this is emulation and a covert challenge to his predecessors: the lack of 'suitable' material makes Tacitus' task a *greater* challenge, and his achievement – a worthwhile history that will win for its subjects and its author immortality – is all the more admirable because achieved with a dearth of what was traditionally ennobling material."

[32] Moles (1998), O'Gorman (2000: 97–105).

[33] On the theory of the mixed constitution in antiquity, see von Fritz (1958).

Suddenly, though, the argument makes what O'Gorman aptly calls a "swerve": after the pattern of the other instances, we begin with a reference to the constitution ("now that the Roman state is no different from the rule of one man") but then receive not a characterization of the kind of knowledge useful for dealing with that constitution, but rather only the weak, vague "it will be useful for these things (*haec*) to be investigated and handed down"(§2).[34] The bland "these things" is self-referential: it is the content of *Annals*. The implication is that it records events that involve monarchs, that this record can help you come to understand how a monarch behaves, and that this understanding can be useful in your interaction with whatever monarchs you might run across. Though the expression's vagueness leaves some ambiguity about how that understanding could be put to use, analogy from the treatment of the previous two constitutions makes it hard to come away with any other impression. But Tacitus keeps his distance from the final interpretive step, and it is only by analogy that we infer three important pieces of information: the referent of "these things," the notion that the stories of monarchy that "these things" refers to can be put together to enhance our understanding of monarchy, and the idea that that understanding could be put to use.

The step is obvious enough that readers have tended to take it automatically: so, for example, Giua takes it as read that the passage exhorts readers to scrutinize the psychology of the *princeps*.[35] But I would point out that the last member of this argument also *calls attention* to its own elliptical nature and requires us both to supplement it and to notice that we have had to supplement it. As a result, the experience of reading this section alerts us that we are in the realm of what Ahl calls "figured speech": Tacitus does not here transmit to his readers a subversive observation, but rather equips them with a mode of thinking whose further consequences, if they choose to complete the argument, belong wholly to themselves.[36]

[34] O'Gorman (2000: 99n24). The manuscript tradition in this passage is corrupt: it can be repaired either as "there being no safety for the state than if one man were to have the power" (*neque alia rerum <salute> quam si unus imperitet*) or "the Roman state being no different from if one man were to have the power" (*neque alia re Rom<ana> quam si unus imperitet*). See the discussions of Koestermann (1963–8 ad loc.) and Martin and Woodman (1989 ad loc.), with the helpful comments of Moles (1998). Reading *re rom<ana>* is easier, but *rerum <salute>* (or something else) cannot be excluded.

[35] Giua (1985).

[36] Moles (1998), McHugh (2004). For "figured speech," see Ahl (1984: 187): "Figured speech . . . is . . . criticism from which the speaker or writer himself stands back. He is safe because the critical links in thought must be established by his reader or listener: the text is incomplete until the audience completes the meaning."

Deploying figured speech implies that some consideration prevented you from explicitness and caused you to hand over to your readers the responsibility for bringing your meaning to its conclusion. As Ahl shows, Demetrius imagines two circumstances under which the mode is useful: when being explicit would be impolite, and when it would be dangerous (*Eloc.* 288–9).[37] The critic only states the obvious here: anyone, above all a readership as attuned to innuendo as the public of the early Principate was, knew that the mode anticipated negative consequences to explicitness and attempted to circumvent them.[38] Our conclusion, then, must be that Tacitus feels it is dangerous to say that *Annals* contains information that will help elite readers understand the nature of monarchs and deal with *principes* in ways advantageous to themselves.[39] In fact, in order to ensure that we do not miss the presence of figured speech here, our passage urges on us the impression of its own elliptical character with such insistence that it holds at arm's length, as though too explosive to be advanced forthrightly, even a rather uncontroversial thought: we are given the tortured "Roman government is not different from if one man were ruling" (*Ann.* 4.33.1) rather than "Roman government is the rule of one man," even though in a passage that could scarcely be more prominent – the preface of *Histories* – Tacitus is comfortable declaring that the post-Actium condition of Rome was that "all power was placed into the hands of just one man" (*Hist.* 1.1.1).

To what danger is our attention being directed, then? "It would be positively dangerous for the historian explicitly to exhort his readers to understand the inner character of the monarch."[40] For Moles, what is to be supplied in the third member of the argument is more dramatic than analogy requires: encapsulated in that third member he perceives the thesis that the *principes* are not merely monarchs but tyrants.[41] I would submit that the bare statement that *Annals* contains useful information for dealing

[37] Ahl (1984: 185–7). [38] Bartsch (1994: 63–97).

[39] "Elite readers," "advantageous to themselves": Tacitus does not here advertise the utility of historical writing for just anyone, but rather only for members of a social and political elite (Luce 1991: 2915). Knowledge of popular government is not useful for the people themselves, but for members of a leadership class who want to control the mob (*Ann.* 4.33.2). Knowledge of elite government is in turn useful for this same class of people, but here the goal is to become a member of an elite within the elite (*callidi temporum et sapientes credebantur*). Knowledge of monarchical government would then by analogy be valuable again for this same class of people.

[40] Moles (1998). Perl (1984: 569) registered, in passing, the idea that Tacitus makes the "swerve" in order not to seem to criticize the current *principes*.

[41] Moles' argument depends on *converso statu* implying a Thucydidean κίνησις and στάσις that expose the Augustan lie of settlement as *really* perpetual revolution. This is an available interpretation, but my point is that the passage is structured in such a way as to leave that interpretation, or a gentler one, or a harsher one *all* available.

with monarchs is not so important or interesting, though we cannot of course inhabit the Roman sense of decorum well enough to be sure of that, and though the nature of informal autocracy is that the "rules" about what is permissible or appropriate are always subject to revision.[42] Moles' intuition that the third member really refers to the Principate's status as a lie and a crime would perhaps have been more offensive, but, again, how could we know?

In fact, there are other ways we could bear out the analogy. For example, under each of the first two kinds of government, knowledge of that government's nature allows a member of the elite to work the system and end up on top: he dominates the mob in the first case, and, in the second, he outplays his elite competitors. Under a monarchy, then, this man would have the monarch "wrapped around his finger," that is, in some way defeat the nominal framework of monarchy (as he defeated the nominal framework of popular rule) to assert a position of power for himself. In this sense, we could read the third member of Tacitus' argument not as encoding a protest against the monarchy but as suggesting that *Annals* offers lessons in how to become Sejanus.

I would not argue that this conclusion is a more legitimate construction of the third member. Rather, I mean that it is possible to construe the third member in more than one way. In the resulting ambiguity we can perceive an important regard in which figured speech helps Tacitus' project, beyond simply defending him and his book from the regime's violence. You can lead a judge to a particular conclusion, says Quintilian, without stating that conclusion yourself:

> res ipsae perducant iudicem ad suspicionem, et amoliamur cetera ut hoc solum supersit: in quo multum etiam adfectus iuvant et interrupta silentio dictio et cunctationes. sic enim fiet ut iudex quaerat illud nescio quid ipse quod fortasse non crederet si audiret, et ei quod a se inventum existimat credat. (*Inst.* 9.2.71)

> Let the information itself conduct the judge all the way to suspicion, and let us exclude all other [conclusions] so that this [conclusion we mean to be drawn] alone remains available. (Emotions and pausing in one's speaking and hesitation are useful here.) The result of this is that the judge himself goes looking for that *je ne sais quoi* he would perhaps not believe if he heard it and believes it because he thinks he figured it out himself.

The professor here stresses the importance of eliminating every conclusion other than the desired one, but, in our passage, Tacitus has taken us only part of the way. Because he appears to mean more than he will say, and

[42] Feeney (1992: 7–8).

because what he will not say seems to be dangerous enough that he is afraid to say it, we are forced to reconstruct an image of his real intent radical enough to justify this apparent fear. If a simple, analogizing construction of his meaning does not seem radical enough to explain the evasiveness of his rhetoric, then we must infer something even more subversive to explain it. In this way, by making *Annals*' imagined purpose unspeakable, he opens up for it avenues of breathtaking consequence. His gesture at *Ann*. 4.32.1, which, as we have seen, extends the applicability of the present discussion to the whole book, and perhaps to his whole career, causes this impression of unspeakable importance to permeate the entire work, and, again, perhaps *Histories* as well. This broad applicability is thus available to counter any impression that *Annals* is basically decorous and harmless: no matter how innocuous it might seem, we have been assured in Book Four that this is merely a superficial appearance. We know – because Tacitus has intimated as much – that under the surface lies material so dangerous that he has had to take measures to protect his life and safeguard his books. Under Augustus, T. Labienus, while reading his history in a recitation, had paused, rolled past one section, and as he was doing so declared that that section could be read after his death (Sen. *Con*. 10 *praef*. 8). The subversive potential of Tacitus' work is not like that of Labienus'; you cannot just roll past the dangerous parts, because it is *all* dangerous.

The ellipsis also obviates risks quite different from the regime's violence. As we have seen, the public circulation of a book proved it had not come under sanction, and you might ask why, if a book were so important, and so resistant to the regime, it had failed to incur repression. Tacitus' technique dismisses the ready-to-hand answer that the regime did not feel threatened by his work and substitutes a more flattering explanation: *Annals* exists, rather, because its author's virtuosity in defending it has left the authorities confounded, and helpless to prosecute.

Furthermore, because Tacitus does not have to furnish an explicit conclusion to his progression of thought in the constitutional section, he does not run the risk of making a subversive statement to which the regime might fail to respond. For what if he had spelled out what he meant, and no one cared? As we will see below, he suppresses the information that Cremutius' history, in which he had called Cassius "the last of the Romans" (*Ann*. 4.34.1), had not been published recently under Tiberius, but rather years before, under Augustus, who knew the work and approved of it (Suet. *Tib*. 61.3; Cass. Dio 57.24.3). "The salutation of Cassius as the last of the Romans actually implies the most radical of political claims, namely that the Republic was Rome and that with the fall of the Republic Rome is

spiritually and politically dead."[43] Yet it took a decade or more for these words to draw the regime's attention (and even then, as we will see, Cremutius' history seems rather to have been a convenient pretext, rather than the true impetus behind the trial). If provocations of that sort could not count on a response, Tacitus' might not, either. What then? If you had said the worst, without rhetorical cover, and still did not attract the regime's interest, your history had lost all pretensions to importance, had played its last card.

Tacitus' use of figured speech can be understood, then, not so much as attempting safely to transmit proscribed thoughts to his readership, as calling attention to his need for protection, and to his mastery in arranging that protection. This would in fact be perfectly consistent with the dynamics of Quintilian's figured speech as he imagines it being used in a fictive political context:

> quamlibet enim apertum, quod modo et aliter intellegi possit, in illos tyrannos bene dixeris, quia periculum tantum, non etiam offensa vitatur; (68) quod si ambiguitate sententiae possit eludi, nemo non illi furto favet. (*Inst.* 9.2.67–8)

> You can speak as openly as you like against those tyrants [we were talking about] and do just fine, provided it can be taken in another sense as well, because one is only trying to escape danger, not offense too. (68) If one can evade the danger by ambiguity in the way one puts things, who doesn't look favorably on a caper like that?

This thought is organized not around the audience's receipt of encoded information, but around its appreciation of the speaker's skill in transmitting encoded information in the tyrant's presence in such a way that the tyrant could not reasonably respond, and apparently around the discomfiture of the tyrant as well, who is probably quite aware he has been insulted. We marvel here not at the message, but at the delivery; the speaker says nothing new about the tyrant (everyone already *knows* he is a tyrant) but says a lot about himself.

Hostile readers

The thoughts of *Ann.* 4.33.4, introduced with the words "and then there's the fact that" (*tum quod*), mark an important shift in Tacitus' argument, but they also continue to support central functions of the discussion so far: construction of readership, demonstration of *Annals*' topicality, and

[43] Moles (1998).

dramatization of its endangerment. While in the previous section we were dealing with the historian's "approved" readers, those who mean to benefit from *Annals*' usefulness, here we turn to "hostile" readers who believe the book is an attack on themselves.

At first glance, the pertinence of the "and then there's the fact that" sentence to what has preceded seems obvious: Tacitus is here striking a familiar note in observing that some readers will see covert criticism in his writing. For example, Pliny expresses hesitation about writing a history that touches on recent events because contemporaries may take the content personally (*Ep*. 5.8.12–13). Furthermore, Tacitus has here been addressing the characteristics of historiographical endeavor peculiar to the Principate; and, since everyone knows *principes* can be unfriendly interpreters and see veiled criticism everywhere, the appearance of this consideration at the end of *Ann*. 4.33 feels natural, even inevitable. On reflection, however, it has nothing at all to do with the formal terms of the argument that goes before it, which is about *why we should be reading Annals* (because it is good for us), not *why writing it is problematic* (because there is a potentially hostile audience).[44] The frame of reference so far has at least formally implied distance between the events recorded and the act of composition. In this model, the book as discourse about events remains separate and insulated from events past and present alike. With the shift in subject, however, that distance collapses suddenly. Where previously we might have been clear that "vicious orders" and "constant accusations" were "things in *Annals*," here Tacitus raises the new possibility that these are "things *Annals* might be in."[45] "Always the same reasons for ruin" (4.33.3) becomes not a compositional problem that saps its entertainment value but an enduring condition that threatened the historian Cremutius under Tiberius and threatens the historian Tacitus now. Even if *Annals* does not become the basis for an accusation or inspire an enmity that would lead to its author's harm, it is here advertised that it was nonetheless produced in a world in which these were potential consequences of reception – that is, the world that also furnishes the work's subject matter. This move argues implicitly that the social conditions in which Tacitus has produced *Annals* may be identical to those the book describes and raises the possibility that it, or any historical

[44] For this reason, I would qualify the statement of Martin and Woodman (1989 ad loc.) that Tacitus at *tum quod* "provides further [examples] of the difficulty of writing Tiberian historiography"; while in a broad sense this may be true, it does not catch the crucial transition between kinds of difficulty.

[45] Cf. Moles (1998): "Tacitus . . . implies that he himself is 'on trial': the historian's task . . . is a perilous one – a politically perilous one." Giua (2003: 254–5) suspects that Tacitus here has in mind the reception *Histories* had received.

work, is an act that inserts itself into contemporary politics, whether or not its author means it to do so.

Attending this change of focus, which should be disorienting but through the innocuous *tum quod* passes smoothly, is, as O'Gorman observes, what looks like a complete reversal in how Tacitus means his narrative to be read.[46] A scant few sentences earlier we were asked to believe this grim, dreary book was worth our while because we could use it to draw analogies from what others had experienced in the past to our own present circumstances. In order to take Tacitus seriously at that point, we had to allow that his narrative about Romans in the past could also be a narrative about *us*. After *tum quod*, though, we are told that readers who analogize from his narrative to their own situation are an irritant and obstacle to the production of historiography, and it is not immediately clear why the former kind of reading is valorized and the latter dismissed.[47]

This shift links up with the exercise in "community-building" we saw on display earlier, when readers were asked to acknowledge that, if they kept reading, they were no longer looking for entertainment but only for useful and important information. The first group, it will be recalled, comprised "Tacitus' kind of people." They might have picked up *Annals* hoping for fun, misguidedly, but they would be swayed by his insistence on utility and forge ahead, recognizing the "helpful" effects of the bitter medicine, that is, knowledge of right behavior under contemporary political conditions. In this way, Tacitus' text shapes a particular kind of readerly subject by defining what a reader of *Annals* is and is not interested in. By virtue of being the kind of readers Tacitus has told us we must be in order to be "with the program" of his book, our community is now licensed to analogize freely. For this group, this passage envisions the history intruding on the real: if we draw correct analogies, we can also modify our behavior according to our new grasp of the kinds of phenomenon produced by the Principate.

The second group of readers is categorically opposed to the first. In one sense, it is doubly imaginary: if "Tacitus' community of readers" is an imaginary construct that seeks to reify itself in the minds of individual readers, then we might think of these other readers as a category that serves purely to define in negative "Tacitus' community." Our picture of them is

[46] O'Gorman (2000: 102–3).

[47] O'Gorman (2000: 102): "Tacitus begins his digression in praise of close reading; scrutiny (*introspicere*) will uncover the meaning of apparently trivial matters. By the end of the digression he appears to deplore the excess of close reading (*nimis ex propinquo*), when readers refuse to accept the surface meaning of events and wilfully interpret his text as a commentary on their own lives." I agree that the passage takes two stances on analogical reading, but, as will be seen, I would explain this not as *Annals* confounding itself but as a double standard used to create *Annals*' readership.

unflattering, and any reader would be glad not to be counted among them. In the first place, they do not themselves form a community *per se* but rather circulate among us in a clandestine fashion; you have to look if you want to find them (*Ann*. 4.33.4; *reperire* means "to find [with effort]"; note also the second-person singular, which binds the good reader to Tacitus the preceptor, over against "the others"). Secondly, they are moral reprobates, sharing a "similarity of character" with malefactors – which, naturally, the approved readership does not.

Fundamentally, the distinction between those who read *Annals* for knowledge about the nature of the Principate and those who read it to find personal criticism is not about the legitimacy of particular reading styles; it has much more to do with whose side the reader is on. If you are willing to accede to Tacitus' terms, to join the club, that very fact licenses you to read analogically, to interpret, and to use the book. If you are not, that at once proves your moral deficiency and denies you the privileges of membership, in that the historian forbids you to interpret (or rather, denies he has placed anything interpretable in) his book. For the "friendly" readership, the move at *tum quod* structures our relationship to the narrative and to its author by identifying us as insiders to *Annals*. For potentially unfriendly readerships, it offers strong incentives to let the matter rest, or even to join the club. These hostile readers need not have existed or even have been anticipated: their role as a construct that defines the relationship of Tacitus' readers to himself more than justifies his book's acknowledgment of them.

