

## TACITUS : SOME SOURCES OF HIS INFORMATION

By RONALD SYME

I. When a consular turned to the writing of history he had full years of experience behind him; and the reminiscences of elderly survivors, not missed by an alert youth, carried a man nearly a century into the past. The mass of knowledge thus accruing has not always been taken into account by adepts of *Quellenforschung*.

A senator's employment could hardly fail to affect his beliefs and opinions. It might be expected to leave traces here and there in his writings. For Cornelius Tacitus ascertainment comes against impediments: reticence all through. He even proclaimed a distaste for 'iactantia' when adducing his praetorship and priesthood on the occasion of the Ludi Saeculares held in 88.<sup>1</sup> For occupations abroad he chose to reveal only the four years' absence from Rome not long after that season.<sup>2</sup> That disclosure was likewise made in strict relevance to his theme. The command of a legion will be assumed without discomfort.

That is not all. As with other new entrants to the *amplissimus ordo*, a military tribunate should be conceded, about the year 76. Anything further will tend to be deprecated by those who cling to a traditional verdict ('the most unmilitary of historians') or neglect the contemporaneous evidence about the consular legates selected to govern the nine armed provinces in the portion of Caesar.

Polite accomplishments (it is no secret) were high on show, attested by Licinius Sura and Sosius Senecio; and Fabius Justus, the friend of Tacitus and disciple in eloquence, went on to hold two of the eminent commands.<sup>3</sup> The case of the jurist Neratius Priscus is instructive, consul suffect in 97, the same year as Cornelius Tacitus. The recent revision of a familiar inscription brings novelty and a welcome surprise. Priscus, it emerges, had Germania Inferior soon after his consulship (?98-101), before proceeding to Pannonia.<sup>4</sup> Another document carried his whole career, beginning with a tribunate.<sup>5</sup> It is fragmentary and supplies space for the command of a legion and for another praetorian post.

In the sequel to the famous prosecution conducted to its termination early in 100 by Tacitus and Pliny, Tacitus finds no mention in the correspondence of the friend for about four years. In 104 or 105 a letter welcomes his return to Rome from a journey: 'salvum in urbem venisse gaudeo' (IV. 13. 1). The phrase indicates a journey of some length.<sup>6</sup> Absence abroad was not unwelcome to one who, perhaps the foremost speaker of the time, renounced public oratory after the trial of Marius Priscus. It may be noted (though not as proof) that a prosecution in the early spring of 103 registers the names of five consulars participant (IV. 9).

In this season Germania Inferior was held by Q. Acutius Nerva (*suff.* 100), the successor to L. Neratius Priscus.<sup>7</sup> For the other command on the Rhine, no evidence. Both had forfeited their former military primacy, being now reduced to two legions. The other gap is Moesia Superior, conveniently to be assigned to Sosius Senecio.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* XI. 11. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Agr.* 45. 5.

<sup>3</sup> In 97 or 98 Justus (*suff.* 102) was absent from Rome (Pliny, *Epp.* I. 11. 2), presumably as legionary legate; and with the armies in 105 or 106 (VII. 2. 1 f.). That is, legate of Moesia Inferior (105-8) before going to Syria.

<sup>4</sup> *ILS* 1034 (Saepinum): the second of the two consulars whose careers are there briefly registered. See G. Camodeca, *Atti Acc. Napoli* LXXXVII (1976), 19 ff., whence *AE* 1976, 195. Instead of 'P[annonia]/inferiore et Pannonia [superiore]' Camodeca reads '[in provinc. Germania]/inferiore et Pannonia'. The consequences are momentous and multiple, cf. remarks in *ZPE* XLI (1981), 140 f. Among them abolition of L. Neratius Priscus, governor of Pannonia Inferior and of Pannonia Superior in the reign of Hadrian. That is, *PIR*<sup>1</sup>, N 47: accepted in *Hermes* LXXV (1958), 480 ff. = *Roman Papers* (1979), 338 ff., and elsewhere.

The two Neratii of *ILS* 1034, father and son, are

the *suffecti* of 87 and 97. For the family stemma see now L. Vidman, *ZPE* XLIII (1981), 377 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Published by O. Freda, *Contributi dell' Inst. di Fil. Class.* 1 (Milan, 1963), 239, whence *AE* 1969/1970, 252 (Larinum). Both inadequate, as Freda's photograph (pl. 2) demonstrates.

<sup>6</sup> As proposed in *Tacitus* (1958), 71. Rejected by Sherwin-White in his *Commentary* (1966), 286, with a remark (highly pertinent) about the dangers of Italian travel. He further states that Tacitus' 'career as an advocate was in full swing'. The passage adduced is merely 'copia studiosorum quae ad te admiratione ingenii tui convenit' (IV. 13. 10).

<sup>7</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, A 101 (citing legionary tiles).

<sup>8</sup> Sosius (*cos.* 99) was in command of an army c. 103 (*Epp.* IV. 4). The Rhine would be a backwater for a man who went on to earn a 'statua triumphalis' and a second consulship (in 107). To Sosius (not to Sura) may belong the acephalous *ILS* 1022, cf. C. P. Jones, *JRS* LX (1970), 98 ff.

II. A historian requires a spell of free time and continuous leisure, as Cicero pointed out when under earnest solicitation: 'historia vero nec institui potest nisi praeparato otio nec exiguo tempore absolvi'. A 'legatio libera' or some other form of 'cessatio libera atque otiosa' was just the thing, so his friend opined.<sup>9</sup> For Cornelius Tacitus the cares and duties of a provincial governor (often overestimated by the incurious) would be no bar. Rather the reverse, and a relief from tedious sessions in the Senate, the demands of social life and the importunity of eager disciples.

Cicero and Atticus had contemporary annals in mind. The *Historiae* of Tacitus set out with the year 69 and much military narration. The original design embraced the fifteen years of Domitian. How much (if anything) Tacitus had written before changing the point of inception is a question that might come into account somewhere (as touching the time and rhythm of composition), but there is no call to obtrude this unknown factor.

Likewise unverifiable is a governorship in Germania Superior. However, the Helvetian episode invited inspection, for what is said—and for what is omitted (I. 67–9). Omissions in a selective author are not to be taken as proof of ignorance. They may be caused by sheer familiarity with the theme or with the persons involved. For example, Tacitus nowhere alludes to the Narbonensian *patria* of Afranius Burrus.

In this episode the narrator decided to single out three notables of the Helvetii. He states that Caecina punished with death 'Iulium Alpinum e principibus ut concitorem belli'; and in conclusion he puts in prominence the artful performance of the eloquent Claudius Cossus. But nothing about the Helvetian general Claudius Severus, save that their levies made a poor showing in the field 'although they had chosen Claudius Severus to lead them'. No annotation is vouchsafed, such as service or exploits in the imperial armies, to explain this general. He is treated as a known character.<sup>10</sup>

III. To revert to facts or dates in foreign occupations of the consular historian. Only the proconsulate in Asia is on attestation: an inscription assigned to the tenure 112/3.

Traces of the sojourn in Asia have been sought in the *Annales*. First, Germanicus Caesar consulting the oracle at Claros (II. 54. 2 ff.).<sup>11</sup> The procedure is described, with the detail that the officiant was not a prophetess as elsewhere but a man, drawn from certain families at Miletus. The historian, a *quindecimvir* for a quarter of a century, and custodian of the Sibylline Books, would not neglect Apollo's sanctuary. After long decadence, Claros had now revived to high fame. Trajan on his journey to Syria in the autumn of 113 may have applied to the oracle.<sup>12</sup>

Second, Rhodes. Coming upon the ruler's addiction to the science of the stars (at a late stage, through the prediction about Galba, the consul of 33), Tacitus recounts how Tiberius once subjected Thrasyllus to ordeal during a stroll along the cliffs: an astrologer found fraudulent met his fate after he returned, 'per avia ac derupta'. Tacitus adds the situation of the residence itself: 'nam saxis domus imminet' (VI. 21. 1). Not essential for the story, the cliffs being already mentioned. The formulation looks like autopsy.<sup>13</sup>

A third sign can be evoked, not perceived by commentators on the event. Namely the earthquake which in 17 afflicted twelve cities of Asia, the severest in human memory according to Pliny.<sup>14</sup> Before cataloguing the cities and the measures of relief from the government (among them the mission of a senator of praetorian rank), Tacitus introduces the chapter with remarks of a general nature. The calamity struck during the hours of darkness. The normal habit of rushing out of doors was precluded by chasms that opened up. And a further particular: 'sedisse immensos montes, visa in arduo quae plana fuerint, effulsisse inter ruinam ignes memorant' (II. 47. 1).

The word 'memorant' and the tense should arouse some interest, no persons having previously been specified. Oral information therefore, perhaps from ostensible centenarians whose predilection it was to parade in front of travellers. In Britain Marcus Aper

<sup>9</sup> Cicero, *De legibus* I. 9 f.

<sup>10</sup> See further *Mus. Helv.* xxxiv (1977), 135 ff. The alternative explanation is inadvertent copying of an excellent source.

<sup>11</sup> C. Cichorius, *Römische Studien* (1922), 386 f.: followed in *Tacitus* (1958), 469 f. 'All pure speculation, and in part, since this book was probably

written by A.D. 112, misguided', so F. R. D. Goodyear observes in his commentary, II (1981), 359.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Macrobius I, 23. 14 ff. (the oracle at Helio-

polis).

<sup>13</sup> As briefly suggested in *Tacitus* (1958), 469.

<sup>14</sup> Pliny, *NH* II. 200.

encountered a native who avowed that he had fought against Julius Caesar; and Mucianus, visiting the island of Samothrace, saw Zocles, who at the age of a hundred and four had grown a new set of teeth.<sup>15</sup>

The list of cities calls for passing annotation. It leads off with the principal sufferers, the Sardi and the 'Magnetes a Sipylo'. After the next four occur 'quique Mosteni aut Macedones Hyrcani vocantur' (47. 3). At first sight the word 'aut' might appear misleading. No call, however, to emend to 'et'. The two communities stand in a certain antithesis (as a proconsul in his tour of duty might learn). Hyrcanis, the city of the Hyrcani, went back to the Persian period. The Seleucids introduced further colonists, as the label proclaims.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, Mostene. This city was proud to advertise an autochthonous origin by the Lydian name on its coinage and the emblem of the double axe.<sup>17</sup>

A small item of Asian toponymy will be suitably subjoined to this rubric. In the course of the year 22 the Senate heard a whole congregation of embassies from cities asserting ancient privileges of asylum for their sanctuaries (III. 60-3). The Magnetes (i.e., Magnesia on the Maeander, as the historian did not need to specify) relied on decrees of L. Scipio and L. Sulla recognizing the shrine of Artemis: in the manuscript, 'Dianae Leucophinae per fugium' (62. 1). Recent editors have been content to print 'Leucophrynae'.<sup>18</sup> Beroaldus saw the plain remedy ages ago: 'Leucophrynae', which three Greek authors enjoin.<sup>19</sup>

A legitimate doubt may arise whether the correct form of a name, certified by other writers (and by coins or inscriptions), should be inserted into a text: the author was perhaps in error, not a scribe. About 'Thubuscum' (IV. 24. 1) no doubt subsists. The town is patently Thubursicu (in Numidia). In the present instance the accurate Tacitus should not be defrauded.<sup>20</sup>

iv. Not much on the score of autopsy or special knowledge, some will duly object. A large problem of a different order is in cause and dispute. Only a brief statement can here be accorded.<sup>21</sup>

Tacitus brought the *Historiae* to completion about the year 109, so it is generally held. Hence an interval before he resumed his labours when he came back from Asia in the summer of 113. That has been a fairly common assumption. The contrary thesis cuts down the interval and even abolishes it: Tacitus began the *Annales* in 109—or even in 108.<sup>22</sup> It has been lavishly expounded in the recent time. The main argument turns on the interpretation of a single passage in Book II. Germanicus Caesar in his peregrination reached the frontier of Egypt,

Elephantinen ac Syenen, claustra olim Romani imperii quod nunc rubrum ad mare patescit (61. 2).

To Lipsius, to Gibbon, and to others in the sequel, the emphatic language, echoing Virgil, or oratorical pronouncements in Livy about the expanse of eastern empires, indicated Trajan's conquest of Mesopotamia in 116. For 'rubrum mare' the other side advocates not the Persian Gulf but the other inlet of the Indian Ocean, namely the Red Sea. Rome had recently annexed the kingdom of the Nabataean Arabs (in 105/6).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Tacitus, *Dial.* 17. 4; Pliny, *NH* XI. 162.

<sup>16</sup> Pliny, *NH* V. 120. For the Hyrcanian Plain, Strabo XII, p. 629. For the site of Hyrcanis, L. Robert, *Hellenica* VI (1948), 16 ff. (with criticism of A. H. M. Jones).

In the dedication set up by grateful cities in A.D. 30 (*ILS* 156: Puteoli) 'Hyrca[nis]' should be substituted for 'Hyrca[nia]'.

<sup>17</sup> Head, *HN*<sup>2</sup>, 653 f; Keil, *RE* XVI, 379 f. For the site, L. Robert, *Bull. ép.* 1958, no. 433. Commentators, adequate or even ample on the familiar, neglect Mostene.

<sup>18</sup> H. Fuchs (1946); E. Koestermann (ed. 2, 1965).

<sup>19</sup> Strabo XIV, p. 629; Pausanias III. 18. 9; Appian, *BC* V. 34 (who put the shrine at Miletus).

<sup>20</sup> *JRS* XXXVIII (1948), 124 (in review of Fuchs):

'Tacitus should have known, having been proconsul of Asia'.

<sup>21</sup> In this matter as in others, economy enjoins a restriction of references—mainly to books or papers published in the last twenty-five years.

<sup>22</sup> Thus J. Beaujeu, *Rev. ét. lat.* XXXVIII (1960), 232: 'commencées en 108-109'.

<sup>23</sup> The thesis is generously expounded by J. Beaujeu, *Rev. ét. lat.* XXXVIII (1960), 200-35 and by F. R. D. Goodyear in his *Commentary*, II (1981), 387-93. For five other proponents of the Nabataean thesis (since 1958), see *Ten Studies in Tacitus* (1970), 144 f.

The controversy finds a clear statement in S. Borzsák, *RE Supp.* XI (1968), 467 ff.

There is an inescapable corollary to the 'traditional view'. It entails belief (hence vulnerable) that the phrase 'quod . . . patescit' is an addition made by the author after he had finished either the first triad of the *Annales* or the first hexad.<sup>24</sup>

Additions enforced by subsequent knowledge are not beyond surmise. For example, in the comments on Tiberius' departure from Rome in 26. A sentence alluding to Rhodes and secret vice was misplaced (IV. 57. 2).<sup>25</sup> It looks like an insertion by the author.<sup>26</sup>

Persian Gulf or Red Sea, the controversial topic ought not to be reserved or abridged in this place without considering the other two passages adduced for relevance. When Germanicus enters Armenia, Tacitus offers a statement summarizing the condition of that country at the time, regarded as permanent. Thus 'ambigua gens ea antiquitus'; and the Armenians are 'maximisque imperiis interiecti' (II. 56. 1). A description of this kind (it may be noted) could hardly have been avoided by the author, even if composed while Trajan was invading Armenia in 114. To allude to a sudden change in the status of Armenia would disturb the exposition of past events. The passage is relevant to what it describes and elucidates.

The author ran into trouble soon after, when explaining provinces and armies in Book IV. He then saw that he had to leave out the name of Armenia. After mentioning the functions of the army of Syria he proceeds 'accolis Hiberno Albanoque et aliis regibus qui magnitudine nostra proteguntur adversum externa imperia' (IV. 5. 2). As it stands, that passage must have been indited in or after the year 114. Precise detail (Iberia and Albania as Roman neighbours and vassals) combines with deliberate and portentous vagueness.