These strategies could of course be designed to ward off hostile readers. In this passage, however, I would propose that Tacitus' burden is not simply to defend his book, but to prove that it needs defending, that there is in fact anything dangerous – or even interesting – about it. Look again at *Ann*. 4.33.4. First we get an example of a subject unlikely to cause offense: if you treated the Punic Wars, nobody cared whether you were on the Carthaginian side or the Roman. Then comes a list of kinds of people who might be offended by Tacitus' work: descendants of those who met with punishment or disrepute under Tiberius, or people who see themselves in past criminals, or people who see a reproach of themselves in the virtues of past heroes. Scholars tend to take seriously Tacitus' suggestion that these hostile readers loom over his work (but not, generally, his assertion that there is nothing there for those readers to find). Like the other defensive maneuvers we see in this section, though, these laments can themselves argue that the author has good reason to expect a hostile reception and that his history is indeed as topical as those readers would have it. By setting

uncontroversial history so far back in time, the reference to the Punic Wars tends to naturalize the conclusion that the *present* material, by contrast, is still explosive: Tiberius' principate is far more recent, and so more liable to be seen as topical. This step responds to an imaginable but unvoiced objection to *Annals*: namely, that there is nothing particularly topical or especially dangerous in writing an account of a *princeps* who had died some eighty years before, and whose relatives had not worn the purple in fifty. If you compared the work with famously "dangerous" historical narratives, it looked rather tame: Asinius Pollio's narrative had reached Philippi at least (*HRR* 2: lxxxxviii) while Cremutius Cordus had written about Augustus under Augustus (*HRR* 2: cxiiii). Even Tacitus' earlier works were topical by comparision with this one.

Likewise, the list of ways in which perverse readers could take offense can, on another view, be read as an almost desperate catalogue of senses in which *Annals* could still be dangerous despite the antiquity of its subject – grandchildren might be angry, and the wicked and perverse might take offense at seeing precedents for their crimes, or even the opposites of their crimes. The last items, which make the discussion even of character, vices, or virtues a possible object of hostile interpretation, give Tacitus the lowest possible bar to clear in order for his work to appear topical: in this way virtually any subject matter you can imagine becomes potentially explosive – in fact, it looks as though even that narrative of the Punic Wars could be dangerous after all, since you would doubtless be called upon to reflect on the relative virtues of the Romans and the Carthaginians (*laetius extuleris*, "whether you give . . . more enthusiastic praise," *Ann*. 4.33.4) and so perhaps be taken to point out the vices of contemporaries. In this way, the argument of *Ann*. 4.33.4 strives to make self-evident something not at all clear: that in *Annals* the kind of hot embers Tacitus trod in *Histories* still lie close to the surface, and that he could easily be burned.

After all, ancient history was ancient history. The younger Pliny, for example, weighs whether, if he were to compose a history, his subject should be old or recent, and presents the options like this:

> tu tamen iam nunc cogita quae potissimum tempora adgrediar. vetera et scripta aliis? parata inquisitio, sed onerosa collatio. intacta et nova? graves offensae levis gratia. (13) nam praeter id, quod in tantis vitiis hominum plura culpanda sunt quam laudanda, tum si laudaveris parcus, si culpaveris nimius fuisse dicaris, quamvis illud plenissime, hoc restrictissime feceris. (*Ep*. 5.8.12–13)

> Now please do start thinking about what era I should treat. An old era others have already written up? [In that instance,] the inquiry is already taken care of, but the collation [of predecessors' accounts] is taxing. Recent times no one has worked on

yet? It's an opportunity for giving serious offense, but not for contracting much goodwill. (13) For beyond the fact that, given that one will be obliged to dispense more criticism than praise when there are such great vices in the people you are talking about, if you do praise you're said to have been stingy with it, but if you criticize you're said to have been excessive, even if you've done the former in fullest measure and the latter very sparingly.

Although he begins by reflecting on a variety of practical difficulties, he soon narrows his focus to two paramount concerns, the potential for creating enemies and the limited prospects for cementing friendships. But his train of thought expressly excludes non-recent history from liability to this anxiety: recent subjects are what threaten serious offense, while old material, which he gives only cursory consideration, he views as difficult only in that it will require laborious comparison of previous accounts.[48] Here, then, non-recent history is a foil for the kind of history readers actually care about. The order, too, and relative length of his discussion of the two types serve to dismiss ancient history: by giving it short shrift, Pliny tells us precisely which type he would rather write.[49]

Livy's preface airs a similar concern about topicality:

legentium plerisque haud dubito quin primae origines proximaque originibus minus praebitura voluptatis sint, festinantibus ad haec nova quibus iam pridem praevalentis populi vires se ipsae conficiunt. (*Praef.* 4)

I have no doubt but that the majority of readers will find that the narrative of the first origins and the period nearest the first origins affords them less pleasure as they hasten on to these recent events through which the powers of the foremost people of the world have been for some time now wearing themselves out.

Whether or not the concern is in earnest, the statement presupposes an audience to whom such a concern makes sense: readers want topical material, and a writer risks losing them if they do not get what they want.[50]

We may then see Tacitus' efforts here as countering the deadly impression that *Annals* is "ancient history": he not only suggests that *any* historiographical act might be perilous, but, pressing the case on another front, also seeks to push back as far as he can the line between old and new. The further boundary implied by the mention of the Punic Wars is a strikingly early

[48] So too in Livy's preface (5), non-contemporary history is notable for not causing its author anxiety.

[49] On the historiographical properties of Pliny's letters themselves, see Ash (2003) and Tzounakas (2007).

[50] For the complicated negotiations in the preface between Livy's and the readership's interests, see Moles (1993). Part of Livy's solution to the problem is to suggest that the past is in a meaningful sense about the present.

date to juxtapose with the principate of Tiberius. Yet even the other boundary in our passage, the one between Republic and Principate implied by the phrase "the Roman people's deeds of old" (*Ann.* 4.32.1), is not necessarily an obvious one.[51] The prefaces of *Histories* and *Annals* imply another, more restricted criterion for distinguishing between new and old, and one especially pertinent to whether a history will be thought to be topical: that is, was the subject matter recent enough that the historian could be conceived to have had a personal relationship with those commemorated, or not?[52] This narrower criterion is of no interest to Tacitus at *Ann.* 4.32–3, however, where he consistently undermines the distinction between the principate of Tiberius and his own present, under thin cover of difference ("but I return to the subject I set out on," 4.33.4). The subject matter of *Annals* thus falls well within the range of the topical – at least, as it itself defines "topical."

In light of the imminent fate of Cremutius and his history, a contemporary reader might with good reason wonder why *Annals*, if indeed it is topical, important, and dangerous, had not been burned, and why Tacitus had not been persecuted. The argument at *Ann.* 4.32–3 prepares us for Cremutius' appearance by assuring this reader that the book survives not because it is inconsequential, or appealing to the regime, but because the author has ably taken measures to persuade potentially hostile readers, including the *princeps*, of the futility of taking action against books. The regime's indifference, suggested by the text's continued existence, is only apparent: it would have acted against this dangerous and important work, had Tacitus not already closed off every avenue of attack. His work here is a *tour de force* of boxing-in and makes a show of its own virtuosity: a readership that keeps in mind as it reads how the regime will respond to an author's subversive activities should be duly impressed that the historian has left a hostile reader without recourse. The thoughtful treatments of Rutledge and O'Gorman have contended that *Ann.* 4.32–3 contains Tacitus' confession of his own inability to control how *Annals* will be received: no matter what he says, hostile readers will find criticism he may not have intended.[53] I see the section rather as an effort, wrought with obsessive care,

[51] On *vetus*, *priscus*, *antiquus*, etc. in the *Dialogus* indicating the late Republic, see Mayer (2001 ad 1.1).

[52] This boundary is crucial to Cremutius' defence at *Ann.* 4.35.1.

[53] Rutledge (1998: 144): "this passage appears to acknowledge Tacitus' own lack of control over the reception of his text . . . Tacitus' and Pliny's [*Ep.* 5.8.12–13] remarks constitute an emphatic surrender of meaning by each author, since both confess an inability to control the significance of their texts." Similarly O'Gorman (2000: 102): "[At *Ann.* 4.33.4] Tacitus ends his digression with a statement which denies ultimate control of meaning to the historian; his history's meaning is determined by future readers regardless of his intentions."

to control reception in another sense: after reading it, you cannot imagine that the work is not in terrible danger and deeply important.

BOOKS AND LIVES

The remarks of *Ann.* 4.32–3 are important for their content, but also for their position. *Annals* has only a gesture at a preface: a capsule history of monarchy at Rome, told at a breakneck pace; a history of Roman historiography, told as swiftly; eleven words describing the content of the present work; and a pledge that Tacitus will do it all "without anger or zeal" (*sine ira et studio*, 1.1.3).[54] *Histories*, and *Agricola*, had opened with remarks on a scale comparable to those at *Ann.* 4.32–3; for that reason, this section is sometimes called the "second preface." Placing the fullest programmatic remarks in *Annals* immediately before the account of Cremutius' trial asks readers to revise their understanding of Tacitus' work not merely in light of that trial, but with Cremutius' story as an important analogy for Tacitus' career.

Cremutius' appearance in *Annals* is the reason for whatever notoriety he enjoys in the twenty-first century, but Tacitus is not the only writer whose eye he caught. Earlier testimonia help us understand the appeal of associating a project with his, and the problems of introducing him into one's work. In the first part of this section, I attempt something of an "archaeology" of the figure of Cremutius in the discourse of the Principate. In order to understand what Tacitus taps into when he represents his predecessor in historiography, it will help to sketch out, so far as we can, what Cremutius had already come to mean to Romans before Tacitus began work on *Annals*. Our discussion of the "early" Cremutius will lead us to the topic of the second section: a fictional declamation scenario, used in the schools of rhetoric, in which Cicero was presented as having had the option to save his life if he burned his *Philippics*. This scenario, I suggest, influenced how Romans talked and thought about the relationship between books and lives, and about the role of political power in assigning value to literary production. Looking both at the declamations about Cicero preserved by the elder Seneca and at instances of writers in some sense choosing their books over their lives will give us a clearer sense not only of why people talked about Cremutius as they did but also of the larger cultural pattern into which Tacitus tries to set himself by aligning himself with him.

[54] On the preface of *Annals*, see in particular Klingner (1958a), Koestermann (1961), Goodyear (1972–81 ad loc.), Leeman (1973: 186–99), Kierdorf (1978), O'Gorman (1995a), and Marincola (1999b).

Cremutius in Roman thought

In the *Liber de Consolatione ad Marciam* (*Dial.* 6) Seneca discusses Cremutius at greatest length outside Tacitus, but Quintilian's brief remarks are informative as well. These authors use Cremutius to imagine *libertas* that has saturated every facet of a man's life – political, social, and literary; to construe a *libertas* ("free speaking") indistinguishable from *libertas* ("personal autonomy"); and to entertain the notion that writer and book are interchangeable.

Seneca's book consoles Marcia for the loss of her son, but her father, Cremutius, makes three significant appearances too.[55] At *Dial.* 6.1.2–4, as evidence that in consoling her he will not have to combat "the weakness of a woman's heart," Seneca recalls her fortitude at her father's suicide and her preservation of his work. At 6.22.4–8, trying to show that an apparently premature death can be a boon, he observes that Cremutius' suicide had snatched him from the jaws of his accusers. Finally, in 6.26, he appears by means of prosopopoeia to console his daughter with the thought of the triviality and transience of human affairs and of the eventual conflagration of the universe. Doubtless Seneca's version of him is adapted to the demands of this work, but it is nonetheless a useful gauge of what you *could* do with him.[56] First, we will look at the question of *libertas*, then at the interchangeability of authors and books (although, as we will see, these issues are not entirely separable).

As we might expect in a work of Seneca's, suicide had realized for Cremutius a state of *libertas* by saving him from the servitude of falling under the power of his accusers and having his life taken from him (*Dial.* 6.1.2, 22.7, 26.3).[57] This *libertas* was the personal autonomy he had put at risk by exercising another sort of *libertas*, "outspokenness":

> propone illud acerbissimum tibi tempus, quo Seianus patrem tuum clienti suo Satrio Secundo congiarium dedit. irascebatur illi ob unum aut alterum liberius dictum, quod tacitus ferre non potuerat Seianum in cervices nostras ne imponi quidem sed escendere. decernebatur illi statua in Pompei theatro ponenda, quod exustum Caesar reficiebat: exclamavit Cordus tunc vere theatrum perire. (Sen. *Dial.* 6.22.4)

Recollect that bitterest of times, when Sejanus had bestowed your father as a largesse on his client Satrius Secundus. He was angry with him because of one or

[55] The key pieces on this work in its historical context are Stewart (1953) and Griffin (1976: 47–59).

[56] Stewart (1953) argues that praising Cremutius was very much in Seneca's interest because Seneca had been associated with Sejanus; Griffin (1976: 47–52) challenges that thesis.

[57] On Seneca and suicide, see Griffin (1976: 367–88), Grisé (1982: 206–18), Hill (2004: 145–82) and Edwards (2007: 98–112).

two remarks that were too frank, which he had made because he had been unable to bear in silence that Sejanus was not merely being set upon our shoulders but even climbing up there. A decree was being put through that a statue of him be set up in the Theater of Pompey, which had burned and which Caesar was restoring. Cremutius cried out "*Now* the theater is *really* dying!"

This candor is linked to yet another species of *libertas*, the political freedom of the community threatened by Sejanus' tyranny. That tyranny is then linked to the Principate more broadly, since Cremutius' witticism bears on the insult being done to the Theater of Pompey, which was itself the site of the tyrannicide and whose dedicant was one of the central symbols of the lost Republican alternative to the monarchy. In consequence, the statement "the Theater of Pompey is no more" brings to mind another: "the Republic is no more." In this way, all freedoms converge in the person of Cremutius, as in fact Seneca suggests with the formulation "a man free in talent, in mind, in hand" (*homo ingenio animo manu liber*, 1.3): that is, in the candor of his work (*ingenio*), his independence as a mark of character and conduct (*animo*), and his autonomy assured by suicide (*manu*).

This emphasis on the presence of *libertas* in Cremutius' life and his work alike is part of a pattern in which Seneca plays with boundaries between the man's life and his literary production. When Marcia rescued his work, she "saved him from true death" (*a vera illum vindicasti morte*, *Dial.* 6.1.3); likewise, he had written the history with his life-blood (*libros quos vir ille fortissimus sanguine suo scripserat*, §3). The result of her republication of the books was that her father "is read, and thrives" (*legitur, floret*, §4). When the prosopopoetic Cremutius addresses her at the end, it is in the historian's literary voice that he speaks:

Puta itaque ex illa arce caelesti patrem tuum, Marcia . . . non illo ingenio quo civilia bella deflevit, quo proscribentis in aeternum ipse proscripsit, sed tanto elatiore quanto est ipse sublimior dicere . . . (26.1)

Now imagine your father, Marcia, speaking to you from that heavenly citadel, not with that literary genius with which he lamented the civil wars and himself for all eternity proscribed the proscribers, but with one even more exalted, in as much as he has now attained a higher place . . .[58]

And, like a good historian, he threatens to cite specific historical *exempla* to prove to her that her son's death may have been a blessing:

regesne tibi nominem felicissimos futuros, si maturius illos mors instantibus subtraxisset malis? an Romanos duces, quorum nihil magnitudini deerit si aliquid aetati

[58] Technically, it is *not* in the historian's voice, but in a voice along the same lines, only enhanced by his *post mortem* perspective on the world.

detraxeris? an nobilissimos viros clarissimosque ad ictum militaris gladi composita cervice firmatos? (§2)

Ought I to name for you kings who would have enjoyed the highest good fortune if death had taken them away sooner from the misfortunes that lay in store for them? Or Roman generals, whose greatness will not be diminished at all if you were to shorten their lifespan a bit? Or men of the highest nobility and conspicuousness steeled, necks at the ready for the stroke of the soldier's sword?

The first set of *exempla* has no place in Cremutius' work, but the second might, and the third surely does: we proceed from "unmarked" *exempla* to those that are specific to his history, and the father's voice converges on the historian's.[59] The succeeding sentence then creates yet another collapse:

respice patrem atque avum tuum: ille in alieni percussoris venit arbitrium; ego nihil in me cuiquam permisi et cibo prohibitus ostendi tam magno me quam vivebam animo scripsisse. (§3)

Consider your father and your grandfather: he came into the power of someone else's assassin, while I permitted no one any violence against myself and, keeping myself from food, proved I had written with the same greatness of spirit with which I had lived.

The manner of his death, he declares, proved the unity of life and writing: the same "greatness of spirit" his life betrayed was present in his work as well.[60] The same thought is hinted at by the formulation "that most valiant of men had written in his own blood" (*vir fortissimus sanguine suo scripserat*, 1.3): "most valiant of men" is a standard compliment of a man's character, but here the man's valor comes out in his writing. The character his history projected thus becomes the standard to which his non-literary life had to be made to conform, and the measure of his success is that he did not fall short of his own books.

Linking Cremutius' death to his work is not merely the "spirit" (*Dial.* 6.26.3) he evinced in his writings but also his now having become an example of fortitude consistent with the figures who appeared in them. Early in the *Consolation* we see the same progression from the contents of the history to the events of his life:

optime . . . de ipso, cuius viget vigebitque memoria quam diu in pretio fuerit Romana cognosci, quam diu quisquam erit qui reverti velit ad acta maiorum, quam

[59] For the period covered in Cremutius' history, see *HRR* 2: cxiiii.

[60] We do not know who Marcia's grandfather was, but his generation would be consistent with a death in one of the civil wars or the proscriptions, in which case his death may have found its way into Cremutius' history. If nothing else, he forms a useful bridge between characters from history and Cremutius, being both a figure from the civil war years and a relative of Marcia.

diu quisquam qui velit scire quid sit vir Romanus, quid subactis iam cervicibus omnium et ad Seianianum iugum adactis indomitus, quid sit homo ingenio animo manu liber. (1.3)

[In preserving his books, Marcia,] you performed . . . the highest of services to him, whose memory thrives and will thrive so long as knowledge of Roman affairs is held valuable, so long as there is anyone who wishes to revisit what the ancestors did, so long as there is anyone who wishes to know what a Roman man is, what an indomitable man is, when the necks of all had already been driven down and bent to the yoke of Sejanus, what, finally, is a man who is free in talent, in mind, in hand.