The two passages (in II and IV) provide a 'terminus ante quem', before 114, so it is contended.<sup>27</sup> Whatever be thought of the first, the second (Armenia not named) may be taken to imply the contrary.<sup>28</sup>

v. So far argumentation based on the text of the author. Two theses stand in sharp contradiction. Consensus or recantation being remote (but not the danger of fatigue or wilful nescience), the temptation occurs to try something else.<sup>29</sup>

In 108 or 109 Cornelius Tacitus (*suff.* 97) stood in near prospect of a proconsulate in Asia or Africa. Those proconsulates are the peak of a senator's ambition, whatever be his previous career. Some, it is true, lacked keen incentive. Thus, among the consuls of Tacitus' year Annius Verus, of a tranquil and Epicurean disposition. Again, the two consular commands held by Neratius Priscus might be considered by others, or by himself, as eminence enough. Agents of the government persuaded Julius Agricola to withdraw from the sortition. They might have invoked the seven years in Britain and the grant of the *ornamenta triumphalia*, not conceded by Domitian to other generals, so far as known.

The list for Asia is complete for a long stretch after 103/4.<sup>30</sup> Not so Africa, but there is no sign that either Annius Verus or Neratius Priscus went there. Verus, had he wished, was a strong candidate, being close to the core of an influential nexus of alliances, which he proceeded to reinforce.

The only thing to deter Cornelius Tacitus was a second consulate, not likely perhaps from Trajan.<sup>31</sup> For Asia or Africa he had favourable prospects. The government inclined to honour civilian excellence as well as birth or military merit.

The interval after a consulship had recently become stable, at thirteen years. Tacitus could look forward to the tenure 110/11. Nonius Asprenas, the consul of 94, duly acceded to Asia for 107/8. A perturbation now impinged. Two of the *suffecti* went in succession to Asia, viz. Lollius Paullinus and A. Julius Quadratus: the former one of the high aristocrats, the latter a close friend of the emperor, and anomalous because of his second consulship (in 105).

<sup>24</sup> E. Koestermann in his *Commentary* (1963), 371.

<sup>25</sup> J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *CR* LXI (1937), 44 f.

<sup>26</sup> *Tacitus* (1958), 675, adducing for parallel *Ann.*

I. 4. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Goodyear, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 390.

<sup>28</sup> As argued in *Historiographia Antiqua* (Louvain, 1977), 260 f. (in a restatement of the thesis).

<sup>29</sup> Brought up in *Historiographia Antiqua* 232 f. Not

previously conceded a factor to admit or repulse.

<sup>30</sup> W. Eck, *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian* (1970), 236.

<sup>31</sup> Nor the Prefecture of the City, which normally comported a second consulship. The double anomaly is the inconspicuous Q. Baebius Macer (*suff.* 103), in office when Trajan died (*HA, Hadr.* 5. 5). The next *praefectus urbi* is Annius Verus (*cos.* II 121).

The interval thus advanced to fifteen years, as shown by the next two proconsuls of Asia before the turn of Tacitus arrived, *suffecti* in 95 and in 96. What is known of Africa confirms, viz. Q. Pomponius Rufus (*suff.* 95) in 110/11, C. Pomponius Rufus (*suff.* 98) in 113/4.<sup>32</sup> As these facts demonstrate, Cornelius Tacitus had to wait, until 112. In 108 or 109 he still had a rational prospect of going out as proconsul in the summer of 110.

It might appear dubious whether a writer in this season, instead of welcoming a respite and the enjoyment of fame, would be impelled to go on at once to another task, of magnitude and much more arduous, since narrating the past demands 'onerosa collatio', as the friend observed (*Epp.* v. 8. 12). However, let that be waived. Who can tell? Nor will it be profitable to indulge in surmise about the author's time of life, his health or his temperament, or assume a rhythm for his writing, all of which, although seductive and not to be declined if the performance of a poet or historian is under assessment, should give way before the search for facts and for security of judgement.

The age of Tacitus has been adduced, it is true, to support the early date for the inception of the *Annales*.<sup>33</sup> On the other side, an entertaining and subversive parallel might be called up. Livy's prose epic devoted to the 'res populi Romani' found crown and culmination (so it can be argued) in the end of all the wars and the triple triumph of Caesar's heir in 29 B.C., with for sequel the nine books embracing the Republic down to 9 B.C., a point of termination not fortuitous but likewise a climax. That epilogue became a secure and attractive project in A.D. 4 when after a decade of seclusion Claudius Nero emerged to become Ti. Caesar.<sup>34</sup>

Livy's age is a question. Drawing on Suetonius, Jerome put his birth in 59 B.C., equated with Messalla Corvinus.<sup>35</sup> Wrong for Messalla, as was discovered nearly a century ago.<sup>36</sup> The consequences for the Patavine annalist were slow to percolate.<sup>37</sup> If 64 be accepted, the year of Messalla (*cos.* 31), Livy in A.D. 4 was aged about sixty-seven. When Cornelius Tacitus came back from Asia in 113 he was a dozen years younger.

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VI. From a digression in no way essential to the argument it will afford relief to revert to the *Annales*. First of all, a general impression not to be anxiously avoided if it comes straight out of the writing without solicitation. Beginning with the demise of Augustus, the historian had not devoted much time and study to the concluding decade of the reign. He was eager to break free from the metropolitan scene and embark on military narrative. The mutinies in Pannonia and on the Rhine and the ensuing campaigns of Germanicus gave scope for eloquence and drama, expounded in lavish and picturesque detail. They take up the greater part of Book I. That theme carries on into the next book, and the story of Germanicus soon resumes, amply related: a unitary narration, although exacting much more care and selection than the campaigns, where a single source might furnish most of the material. Before he had gone very far the historian became aware that the decision to begin with the death of Caesar Augustus carried grave disadvantages. Leading topics ran continuous, such as the German war, the condition of the armies, complications in the Eastern lands, prosecution for *maiestas*, senior consulars of weight and eminence, scandal in the dynasty. Many episodes and persons had echo and resonance backwards.

Coming upon a transaction in the Senate which evoked the banishment of the younger Julia, Tacitus could not refrain from making an announcement that contravenes his normal reticence: he would go back and recount that epoch, if life be vouchsafed (III. 24. 2). The declaration indicates that the writer, in whatever terms age be reckoned or held relevant, was robust and confident, imbibing energy and delight from the congenial task.

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<sup>32</sup> Proconsulates dated by *IRT* 353; *I. l. Alg.* I. 1230.

<sup>33</sup> Goodyear, *op. cit.*, 388, concluding 'if T. finished the Histories by 108 or not much later, it would be surprising he should abandon history for five years or more'.

<sup>34</sup> For these estimates, *Harvard Studies* LXIV (1959), 27 ff. = *RP* (1979), 400 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Jerome, *Chron.* 164 H.

<sup>36</sup> H. Schulz, *De Valerii Messallae aetate* (Progr. Stettin, 1886), 6.

<sup>37</sup> No hint of the problem in *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, L 292.

VII. Direct disclosures are not to be expected, and genius is elusive. How Tacitus worked upon his material is another matter. It should not baffle ascertainment. Content and structure reveal.

In the past, enquiry has been bedevilled either by analysis overliterary or by *Quellenforschung* often misapplied through preoccupation with the theory of 'a single source'. Revulsion from which produced a firm challenge: the only single source pervading the first hexad is the *acta senatus*.<sup>38</sup> Another controversy therefore. The theme is large, it comports much detail. Concision will enhance clarity.

First, the orations and despatches of Tiberius Caesar. They declare the ruler in his manner, style and language.<sup>39</sup> Further, the language influences the context. Whence derive these versions, from the *acta* or from a separate collection?

Of the reading matter of a later emperor it was averred 'praeter commentarios et acta Tiberi Caesaris nihil lectitabat'.<sup>40</sup> The passage gets put to constant employ. An item from Cassius Dio happens to be less in evidence. Among the ceremonies of the opening year certain orations of Augustus and of Tiberius were read out, to the fatigue and distress of senators, detained until evening. Claudius Caesar abolished the practice.<sup>41</sup>

Some scholars boldly and briefly postulate a published collection. Others hesitate about the *acta*, or deprecate.<sup>42</sup> One of them is impelled to restrict rigorously the historian's use of the Tiberian speeches.<sup>43</sup> Not all bother to cast their glance forward in the *Annales* and consider the renderings of Claudius Caesar—and a discussion of the sources for that reign allocates scant notice to imperial orations in relation to Tacitus.<sup>44</sup>

Reflection will suggest that the hypothesis of collected and published orations is highly vulnerable. Of interest to enlightened students of oratorical style, such as was Cornelius Tacitus all through, they would be of imperfect value to a historian without the whole context, without the transactions that evoked them (sometimes casual or trivial) and the results (if any). He needed the *acta*.<sup>45</sup>

VIII. Next, structure and content. Continuous segments carry the report of senatorial business, interlarded with comment from the writer. For the year 15 the parallel with Cassius Dio is instructive. Dio went back to one of the annalistic predecessors of Tacitus who had made a selection notably different, and inferior in point and value.<sup>46</sup>

Significant for use of the *acta* are debates that resume after an interval. Even more so those which led to no conclusion. The choice of personal names is variously instructive. After the condemnation of Libo Drusus in 16, seven men of rank came out with proposals for revenge or for public thanksgivings (II. 32. 1 f.). At the head stands Cotta Messallinus, the younger son of Corvinus: the earliest entrance of an aristocrat whom Tacitus took care to indict for subservience later on. Cotta Messallinus gets placed first, before ex-consuls, although he was praetor-designate at the time.<sup>47</sup>

By contrast, obscure persons on solitary mention and sometimes in minor transactions. They certify research and documentation.

Because of the design he adopted for the Tiberian hexad, the historian had need of much material for Book III. Previous annalists marked a turn for the worse after the death of Germanicus Caesar.<sup>48</sup> Tacitus decided to postpone the declension and begin the second half of the hexad with the rise of Aelius Seianus. After the prosecution of Cn. Piso early in 20, he had to fill out undramatic annals down to the end of 22.

The challenge was gladly taken. The *acta* offered abundance, and freedom of choice.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Tacitus (1958), 278.

<sup>39</sup> N. P. Miller, 'Tiberius Speaks', *AJP* LXXXIX (1968), 1 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Suetonius, *Dom.* 20.

<sup>41</sup> Dio LX. 10. 2.

<sup>42</sup> B. Levick, *Tiberius the Politician* (1976), 222. And for R. H. Martin 'possibly in the *acta senatus*' (*Tacitus* (1981), 200).

<sup>43</sup> For D. Flach Tacitus used 'bestenfalls' only two 'Senatsreden' of the Princeps. He cited *Ann.* I. 81. 1 and II. 63. 3 (*Athenaeum* LI (1973), 92).

<sup>44</sup> D. Flach, *Mus. Helv.* xxx (1973), 101.

<sup>45</sup> By contrast Quintilian. The professor of

rhetoric nowhere cited Asconius for the historical setting of Ciceronian orations. (His two references to Pedianus (I. 7. 24; V. 10. 9) were neglected in *CQ* xxxi (1981), 426.)

<sup>46</sup> A detailed comparison for 15 (and also for 16) is presented in *Gedenkschrift Pflaum* (i.e. *ZPE* XLIII, 1981), 365 f.

<sup>47</sup> The fragmentary name of Cotta can be discerned on the *Fasti Arvalium* (*Inscr. It.* XIII. 1, p. 297).

<sup>48</sup> As emerges from Suetonius, *Cal.* 6. 2; Dio LVII. 7. 1 f.; 13. 6; 19. 1.

<sup>49</sup> For a catalogue, *Historiographia Antiqua* (1977), 248.

The selection in Book III discloses interests or preoccupations of the author, among them sacerdotal antiquities and the condition of Gaul.

Africa and Asia conveyed personal concern for a consular. One episode explains how the sortition might be discussed or managed, how the Princeps intervened to secure a desired or suitable candidate. When warfare renewed in Africa, Caesar in a letter pointed out the need for careful selection (III. 32. 1). Asia then came into debate, the occasion being exploited by a consular for a personal attack on Manius Lepidus—who, defended by senators, was allowed to have that province. At the next meeting a despatch from Tiberius put forward two names for the senate to choose between: Marcus Lepidus and Junius Blaesus. Lepidus drew back on various pleas, and Africa went to the uncle of Seianus (III. 35).

Asia engrosses attention with the full-length prosecution of a proconsul (III. 66–8), the earliest in the *Annales*. It leads on to the helpful proposal of Cornelius Dolabella: no person 'vita probrosus et opertus infamia' should be admitted to the sortition, the Princeps to adjudicate. Tiberius sent a firm and sagacious answer, deprecating moral inquisition or regimentation (III. 69).

Asia also claims a long debate on its sanctuaries, with a plethora of names and of precedents from the old time. It afforded the high assembly a welcome 'imaginem antiquitatis' (III. 60–63).

Asia deserved high prominence in senatorial debates—and no proof that a recent proconsul reflects and renews his experiences. However that may be, those who advocate an earlier inception for the *Annales* have not been able to adduce any break in the exposition or any sudden novelties that could be ascribed to the year of the proconsulate.

ix. Although a case may appear clear and valid in its own right, there is no harm in lending support on the flank, from negative indications. That is, things neglected by Tacitus because not to be found in the annual register. Phenomena of contrasted types cannot escape attention.

First, the Guard Prefect Seius Strabo departing to govern Egypt in 15 or 16, not long after he had been assigned his son as partner in that office.<sup>50</sup> Important, as revealing a stage in the rising ambitions of Aelius Seianus—and favour and confidence from the ruler. Imperial appointments would not normally be entered on the senate's protocol.<sup>51</sup> Hence facts or persons missing. It would be worth knowing at what precise juncture began the absentee governorships of Aelius Lamia and L. Arruntius (in Syria and in Tarraconensis) which were noted under the year 33 (VI. 27). Before censuring the historian, caution intervenes. Tacitus might have reserved Strabo's supersession in command of the Guard for more effective use later on, in relation to Seianus. Most of Book V is lost. It may not have omitted Strabo's successor in Egypt, C. Galerius, now terminating by death at sea a tenure of sixteen years.<sup>52</sup>

Second, noteworthy consulars on mention seldom or never. L. Piso was Prefect of the City for long years until his death in 32, and his personality conveyed amicable appeal to the author. Piso appears in the Senate only once (III. 68. 2). By the same token his successor in office: Aelius Lamia had made only one entrance, of no great moment (IV. 13. 3). The reason is clear. These excellent men seldom raised their voices in the Senate. Likewise the next Prefect, Cossus Cornelius Lentulus, a 'vir triumphalis' but receiving no farewell notice from Tacitus when he died late in the reign.<sup>53</sup>

A diverse character and a different phenomenon will explain total silence about Domitius Ahenobarbus until the obituary in 25 (IV. 44. 2). The husband of the elder Antonia was sullen, recalcitrant, or early senescent.<sup>54</sup>

Third, particulars about the private life and habits of Tiberius Caesar, and his earlier existence. Late awareness of his addiction to astrology has already been noted. Late also

<sup>50</sup> Dio LVII. 19. 16 (apparently under A.D. 20).

<sup>51</sup> Poppaeus Sabinus, prorogued in Moesia, occurs because Achaia and Macedonia were then added to his province (I. 80. 1).

<sup>52</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, G 25. Tacitus was alert to prolonged governorships at an early stage, cf. I. 80. 1 (Poppaeus

Sabinus). He had appraised the sonorous eloquence of Galerius Trachalus, the consul of 68 (*Hist.* I. 90. 2), probably a son or grandson of the Prefect of Egypt.

<sup>53</sup> Perhaps reserved for Book VII. Consulars had a keen interest in the *praefectus urbi*.

<sup>54</sup> For his detestable nature, Suetonius, *Nero* 4.

the significance of Rhodes, so it can be argued. That is, on the hypothesis that an allusion in Book I to Rhodes and secret vice (I. 4. 4), which interrupts a sequence bearing on pride and power, is a subsequent insertion (like IV. 57. 2).