We begin with a reader who will celebrate him for having transmitted a narrative about "Roman affairs" and "what the ancestors did." Next we are asked to imagine a reader interested in "what a Roman man is" – a question that, so far at least, would seem also to be answered by the contents of the history (e.g., "the younger Cato is Roman manhood personified").[61] When we come to the next point of interest about the history, however, we are required to revise that assessment, too: the "indomitable man" is not a Cato but rather Cremutius himself, and hence the "Roman man" serves as a bridge between the "real men" who populate the historian's narrative and the "real man" Cremutius proved to be when he refused to genuflect before Sejanus.[62]

Since the margins between his life and his text are so permeable, Cremutius is able, through his durable book, to engage in reciprocity with people with whom he is not contemporaneous. Thanks to Marcia's vindication of his history, he is remembered, while her undoing of the prosecutors' suppression of his memory meant that the only memorable thing they had ever achieved had been nullified, and that they would thus themselves fade from memory:

legitur, floret, in manus hominum, in pectora receptus vetustatem nullam timet; at illorum carnificum cito scelera quoque, quibus solis memoriam meruerunt, tacebuntur. (*Dial.* 6.1.4)

He is read; he thrives; welcomed into the hands, the hearts of others, he has no fears of becoming ancient; in no time, however, not even the crimes of those butchers – their only claim to be remembered – will be spoken of any longer.

In this manner, Cremutius' resurrection in book form causes the death of his persecutors, so Cremutius *qua* book avenges the harm done to Cremutius

[61] James Ker suggests to me that Cassius (Cremutius' *ultimus Romanorum*) might be implied here in *quid sit vir Romanus*.

[62] On Cato as *indomitus*, cf. Hor. *Carm.* 2.1.23–4.

qua person. This process can flow in the opposite direction, as well, in that by means of his books he can take revenge on the malefactors of the civil wars: "he himself for all eternity proscribed the proscribers" (26.1). We might also take a further step and say that these "proscribers" are not just the triumvirs but also Sejanus and his clients who had brought the accusation.

In Seneca, then, Cremutius means the thorough interpenetration of life and writing and the saturation of both with *libertas* in all its forms. The notice in Quintilian shows important continuities with this depiction; while briefer, and no less conditioned by the specific demands of its author's project, it has other features that will help us assess Cremutius' appearance in *Annals*. Quintilian turns to him near the end of a section in which he is assessing the suitability of various historians for imitation by orators-in-training:

habet amatores – nec inmerito – Cremuti libertas, quamquam circumcisis quae dixisse ei nocuerat; sed elatum abunde spiritum et audaces sententias deprehendas etiam in iis quae manent. (*Inst.* 10.1.104)

There are those who are infatuated – and not without reason – with the freedom of Cremutius as well, even though those parts have been trimmed the expression of which had brought him to harm; but you can catch his amply sublime spirit and bold ways of putting things even in the parts we still have.[63]

The professor gives little time to individual writers in the survey in *Inst.* 10.1; he tries to capture the essence of their style in as few words as possible. In Cremutius' case, the word that leapt to mind was *libertas*. This is already slightly odd as a characterization of style: it takes "candor" to express certain content, not to arrange words, and *libertas* is an attribute of author, not language.[64] We then learn that the content that had brought him trouble in the first place, which was the best evidence of *libertas* his writing offered, was in fact no longer in the book. This is a strange and interesting thing to say. Quintilian explains: even though the dangerous parts are gone, you can still feel, even in the parts that were not dangerous, the "spirit" and "ways of putting things" that would say those dangerous things. This explanation asks us to import into Cremutius' non-offensive words his knowledge that there once had been offensive ones, too. Here you see the advantage of having what we might call "biographical support" for your book: it no longer mattered whether the history contained anything

[63] Cremutius' name here is Nipperdey's conjecture for the manuscripts' *remuti*, but it is secure.

[64] Quintilian often describes writers' styles in terms appropriate to description of character and personality, but in ways I find easier to reconcile with "style" as ordinarily conceived.

dangerous, because readers already knew its author had been prosecuted. Quintilian's copy of the history was thus the embodiment of radical *libertas* despite no longer containing anything that could be characterized as an expression of radical *libertas*. At the same time, just as in Seneca, the book becomes an avenue of access to the man: you feel in it that *libertas* with which Cremutius had conducted his life, and the process of reading is here a matter of hunting through the text to "catch" the writer's "amply exalted spirit/nature/disposition" – and *spiritus*' common meaning of "life-breath" or "life" may suggest, again as in Seneca, that the book's survival has brought its author back to life as well.

One way of approaching this Cremutius is as an *exemplum*. Literary collections of *exempla* began to appear early in the Principate. Valerius Maximus' work collects anecdotes and categorizes them according to the virtues, vices, or other personal qualities displayed by the figures who appeared in them.[65] The "exemplary" mode of thought tended to make of historical persons symbols of abstract qualities.[66] Valerius does produce *exempla* under a rubric quite like "*libertas*" but it is not what we might have expected: for him, *libertas* seems mainly to mean untimely failure of self-restraint that harms everyone by tripping up the great and frustrating their designs.[67] Even the quality of "candor" was more boisterous than was suitable for the polite young men for whom the collection was meant, but others, not bound by Valerius' purposes, were quite capable of constructing their own such rubric, and doing so more positively.[68] The series of men of the "Stoic Opposition" – the younger Cato, Thrasea, Helvidius Priscus *père*,

[65] On Valerius Maximus, see Maslakov (1984), Bloomer (1992), the contributions in David (1998), and Gowing (2005: 49–62).

[66] I write this with due recognition of the flexibility, versatility, and contestability of *exempla*: see Hölkeskamp (1996: 314–20, 323–6), Chaplin (2000: 37–47), Roller (2004: 51–2), and Kraus (2005: 197–200). Litchfield (1914) remains usefully descriptive of the general tendency.

[67] The relevant section is V. Max. 6.2. The introduction is very good: the gist is "*libertas* is in my collection of its own volition; it is not a virtue; it is more bother than it is worth; people of discernment understand it only leads to trouble, and I will discuss it only for completeness' sake." See Bloomer (1992: 54–6) and Gowing (2005: 59–62), and cf. Tac. *Dial.* 40.2.

[68] It does not appear in Litchfield's table (1914: 28–35). In a sense, *libertas* is easier to imagine as a civic virtue under the Principate, when demonstrations that it was possible to be free now served the elite community; under the Republic *libertas* was an unmarked, constant state of being for a man of the elite, whereas under the Principate it set itself off against an unmarked state of *servitus* or, at least, *obsequium*; cf. the remarks of Gowing (2005: 68) on *clementia*, which is equally tied to the social conditions of Principate. This idea would run parallel to the argument of Kraus (2005) that under the Principate the *princeps* comes to be both the implied audience of exemplary discourse and the only generator of new *exempla*; see also Gowing (2005: 123–5) on Trajan as a "new and improved *exemplum*" (123). *Libertas* as a virtue encoded in *exempla* would thus operate within a parallel tradition of demonstrative elite resistance to *principes*. "Too boisterous": cf. his uncharitable estimate of Brutus (V. Max. 6.4.5).

Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio, Helvidius *fils* – surely would fit the bill. So does Cremutius. As "Cicero" had become for Quintilian "not the name of a man but the name of eloquence" (*iam non hominis nomen sed eloquentiae*, *Inst.* 10.1.112) so Cremutius seems, at least so far as we can tell from Seneca and Quintilian, to have become a sign of *libertas*.[69] Indeed, though he is unusual in that his fate is associated with a history, rather than with practice or with, at the least, a biography of a martyr, in other respects his narrative pattern is precisely that of the martyrs: lonely, brave, uncompromising behavior ("indomitable, when the necks of all had already been driven down and bent to the yoke of Sejanus," Sen. *Dial.* 6.1.3) that seems to vindicate the ideological legitimacy of the senatorial elite ("he had been unable to bear in silence that Sejanus was, not being set upon *our* [emphasis mine] shoulders, but climbing up there," 22.4) and that ends in a death that reaffirms their discretion over their own persons.[70] It looks, moreover, as though he himself had cultivated, if not martyrdom, at least a sort of equivalence between himself and the tyrannicides: after all, he was not the first person to call Cassius "the last of the Romans" (*Ann.* 4.34.1), though he was the only historian we know of to do so. That sentiment had famously issued from the lips of Brutus himself, upon the death of his fellow partisan (App. *BC* 4.114; Plu. *Brut.* 44.2). Repetition of these words did not signal mere adherence to the cause; it equated author and subject. In that light, Cremutius' history might present itself as the textual equivalent of the tyrannicides' resistance, deserving equal recognition. As we will see below, the equivalence of those two types of resistance is in fact a subtext of the speech Tacitus gives him.

Seneca and Quintilian bring us some distance toward understanding the place of Cremutius within the Roman cultural imaginary before Tacitus' intervention. Although it does give us pertinent information that Tacitus neglects, there is no reason to think that in general it gives us a more genuine picture of the historical Cremutius; rather, it tells us what people had thought was interesting about him, and the kinds of thing people said about him, before Tacitus put him in *Annals*.

Cicero's choice

In fact, so far from being an avenue to the "real" Cremutius, Seneca's presentation seems to have been fundamentally structured by declamatory

[69] On the posthumous exemplary force of Cicero, see Winterbottom (1982: 241–2) and Kaster (1998).

[70] It is Cremutius' concern for the necks of his fellows that distinguishes him from T. Labienus: the latter was a general offender, according to the elder Seneca (*Con.* 10 *praef.* 5): *libertas tanta, ut libertatis nomen excederet, et, quia passim ordines hominesque laniabat Rabie<nu>s vocaretur*. If Dio's καθήψατο (57.24.3) means "attacked" not "expressed adherence to," the difference between the men shrinks.

treatment of a fictive episode involving Cicero. Seneca's remarks on Cremutius in the *Consolatio ad Marciam* rehearse some of the tropes of the *suasoriae* his father had excerpted on the topic, "Cicero deliberates whether to destroy his writing by fire, under Antony's pledge that, if he did so, he would survive" (*Suas.* 7). In the school exercise of declaiming *suasoriae*, low-status teachers and young men of the elite delivered speeches in counsel of a historical figure or figures confronted with a choice, sometimes historical and sometimes fictive.[71] This topic imagined a historical situation – the orator at Antony's mercy in 43 BCE – but an invented choice. It forms a special case of a general theme, "Cicero deliberates whether to beg Antony's mercy" (*Suas.* 6). The elder Seneca seems to imply that the topic of Cicero's deliberating whether to burn his books antedates the oration *Pro Lamia* of Asinius Pollio (so, in the late 40s or in the 30s BCE), and the topic persists at least until the mid-90s CE.[72] On a conservative estimate, then, it was in use in the schools for a couple of generations. Its mention by both Seneca and Quintilian seems to show that it was a familiar one. We can also perceive its influence in historiography: Roller and Wright have identified ways in which the topic influenced historians' accounts of Cicero's death, and Velleius' impassioned outburst (2.66.3–5) upon reporting his death, too, seems to me wholly informed by the scenario.[73] These traces suggest that the topic was in sufficiently heavy use for us to conclude that, at some point in their education, a significant percentage of young men of the elite will either themselves have entered into the *persona* of an advisor to Cicero and delivered a speech urging him not to accept Antony's offer or have listened to such speeches being delivered. Declamatory practice offered Romans a ready-made framework and vocabulary with which to represent Cremutius' trial and death, and "Cicero's choice" must affect

[71] On declamation, see Bonner (1949), Sussman (1978), Fairweather (1981), Beard (1993), Bloomer (1997b) and (1997c), Roller (1997: 110–14), and Gunderson (2003). On *suasoriae* and "alternative history," see O'Gorman (2006: 293–7).

[72] "Antedates": *Suas.* 6.14. We are not sure when the speech was delivered. Seneca's language seems to mean that Asinius Pollio was attempting in the speech to spread the idea that the declamatory topic was a historical truth as well. Technically, though, Seneca's quotation from Pollio does not involve Cicero's destruction of the *Philippics*, only his disowning them and writing new ones that favored Antony. "Persists": Quintilian (*Inst.* 3.8.46) writes of the topic as of one still in use.

[73] Roller (1997), Wright (2001). Cf. Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2003: 35–6). Velleius underscores that by killing Cicero Antony achieved the opposite of his intent (2.66.3), that Cicero is made alive eternally in memory (§5), and that Cicero's writings have posthumously become the vehicle for his fame and for Antony's disgrace. I am not as sure as Gowing (2005: 47–8) that Velleius' indignation depends on his assumption that the Republic is still alive; I would rather suggest that the schools had been habituating everyone to say this sort of thing *whenever* the death of Cicero came up. I would guess that declamation is the source of the Ciceronian expressions that Woodman (1983 ad 2.66) sees Velleius using in the outburst.

our picture of the tradition's development and our understanding of what it means for Tacitus to align himself with the author of an incinerated history.

No one, writes the elder Seneca, declaims in favor of Cicero's burning his writings, though he thinks you actually could make a case for him to prefer his own life (*Suas*. 7.10).[74] In general, declamations offer a choice between real alternatives, or, at least, conflicting imperatives, but in this instance declaimers stick to one side. An imaginable reason lies in Cicero's place in their history of rhetoric and in the repercussions of his choice for themselves.[75] In the elder Seneca, he occupies an ambiguous position *vis à vis* the declaimers. On one hand, as Bloomer shows, he is the endpoint toward which the practice of public speaking was developing, and his declamation is said to differ categorically from the practice of Seneca's day (*Con*. 1 *praef*. 12).[76] On the other, he is the beginning as well, a seminal figure in the history of declamation: he is the only notable representative of eloquence whom Seneca has not heard in person (§11) and he and Calvus, Seneca says, are the first to attest the term "declamation" (§12). If what Seneca thinks about Cicero's place in the history of declamation is typical of declamatory culture's impression more generally, the orator's choosing not to ask for his life was not just a topic like any other but, rather, bore on declamation and the identity of declaimers.

One of the rhetorical terms of the practice of declamation in general is that the speaker is *not* Cicero: so Haterius protests that he is "far from being Cicero" (*multum a Cicerone absum*, Sen. *Suas*. 7.1). The subtext of the declamations about him, however, is the declaimers' substitution of themselves for him: the declaimer who urged the orator not to destroy his books was not just taking the part of a well-meaning advisor but rather became more "Cicero" than Cicero.[77] The fictive circumstance imagined the great orator hesitating whether to be less than himself and the declaimer intervening, energetically, to show him how to be himself, and turning him

[74] Quint. *Inst*. 3.8.46 seems to imply that sometimes declaimers did urge him to accept his life in exchange for the books: if you are going to take that side, though, he says, you have to attribute to him the noble desire to save himself for the use of his fellow citizens, not simply the pedestrian desire not to die.

[75] On the declaimers' heroization of Cicero, see Kaster (1998). Cf. Gunderson (2003: 82): "As orators and as heirs to the fantasy of oratory bequeathed by Cicero, these faithful foster-sons cannot bring themselves to take the wrong side." For similar reasons Seneca criticizes Varius Geminus, who had urged Cicero to beg Antonius for his life (*Suas*. 6.11–13); pillories Asinius Pollio for being hostile to Cicero's reputation (§§14–15); and takes care to establish, via a series of excerpts from historians (§§14–25), that Cicero would not *really* have wavered.

[76] Bloomer (1997b: 211). Cf. Kaster (1998: 259–60).

[77] Gunderson (2003: 79–88) sees the relationship between the declaimers and Cicero as one of filiation, with psychoanalytic implications.

aside from the path that meant not being himself.[78] In addition, since the implied addressee of this *suasoria* is Cicero himself, the auditors themselves fit into his role, too: everyone in the room is thus a Cicero, exhorted not to fail to be Cicero and not to value their lives above their production of speech. The declaimers, indeed, make a habit of feeding Cicero's words back to him, recalling him to knowledge of his own *œuvre*.[79] Formally this technique recognizes a difference between orator and declaimer ("one can only use *your* words here, Cicero: 'alas for this age, alas for its iniquity!'" [*tuis verbis, Cicero, utendum est: "o tempora, o mores!" Suas.* 6.3]) but, of course, also entails the declaimer's, if only momentarily, speaking exactly like the orator. Or the relationship between Cicero and him can be articulated as a loan: "Allow me but for a little while to use your eloquence, Cicero" (*Accommoda mihi paulisper eloquentiam, Cicero*, *Suas.* 7.2).

What we see here is that declamation on the topic at once made declaimers and their audiences into "Ciceros" and denied that anyone present had ambitions of equivalence to him.[80] For this reason the elder Seneca sees Gargonius' *suasoria* as the site of the two stupidest things "that most adorable of morons" (<*fatuorum*> *amabilissimus*, *Suas.* 7.14) had ever said:

> unam in principio; nam cum coepisset scholasticorum frequentissimo iam more, ut quam primum tantum tumeant quantum potest, a iure iurando et dixisset multa, <ait>: ita aut totus vivat Cicero aut totus moriatur, ut ego quae hodie pro Ciceronis ingenio dixero nulla pactione delebo. (§14)

> One of these things came at the opening: when he had begun with an oath, puffing himself up as much as possible at the earliest possible moment (after the now extremely common manner of the schoolmen), he said after many remarks: "Let Cicero either die altogether or live altogether, just as I myself will on no condition erase that which today I will have said in defense of Cicero's genius."