Indeed, growing interest in the person of the Caesar extends to a terrifying portrayal of his physical appearance in old age (IV. 57. 2). The biographer is shown miserable by contrast. No hint of the shrunken form, the scarred face, the denuded summit.<sup>55</sup>

x. So far the case for the *acta senatus*. Tacitus happens to mention the protocol of the Senate once only, and at a very late stage: 'reperio in commentariis senatus' (xv. 74. 3). The solitary avowal of direct consultation is duly snapped up by the opposition.<sup>56</sup> That neglects two considerations of some relevance.

First, in what preceded (the fluent narration of Piso's conspiracy) Tacitus had not made much use of the *acta*, apart from the long catalogue of names at the end (xv. 71), and the decorations for Nero's allies which disclose the *ornamenta triumphalia* for Cocceius Nerva (72). Second, it is by no means clear that he either completed the third hexad or revised the last Neronian books as extant. The note could have been omitted without damage, since the whole passage enumerates decrees of the Senate. The proposal in question, made by Anicius Cerialis, was abortive; a 'templum divo Neroni'. But Cerialis was of sharp concern—men remembered that this person had betrayed a conspiracy to Caligula, as soon emerges (xvi. 17. 6).

In the matter of senatorial decrees the historian had asserted competence shortly before: 'neque tamen silebimus si quod senatus consultum adulatione novum aut patientia postremum fuit' (xiv. 64. 3). And much earlier, 'exsequi sententias', etc. (III. 65. 1).

Another passage gave rise to misconceptions (vi. 7. 4). Two men got involved in a treason trial: 'Iulius Africanus e Santonis Gallica civitate, Seius Quadratus (originem non repperi)'. Now Africanus belonged to a family of later fame for eloquence.<sup>57</sup> Why the profession of ignorance about Quadratus, it was asked. Tacitus, they said, had only to look in the *acta*. Confidence was premature. An enquirer would there find name and tribe but not the *civitas*.<sup>58</sup>

The episode concludes with an affirmation couched in solemn and Sallustian language: 'nobis pleraque digna cognitu obvenere, quamquam ab aliis incelebrata'. To deny it imports a grave charge. It impugns the integrity of the consular historian.

xi. None the less, the strong disinclination has obtained to admit that Tacitus had any constant or continuous recourse to the protocol: from time to time (it is conceded) but we cannot tell how often.<sup>59</sup> That verdict carried weight and finds recent endorsement, express or through cursory treatment.<sup>60</sup> A more generous appraisal was still hesitant: 'what we do not know is . . . whether, for instance, he used the *acta* to control his literary sources, rather than merely for variety from them'.<sup>61</sup>

To those doubts and uncertainties (how often the *acta* and for what purposes) a proper scrutiny of the text, if undertaken, might be expected to yield some kind of response.

<sup>55</sup> Suetonius, *Tib.* 68. 1 f. The dreadful 'mentagra', an affliction that attacked the human face arrived 'primum Ti. Claudi Caesaris principatu medio' according to Pliny, *NH* xxvi. 3 f. Editors have failed to see that the word 'Claudi' is an intrusion. Neither Tiberius nor Claudius is designated elsewhere in the work by the reading innocently accepted and perpetuated. Cf. *ZPE* xli (1981), 25 f.

<sup>56</sup> Thus for example A. Momigliano, *Gnomon* xxxiii (1961), 56: 'Tacitus hat zweifellos die Acta Senatus gelegentlich herangezogen (Ann. 15. 74), aber wir wissen nicht wie oft'; D. Flach, *Mus. Helv.* xxx (1973), 101: 'dass er sie häufiger einsah, lässt sich nicht beweisen.'

<sup>57</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, J 120 f.

<sup>58</sup> A subsequent senator had 'Seius Quadratus' in his nomenclature, with the tribe 'Quirina' (*CIL* xiv. 2381: Tibur). That Roman tribe, the most

common of all, would not help an enquirer then or now. His other cognomen, 'Sittianus', happens to declare an African origin.

<sup>59</sup> Thus Momigliano, quoted above, n. 56.

<sup>60</sup> D. Flach, *Tacitus in der antiken Geschichtsschreibung* (1973), 71. There is not much about the *acta* in S. Borzsák, *RE Supp.* xi, 482 f. In the phrase '... hat T. versäumt die acta senatus sorgfältig zu studieren vgl. Mommsen' etc., the word 'nicht' should be inserted before 'versäumt'.

In relation to the *acta* Miss Levick stated that 'it would be impossible to show that the narrative of events in the House was based mainly on that record—an intermediate literary source may always be postulated, and can sometimes be demonstrated' (*Tiberius the Politician* (1976), 222).

<sup>61</sup> F. R. D. Goodyear, *Tacitus. Greece and Rome New Surveys* (1970), 26.



Other scholars betray a tendency to steer clear of the problem. They will derive benefit from the second volume of the new commentary on the *Annales*. A salubrious change has supervened. Thus, discussing the urban rubric of the year 15, 'substantial parts . . . rest on the *acta senatus* which in all probability he used directly'; and again for 18, 'his usual sources of information, in particular the *acta senatus*'.<sup>62</sup>

For ease and clarity a marked shift of opinion on a major and controversial topic ought to be registered somewhere. Some, but not many, have quite recently discovered a rift between philology and history and assert that it is widening.<sup>63</sup>

By paradox, a precise reference to the *acta* has been desiderated in a passage where they appeared not to belong. Adgandestrius, the chieftain of the Chatti, wrote to Tiberius offering to do away with Arminius if he were sent some poison. The letter was read out in the Senate. Tiberius Caesar composed an answer in consonance with the 'decus imperii' (ever his care); and, in the words of Tacitus, he put himself on a level with the 'prisci imperatores'.

Tacitus states the source of his information:

reperio apud scriptores senatoresque eorundem temporum Adgandestrii principis Chattorum lectas in senatu litteras (II. 88. 1).

The introductory phrase has aroused some puzzlement. Without warrant. It may be rendered as 'contemporary writers who were senators'. No perplexity therefore. The statement was proffered for the precise reason that for once a transaction in the Senate did not derive from the Senate's protocol.<sup>64</sup>

The name 'Adgandestrius' excited alarm and distrust. More plausibly Germanic would be 'Gandestrius'. The text might be in corruption, extending beyond the name. Reinforcing a desire to find a reference to the *acta*, that notion elicited from Mommsen the remedy 'reperio apud scriptores senatoriisque actis Gandestrii . . . litteras'.

As earlier critics did not fail to observe, the adjunct 'eorundem temporum' was inept, the *acta* by nature and definition being contemporaneous with the event. However, another refinement now comes out with 'apud scriptores senatoriaque acta eorundem temporum'.<sup>65</sup>

Adgandestrius has caused more nuisance than he deserves. German princes sometimes betray Celtic nomenclature. Thus Maroboduus of the Marcomanni, flagrantly.<sup>66</sup> The curious may refer to Celtic types such as Adbucillus the Allobrogan or Adminius, a British chieftain.<sup>67</sup>

XII. Doubts and hesitance were advertised about the reasons that might counsel Cornelius Tacitus to have recourse to the *acta senatus*. No mystery. He distrusted the historians of the first dynasty: adulation of the living and the dead defamed. Furthermore, Tacitus was anxious that his *Annales* should abide by the theme and tone of the Roman Senate, not degenerating into the biography of emperors. He was able to suffuse debates in the Senate with the real presence of the sombre and sagacious ruler, by orations and by curt sporadic comment such as 'castigatis oblique patribus' (III. 35. 1).

Recognition now accruing, albeit retarded, to the industry of the writer, equity demands that some attention should go to dangers incurred or even errors (suspected or proved) through employment of the *acta* when he blended them with other information, used them for supplement or transition, or added his own annotations. Nine specimens may be usefully put on exhibit.

(1) Augustus praised, incinerated and consecrated, the Senate was permitted to discuss the position of his successor. When the debate of September 17 flagged and lapsed, they turned

<sup>62</sup> Goodyear, II (1981), 136; 352.

<sup>63</sup> Thus D. Flach, *Tacitus in der antiken Geschichtsschreibung* (1973), 13. He cited opinions (not recent) of Vogt, Klingner and Büchner. 'À qui la faute?' No guilty men are named. He was presumably not indulging in self-incrimination.

<sup>64</sup> Compare Momigliano, *Gnomon* xxxiii (1961), 56: 'Syme gibt keine Erläuterung von Annales 2,

88. In diesem Fall ist es eindeutig dass Tacitus die Acta Senatus nicht benutzt hat'.

<sup>65</sup> Goodyear, II, 446, in a careful discussion of the text. Tacitus has 'senatorium album', once (IV. 42. 3).

<sup>66</sup> Some now allege Ariovistus.

<sup>67</sup> Caesar, *BC* III. 59. 1; Suetonius, *Cal.* 44. 2. For the common Celtic prefix, E. Evans, *Gaulish Personal Names* (1967), 128 ff.

to routine business. In the course of which, the Princeps 'Germanico Caesari proconsulare imperium petivit' (I. 14. 3). At first sight the item, while instructive for assessing what preceded, provokes unease.

Germanicus was already invested with that *imperium*, indubitably. It is attested and enforced by his first imperatorial salutation, taken in the course of the previous year and concurrent with *imp. XXI* for Augustus, *imp. VII* for Ti. Caesar.<sup>68</sup>

A solution avails. The Princeps was merely re-affirming that *imperium*—which enabled him to make a friendly reference to Drusus, described as 'praesens' and consul designate.<sup>69</sup> Therefore two alternatives. The explanation of Tiberius either did not pass into the protocol or was misunderstood by a historian who had not studied the recent years. Another item in these transactions has attracted more urgent attention: 'candidatos praeturae duodecim nominavit' (14. 4). Some discover ambiguity or inadequacy. Yet it is a plain statement. The list of praetors up for election, by whatever devices established, was in the hands of Tiberius Caesar. He read it out to the Senate. Trouble comes up in the sequel, in the historian's comments, brief and studiously vague.

(2) As the first item of 15, introduced by the names of the consuls, occurs 'decernitur Germanico triumphus manente bello' (I. 55. 1). In the late autumn of the previous year the Princeps had reported to the Senate actions of Germanicus, with firm commendation but without any hint of a triumph (52. 2); and the young prince did not then earn the prerequisite, an imperatorial acclamation. Hence a notion attractive on a surface view. Tacitus made a mistake. Facts are thrown in. Germanicus Caesar was acclaimed *imperator* in the course of 15, Tiberius concurring (58. 5). The vote of the triumph should fall at the end of the year when legates of the prince received military decorations (72. 1).<sup>70</sup>

A better solution is to hand. Germanicus was already equipped with the necessary salutation, taken in 13 (cf. above).

There is a further consequence, of no small value for the understanding of Tacitus, for the reconstruction of history and policy. Tiberius Caesar (one assumes) set his mind against warfare beyond the Rhine, from the first days of his reign. The offer of a triumph to Germanicus at the beginning of 15 conveys an easy and unobtrusive interpretation. That is, an honour to tempt the prince, conveying a gentle admonition to desist. The admonition became sharper at the end of the year when military decorations voted to the legates of Germanicus should have advertised not the end of a campaign, but the end of a war. Undeterred, the prince went on.<sup>71</sup>

(3) A proconsul of Bithynia prosecuted (I. 74). The action was launched by Caepio Crispinus his quaestor, 'subscribente Romano Hispone, qui formam vitae iniit quam', etc. A digression follows, describing the habits and vicissitudes of *delatores*. After which, the trial resumes with 'sed Marcellum insimulabat', etc., and the next sentence begins with 'addidit Hispo'.

A genuine perplexity. Does the parenthesis about *delatores*, introduced by 'qui', refer to Caepio the quaestor or to Hispo his adjutant? As one reads on in the passage it appears to be the former.<sup>72</sup>

Resort has been had to a small emendation. For 'insimulabat' Nipperdey proposed 'insimulabant'. That remedy has manifest attractions.<sup>73</sup> It would allow leaving Hispo as the *delator*.

To Hispo the label 'egens atque ignotus' (74. 2) attaches suitably, to Hispo the *subscriptor*. He crops up often in the pages of Seneca. Two passages are worth quoting. Hispo is defined as 'qui natura asperiozem dicendi viam sequeretur' (*Controv.* IX. 3. 11);

<sup>68</sup> For Germanicus as *imp.* I, T. D. Barnes, *JRS* LXIV (1974), 24 f.; R. Syme, *History in Ovid* (1978), 56 ff.; *Phoenix* XXXIII (1979), 317 ff.

The 'imperatoria nomina' conceded to Tiberius and his brother (*Ann.* I. 3. 1) presuppose *imperium proconsulare*: granted towards the end of 11 B.C., cf. Dio LIV. 31. 4; 33. 5; 34. 3.

<sup>69</sup> *Historiographia Antiqua* (1977), 241.

<sup>70</sup> D. Timpe, *Der Triumph des Germanicus* (1968), 45 f., cf. 57. He found noteworthy followers, cf. *Phoenix* XXXIII (1979), n. 67.

<sup>71</sup> For this interpretation, *History in Ovid* (1978), 59 ff.

<sup>72</sup> E. Groag, *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, C 159; R. Syme, *Tacitus* (1958), 326, cf. 693 f.

<sup>73</sup> Sagacious reasons are produced by Goodyear, 1 (1973), 159.

and, further, 'maligne et accusatorie dixit' (II. 5. 20). Observe finally Hispo's employment of 'contumelia' (Quintilian VI. 3. 100).

Therefore patently the better candidate, if one were compelled to make a decision.<sup>74</sup> If decision be waived, the passage retains its use, and an explanation. Tacitus, mindful of a leading theme, was incited to insert at once the portrayal of an archetypal *delator*, not waiting for Fulcinius Trio, a senator and a superior agent of evil.<sup>75</sup> In so doing he was not able to avoid an awkward suture.

(4) The Tiber floods. Asinius Gallus (perhaps not innocent) spoke for a consultation of the Sibylline Books. Caesar objected, and the Senate appointed two commissioners to investigate and report (I. 76. 1). A later session discussed their proposals—and no action followed (79. 4). Cassius Dio registered the floods, to the accompaniment of portents such as earthquakes and thunderbolts (LVII. 14. 7 f.). He subjoined a permanent board of five *curatores* now appointed. They are on record, the first presided by L. Caninius Gallus (*suff.* 2 B.C.), the second by the elderly C. Vibius Rufus (*suff.* A.D. 16).<sup>76</sup> In the *acta* no doubt, but not in Tacitus, who is not drawn to administration, who eschews even the consulars in charge of the Roman aqueducts.

Furthermore, the innovation, though put under 15 in Dio, may belong to the next year. A small detail of this kind would not accord well with the technique there adopted by Tacitus: senatorial business grouped around central episodes in large sections.<sup>77</sup>

(5) Poppaeus Sabinus the legate of Moesia (I. 80. 1). Continuing with 'id quoque morum Tiberii fuit,' Tacitus explains the ruler's practice of leaving governors in their provinces for prolonged tenures, and some to the end of their days. The transition is abrupt. A link was there—but in the mind of the author. He knew that Poppaeus Sabinus died in Moesia twenty years later (VI. 39. 3).

The phrase 'id quoque' may afford guidance to another passage a little earlier. Discussing criminal libels, Tacitus notes that the Princeps, consulted about the law of treason by the praetor Pompeius Macer, made an answer: 'exercendas leges esse' (72. 3). Tacitus adds 'hunc quoque asperavere carmina', etc. Among the topics of those poems he notes 'discordem cum matre animum'. Not perhaps relevant to the year 15. Discord between Tiberius and the Augusta is a motive that arises late in the hexad. The poems look like a subsequent addition, inserted between 'iudicia maiestatis' and the first prosecution for treasonable practices described as 'praetemptata crimina' (73. 1).