Poor, stupid Gargonius ruins the exercise by forcing his audience to confront the incomparability of Cicero and declaimer and to admit finally that no one present bears the least resemblance to their idol. Yet he is merely voicing the declaimer's secret ambition – to become the exemplar – and this may be one reason, we may infer, why he is a moron for whom the elder Seneca nonetheless cannot help feeling affection ("most adorable"): all enthusiasm and no decorum, he understands declamation well enough to see that the point is to be like Cicero, but not well enough to know that its terms are to

[78] Cf. Gunderson (2003: 81): "They treat him less as a real man than as one who ought to adhere to the greatness of his own literary legacy."

[79] See the apparatus of Håkanson (1989: 357–9, 361, 370). Kaster (1998: 253–4) points out that the quotations and allusions come from only a small set of his works.

[80] On these declamations as turning declaimers into "Ciceros," see Kaster (1998).

renounce all claims to be Cicero. By contrast, the reaction of Asinius Pollio to the declaration of one Sextilius Ena that eloquence had fallen silent with Cicero reflects a too literal understanding of the "we are not Cicero" tenet of the declaimers: he storms out, saying he will not listen to somebody who thinks him mute (*Suas* 6.27).

In these "Cicero's choice" declamations, then, the students, and the teachers, and the amateurs may all be viewed as exploring a fantasy about becoming their icon, but at the same time the scenario explores a fantasy about their relationship to their own speech, and this is the path that Gargonius has started to go down. The Antony of the scenario wants the *Philippics* burned because he cares whether they exist, because they have done him harm and will keep doing so. In the language of the declamation, they "proscribe the proscriber." But no one cares what Gargonius says, and no one is going to threaten to kill him if he does not disown his *suasoria*. Declaiming on the topic, however, because it draws the declaimers so close to Cicero, does give an opportunity to experiment with what it would be like to produce speech that matters, that incurs the validating anger of the powerful, that is worth giving your life for.

This declamatory theme, and the ideas and values it represented and reproduced, affected how the relationship between writers and books was represented under the Principate. In the rest of this section we will look at depictions of Cremutius Cordus in Seneca, Titus Labienus in the elder Seneca, and Curiatius Maternus in Tacitus' *Dialogus* in terms of their relationship to these declamations. I do not wish to argue that these authors refer self-consciously to particular performances, or even necessarily that the relationship to declamation in general is felt or meant, but rather only that universal elite education in declamation, together with pervasive declamatory culture, structured Roman discourse in many ways, and that "Cicero's choice" provided an important framework for thinking through the destruction of books and the relationship between writing and practice.[81]

Let us first go back to the *Consolatio ad Marciam*, in which Seneca frames Cremutius' death in the language of declamation. Seneca may have read his

[81] See the characterization of Gunderson (2003: 88): "One brings back from declamation not simply a set of elements and a collection of cases, but a mode of apprehension and a set of power relations governing the arrangement of life's themes more generally." See also the important discussion of Beard (1993). We might say that Cicero is to dying for your books what the younger Cato is to martyrdom through suicide: cf. Griffin (1986: 195), "it was the way in which the younger Cato chose to stage his end and the way in which others celebrated it thereafter that explain why political opponents of the Emperors, who were ordered to kill themselves or even were actually executed, came to be thought of, and probably thought of themselves, as following the great Stoic Cato in death." Reciting Cato's dying words seems to have been a school exercise, as well: Pers. 3.44–7. On the exemplary force of Cato's suicide, cf. now Edwards (2007: 154–9).

father's collection of declamations – he is one of the addressees, after all – but he probably knew the theme from his own experience in the schools as well. His remark that in his history Cremutius "himself for all eternity proscribed the proscribers" (*proscribentis in aeternum ipse proscripsit*, Sen. *Dial.* 6.26.1) closely resembles that of Arellius Fuscus, as reported by the elder Seneca, that, if his books survive, Cicero "proscribed in one era will proscribe Antony in every era" (*uno proscriptus saeculo proscribes Antonium omnibus*) and the plea of an unnamed speaker that Cicero "permit [his] genius to persist beyond [his] life, as a permanent proscription of Antony" (*sine durare post te ingenium tuum, perpetuam Antonii proscriptionem*, Sen. *Suas.* 7.8).[82] That sentiment appears to acknowledge and refute the witticism of Asinius Pollio that "it is not easy to write (*scribere*) against him who is able to proscribe (*proscribere*)" (*non est enim facile in eum scribere qui potest proscribere*, Macrob. *Sat.* 2.4.21). Pollio distinguishes between mere writing and the ability to inflict harm on authors, while the declamatory tradition sees the violence done by the *Philippics* to Antony's reputation as at least equivalent to that done by Antony's proscription to the person of Cicero.[83] Degl'Innocenti Pierini spots a resemblance between Sen. *Dial.* 6.1.3 and Sen. *Suas.* 7.8:[84]

viget vigebitque memoria [sc. of Cremutius] quam diu in pretio fuerit Romana cognosci, quam diu quisquam erit qui reverti velit ad acta maiorum, quam diu quisquam qui velit scire quid sit vir Romanus, quid subactis iam cervicibus omnium et ad Seianianum iugum adactis indomitus, quid sit homo ingenio animo manu liber. (*Dial.* 6.1.3)

[His] memory thrives and will thrive so long as knowledge of Roman affairs is held valuable, so long as there is anyone who wishes to revisit what the ancestors did, so long as there is anyone who wishes to know what a Roman man is, what an indomitable man is, when the necks of all had already been driven down and bent to the yoke of Sejanus, what, finally, is a man who is free in talent, in mind, in hand.

quoad humanum genus incolume manserit, quamdiu suus litteris honor, suum eloquentiae pretium erit, quamdiu rei publicae nostrae aut fortuna steterit aut memoria duraverit, admirabile posteris vigebit ingenium. (*Suas.* 7.8)

So long as the human race shall be preserved, so long as literature receives its due regard and eloquence its just value, so long as the good fortune of our state, or its memory, shall have lasted, your genius will remain, a marvel to posterity . . .

[82] The text of Håkanson (1987) assigns the words to a speaker whose name he thinks has fallen from the manuscipt tradition; if we do not posit the omission, the words belong to Argentarius. On declamation's cultivation of *sententiae*, see Bonner (1949: 54–5).

[83] The elder Seneca deplores the similar wordplay of (perhaps) Murredius: *"Pro facinus indignum! peribit ergo quod Cicero scripsit, manebit quod Antonius proscripsit"* (*Suas.* 7.11).

[84] Degl' Innocenti Pierini (2003: 35n156).

Common to them as well are the suggestion that the mere preservation of the books will be a service to the Roman people; that *true* death is to lose the monument your books represent, not your biological life; and the notable phrase "to punish literary talent" (*supplicium de ingenio sumere*). The model of "Cicero's choice" also goes some way toward explaining Seneca's formulation that "if [Cremutius] wished to live, he had to beg Sejanus; if he wished to die, he had to beg his daughter" (*si vivere vellet, Seianus rogandus erat, si mori, filia*, *Dial.* 6.22.6). Nowhere else in the consolation or in the rest of the tradition about Cremutius is there any suggestion that he had an avenue of escape; the remark seems to force his story into the mold of declamations about Cicero, in which the whole point is that there are alternatives.

The elder Seneca explicitly reads the story of Labienus' works, which we looked at briefly above, through the lens of "Cicero's choice."[85]

in hoc primum excogitata est nova poena; effectum est enim per inimicos, ut omnes eius libri comburerentur. res nova et inusitata, supplicium de studiis sumi. (6) bono hercules publico ista in poenas ingeni versa crudelitas post Ciceronem inventa est. quid enim futurum fuit, si triumviris libuisset et ingenium Ciceronis proscribere? (*Con.* 10 *praef.* 5–6)

In his case first was a new punishment invented: it was achieved by his enemies that all of his books were burned. It was a new and unfamiliar thing that punishment should be exacted from literary works. (6) My word, was it a boon to the public that that savagery directed to the punishment of works of genius was a post-Ciceronian invention! For what would have happened if the Triumvirs had felt like proscribing also Cicero's genius?

Observe here that the historical destruction of Labienus' books causes the elder Seneca to think first of the *declamatory* and, even within the declamatory fiction, almost always *unrealized*, destruction of Cicero's speeches. Labienus here signifies not for what his books meant, but rather because the invention of book burning came so late that "Cicero's choice" was still available as a topic of declamation. What indeed *would* have happened if Antony had proscribed Cicero *and* his works? The elder Seneca leaves the question unanswered and moves on to the pleasing, but not evidently germane, observation that those who have devised cruel punishments have often ended up suffering those punishments themselves.[86] The answer he

[85] On Labienus' career, see Hennig (1973).

[86] The thought is the less logical in context, as the declaimers regularly assure Cicero that his works' survival will mean that the man who proscribed him will himself be "proscribed": the consequence of successful proscription of both man and *œuvre* is surely that the *œuvre* could no longer "proscribe proscribers."

leaves to the side is not just that we would not have the *Philippics*, but that the choice to be Cicero could no longer inform the sense of self of young men of the elite.

It is through the gap between Cicero and Labienus that we can make out what role the elder Seneca imagines literature and declamation to play under the Principate. For while it would have made all the difference in the world had Cicero's books been punished in that era before such punishment had been devised, now that it has been devised, it no longer matters if books are burned, because there no longer are any books that matter: "we have the gods to thank that that sort of punishment applied to genius began in that era in which genius came to an end" (*di melius, quod eo saeculo ista ingeniorum supplicia coeperunt, quo ingenia desierant!* Sen. *Con.* 10 *praef.* 7).[87] Labienus thus enters declamation's narrative of its own history, according to which it is part of the general collapse into irrelevance of literature and public speech. But running contrary to the elder Seneca's diminution of books' importance is a strong claim that Labienus is more like Cicero than the dimmer view would have it. Labienus, Seneca is careful to report, "refused to survive his genius" (*nec superstes esse ingenio suo voluit*, §7) and buried himself alive amid the tombs of his ancestors. The expression is the same as that used by the declaimer who advises Cicero that "Antony does not want you to live, but to make you the survivor of your own genius" (*non ille te vivere vult sed facere ingenii tui superstitem*, *Suas.* 7.8). The elder Seneca's attention to Labienus' choice, along with his expression of it as a species of Cicero's, hints at more robust possibilities for the consequentiality of writing.

We may think about Curiatius Maternus, the senator and dramatic poet who appears in Tacitus' *Dialogus*, in terms of "Cicero's choice" as well. A lot depends on the inference that one of the Flavians brought the historical Maternus to a premature end, but that much is now widely, though not universally, accepted.[88] Whether or not that end was in fact closely connected

[87] Plass (1988: 99) reads the *sententia* as ironic, needlessly.

[88] *Dial.* 11.4 and 13.6 seem to make it secure that Tacitus' readers were supposed to read them with the knowledge that bad things lay in store for Maternus. So do the vaguely sinister and paranoid atmosphere of Maternus' *cubiculum* visited by a delegation urging him not to offend the powerful with his books, and the imagery of literary endeavor "on trial" (*Dial.* 4.1–2, 42.2). See Cameron (1967). It is less sure whether this Maternus is the same as the "sophist" Maternus whom Dio (67.12.5) reports that Domitian killed in 91 CE for writing a declamation against tyrants. On this see Norden (1958: 324–5) and the treatment of the history of the debate in Matthießen (1970); there is a capsule history of the question since 1970 in Mayer (2001: 44n102), although the position of Barnes (1981) is not quite right there. The main obstacles to the identification are that it is odd to call a senator a sophist (the word was in Dio, as it appears in the notices of both Xiphilinus and Zonaras) and that punishment in 91 CE for an offense committed in 75 CE (the dramatic date of the *Dialogus*; see Syme

to his literary production, within the world of the work it unquestionably was: if his plays were not dangerous to himself, we infer, *Dialogus* would not happen. Marcus Aper and Julius Secundus seem to have paid their visit specifically to ask Maternus to curb his outspokenness, and it is his decision to stay his perilous course that enables the discussion of career-choice, which is the entrée to the rest of the dialogue. As Tacitus sets up the dialogue, we learn that, the previous day, Maternus had recited a historical drama, a *Cato*, and had caused resentment among "the powerful." During the reading he had "forgotten himself and had only Cato on his mind" (*sui oblitus tantum Catonem cogitasset*, *Dial.* 2.1); already here we have the suggestion, reminiscent of our declamations, that to inhabit a persona is, for a time, to lose oneself and become another.[89]

As the dialogue begins, more similarities emerge.

igitur ut intravimus cubiculum Materni, sedentem ipsum, quem pridie recitaverat librum inter manus habentem deprehendimus.

(2) Tum Secundus "nihilne te," inquit, "Materne, fabulae malignorum terrent quo minus offensas Catonis tui ames? an ideo librum istum adprehendisti ut diligentius retractares et, sublatis si qua pravae interpretationi materiam dederunt, emitteres Catonem non quidem meliorem sed tamen securiorem?"

(3) Tum ille: "leges tu quid Maternus sibi debuerit, et agnosces quae audisti. quod si qua omisit Cato, sequenti recitatione Thyestes dicet: hanc enim tragoediam disposui iam et intra me ipse formavi, atque ideo maturare libri huius editionem festino ut dimissa priore cura novae cogitationi toto pectore incumbam." (*Dial.* 3.1–3)

So, when we entered Maternus' chamber, we caught him sitting there, in his hands the very book he had recited the day before.

(2) Secundus asked: "Don't the tales of the malicious at all frighten you from your infatuation with the offenses of your Cato?[90] Or have you taken your book in hand in order to give it a more careful revision, take out any passages that have offered material for perverse interpretation, and publish a Cato that is not better, I grant you, but certainly safer?

[1958: 670–1]) strains credulity. The first count is tricky but not insurmountable; the latter is not much of a problem, since we can construe a much later performance as the stimulus to charges in 91 CE; setting the dialogue in 75 CE may have less to do with the date's proximity to Maternus' death than with ensuring that Tacitus is at an appropriately impressionable age (about twenty) when he hears the conversation, so he can have the seeds of his historiographical career planted by the poet of historical dramas, Maternus.

[89] Gowing (2005: 112): "Maternus is said not merely to have *played* Cato, he actually for a time *became* Cato and 'forgot' himself (*sui oblitus*)" (italics in original).

[90] I deliberately leave "Cato" in roman type here: in Latin, the word can be either the name of the historical person or the title of the play.

(3) He responded: "No, you will read what Maternus owed himself, and you will see there what you heard [yesterday]. If Cato left anything out, Thyestes will say it at my next recitation: for I have already plotted out this tragedy and put it together in my head [lit. inside myself]. And I hasten to accelerate the publication of this book I have here so that I may lay that old concern aside and throw myself wholeheartedly into my new preoccupation."

Book in hand, Maternus is the picture of identification of writing and author. Secundus presents a challenge to that identification: is his friend really committed to it? Will he not rather sacrifice his book in order to save his own skin? Maternus confirms his commitment: the published work will be identical to his performance, and consistent with his identity ("what Maternus owed himself," §3).[91] Far from subtracting from his *Cato* "anything" (*si qua*, §2) that may have left him open to criticism, he will include in another play "anything" (*si qua*, §3) that *Cato* left out: instead of distancing himself from his book, then, he will in effect produce an expanded second edition. This exchange works like an implicit "Cicero's choice": Secundus performs the *suasoria* in favor of "burning" the *Cato* and avoiding harm, and Maternus (who had heard this scenario just as surely as Tacitus' readers have) rejects his counsel and chooses to be "Maternus" . . . and to be "Cato" and "Cicero" as well.

In each of these instances – Cremutius, Labienus, and Maternus – the writer becomes conflated with his books, his books become indices of the *libertas* with which he had conducted himself over a period of time, his choice not to compromise his books and not to survive them becomes a means of vindicating his own personal autonomy, and his preference for his books over his life appears to acknowledge that his books are his "truest" life. Each instance we have observed, moreover, underscores a central implication of the "Cicero's choice" scenario: that books matter to *everyone* – to the writer, to the audience, to the tyrant.

Equipped with this key background, we can now turn back to the trial of Cremutius in *Annals*.

CREMUTIUS IN *ANNALS*

By aligning Cremutius in a complex way with himself, Tacitus uses him to advance the impression of *Annals*' consequentiality. Scholars have long since

[91] The expression can be read in two ways, both from Maternus' perspective ("My text will be consistent with the life I have lived thus far") and from ours ("My text will be consistent with later generations' construction of 'Maternus'").

seen this alignment, but have given it a limited range of purposes.[92] Common explanations hold that, as a defender of freedom of speech, Tacitus naturally sympathizes with the victim of censorship, or that Cremutius is a convenient mouthpiece for Tacitus' own ideas.[93] A more sophisticated view sees, in addition, his solidarity with Cremutius as a means of protecting *Annals*: by vindicating his predecessor's memory and showing that those who had tried to destroy his work had only destroyed their own reputation, Tacitus warns "hostile readers" (i.e., the regime) that if they touch him or his work, they are merely consigning themselves to ignominy. I find this latter interpretation useful, and I build from it below, but I propose that we are better served if we keep in mind the broad range of benefits to be derived from the impression that a work requires protection – as Catharine Edwards has recently remarked, the example of Cremutius "serves as a manifestation of the dangers run by the historian" – and furthermore I hesitate to grant that Tacitus' work can without too much qualification be seen as similar to that of Cremutius (although, as we will see, it is one of the burdens of Tacitus' treatment to reduce the difference between them, in several ways).[94]

Cremutius' special value for Tacitus' project is that he was a martyr who had written a history. In chapter 1, I discussed the prestige the martyrs enjoyed within Roman discourse contemporary with Tacitus, and I showed that Tacitean historiography was interested in other modes, including historiographical modes, of acquiring a reputation for autonomy. The serious obstacles to real competition between the model of the martyrs and that of the historiographical career were two: first, by convention, writing was accorded a supplementary, inferior status relative to practice and, second, the martyrs had their autonomy confirmed by their deaths, while we might say turning to a literary career was a strategy for *avoiding* the martyrs' eventual fate. The utility of a martyr who had been brought up on charges for what he had written in his history, then, was immense: through Cremutius, you could link the glamour of Thrasea and Helvidius and the inglorious toil of the historian. That link, in turn, seemed to extract historiographical discourse from the realm of "mere" words and to categorize it rather as the "speech act" of a social agent: all of the martyrs had resisted, but some in practice and some in writing.

From the start, Tacitus problematizes the relationship between Cremutius and himself. When we read *Ann*. 4.32–3, we do not yet know that

[92] There have been a number of important treatments of Tacitus' report of the trial: see Rogers (1965), Steidle (1965: 105–14), Suerbaum (1971), Cancik-Lindemaier and Cancik (1986), Canfora (1993: 221–60), Moles (1998), and O'Gorman (2000: 97–105).

[93] "Own ideas": Clarke (2002: 96) and McHugh (2004).

[94] Edwards (2007, quotation p. 141).

Tacitus' remarks on how and by whom *Annals* ought, or ought not, to be used will be of immediate relevance to what follows. In fact, as Woodman notes, the relationship between the sections seems to be undercut by the transition between them: "But I digress."[95] This transition denies what the context and the phrase "constant accusations" (*continuae accusationes*, 4.33.3) had made obvious: that we are to think of Tacitus' work as equally topical, and equally subject to hostility, as that of Cremutius. This gesture holds at arm's length the fusion of Tacitus' and Cremutius' language that *Ann*. 4.32–3 and 4.34–5 otherwise everywhere suggest, but observe that it does so in the most transparent way possible. The transition is a mere fig leaf and calls attention to the denial it makes: it does not persuade us that Tacitus is unlike Cremutius, but rather that he is *so much* like him that it would be unsafe not to deny a connection.

Let us turn now to Tacitus' presentation of Cremutius' speech:

[34] Cornelio Cosso Asinio Agrippa consulibus Cremutius Cordus postulatur, novo ac tunc primum audito crimine, quod editis annalibus laudatoque M. Bruto C. Cassium Romanorum ultimum dixisset. accusabant Satrius Secundus et Pinarius Natta, Seiani clientes. (2) id perniciabile reo et Caesar truci vultu defensionem accipiens, quam Cremutius, relinquendae vitae certus, in hunc modum exorsus est: "verba mea, patres conscripti, arguuntur: adeo factorum innocens sum. sed neque haec in principem aut principis parentem, quos lex maiestatis amplectitur: Brutum et Cassium laudavisse dicor, quorum res gestas cum plurimi composuerint, nemo sine honore memoravit. (3) Titus Livius, eloquentiae ac fidei praeclarus in primis, Cn. Pompeium tantis laudibus tulit, ut Pompeianum eum Augustus appellaret; neque id amicitiae eorum offecit. Scipionem, Afranium, hunc ipsum Cassium, hunc Brutum nusquam latrones et parricidas, quae nunc vocabula imponuntur, saepe ut insigne<s> viros nominat. (4) Asinii Pollionis scripta egregiam eorundem memoriam tradunt; Messalla Corvinus imperatorem suum Cassium praedicabat: et uterque opibus[que] atque honoribus perviguere. Marci Ciceronis libro, quo Catonem caelo aequavit, quid aliud dictator Caesar quam rescripta oratione, velut apud iudices, respondit? (5) Antonii epistulae, Bruti contiones falsa quidem in Augustum probra, sed multa cum acerbitate habent; carmina Bibaculi et Catulli referta contumeliis Caesarum leguntur: sed ipse divus Iulius, ipse divus Augustus et tulere ista et reliquere, haud facile dixerim, moderatione magis an sapientia. namque spreta exolescunt: si irascare, adgnita videntur.

[35] Non attingo Graecos, quorum non modo libertas, etiam libido impunita; aut si quis advertit, dictis dicta ultus est. sed maxime solutum et sine obtrectatore fuit prodere de iis, quos mors odio aut gratiae exemisset. (2) num enim armatis Cassio et Bruto ac Philippensis campos optinentibus belli civilis causa populum per contiones incendo? an illi quidem septuagesimum ante annum perempti, quo modo imaginibus suis noscuntur, quas ne victor quidem abolevit, sic partem memoriae

[95] Woodman (1998: 134).

apud scriptores retinent? (3) suum cuique decus posteritas rependit; nec derunt, si damnatio ingruit, qui non modo Cassii et Bruti, sed etiam mei meminerint." (4) egressus dein senatu vitam abstinentia finivit. libros per aediles cremandos censuere patres; <s>ed manserunt, occultati et editi. (5) quo magis socordia<m> eorum inridere libet, qui praesenti potentia credunt exstingui posse etiam sequentis aevi memoriam. nam contra punitis ingeniis gliscit auctoritas, neque aliud externi reges aut qui eadem saevitia usi sunt nisi dedecus sibi atque illis gloriam peperere. (*Ann.* 4.34–5)

In the consulship of Cornelius Cossus and Asinius Agrippa, Cremutius Cordus was called up on the new charge, never before heard, that he had published annals and in them had praised Marcus Brutus and called Gaius Cassius the last of the Romans. The accusers were Satrius Secundus and Pinarius Natta, clients of Sejanus. (2) That meant the end for the accused, as did Caesar's hostile expression as he listened to the defendant's speech, which Cremutius, who was already decided on leaving life behind, began in this fashion: "My words, members of the Senate, are on trial here, so innocent am I of any acts. And these words were not critical of the *princeps* or of his father, who are the parties protected under the treason law: I am said to have praised Brutus and Cassius, whose deeds, though they have been written of by many, have never been recorded without respect. (3) Titus Livius, quite preeminent as a stylist and an authority, extolled Gnaeus Pompeius with such praise that Augustus called him a Pompeian; and it did no damage to their friendship. Scipio, Afranius, and, yes, even the Cassius and the Brutus in question he nowhere calls bandits and parricides (words often used to describe them these days), but often refers to them as excellent men. (4) Asinius Pollio's writings transmit an outstanding memory of these men, and Messalla Corvinus called him 'his general': both of these men flourished on, in wealth and honors. And to Marcus Cicero's book, in which he raised Cato to the stars, what other reaction did the dictator Caesar offer besides a speech written in response, as though before a jury? (5) Antony's letters and Brutus' speeches contain abuse of Augustus that is, to be sure, false, but quite caustic nonetheless; the poems of Bibaculus and Catullus, which are crammed with insults to the Caesars, are read: but even the Divine Julius, even the Divine Augustus not only endured them but let them be, whether with greater moderation or sagacity, I could not easily say. For what you ignore fades away; if you react in anger, it seems to be acknowledged.

[35] And I do not even bring up the Greeks: not only did freedom of expression go unpunished among them, but also licentiousness; or, if someone did take note, he avenged words with words. The act that was most free of consequences and without critics, though, was to write of those whom death had exempted from hatred or favor. (2) Are Cassius and Brutus in arms and occupying the field at Philippi, and am I inciting the populace to civil war in public harangues? Or do those men, dead now for seventy years, just as they are known by their *imagines*, which not even the victor effaced, in the same way keep a part of their memory among authors? (3) To each posterity deals out the honor that is his; nor, if a verdict of 'guilty' threatens, will there be lacking those who will remember not only Cassius and Brutus but

me as well." (4) Then he left the Senate and committed suicide by starvation. The Senate decreed the aediles should burn his books; but they survived, hidden and published. (5) It is therefore all the more agreeable to mock the folly of those who imagine power in the present can extinguish the memory of the following age as well. For talents who have been subjected to punishment see their authority increase, and foreign kings (or those who have exercised the same savagery as they) have effected nothing but disgrace for themselves and glory for the writers.

The charge

The way in which Tacitus frames this trial turns a martyr who had written a history into a martyred historian: "C. Cassius, last of the Romans." According to Tacitus, these words, included in Cremutius' history, constituted his primary offense, though he had also given Brutus laudatory treatment.[96] Other information, readily available, showed that there was more to it.[97] As we have seen, Cremutius had insulted Sejanus with witty jibes, and Sejanus had thrown him to his dogs; and, in his history, he had had harsh words for the Senate and people, and too little adulation of Caesar and Augustus (Sen. *Dial.* 6.22.4).[98] That he had not been charged under Augustus, or in the first decade of Tiberius' rule, would indeed seem to indicate that some newer consideration, not the books themselves, had brought matters to a head.[99] In fact, it seems as though no one had paid much attention to his work until he had taken other steps that drew the notice of the powerful; only then did the books become interesting and useful, as grounds for accusation.[100] In Dio, moreover, the history was the least lame pretext the accusers could devise (57.24.2): any other offense, real

[96] Such is the effect of referring to the praise of Brutus in an ablative absolute: cf. Canfora (1993: 225): "Direi . . . che, dal modo in cui Tacito si esprime, par chiaro che esaltare Cassio (ed in quei termini) era cosa ancora più riprovevole che 'lodare Bruto.'" *Pace* Hedrick (2000: 123), we do not learn from this trial, nor from the punishments of Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio, that "historians were not allowed to use certain names."

[97] See Suerbaum (1971: 69–70) and Bartsch (1994: 106).

[98] Cf. Cass. Dio 57.24.2–4. The canine imagery is Seneca's, not mine: *Dial.* 6.22.5.

[99] Augustus is said either to have heard the history recited (Suet. *Tib.* 61.3) or to have read it himself (Cass. Dio 57.24.3). Suerbaum (1971: 80–1) entertains but does not endorse the notion that Augustus saw only an expurgated version. I am not certain we should assume that Augustus read or listened to the whole thing (or will have wanted to!); a judicious selection of a book or books appropriate for his perusal would have been possible, and perhaps appreciated.

[100] Something similar appears to have happened with Herennius Senecio. His prosecution for treason by Mettius Carus, which led to the burning of his *exitus* of Helvidius Priscus (Plin. *Ep.* 7.19.5), looks like a reprisal for the prosecution of Baebius Massa (Plin. *Ep.* 7.33.7); in that case, the *exitus* would have been not the cause but the pretext. Dio's epitomator (Cass. Dio 67.13.2) lists as the causes for killing Herennius both the *Life of Priscus* and his having stopped holding office after the quaestorship.

or fictitious, would have done as well, but the unassailable evidence of a published, circulated work was convenient.[101] In other circumstances Tacitus might jump at the chance to contrast pretext with true motive; but here, to judge solely from the information he gives, Sejanus' aim actually was to punish Cremutius for praising Brutus and Cassius.[102] He also abandons his regular insistence that Tiberius' face was no guide to his thoughts.[103] Likewise, the Senate's eventual verdict will owe nothing to resentment of his hard words for that body (Cass. Dio 57.24.3) but only to Sejanus' weight and Tiberius' evident prejudice ("Caesar's hostile expression as he listened to the defendant's speech," *Ann.* 4.34.2).[104] While Tacitus notes that the prosecutors were Sejanus' clients, Tiberius is clearly the real critic in the room: the prefect might have been focused on an insult (if a reader happened to know about it, via the *Consolatio ad Marciam* or something else) but the *princeps* was plainly angry at the history. Above all, this case will not be like that of Cassius Severus, who was widely agreed to have crossed the line from *libertas* to *licentia* (from "candor" to "slander," almost) in defaming prominent figures (*Ann.* 1.72.3; cf. 4.21.3).

Tacitus also omits to tell us how old the work was in 25 CE: as noted above, it had been around for more – possibly much more – than a decade, but, to judge from our historian, prosecution might well have followed publication immediately.[105] The defendant himself is complicit in this. Although he spends about half of his speech (*Ann.* 4.34.3–5) listing examples of the tolerance that Julius Caesar and (especially) Augustus exercised when faced with critical writings, he nonetheless obligingly refrains from the obvious step of referring to Augustus', to say nothing of Tiberius', toleration of his *own* book, even though that information would have been immensely useful for pleading innocence as well as for condemning the process.[106] What is more, if there was an approach you could rely on to sway Tiberius, it was adducing the precedent of his divine parent, as he is to remind us shortly: he says he "observes the precedent of all that [Augustus] did and said as though it were law" (*omnia facta dictaque eius vice legis observem*, 4.37.3).[107]

[101] Indeed, at least in theory, sanctions against a book need not have been directed against its contents; rather, since your literary production was part of your "monument to posterity," its effacement or defacement was an appropriate way to punish an author whether or not his books were offensive.

[102] Suerbaum (1971: 70).

[103] On Tiberius' face, see Bloomer (1997a: 154–95).

[104] Cf. Devillers (1994: 233).

[105] Canfora (1993: 229).

[106] Cremutius' failure to mention his own publication under Augustus makes problematic the assertion of Moles (1998) that "Cordus' speech aims to embarrass Tiberius *qua* monarch by conveying that the right way to respond to Republican manifestations is to be less monarchical, as Caesar and Augustus, Tiberius' predecessors, had managed to be under similar circumstances."

[107] Of course, Tiberius' failure to follow Augustus' precedent in Cremutius' trial makes this statement either disingenuous or delusional.

If we add to the story the information Tacitus excludes, historiography enters the picture only tangentially. Without it, however, the affair of Cremutius is a clear instance of the regime taking the content of a history seriously enough to harm a historian and to destroy his work. One Cremutius punished for his book was worth more as a predecessor to Tacitus than ten Asinius Pollios or Messalla Corvinuses, authors who, as Cremutius is about to remind us, "flourished on, in wealth and honors" (***opibus atque honoribus*** *perviguere*, *Ann*. 4.34.4).[108] For attentive readers, at least, that phrase recalls Tacitus' remarks at *Ann*. 1.2.1 on how the Augustan regime came to be:

cum ferocissimi per acies aut proscriptione cecidissent, ceteri nobilium, quanto quis servitio promptior, *opibus et honoribus* extollerentur.

[no one opposed Augustus' assumption of all functions of state] since those who were most defiant had died in battle or in the proscriptions, and, as for the rest of the nobility, the faster one was to descend to servitude, the higher one was exalted with *wealth and honors*.

Tiberius' angry countenance, too, as clear proof of the seriousness with which he took historiography, was better than the placidity of Nerva, Trajan, and possibly Hadrian, all of whom had failed to set the seal of integrity and credibility on Tacitus' works by trying to suppress them.

Restricting Cremutius' offense to his history alone has a further, important effect. As we have seen, he interested Seneca because he signified a "global" sort of *libertas*, in writing and in practice, in life and in death. Essential to that construction was his public insult to Sejanus expressed in response to a decree that was being put through at the time (*decernebatur*, "was then being decreed"): in his books he exercised *libertas* about the past, but when his fellow Romans were being treated tyrannically in the present, Cremutius could not be *tacitus*, "quiet," then, either (Sen. *Dial*. 6.22.4). When the story of his punishment hinges on the books alone, however, he becomes an *exemplum* of a purely textual *libertas*: in this model, to have written a history that appeared to exercise *libertas* was enough to bring you up to par with the martyr. For the Cremutius of *Annals*, his book is not the culmination and distillation of a life of *libertas*; it *is* the life of *libertas*.

[108] Pollio could be construed in two ways: he could be either an independent voice who had shown courage by abandoning the *partes*, or a compliant coward who had not died for the Republic.

Tacitus and the Cremutian tradition

Tacitus seeks to make himself part of a "Cremutian" tradition, as though he, the tyrannicides, and the martyred historian stood on a single continuum.[109] Brutus and Cassius are to Cremutius what Cremutius is to Tacitus. For Cremutius pronounces that, if he is convicted, "there will not be lacking people to remember not only Cassius and Brutus but me as well" (*Ann.* 4.35.3).[110] The text we have before us is patently the memorialization of himself that Cremutius had predicted: as he had tended to the memory of his subjects, so Tacitus has tended to that of his.[111] Tacitus draws one lesson – that future memory cannot be extinguished by present power – that agrees with Cremutius' assertion that future ages will remember Cassius, Brutus, and himself, and another – that authors, if punished, gain in authority – that echoes Cremutius' observation that hostile attention to histories only gives them credit and cachet.[112] Both historians also lament that perverse readers have failed to recognize an accepted distinction between how you should read older, and how you should read recent, history. Through this "hall of mirrors" effect, Tacitus alludes to his own future: "In recounting from the past Cremutius' inspiring defence, Tacitus anticipates his own epitaph in the future. People will remember him after his death, just as they now remember Cremutius."[113] But this is not merely an epitaph; it is also a warning: an attack on any book (including Tacitus') can only have the opposite result to the desired one – better not even to try. Syme and many others have taken this as Tacitus' warning to contemporaries, especially the *princeps*, to leave him and his books alone, and they may well be right.[114] All the same, we should attend to other possibilities. The technique warns off the hostile tyrant. Yet it also alerts any reader that Tacitus expects the tyrant to be offended, and that the stakes of *Annals* are so high that he has had to take measures to defend his book. Indeed, if we draw analogies from Cremutius' career to Tacitus', since the last words we hear from Cremutius before his condemnation are just the sort of warning Tacitus himself gives,

[109] See also Marincola (1997: 252): "The line of predecessors in which Cremutius places himself can be seen as Tacitus' own attempt to be seen, via this character, as the continuator of that same line."

[110] I assume here that Cremutius' speech is Tacitus' free composition; that is also the conclusion reached in the thorough analysis of Suerbaum (1971).

[111] Suerbaum (1971: 93), Luce (1991: 2922).

[112] On Tacitus' "endors[ing] Cremutius's point about the futility of suppression," see Clarke (2002: 97).

[113] McCulloch (1991: 2933).

[114] Syme (1958: 517): "Tacitus was writing about the time of Tiberius, he recalled Domitian – and he was not oblivious of the present."

we might imagine that the next step after Tacitus publishes *Annals* is that he will be put on trial in the Senate.