(6) Furius Camillus in Africa. The proconsul's campaign, with at the end the grant of *ornamenta triumphalia*, finds record under the year 17 (II. 52). Later, when the next proconsul, L. Apronius, turns up in 20, one reads 'eodem anno Tacfarinas, quem priore aestate pulsum a Camillo memoravi, bellum in Africa renovat' (III. 20. 1). A patent error in dating. Tacitus forgot.

Apronius had a tenure from 18 to 21. When Apronius awarded decorations, the Princeps added a 'corona civica'. That was within a proconsul's rights, so he pointed out, 'questus magis quam offensus' (21. 3). The *acta* again, as in the other two sections about Africa (III. 73. f., IV. 23 ff.).

(7) The ovation of Drusus Caesar. It was voted in 19 (II. 64. 1), celebrated in 20 (III. 19. 3), and also defined in 20 as 'ob . . . res priore aestate gestas' (II. 1). Those data

<sup>74</sup> Goodyear, *ib.*: 'on balance the arguments seem to favour Romanus' claims, but not so clearly as to preclude doubt.' The present writer is ceasing from doubt.

<sup>75</sup> *Ann.* II. 28. 3: 'celebre inter accusatores Trionis ingenium erat avidumque famae malae'. Trio, the prime prosecutor of Libo Drusus, reached a consulship in 31, a year fatal to many, and ended by suicide in 35 (VI. 38. 2). His name is absent from the roll of

declaimers in Seneca.

<sup>76</sup> *ILS* 5983; 5925. The order of the two colleges was inverted in *RR* (1939), 403. See further *ZPE* XLIII (1981), 369 f.

<sup>77</sup> Namely II. 27–32 (Libo Drusus); 33 (measures against luxury); 34 f. (L. Piso and Urgulania); 36 (a proposal of Asinius Gallus); 37 f. (the appeal of Hortensius Hortalus, with an oration from the Princeps).

are involved in the notorious aporia that besets the Tacitean chronology of 18 and 19. A discreet approach from that basis may help to clarify the problem.

Before the end of 17 both princes had left Rome, Germanicus going to the eastern lands, Drusus to Illyricum, likewise invested with proconsular *imperium*—as a senatorial writer did not need to specify.

In the course of the year 18 Germanicus installed Zeno as ruler of Armenia. Drusus was sent out as 'paci firmator' (II. 46. 5). That is to say, to promote through diplomatic arts the disruption of the empire of Maroboduus.

Two considerations come into the debate. First, operations of Drusus and the fall of Maroboduus are related under the year 19 (62 f.). Suspicion has arisen. They ought to belong to the previous year. Second, that narration is introduced by the words 'dum ea aestas Germanico plures per provincias transigitur' (62. 1). As the text runs, that refers to Egypt, dated by the consuls of 19 (59. 1). The phrase 'plures per provincias' fits better the travels of the previous year.

Hence a bold solution. Transfer a large piece (62–7) to the year 18, to be inserted before the consuls of 19 (59. 1). Such was the proposal of Steup, in 1869. It has met with varied response.<sup>78</sup> Some scholars concur—or all but.<sup>79</sup> One has printed his own transposition in his edition of the text.<sup>80</sup>

Something has gone wrong somewhere. That is clear. The clue may reside in the date (sometimes postponed) at which certain transactions came to be discussed in the Senate and registered in the *acta*. The following passage under the year 19 is vital:

simul nuntiato regem Artaxian Armeniis a Germanico datum, decrevere patres ut Germanicus atque Drusus ovantes urbem introirent. structi et arcus etc. (64. 1).

A conjecture can be proffered. Tacitus recounted the mission of Drusus and events beyond the Danube as a single episode, from Maroboduus and his demolition down to the establishment (a little later) of a client kingdom under Vannius of the Quadi (62 f.). In a speech to the Senate Tiberius extolled the achievement ('extat oratio') with emphasis on the formidable power of Maroboduus.

The speech of Tiberius justifies the grant of an ovation to Drusus. At the same time it was easy and suitable to associate Germanicus in the abnormal honour (neither had taken the field), in recognition of the ceremony at Artaxata the year before.

The vote of the two ovations was simultaneous, but not the arrival of tidings at Rome. Tacitus by inadvertence fell victim to an error and wrote 'simul nuntiato' (64. 1).

On this showing an explanation emerges. No call therefore to acquiesce in Steup and transfer from 19 to 18 a large chunk which, along with Maroboduus (62 f.), comprises affairs in Thrace (64. 2–67. 3), firmly linked to the ovations and to Tiberius' satisfaction by 'igitur Rhescuporum' (64. 2). The narration in Tacitus follows the dating prescribed by the *acta senatus*—which is confirmed by the references in the next year to Drusus' ovation (III. 11. 1; 19. 3).<sup>81</sup>

(8) The descendants of Cn. Pompeius Theophanes. In 33 Pompeia Macrina suffered prosecution and exile on charges of *maiestas*. Whereupon her father and her brother under ominous prospects committed suicide: 'pater quoque inlustris eques Romanus ac frater praetorius, cum damnatio instaret' (VI. 18. 2).

Names can be attached. Q. Pompeius Macer was praetor in 15, the praetor who consulted the Princeps about *maiestas*.<sup>82</sup> Macer's equestrian father, after being procurator of Asia under Augustus, stood high in favour with his successor. He was the son of Theophanes, the client and historian of Pompeius Magnus. Thus Strabo (XIII, p. 618).

<sup>78</sup> Against, E. Koestermann in his commentary, I (1963), 371 f.

<sup>79</sup> Thus, in a full and judicious discussion, Good-year, op. cit. 394: 'there is a good chance that he is right, in spite of what follows'. He agrees with

Koestermann in thinking that Tacitus' annalistic structure has broken down (ib. 395).

<sup>80</sup> H. Fuchs (1946).

<sup>81</sup> That is, even if most of the Danubian portion in fact belonged to 18.

<sup>82</sup> For the praenomen, *ILS* 9349.

Macer was also a friend of the poet Ovid, sharing and guiding his early travels in Sicily and Asia—and related to Ovid's third wife.<sup>83</sup>

Tacitus' account of the affair is compressed and enigmatic. The incrimination appears unduly trivial. It brought up the famous ancestor, 'quodque caelestes honores Graeca adulatio tribuerat'. Tacitus styles him 'proavum eorum', perhaps a little awkwardly since the term includes the *equus Romanus*, the parent of the praetor and his sister.

Now that parent is the procurator of Asia, the son of Theophanes. Theophanes should have been called 'avus' not 'proavus' in relation to Macer and Macrina. The historian has made a slip,<sup>84</sup> which many have failed to discern or refused to concede. It is no remedy to shove in another generation and a second *equus Romanus* between the client of Magnus and the praetor of A.D. 15.<sup>85</sup> Ages and chronology forbid.

Official documents are not immune from error. But there is no need to postulate a mistake in the contemporaneous protocol that recorded the prosecution of Pompeia Macrina. It may not have registered either word, 'avus' or 'proavus'. The reason is to be sought in Tacitus' annotation on the two suicides. He was well aware of the ancestor, and the memory of Magnus took him too far back into the past.

The more surprising perhaps because the family now came up again with a consul suffect in 115, previously governor of Cilicia when Tacitus was proconsul in Asia.<sup>86</sup> And another surprise. Tiberius Caesar made no move to rescue an old friend and close coeval. The annalist neglected an occasion to exemplify the fatalism of the ruler or his capricious temperament, who though enamoured of Greek letters turned against a scholar of elegant accomplishment.<sup>87</sup>

Fatigue ensued from the mass of prosecutions or deaths in this sombre year; and choice of emphasis bore on other persons and episodes.

(9) A governor dying in Syria. At the very end of 33 fell the decease of Aelius Lamia, with a public funeral (VI. 27. 2). The tribute is splendid ('genus illi decorum, vivida senectus') but short, eschewing all but the absentee governorship of Syria from which Lamia had at last been released when he assumed the Prefecture of the City.