On avenging Cremutius

The third panel of what Cancik-Lindemaier and Cancik aptly call a "triptych" – *Ann*. 4.32–3, 4.34–5, and Tiberius' speech in *Ann*. 4.37–8 – presents Tacitus as Cremutius' avenger.[115] Through the medium of historiography, he exacts from Tiberius revenge for his persecution of Cremutius much as Pliny styles himself the avenger of the younger Helvidius (*Ep*. 9.13; see the discussion in chapter 1), and at comparable risk. When Pliny began to take on Publicius Certus in the Senate, he says, a consular friend came to him and urged him to relent: he would make himself notable to future *principes* – into what dangers was he rushing, headlong and heedless (*Ep*. 9.13.10–11)? To avenge Helvidius is to take his place in the world – to assume his friends and enemies – and to invite his fate, by bringing yourself to the angry attention of the powerful. Pliny's characterization of Helvidius' conduct under Domitian ("because of fear generated by political conditions, he was concealing in retirement his gigantic name and his equally grand virtues," [*metu temporum nomen ingens paresque virtutes secessu tegebat*, §3]) provides a blueprint for his own supposed peril: just as the risk to Helvidius was due at once to his being the namesake of his martyred father and to his own virtues, so Pliny as avenger will take on both the risks of solidarity with Helvidius and those inherent in his own excellence. Although he assures us the danger was quite real, he survived his act of courage and succeeded in his vengeance. His anecdote is not complete till we learn a macabre fact, of which he is proud:

> accidit fortuitum, sed non tamquam fortuitum, quod editis libris Certus intra paucissimos dies implicitus morbo decessit. (25) audivi referentes hanc imaginem menti eius hanc oculis oberrasse, tamquam videret me sibi cum ferro imminere. verane haec, adfirmare non ausim; interest tamen exempli, ut vera videantur. (§§24–5)

> It was a chance occurrence – but totally *unlike* a chance occurrence – that, once I had published the books [sc. *On the Avenging of Helvidius*], after the elapse of a mere few days, Certus died, in the grip of an illness. (25) I heard some say an image hovered before his mind, before his eyes, even: me, standing over him, blade in hand. I would not venture to say whether this is true, but it is better for the exemplary force of the story that it should seem to be so.

[115] Cancik-Lindemaier and Cancik (1986: 17).

The story's appeal lies in the completeness of the revenge. Certus had caused Helvidius' death; while Pliny's speech had only cost Certus his consulship (§§22–3), his book of vengeance had actually killed him – or it might as well have. Pliny is quite clear about the advantages of a prudently adopted pet project of vengeance: "after Domitian was killed, I thought things over and made a personal decision, that there was now a great, and becoming, opportunity for hounding the guilty, defending the defenseless, and bettering one's own position" (*occiso Domitiano statui mecum ac deliberavi, esse magnam pulchramque materiam insectandi nocentes, miseros vindicandi, se proferendi*, §2).

We may think of Tacitus' depiction of Tiberius in similar terms: *Annals* kills the posthumous reputation the *princeps* hoped for. Tiberius' speech at *Ann*. 4.37.2–38.3 exists in order to attribute to him an ambition Tacitus can in turn destroy, so that he can position himself as the successful avenger of Cremutius.

Per idem tempus Hispania ulterior missis ad senatum legatis oravit, ut exemplo Asiae delubrum Tiberio matrique eius exstrueret. qua occasione Caesar, validus alioqui spernendis honoribus et respondendum ratus iis, quorum rumore arguebatur in ambitionem flexisse, huiusce modi orationem coepit: (2) "scio, patres conscripti, constantiam meam a plerisque desideratam, quod Asiae civitatibus nuper idem istud petentibus non sim adversatus. (3) ergo et prioris silentii defensionem, et quid in futurum statuerim, simul aperiam. cum divus Augustus sibi atque urbi Romae templum apud Pergamum sisti non prohibuisset, qui omnia facta dictaque eius vice legis observem, placitum iam exemplum promptius secutus sum, quia cultui meo veneratio senatus adiungebatur. ceterum ut semel recepisse veniam habuerit, ita per omnes provincias effigie numinum sacra<ri> ambitiosum, superbum; et vanescet Augusti honor, si promiscis adulationibus vulgatur.

[38] Ego me, patres conscripti, mortalem esse et hominum officia fungi satisque habere, si locum principem impleam, et vos testor et meminisse posteros volo; qui satis superque memoriae meae tribuent, ut maioribus meis dignum, rerum vestrarum providum, constantem in periculis, offensionum pro utilitate publica non pavidum credant. (2) haec mihi in animis vestris templa, hae pulcherrimae effigies et mansurae. nam quae saxo struuntur, si iudicium posterorum in odium vertit, pro sepulchris spernuntur. (3) proinde socios cives et [deos et] deos ipsos precor, hos ut mihi ad finem usque vitae quietam et intellegentem humani divinique iuris mentem duint, illos ut, quandoque concessero, cum laude et bonis recordationibus facta atque famam nominis mei prosequantur." (4) perstititque posthac secretis etiam sermonibus aspernari talem sui cultum. quod alii modestiam, multi, quia diffideret, quidam ut degeneris animi interpretabantur. (5) optimos quippe mortalium altissima cupere; sic Herculem et Liberum apud Graecos, Quirinum apud nos deum numero additos. melius Augustum, qui speraverit. cetera principibus statim

adesse: unum insatiabiliter parandum, prosperam sui memoriam; nam contemptu famae contemni virtutes. (*Ann.* 4.37–8)

During this same time, Further Spain sent to the Senate representatives asking that, following the example of Asia, the province might build a temple to Tiberius and to his mother. On this occasion Caesar, at other times a vigorous decliner of honors, and supposing he had to respond to those by whose rumblings he was being accused of having become ambitious, gave a speech like this: (2)"Well do I know, conscript fathers, that many have found my resolve wanting, in that I did not oppose the cities of Asia when they recently made this same request. (3) I shall therefore reveal to you at a stroke both my defence of my earlier silence and what my policy will be for the future. Since the Divine Augustus did not prevent the establishment at Pergamon of a temple to himself and the city of Rome, I, who observe all that he did and said as though it were law, followed this already thus approved example all the more readily for the reason that veneration of the Senate was to be attached to the worship of me: but though to have accepted this once will be pardoned, to be consecrated throughout all the provinces with the images of the gods is ambitious and proud; and the honor to Augustus will become empty if it is made common by indiscriminate flattery.

I call you to witness, conscript fathers, and I wish those who come after us to remember, that I am a mortal man, that I perform a human function, and that I am satisfied if I fill the chief role. Future generations will do justice and more than justice to my memory if they believe that I was worthy of my ancestors, that I took care of your interests, that I was steadfast in times of danger, and that I was not afraid of offense when the public interest was at stake. (2) These thoughts will be my temples, in your hearts; these, my fairest and lasting statues. For those that are built of rock, if posterity's judgment of you turns to hatred, are spurned as though they were tombs. (3) I therefore entreat allies, citizens, and the gods themselves: the latter, that even unto the end of my days they endow me with a peaceful mind that comprehends the law of gods and humans; the former, that, on that date when I shall have departed, they follow my deeds and reputation with praise and memories of good." (4) And after this he continued, even in intimate conversation, to spurn such worship of himself. Some understood this as modesty; many as diffidence; and certain persons interpreted it as a sign of ignoble character, (5) saying that the most excellent mortals wished that which was highest; that that was how Hercules and Liber, among the Greeks, and Quirinus, among us, had been included in the number of the gods: Augustus had done better, who had hoped for it. Everything else, they said, a *princeps* could have as soon as he liked; one thing alone required untiring preparation – a favorable memory of himself: despising repute is despising virtue. (*Ann.* 4.37–8)

Others have commented that Tiberius' thoughts on his own posthumous memory bear some relation to the preceding thoughts of Tacitus and

Cremutius on historiography.[116] While at the conclusion of his report of Cremutius' trial Tacitus dismisses book burning as a vain and laughable attempt to snuff out the memory that later generations would receive, Tiberius' speech centers on what kind of memory of himself he would like later generations to receive. The *princeps*' attempt to suppress Cremutius' history and his refusal of divine honors outline a contest between himself and Tacitus over what posterity will remember.[117] After excusing the existing temple at Pergamon by pointing to Augustus' precedent, Tiberius turns to the future. As he opened his oration, it looked as though he meant to explain his past actions (which he has just now done) and also to declare a policy on divine honors (*quid in futurum statuerim*, "what my plans are [for my practice] for [further such occasions in] the future," 4.37.3). As he continues past his "defence," those words take on an additional cast: "what my plans are [for my reputation] for [ages in] the future." For while he does obliquely appear to establish a policy – that is, regular refusal of divine honors – the rest of his speech is really about how he wishes to be remembered.

When we begin the speech, we think that we know what is going on. The dilemma Tiberius faces is this: the cost of any flattery he receives from provincials will be subtracted from his contemporary repute at Rome and from his future repute alike. With good reason, then, he seems to frame as a choice what he well knows to be a trade: it is enough for him to be remembered as first among mortals, and as a stalwart defender of the interests of his fellow Romans; more than that, he does not desire. What is then an act of interested moderation (to secure the civic repute he would lose if he accepted the provincial repute of divine honors) is passed off as a disinterested one ("I could have had both, but I prefer to have only the civic sort") because if he admitted there was a necessary trade-off, he would imply that he had in fact wanted these honors and had sacrificed them in the interests of civic repute, and open calculation of this sort would

[116] See Cancik-Lindemaier and Cancik (1986), Martin and Woodman (1989 ad loc.), Luce (1991: 2925), and Moles (1998). For the most part, however, scholars have viewed *Ann.* 4.32–5 as a discrete unit.

[117] Moles (1998): "will Cordus' death and the burning of his books destroy his memory and the chances of history making their condemnation [of Tiberius] stick? No – because Cordus' successor and commemorator, Tacitus himself, 'records' the whole story. Then Tiberius's speech again raises the question of his memory. His rejection of divine honours and desire for unfeigned approbation closes with the words (4.38.3): *quandoque concessero, cum laude et bonis recordationibus facta atque famam nominis mei prosequantur* (sc. 'allies and citizens') . . . Not only will any reader recall the rejoicing with which Tiberius' death was actually greeted . . . but *bonis recordationibus* is undermined by our memory of Tiberius' treatment of CORDUS (with all Cordus' many different aspects). Cordus' *decus* again underlines Tiberius' *dedecus*. The memory of the virtuous triumphs."

destroy the very civic repute he is trying to cultivate. For this reason, we think, he insists that divine honors are empty unless accompanied by a truly affectionate memory in the hearts of your fellow citizens and of later generations.

All of this has the ring of Tiberian dissimulation, and it seems like a prime spot for a Tacitean demolition of his motives: the phrase "arrogant modesty" (*adroganti moderatione*, *Ann*. 1.8.5) would work as well here as anywhere.[118] Surprisingly, however, Tacitus goes out of his way to affirm the sincerity of his sentiments. He tells us Tiberius kept rejecting the idea of divine honors even in his private conversations. A report of what a *princeps* said away from the public scene is the closest the historian can give us to what that *princeps* really thought, as opposed to what political circumstances demanded.[119] We are, then, given strong encouragement to believe that Tiberius rejects divine cult not because it could only be achieved at the cost of civic repute, but because civic repute was all he really wanted in the first place.[120]

In that desire he is frustrated: no one will sustain that what Tiberius receives in *Annals* is the memory he outlines in *Ann*. 4.38. The images of him we have seen most recently at this point are not appealing.[121] There is also the general picture of the *princeps* drawn in the Tiberian books as a whole.[122] He is a tyrant unwilling to acknowledge the fact of his own tyranny, duplicitous and inscrutable, forever spying, distorting, and manipulating. He is ferocious and depraved, but pitiable, too, and frail. Both his fearsome and perverse exercise of power and his anxious insecurities form the substance of the memory Tacitus preserves. Upon dying, he gets a necrology: in his last years the fear and the sense of shame that had once

[118] Cancik-Lindemaier and Cancik (1986: 23–4).

[119] Cf. the discussion of Germanicus and Galba in chapter 1.

[120] Sinclair (1995: 112) thinks that Tacitus would have us see the cynicism of Tiberius' statements here; the appeal to the *secreti sermones*, though, tends in the opposite direction.

[121] At *Ann*. 4.33.3 the history of his principate was briefly characterized as follows: *saeva iussa, continuas accusationes, fallaces amicitias, perniciem innocentium et easdem exitii causas*. At *Ann*. 4.35.5 Tiberius is implied to have exercised the same kind of viciousness that foreign kings do – and foreign kings, of course, are the people for whom the ruler cult that Tiberius spurns was invented. In light of the trial of Cremutius, Tiberius' wish to be remembered as "unafraid of offense" is absurd. And as we leave the account of Tiberius' speech on his *memoria*, things do not seem to be looking up: any story that begins "But Sejanus . . ." augurs no good (*Ann*. 4.39.1). That very paragraph then goes on to reveal a strikingly uncivic fact about Tiberius: *moris . . . tum erat quamquam praesentem scripto adire* (§1). If Tiberius wishes to be remembered as he describes, he nonetheless does nothing in the immediate vicinity of this report to deserve such a memory.

[122] On this popular subject, see Walker (1952: 208–12 and *passim*), Syme (1958: 420–30), Knoche (1963), Shotter (1968), Seager (1972: 260–2), Martin and Woodman (1989: 27–33), Christes (1994), Griffin (1995), and Woodman (2006b).

inhibited his bad nature had fallen away, and all that was left was crime, and disgrace (*Ann*. 6.51.3).[123] So end the Tiberian books of *Annals*.

Annals is here condign punishment: it harms Tiberius by establishing forever his disgrace. One of the many ways in which he earned that disgrace was by persecuting Cremutius, which was also, so far as Tacitus is concerned, an attempt to control future memory. Tacitus pays him back in the same coin. Just as Tiberius' hostile expression as he listened to Cremutius' defense-speech (*Caesar truci vultu* ***defensionem*** *accipiens*, 4.34.2) meant he had already made up his mind, and Cremutius' words would avail him nothing, so now Tacitus gives Tiberius' defense-speech (***defensionem***, 4.37.2) a hearing, but he already knows what his verdict will be.[124] The corrective the *princeps* sought to impose in Cremutius' case – the elimination of good memories of Brutus, Cassius, and Cremutius – is now itself corrected by Tacitus' rejection of good memories of Tiberius.

In order to grasp how complete historiography's triumph has been, it helps us to hear that the wishes Tiberius professed for his own memory were true. Thanks to the boundary between present and future, a boundary "present power" (*Ann*. 4.35.5) cannot cross, the very incarnation of that power is frustrated in his heart's wish to be remembered as a *civilis princeps*. One group of interpreters, Tacitus says, reflected on his refusal to receive divine honors in this way: "Everything else . . . a *princeps* could have as soon as he liked; one thing alone required untiring preparation – a favorable memory of himself" (4.38.5). The larger argument within which the statement occurs is misguided: the group seems to think allowing divine cult would have served Tiberius' memory.[125] But the gnome itself is unobjectionable, and relevant. In the one area in which success was not automatic, he had failed, and his reputation had gone to ruin. For this reason, Tiberius' sentiments do not fall into the category of what Henderson usefully calls "Imperial jabber."[126] For it is only if we take them seriously that Tacitus can also cut him to the quick by withholding what he wants. At the end of the trial, as Moles observes, Tacitus "enjoys laughing in the face of (*inridere libet*) those" (obviously including Tiberius) "who think present power can steal the memory of succeeding ages"; here, he has another laugh in Tiberius' face (for his fierce expression cannot harm Tacitus, as it had Cremutius), and when he does, we know it hurts.[127] As Seneca's Cremutius

[123] Gowing (2005: 64–5) points to the sources' evocation of the unpleasant associations of the place of Tiberius' death, Lucullus' villa at Misenum.

[124] Moles (1998) notes the echo. [125] Luce (1991: 2925–6). [126] J. Henderson (1989: 177).

[127] Moles (1998) connects Tacitus' laughter with Tiberius' expression. I would put less emphasis on the liberating quality of the laughter and more on the violence it does to Tiberius (*inridere* is, after all, "to mock").

had done, as Cicero's *Philippics* had done, so too does Tacitus "proscribe the proscribers" (Sen. *Dial.* 6.26.1).

The speech of Tiberius also matters in another regard. For as Tiberius proved with his angry expression his hatred of Cremutius and his history, so by confirming that he truly wants to be remembered as a good *princeps* he shows how concerned he is about his place in future Roman historiography – how concerned he is, in short, about *Annals*. At least to a degree, Tiberius here can stand for *principes* in general, since the interpreters who close the account draw conclusions that bear not just on Tiberius but on the position of *princeps*: "Everything else . . . a *princeps* could have as soon as he liked" (*Ann.* 4.38.5). Far from being tangential to the regime's concerns, historiography is central to the interests of any *princeps*, and so never negligible.

Annals *in the fire*

Through this program of vengeance, and in the other senses we have surveyed, Tacitus draws *Annals* close to Cremutius, and Cremutius to *Annals*. There were, however, obvious, important differences between Cremutius' memorialization of Cassius and Tacitus' of Cremutius, and these present rhetorical difficulties. Praise of the tyrannicides, though not always punished, could invite trouble. They were clearly *personae non gratae*, and the previous book of *Annals* ends with the famous report of the funeral of Junia, Brutus' sister and Cassius' wife, at which their *imagines* were made conspicuous by their absence (*Ann.* 3.76).[128] It was safer to align yourself with Cremutius: his works were out of circulation not much more than a decade, and, when they appeared again, it was by leave of the regime (Sen. *Dial.* 6.1.3; Suet. *Cal.* 16.1). His memory stood under no sanction, and nothing indicates that it was dangerous under Trajan or Hadrian to broach the subject of a long-dead historian; he had been acceptable under Caligula (witness Seneca) and Domitian (witness Quintilian), even if bits of his work had not been.[129] In including him, *Annals* ran no risk comparable to what Cremutius' work had done in praising Brutus and Cassius. Tacitus' repeated suggestion of his own solidarity with Cremutius, and judicious

[128] For the later tradition on the memory of Cassius and Brutus, see Rawson (1986).

[129] Adherence to Cassius, by contrast, had remained problematic even under Nero: C. Cassius Longinus was sent into exile in part for his special reverence for the *imago* of his ancestor, which was inscribed "*duci partium*" (*Ann.* 16.7.2). But even this was in the extraordinary circumstances of the post-Pisonian conspiracy months of 65 CE.

selectivity in his portrayal of him, attempt to counteract these discernible differences.

Moles writes that

> Because of [the] parallelisms [between Tacitus and Cremutius] Tacitus can at once be (as it were) "attracted" into the category of "punished talents", but it is also objectively true that his own libertarian historiographical writings were silenced during the tyranny of Domitian . . . and that such fellow historians as Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio who did produce work under Domitian were indeed punished.[130]

This is precisely the conclusion *Annals* wishes us to draw about its author, but look how much *apologia* we need to use here if we are to equate him with these other writers. In essence, it requires us to ignore the difference between the contrafactual condition "if Tacitus had published under Domitian, he would have been punished" and the factual sentence "because Tacitus published under Domitian, he was punished." The very existence of *Agricola* shows that, in the eyes of the reading public, there was a world of difference between the men who had spoken up and died and those who had remained silent and survived. In the same way as (as we saw in chapter 2) Tacitus must argue that Domitian all but killed Agricola and (as in chapter 1) Pliny means us to see that he was all but singled out for persecution during the Domitianic terror, so too Tacitus asks us to believe that *Annals* was all but burned. We might have explained the existence of *Annals* and its availability for our consumption by inferring that the regime liked it, or that the author had compromised his books to avoid the regime's ire. We might also have taken his literary career as an abandonment of claims to political consequence. His alliance with Cremutius attacks those suspicions directly. From the point of view of *Ann.* 4.32–8, *Annals* exists not because Tacitus has compromised his books in order to protect his life or to win favor from the regime, nor because the regime could afford to ignore him. Rather, it came into being in the first place because Tacitus, like Cremutius, had written his book, consequences be damned; or, to put it in the terms of "Cicero's choice," Tacitus had chosen his books over his life. It was only his spectacular rhetorical skill – his execution of "figured speech," his successful deflection of hostile readers, and his warning that there will

[130] Moles (1998); see also: "Given the intrinsic parallels between Cordus and Tacitus (both being historians, annalists, encomiasts of Brutus and Cassius, in some sense anti-imperial and on trial, Cordus literally so, Tacitus metaphorically (4.33.4)), Cordus' arguments must say something about Tacitus' own position and about the general tradition to which both belong." Cf. also Edwards (2007: 140–1).

be future Tacituses to proscribe his proscribers – that has permitted him to have both his life and his books.

Cremutius' decorum

Now, given the broader program of identifying Cremutius and Tacitus, it is only to be expected that Cremutius' speech about historiography should sound like Tacitus' recent remarks on the genre. Although, as we have seen, part of the strategy of *Annals* has been to appropriate the biographical sheen of Cremutius, his appearance in the work conforms quite strictly to the decorum of Tacitean historiography. This feature of the text is directly related to real difficulties involved in making Cremutius' outspoken, punished book and enforced suicide equivalent to Tacitus' decorous, unpunished book and survival.

Before Cremutius speaks, Tacitus informs us of his state of mind: he was *relinquendae vitae certus*, "decided on leaving life behind" (*Ann*. 4.34.2). As has often been observed, this information condemns the process: he had decided on suicide because the verdict was a foregone conclusion, and, if the conclusion was foregone, the trial was a sham.[131] But its effects are more significant than that. Suerbaum shows what is at stake: "[the defence-speech of Cremutius acquires] because of his determination to die the status of significant 'last words of a dying man.'"[132] A dying man's pronouncement is interesting because, like Dickinson's "look of Agony," you "know it's true." With the worst possible consequence already inevitable, there is no reason for the speaker to say anything other than what he really thinks.[133]

For example, in his account of the Pisonian conspiracy, Tacitus reports the arrest and execution of the military tribune Subrius Flavus:

postquam urgebatur, confessionis gloriam amplexus interrogatusque a Nerone, quibus causis ad oblivionem sacramenti processisset, "oderam te" inquit; "nec quisquam tibi fidelior militum fuit, dum amari meruisti: odisse coepi, postquam parricida matris et uxoris, auriga et histrio et incendiarius extitisti." (3) ipsa rettuli verba, quia non, ut Senecae, vulgata erant, nec minus nosci decebat militaris viri sensus incomptos et validos. nihil in illa coniuratione gravius auribus Neronis accidisse constitit, qui ut faciendis sceleribus promptus, ita audiendi quae faceret insolens erat. (*Ann*. 15.67.2–3)

[131] Canfora (1993: 245).

[132] Suerbaum (1971: 72); my translation. Pagán (2000: 366) takes this phrase "to emphasize the death, and so the futility, of Cremutius."

[133] For the same reason, Romans considered a will an incomparable index of the testator's true feelings: Champlin (1991: 9–11).

Then, when he was being tortured, he embraced the glory of a confession and, asked by Nero why he had gone so far as to forget his oath, "I hated you," he said, "and there was no soldier more loyal to you than I, so long as you deserved to be loved: I began to hate you when you turned out to be a parricide of your mother and your wife, a charioteer, an actor, and an arsonist." (3) I have quoted his words exactly, because, unlike those of Seneca, they were not widely circulated, and it is no less suitable that the unrefined and forceful words of a soldier be known. It was agreed that in that conspiracy nothing more upsetting had reached Nero's ears than this, for, ready though he was to commit crimes, he was not accustomed to hearing about them.

Subrius' decision to die here means Nero can no longer elicit fiction in exchange for life and, deprived of the power to influence what the tribune says, is given an unsettling dose of truth.[134]

Death (of either a writer or a *princeps*) was generally held to ensure the independence of a history: the elder Pliny kept his history under wraps, to be published posthumously (*Nat. praef.* 20).[135] Likewise, it was well known that if you wanted to speak your mind on certain matters, it was better to wait until you or the *princeps* was dead. For reasons that are unclear, Livy ensured Books 121–42 of his history were published after the death of Augustus.[136] More pertinently, Labienus, whom we encountered above, had pronounced, somewhat histrionically, that the parts of his history he would not read in public could be read after his death (Sen. *Con.* 10 *praef.* 8). If death marks the boundary between truth and dissimulation, and Cremutius is as good as dead, then we approach his speech with the strong impression that it will reveal his true and full thoughts. Pronouncing before Cremutius' speech his determination to die, then, achieves an equivalent effect to that produced by vouching that even in private conversation Tiberius rejected the idea of divine honors for himself.

It is then something of a surprise to hear Cremutius actually speak. Although in the scholarly literature his oration is regularly hailed as a brave and eloquent defense of freedom of speech, it is actually quite banal and does not breathe candor but rather "figured speech." Once death is certain, there is no reason not to burn the whole house down, rhetorically speaking: the *princeps* is a slave-master; the Senate and the *equites* are slaves; the survival of the Republic is a lie; down with the king; up with the Senate. Tacitus'

[134] For the last words of Subrius, cf. Cass. Dio 62.24.2.

[135] See Flach (1973a: 63–4).

[136] The *periocha* refers to *libri CXXI qui editus post excessum Augusti dicitur*: discussion at Badian (1993: 23–8) and Canfora (1993: 189–201).

Cremutius, however, turns out to be quite decorous.[137] This is not what we expect from the heir of Brutus and Cassius, nor from an heir of Cicero, who had not pulled his punches with Antony, nor from what we know of Cremutius' history itself, nor even from Cremutius' everyday converse, in which he could not hold his tongue when confronted with Sejanus' outrageous conduct. Astonishingly – and the oddness of this has not been sufficiently noted, let alone explained – the Cremutius of *Annals* bothers to make the case for his own innocence, which would not be strange if he held out hope of acquittal but is positively paradoxical when we know he is "decided on leaving life behind" (*Ann*. 4.34.2). He argues that his supposed offense does not fall under treason law, that many authors had done precisely what he had without angering the *princeps*, that Caesar and Augustus had even put up with libel without resorting to oppressive measures: that is, "I did not commit a crime, but even if I did, it is a crime many others have committed with impunity, and furthermore, a punishment such as is proposed is unprecedented for this crime." In short, it is a proper defense speech in a proceeding in which "defense" is no longer a relevant concept. At this moment, when Cremutius can say whatever he likes, his innermost thoughts on his genre and on the Principate turn out to contain a great deal of legalistic ratiocination in support of acquittal. In this regard, the speech replicates Tacitus' own declarations that there is nothing expressly topical, and therefore nothing subversive, in his work.

The speech also reproduces Tacitus' doubled claim for the power of historiography, presenting it simultaneously as deeply consequential and as essentially peripheral to and insulated from the world of practice. The surface tendency of Cremutius' remarks is to deprecate the genre's power. His oration begins from the *logos/ergon* binary: "it is my words, conscript fathers, that are challenged: so innocent am I of any deeds" (*Ann*. 4.34.2). Deeds should be met with deeds, but words only with words: that is what Caesar had done with Cicero's *Cato*. For words are merely words, not deeds; they do not have consequences in the real world. True, *some* words might, but they would have to be very different from historiographical discourse: Cremutius' praise of Brutus and Cassius does not come as the men themselves prepare for war, but long after they have died; nor does it come in the political arena of an address to the assembled populace, but in a book-roll. This argument complements Tacitus' own insistence at *Ann*.

[137] Hence I hesitate to accept the view of Pagán (2004: 86) that the speeches of Subrius Flavus and of Cremutius are comparable in their brave candor.

4.33.4 that it is inappropriate to read *Annals* analogically to find criticism of oneself: the reader inclined to be offended is assured that *Annals* has no ambitions of impinging on contemporary society by distributing blame and criticism.

As has often been noted, however, as Cremutius argues for historiography's innocuousness, he also furnishes the materials for a more robust interpretation of the genre's potency.[138] That interpretation could be reached by taking the rhetorical questions seriously: Cremutius *is* in fact inciting the people to civil war, or something a lot like it; and the dead *do* keep a part of their memory in books, just as in their *imagines*.[139] The speech leaves just under the surface a historian's fondest ambitions: that a history is a political act, that it might cause people to act, and that it does keep people and their causes alive. Crucially, though, these ambitions are submerged in an argument that runs contrary to them, an argument according to which historical writing only bears concrete consequences when deranged powerful readers *treat* it as consequential and thereby bring down on themselves concrete disgrace which otherwise would not have befallen them ("what you ignore fades away; if you react in anger, it seems to be acknowledged," *Ann*. 4.34.5). This reprises Tacitus' own defensive maneuver at *Ann*. 4.33.4: in effect, those who are inclined to be on the historian's side and to agree with contemporary criticism are implicitly licensed to hear that criticism (though neither of our historians acknowledges that it is there), while those who would take offense at any such criticism are told clearly that the criticism does not exist but can be made to exist by their own perverse and self-condemning strategies of reading.

So, as Moles writes, "as regards its central claim that words are wholly distinct from deeds . . . Cordus' speech is an exercise in 'figured speech' – again like Tacitus' digression."[140] Yet, as a matter of dramatic plausibility, there is no reason for Cremutius to use "figured speech," which by its nature only makes sense when you hope to avoid harm at the hands of the powerful. When harm is already inevitable, Cremutius keeps talking about historiography in just the same way as a historian who does in fact have a

[138] Clarke (2002: 97): "On the one hand, Cremutius requires the historian to have some power at least to record and immortalise the acts of great men; on the other, he undercuts the importance of the past–present link by stressing their distinction . . . But . . . if historiography has no power, at least in the present and future, then it is strange that he wishes to become its theme himself."

[139] MacMullen (1966: 20): "To Cremutius' rhetorical question [about inciting the *populus*] . . . the answer given by his enemies was an inward 'yes' – 'yes' in the legally inexcusable but politically colorable sense that people likely to make trouble for the regime were to be sought among Cremutius' friends."

[140] Moles (1998).

lot to lose – Tacitus. This gives the impression that a historian martyred for his history, even when he was at liberty to say what he pleased, could come up with nothing more striking than Tacitus himself can say in his own voice. This impression has important effects. We might see the strategy as a means of authenticating the notion that historiography was not dangerous: if, freed from threats, the historian persisted in saying he had meant no ill, then there was no sense in persecuting other historians – for example, Tacitus – who themselves presumably meant no ill, either.

Yet there is a further, important set of considerations that prevents Tacitus' Cremutius from an outburst *à la* Subrius Flavus. The difference between Cremutian *libertas* and Tacitean silence could only embarrass: that is, the presence of Cremutius speaking freely and dangerously within an *Annals* that does not speak freely and dangerously would ruin by the contrast Tacitus' claims to his mantle, and to his desert of martyrdom. Tacitus is no less sensible than Valerius Maximus of the discourteous tendencies of unbridled *libertas*: you have to take care to keep it at arm's length, or it will hijack your work and take it in its own direction.[141] *That* Cremutius would stand out against the rest of *Annals* in the same way as the Cremutius who said the Theater of Pompey was dying stood out against his fellows, who were permitting Sejanus to clamber up on their necks. Instead, Tacitus' Cremutius is the one you would find in Quintilian's expurgated edition: *libertas* itself is absent, but what we already know about him allows his presence to refer to it, without its stealing the show. His speech is not degrading, but nor does it embrace and exploit the hopelessness of the situation; he does at the end achieve a *libertas*, but it is of the sort that caused Seneca to call him "free in hand" (*Dial.* 6.1.3) – that is, master of his own death – and not the sort that tells Tiberius precisely what is wrong with him, and with the state over which he presides.[142]

This speech thus indicates the serious rhetorical dilemma Cremutius posed. On one hand, he is a model whom Tacitus, or any sane historian, could not neglect: the tradition about him, and the culturally significant pattern his life fit so neatly, made an association with him immensely valuable.

On the other, he had actually conducted himself in risky ways, and you might well not want to do that yourself: your book, then, despite wanting

[141] Emphasized are the phrases indicating the refusal of *libertas* to "color inside the lines," as it were: V. Max. 6.2 *init.*, *libertatem autem vehementis spiritus dictis pariter et factis testatam ut non invitaverim, ita* ***ultro venientem*** *non excluserim. quae inter virtutem vitiumque posita, si salubri modo se temperavit, laudem,* ***si quo non debuit profudit****, reprehensionem meretur.*

[142] "Not degrading": Aubrion (1985: 611) notes, for example, that there is no *captatio benevolentiae*, the effort to secure the audience's goodwill that is conventional in forensic speeches.

to be closely associated with that of Cremutius, had in fact to behave quite differently from it. In other words, the task was to behave differently while appearing to behave identically. As we have seen above, Tacitus' response to this challenge is double: it is at once to make *Annals* appear dangerous, like Cremutius' history, by means of judicious deployment of the tropes of "figured speech" and to make Cremutius' conduct appear like Tacitus', by suppressing the traces of *libertas* that characterized Cremutius' history. By placing it immediately after his own programmatic remarks and at the beginning of the year, and indeed by including it at all, Tacitus does give the speech special prominence. I would submit, however, that the real contribution of Cremutius to *Annals* is his mere presence as an example of punished historiography. He unlocks the door to the considerable cultural value conferred by the "Cicero's choice" pattern, a pattern in which your books counted for your life, in fact were your life. The purpose of the speech is, paradoxically, to keep Cremutius from talking, to make him – for once – *tacitus*.

The way in which Tacitus presents Cremutius' death fits neatly with a larger pattern in which he presents his own work as competing with the characteristic representational modes of the regime. Within *Annals*, at least, the trial is an obvious attempt of the regime to control not empire, not civic space, but historiography itself. Vindicating the memory of Cremutius and destroying that of Tiberius shows the historian again able to dismiss the structures of domination constituted by the Principate and to attain, as writer and as social agent, transcendent autonomy: such, at least, is the impression the episode produces. But in this instance Tacitus has the proverbial tiger by the ears: unless handled with great care, Cremutius' memory, which was one of uncompromised *libertas* on the page and in life, stands to leave his own memory diminished, a drab Agricola next to the incandescent Thrasea. That vindication must therefore be attended by a vigorous rhetorical strategy that effaces the difference between the two historians.

In general, Tacitean historiography strains against the distinction between commemorator and commemorated, between writing and practice, between then and now. Among the frailties of historical narrative is that it depicts that which can no longer be changed; it is discourse, not action, but, as it is *about* action, it never fully loses the ambition that it can itself become action, that it can be words that do things. Indeed, the strong claim for its own importance that Tacitus' *œuvre* advances from time to time is that it can do something where other people, and other writers, have not been able. The Cremutius episode comes close to resolving that tension:

Tacitus and Cremutius (and Cremutius and Cassius) merge, time of writing and time about which you write bleed into each other, and writing about things becomes the same as doing them. It is in this sense that Cremutius' trial achieves the deepest justification of Tacitus' project. It was, or at least in Tacitus' hands it became, an episode in which the regime agreed that writing was equivalent to doing – for did not the verdict implicitly confess that Cremutius *was* in fact doing the equivalent of "inciting the populace to civil war in public harangues?" (*Ann*. 4.35.2) – and in which a man's reputation for a life of *libertas*, a life of not being a slave, could rest on his having written annals.

Conclusion: on knowing Tacitus

The Cremutius episode provides a way of approaching a couple of thoughts that I would like to set down in conclusion, both of which touch on ways in which modern readers are affected by the self that Tacitus' work constructs.

THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR

In the episode intersect the "programmatic" and "representational" aspects of Tacitean historiography around which I have organized my discussion: "programmatic" because the section focuses continuously on what *Annals*, and historiography, are for; "representational" because it is about the role of historians and histories within history and about the relations of historical actors to past or future works of history. The intersection is only especially evident here, however, and not unique. In fact, Tacitus' mode of representation, as we have seen, also regularly serves as an implicit argument about its own function and purpose: it is supposed to say something about the historian, and about his work, that he presents the city, or the empire, or the trial of Cremutius as he does and not otherwise. Conversely, his programmatic discussions of his own activity always situate his writing historically, within the peculiar set of political conditions within which it was produced, even if only to deny his work has been affected by those political conditions in any way. *Agricola* is the first voice of the post-Domitianic reawakening, a property from which the preface derives a lot of the work's significance; the preface of *Histories* intertwines the history of historiography with the history of political power at Rome, and then sets itself within that history of historiography; the discussion at *Ann*. 4.32–3 slyly leads us from the perils that *Annals* records to the perils it faces. Programmatic and representational so combine, I suggest, because of the biographical weight placed on Tacitus' *œuvre* from the beginning: one of the central functions of his work is to make an argument about his life, indeed, to create the impression that a historiographical career itself is a kind of life, a means of

doing things through books. As Curiatius Maternus says, "just as I perhaps can have some sort of effect in the pleading of cases, so I can with the reciting of tragedies" (*ego autem sicut in causis agendis efficere aliquid et eniti fortasse possum, ita recitatione tragoediarum*, *Dial.* 11.2).[1]

As we have seen, Roman enthusiasm for the martyrs is part of the background against which Tacitus configures his literary career. Their model describes the outer limit of prestige you could win by incurring the *princeps*' hostility, in the same way as Tacitus' career, as it would have been recorded on his funerary monument, represents the extreme, or very nearly the extreme, of the sort of honor you could get by consistently earning the regime's approval. In a sense, a historiographical life might let you have your cake and eat it, too, let you be a winner within the system while also projecting a prominent, public version of yourself that rejected that system and made no concessions to it. While Cremutius' trial and suicide is the moment in Tacitus' work at which the historian's career comes closest to seeming interchangeable with the martyrs', and in that sense represents the extreme of the biographical claims of Tacitus' work, it would feel highly appropriate if it fell near the end of the work, which it does not do at all, not even by a long shot: there were two more books of Tiberius' principate, six of Gaius' and Claudius', and at least three-and-a-half of Nero's.

But, as it is preserved, the ending of *Annals* is strikingly apposite, too. We have no idea whether or not Tacitus completed *Annals*, or even completed the last sentence, which comes in a description of the suicide of Thrasea Paetus: "and then, as the slowness of his death was bringing terrible suffering, turning to Demetrius . . ." (*post lentitudine exitus graves cruciatus adferente, obversis in Demetrium . . .* , *Ann.* 16.35.2). It is entirely possible that the book ends here because the exemplar of our manuscripts lost the succeeding pages, or I suppose Tacitus could simply have stopped writing for the day mid-sentence, only to have misfortune befall him before he could go back to work. Koestermann proposed that this marks the point at which Tacitus, dismayed at the carnage that inaugurated Hadrian's rule, took his own life after the model of Thrasea.[2] Obviously, barring a freak discovery, we will never know. I want to leave to the side the question whether *Annals* originally ended here, or whether Tacitus meant it to, and simply reflect

[1] The succeeding sentence *may* refer to Maternus' breaking Vatinius' power through a play (Bartsch [1994]: 200–2). The general preference for the interpretation of Stroux (1931), now enshrined in Mayer (2001 ad 11.2), is not altogether justified: see the arguments of Barwick (1954: 40–2).

[2] Koestermann (1965: 207–8). "Und vielleicht sind die Worte, mit denen das letzte Kapitel des 16. Buches jäh abbricht, die letzten gewesen, die er niederschrieb: Auch ihm mochte angesichts der Zeitgenössischen Erlebnisse der Gedanke an Iuppiter Liberator als Erlöser gekommen sein" (p. 208).

on how apposite this end is to the themes we have explored in this book. An important reason to suppose that this ending is the result of damage to the manuscript is the arbitrariness of the break: the narration is cut off unnaturally, in mid-story and mid-sentence, in a way that a reader cannot accept as deliberate. Yet that is only to say that the work itself bears marks of a violence that prevented the author from saying whatever he meant to say next; we may attribute that violence to the hardships to which manuscripts are subject, or we may place the time of that violence during the composition itself. The narrative context of the break, of course, points to a possible source of that violence: just as Thrasea's life is cut off before its time, and just as his words are silenced as he seems to be about to address Demetrius, so Tacitus' work is brought to an early end by a peremptory force, and he is kept from telling us what he clearly meant to. If you come to the end of *Annals* as it is and it does not for a moment occur to you that "maybe they got *him*, too" – not even for a moment, before you recover your sober judgment – then you may not have been paying attention. In retrospect, this end can serve to confirm the validity of the connection between Tacitus and the martyrs that Cremutius embodied: here, Cremutius' intermediary function simply falls away, no longer useful, and the lives of Thrasea and Tacitus converge at the very moment at which they are cut off with the same stroke. Yet observe that the end of Tacitus' work does not, technically, coincide with Thrasea's last breath. It precedes it, by very little, possibly by only a few words. What came in the next seconds, however, was important. Thrasea has already told the young *quaestor* to keep his eyes on him:

> "libamus" inquit "Iovi liberatori. specta, iuvenis; et omen quidem dii prohibeant, ceterum in ea tempora natus es, quibus firmare animum expediat constantibus exemplis." (*Ann*. 16.35.1)

> "It is a libation we pour," he said, "to Jupiter the Liberator. Watch, young man. May the gods avert the omen, but you have been born into times when you will have need of examples of constancy."

Thrasea's constancy would be evidenced by what he did and said when his pain was the cruelest, but that is precisely what we are kept from seeing when the text breaks off: he turns to Demetrius and . . . what? Our *exemplum*, Thrasea's moment of spectacular endurance, which Helvidius Priscus was there to behold and would himself later imitate, is denied us. We might look at this ending as embodying both crucial characteristics of Tacitus' relationship to the martyrs: deprecation of their value as *exempla*, both as objects of celebration and as models for behavior, alongside insistence on the practical identity between the dangerousness of their mode of life

and his own. In this same way, moreover, he had aligned himself with Cremutius' name for *libertas* while concealing from us what that *libertas* would actually look like.

If this ending is coincidental, it is fitting all the same. It also seems worthwhile to note that there was an important, recent precedent for an unfinished work of historical narrative, broken off a little more than two books from the end it appeared to anticipate: Lucan's *De bello civili*.[3] The end of that epic, as we have it, seems likely to have been the consequence of the poet's involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy, for which he was forced to commit suicide. Tacitus has only recently reported the poet's death (*Ann*. 15.70) and had told us earlier that, because Nero was jealous of his literary gifts, he was keeping him from publishing (15.49.3). And, as is well known, Lucan's participation in the conspiracy and consequent death suggest striking continuity between literary production and political action: his anti-Caesarian work suppressed, the poet proceeds to an anti-Caesarian plot, while, as he dies, he is reminded of a passage from his own poetry "in which a wounded soldier had met a death that conformed to that sort of scheme" (*quo vulneratum militem per eius modi mortis imaginem obisse*, 15.70.1) and recites it.[4] A reader of *Annals* who knows how the *De bello civili* ends has a ready explanation for the history's abrupt conclusion: it represents the point at which the regime acknowledged the political threat posed by Tacitus' activity and forcibly put an end to it. *Annals* ends when it does, we fear, because that is when men arrived with swords.

Most of my readers will regard as deranged the idea that Tacitus deliberately ended *Annals* here in order to seal forever the impression of a persecution that his life and his writing never managed to incur. This probably speaks well for their judgment: it would indeed require us to postulate an author ready to violate classical aesthetics and leave behind, deliberately, a monument that was unpolished and defaced – a lot to ask. If we were

[3] "A little more than two books": I assume here that a reader of *Annals* is expecting a Neronian hexad to complement the six Tiberian books and the six about Gaius and Claudius, and that a reader of Lucan will have taken the necromancy of Book Six, which parallels the *katabasis* of *Aeneid* Book Six, as an indication that there were to be twelve books. Masters (1992) argues strenuously against the widespread view that Lucan meant to go further than Book Ten, and proposes that he ended the poem where he did in order to dramatize the endlessness of civil war. That may be so, but the poem appears to be unfinished in ways that would have struck ancient readers, and it seems to me that they would have read it not as a work that Lucan completed with provocative abruptness but as one that he did not complete.

[4] Yet Tacitus treats Lucan with an ambivalence that resembles his stance on the martyrs: although other participants in the conspiracy were motivated by patriotism, Lucan had no political agenda but instead was angry that Nero was interfering with his poetic career (*Ann*. 15.49.3); we also learn that Lucan caved to a pledge of impunity and implicated numerous others, beginning with his mother (15.56.4, 58.1).

dealing with such an author, though, this would be an excellent place for him to conclude his book.

I would return briefly to the thesis of Koestermann, whose idea implies that he did think we were dealing with such an author. Despite its unusual conclusion, his reaction actually says something important about the sort of relationship Tacitus' readers have to their author. For it seems not to have entered his mind that, after deliberately ending *Annals* here, Tacitus could have done anything other than kill himself. The inseparability in Koestermann's eyes of what would seem to be two rather distinct propositions reflects his total assent to the continuity between literary career and life that Tacitus' work has claimed for itself: it literally does not occur to him that Tacitus might break his text off without also breaking off his own life.

TACITUS AND FRIENDS

Koestermann's curious reaction leads me to the second thought I would like to offer, about what scholars' reactions to Tacitus say about the special relationship his work creates with his readers. That relationship looks something like this: in reading his work, we become part of an imagined group of outsiders who together with him reject the fictions of the Principate and see things as they are, not as they are professed to be. Privileged to share with this select group insights and information others do not, we also feel we are engaged in something vaguely naughty, as though our copy of *Annals* could be confiscated by palace agents at any moment. Our community shares also a strong sense of morality and decorum that is offended, even outraged, during almost the entire experience of reading *Histories* and *Annals*. Feldherr has made the successful and important argument that Livy's history strives to engage readers, in a participatory sense, in the spectacles and rituals of Rome's past, and that the work, like the spectacles it contains, cultivates a unifying, "community-building" effect.[5] Tacitus' work too constructs an imagined community, but it is a community forged in rejection of, not participation in, the world of the narrative. And, in as much as Tacitus often entertains, but never flatly asserts, the notion that political conditions are quite similar from one *princeps* to the next, rejection of the world internal to Tacitus' narratives also implies rejection of society not simply as it was under Tiberius or Nero or Domitian but as it is always, so long as there are *principes*. This effect, as we are pulled along with the

[5] Feldherr (1998).

powerful, almost irresistible sense of our author's alienation, is responsible for the widespread and deep phenomenon among modern interpreters that we might term "Tacitean exceptionalism." This is a feeling that he, perhaps alone among Romans, went undeceived by the false appearances and hypocrisies of the Principate. This Tacitus, whom we construct as we read, is in this fashion confirmed as an "outsider" and placed rather closer to us, as clear-eyed observers of ancient Rome who have no stake in actually living as Romans.

The effect is enhanced by modern historical experience with autocratic and authoritarian regimes. The Principate becomes an easy precursor of European Fascist states or of Soviet Stalinism, and so Tacitus, as a dissolver of the Principate's illusions and chronicler of its crimes, becomes a proto-liberal.[6] He sees the Principate not as one of its subjects saw it but as we would have seen it, had we been there. His greatest interpreter of the last century, Sir Ronald Syme, in what for that scholar amounts to an effusion, concluded the preface of his magisterial *Tacitus* like this: "It is good fortune and a privilege if one can consort for so many years with an historian who knew the worst, discovered few reasons for ease or hope or confidence, and none the less believed in human dignity and freedom of speech."[7] This sentence follows not Syme's general reflections on the subject matter of his book, but rather, by position, seems to be the last of a short series of personal acknowledgments of assistance in the writing of the book. In this way, Tacitus becomes not merely the subject of his study but an associate, even a friend, of his (and it is presumably the strangeness of the idea that produced the paragraph break between the acknowledgments of the living Britons and the dead Roman).[8] Their friendship is, to be sure, one between colleagues: he and Tacitus alike are engaged in the same project of writing the history of the Principate, and his authorial career began with the epochal *The Roman Revolution* (1939), manifestly the companion volume to the narrative comprised by *Annals* and *Histories*.[9] But it is more than this, as well. For the two men are here engaged in the same project because they are "in the same situation" (*con* + *sors*): each of them has "seen the worst" –

[6] The most persistent proponent of the Stalinist model is Rudich (1993), (1997). [7] Syme (1958: vi).

[8] The other side of this would be Syme's exertions to show that Tacitus was not *really* friends with the silly, vapid Pliny (as this would not only reflect on Tacitus' qualities but mean that Syme was connected with Pliny by an uncomfortable single degree of separation). "A suspicion arises – the relationship showed more warmth, and more insistence, on the one side than on the other" (Syme 1958: 113) is a strange thing to say when we have only Pliny's letters, not Tacitus'. J. Henderson (2003: 116–17) too is (uncharacteristically) unsporting: "Pliny's relationship is pretty obviously not that of 'a genuine friend.'" Griffin (1999) is a useful corrective.

[9] It is also, of course, Pollio's *motum ex Metello consule civicum*, as it begins its narrative in 60 BCE.

that is, witnessed the historical trauma of Fascism, National Socialism, and the Second World War, which has given them abundant cause to lose all hope for humanity – and nonetheless survived as an advocate of liberal humane values ("human dignity and freedom of speech"). In other words, they are not merely subject and author, and in fact not even merely colleagues. Rather, they had been through the war together.

I do not mean to be dismissive or derisive. Indeed, my point is precisely that this is how Tacitus' work affects his attentive readers: it separates its author out from the society of the Principate and associates him intimately with his reader at an outside vantage point. This sense of alienation may be "genuinely" Tacitus', or it may not. Quite apart from the question of genuineness, on which we cannot meaningfully pronounce, the "alienation" effect, as we have seen, also has a very specific role to play for Tacitus within his political and social environment, a role structured by the challenges of claiming authorship and demonstrating authenticity and autonomy. A work that did not have effects like those that Tacitus' work had on Syme, and on many others, could not have been treated as serious, and as his own.

It is because of our confidence that Tacitus is on "our side," whatever "our side" might be, that modern readers have been so disappointed when confronting his "Jewish Excursus" in Book Five of *Histories*. The section has been (not quite) universally deplored (it has naturally been dear to the hearts of anti-Semites).[10] The last volume of Chilver's commentary, completed by Townend, prefaces its discussion of the "Jewish Archaeology" with the remark that it falls "sadly below Tacitus' usual standard."[11] The apparent reference is to the ignorance of Judaism and Jewish history Tacitus betrays – he falls below his "usual standard" of research and accuracy. Yet of course that is not all that is meant. The commentators are understandably dismayed and embarrassed by Tacitus' remarks – and "below his usual standard" explores the fantasy that the Tacitus in this passage is not really *our* Tacitus (who is defined by the standard that this writer – whoever he is – fails to meet). If only the manuscript tradition had given out with Book Four . . .[12]

[10] See Bloch (2002: 210–16). [11] Chilver and Townend (1985 ad 5.2).

[12] The habit is still with us. For Bloch (2002: 175) the Jewish ethnography has a satirical aspect that "eine gewisse innere Distanz des Autors zum Text impliziert." And when Haynes (2003: 140) writes that the excursus "suffers from being taken so literally," it is hard not to feel that we are being asked to impute to Tacitus Žižek's arguments about "The Jew" as master-signifier. See Žižek (1993: 149), "Jew is the explanation offered by anti-Semitism for the multiple fears experienced by the "common man" in an epoch of dissolving social links (inflation, unemployment, corruption, moral degradation) – behind all these phenomena lies the invisible hand of the 'Jewish plot.' The crucial point here . . . is that the designation 'Jew' *does not add any new content*: the entire content

It did not give out, though, and we have every word of the "Jewish Archaeology.' Even if it falls below the standards we require in order to think of Tacitus as a reliable source and personable colleague, it by no means falls below his "usual standard" of care and complexity of authorship: it is repellent, but it is also very good. We cannot take Tacitus out of this text, nor pry the text away from Tacitus. What is more, to try to do so harms our understanding not only of *Histories* but of all Tacitean historiography, and his whole career. For the alienated self his voice projects is tailored to exploit the peculiar dynamic between the *princeps* and his elite subjects: specifically, it is useful for suggesting that the author is exempt from the low position in a relationship of domination that all observers would otherwise assume to be in effect. The historian's relationship to the empire follows another logic altogether, because in that case he forms part of a broader community that, taken as a whole, still exercises dominion over the rest of the world and founds its identity in no small part upon that fact. If we call his stance on the Principate "alienated," the right word for his relationship to the empire is "implicated." Each of these positions, however, is determined by the sort of relationship it sets him in *vis à vis* his readers: in the former instance, figuratively speaking, he is their martyr; in the latter, their *triumphator*. In either, he is an instrument that vindicates the legitimacy of an order of the world in which his fellows are deeply invested by rejecting its alternatives. As martyr, he stands for an order of Roman society in which no autocrat impinged on the full realization of elite possibilities; this order no longer exists except as memory but remains vital to the collective identity of the elite. As victor, he reenforces the real order of the inhabited world, in which one people rules all others, and that one people is Rome's. It is precisely where we seem least likely to make a single person from Tacitus' voice, where we feel most keenly a contradiction between "our" Tacitus and the one who fails to be the Tacitus we know, that we may perceive most clearly wherein the unity of that voice resides.

is already present in the external conditions (crisis, moral degeneration . . .); the name 'Jew' is only the supplementary feature which accomplishes a kind of transubstantiation, changing all these elements into so many manifestations of the same *ground*, the 'Jewish plot.' Paraphrasing the joke on socialism, one could say that anti-Semitism takes from the economy unemployment and inflation, from politics parliamentary corruption and intrigue, from morality its own degeneration, from art 'incomprehensible' avant-gardism, *and from the Jew the name*." In my reading of Book Five, if anything Tacitus writes not from the position of Žižek but from that of Žižek's anti-Semite.

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Index of passages discussed

General index

Romans who were not *principes* or authors are alphabetized by *nomen*.