Then comes the death of Lamia's successor in Syria, Pomponius Flaccus (27. 3). It provoked a despatch from the Princeps complaining about the reluctance of consulars to take on provincial commands. Tiberius forgot that Arruntius had been detained at Rome for a decade and prevented from going to Spain, so Tacitus is careful to add. On which follows the decease of Marcus Lepidus: the annalist had postponed it (Lamia died 'extremo anni') in order to conclude the evil year with a noble valedictory for a man who commanded much admiration.

To have Pomponius Flaccus dying in 33 imports a problem. Account has to be taken of Josephus and the long peregrination of Herod Agrippa.<sup>88</sup> If the story be given credit down to details of chronology, Agrippa had an interview with Flaccus not very long before he at last reached the capital. He arrived in the spring of 36. On this testimony, the tenure of Flaccus has been extended until 35, when L. Vitellius (*cos.* 34) turned up.<sup>89</sup> That estimate may be excessive.<sup>90</sup> A praetorian legate could function, as had occurred before

<sup>83</sup> For his occupations see H.-G. Pfaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres* 1 (1960), 12 ff., with the Addendum in III (1961), 957. He omitted however *Ann.* VI. 18. 2. As did by wise and deliberate choice L. Robert, *CRAI* 1969, 48, n. 1 (discussing Theophanes).

Some harm has been caused by a failure to see that in Strabo Μάρκον Πομπηίου should be changed to Μακρόν Πομπηίου. For the coin of Priene with the name of Macer and his presumed head, see M. Grant, *FITA* (1946), 388 f. He was disclosed as Cn. Pompeius Macer, with the title ὑπαρχος, on *Inscr.* v. *Priene* 247.

<sup>84</sup> Strongly suspected in *Tacitus* (1958), 749—and firmly stated in *History in Ovid* (1978), 73 f.

<sup>85</sup> Thus, following *PIR*<sup>1</sup>, 471 ff.: R. Laqueur, *RE* v A, 2099 f.; R. Hanslik, *xxi*, 2277. The latter

scholar failed to discern or state the problem presented by Tacitus—and no mention of the evidence from Priene.

<sup>86</sup> For the consulship of M. Pompeius Macrinus, styled 'Neos Theophanes', 100 or 101 was accepted in *Tacitus* (1958), 749. For the correct date, *Historia* xviii (1969), 355 f. = *RP* (1979), 777 f.

<sup>87</sup> Compare 'Iulius Montanus, tolerabilis poeta et amicitia Tiberii notus et frigore' (Seneca, *Epp.* 122. 11).

<sup>88</sup> Josephus, *AJ* xviii. 150 ff., cf. 126. Not noted by Koestermann ad loc., or by W. Eck, *RE Supp.* xiv, 439 f.

<sup>89</sup> Thus in Schürer's *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (ed. 2, revised by G. Vermes and F. Millar, 1973), 264.

<sup>90</sup> On which see remarks in *ZPE* xli (1981), 129 f.

the appointment of Pomponius Flaccus. However that may be, the chance subsists that the historian made a mistake in disposing his material when he introduced Flaccus in juxtaposition to Lamia.

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XIII. *Epilogue.* Tacitus has been under frequent assault from captious critics, overbold, overfleet. The more facts in an author, the greater danger of error or inadvertence. The nine specimens here on exhibit are intended to show how errors may arise, precisely during assiduous recourse to documents. By the same token, in the larger theme the very excellence of Tacitus' information about Tiberius Caesar (notably the orations) can be exploited to subvert (or at least modify) his portrayal of the ruler. It will be suitable to conclude with a pair of passages that illustrate his percipience and his technique.

When requesting the Senate to vote a public funeral for the unamiable *novus homo* Sulpicius Quirinius, Caesar recounted public services, with emphasis on personal loyalty during the sojourn at Rhodes; and he threw in a rancorous reference to Marcus Lollius, dead twenty years before (III. 48).

The version leads off with 'nihil ad veterem et patriciam Sulpiciorum familiam Quirinius pertinuit, ortus apud municipium Lanuvium'. The local origin of Quirinius might not be beyond reach despite the long efflux of time, but it carried no great value for Tacitus or for his readers: Quirinius left no issue from two aristocratic brides. Not therefore the product of research outside the *acta*. It is the noble and patrician who speaks, often at variance with his own class (not rivals and enemies only, but the idle or incompetent) and eager, although with passing dispraisal of a municipal origin, to asseverate the claims of merit against birth.

In the year 33 Caesar had to find husbands for three princesses: for two daughters of Germanicus and for Julia, the daughter of Drusus. Cassius Dio curtly noted the occasion—and omitted to name the consorts (LVIII. 21. 1). Tacitus puts it on high show, to open the year (VI. 15. 1). Drusilla was consigned to L. Cassius, her sister Julia to M. Vinicius. The extraction and character of the two husbands, standing in a certain contrast, is neatly indicated. Nothing, however, about the third princess, the daughter of Drusus Caesar.

In his missive to the Senate Tiberius evinced scant enthusiasm for his own choice. He wrote 'levi cum honore iuvenum'. That is significant for his manner. And something further. Tiberius had taken a long time to make up his mind. The passage opens with 'diu quaesito'. Observe for comparison 'saepe apud se pensitato' (III. 52. 3). That comes in the historian's preface to the long despatch in which the ruler evaded attempts to involve him in a programme of sumptuary legislation. The phrase, it appears, echoes Caesar's own exordium. Tacitus at an early point had singled out the 'anxium iudicium' which impeded and delayed the selection of governors (I. 80. 2).

To resume. The third marriage Tacitus chose to segregate, to keep it until late in the year, before the decease of Aelius Lamia. It was a 'pars maeroris' (VI. 27. 1). The sorrow was of a social nature. The daughter of Drusus 'denupsit in domum Rubellii Blandi'. Men recalled that his grandfather had been a Roman knight from Tibur.

Vinicius, the husband of the other Julia, avowed 'oppidanum genus', from Cales, it is true, but the son and grandson of consuls. Vinicius and Cassius shared the consulship of 30. In Rubellius Blandus (*suff.* 18) there was a certain disparity of age, not remarked by the historian: well over fifty when he got the hand of a princess. The explanations would be worth knowing, which Tiberius offered in his despatch. Julia was in fact about twenty-seven, and awkward to dispose of, having been married to Nero, the eldest son of Germanicus. An innocuous husband without birth and pretensions was a good solution, not without parallel in other dynastic arrangements.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>91</sup> The Tiburtine grandfather may have counted with Ti. Caesar: illustrious in the schools of declamation and in fact the first Roman knight to teach rhetoric (Seneca, *Controv.* II, *praef.* 5). For the match, see now 'The Marriage of Rubellius Blandus', *AJP* CII (1982), 62 ff.

The season remains a problem. Reasons can be adduced for questioning Dio's amalgamation with the other marriages early in the year (LVIII. 21. 1). The ceremony (perhaps discreet) may have ensued at some time in the summer, before Tiberius went back to Capreae (cf. *Ann.* VI. 20. 1).

The disjunction of Julia's nuptials is an incentive to curiosity, likewise the placing of the last item but one (only the suicide of Munatia Plancina intervenes, on brief report). Tacitus had given full space to the decease of the jurist Cocceius Nerva, 'continuous principis comes' (26. 1). Despite earnest reproach from his old friend, Nerva resolved to end his days by starvation.

On any count, Nerva and Nerva's end called for emphasis and high relief. Something further is disclosed by the proximity into which Nerva and Blandus are cast. Descendants survived of Blandus and Julia. Not of great account, yet kinsfolk of the Emperor Nerva. His maternal uncle married Rubellia Bassa.<sup>92</sup>

Design is apparent, and malice suspected.<sup>93</sup> The enquiry comes round to its beginning: experience and knowledge acquired by Cornelius Tacitus, senator, consul, proconsul of Asia.

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<sup>92</sup> *ILS* 232, cf. *PIR*<sup>3</sup>, C 1227.

<sup>93</sup> As in the conjunction of Nerva and Tigellinus (xv. 72. 1).