Tacitus on Principate and Empire: from the *Agricola* to the *Annales*

by

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To my grandfather, Henricus Maria ten Berge, and his memory

supportive from the start. Julia Hell offered welcome perspectives from another discipline, particularly on my approach to Tacitus and literature generally. Celia Schultz has been a mentor, editor, and advisor on more occasions than I can list here. Her generosity, straightforward advice, and eye for detail have been instrumental both for this dissertation and for my other work. David Potter is owed an immense amount of gratitude, for believing in me from the very start, for the training I have enjoyed under him, and for his mentorship at every stage not only of this project but of my graduate career generally. He is an example and a true mentor. A genuine thank you to all.

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List of Abbreviations

AE   *L'Année épigraphique* (Paris, 1888-)

ANRW   H. Temporini *et al.* (edd.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin, 1972-)

CAH²   J. Boardman *et al.* (edd.), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd edn. 14 vols. (Cambridge, 1982–2005)

CIL   T. Mommsen *et al.* (edd.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin, 1863-)

ILS   H. Dessau (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Berlin, 1892-1916)

OCD⁴   S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, and E. Eidinow (edd.), *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th edn. (Oxford, 2012)

PIR²   E. Groag, A. Stein, *et al.* (edd.), *Prosopographia Imperii Romani saec. I. II. III.*, 2nd edn. (Leipzig, 1930-)

RE   A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, and W. Kroll (edd.), *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Berlin, 1893-1980)

RIB   R. G. Collingwood, R. P. Wright, *et al.* (edd.), *The Roman Imperial Inscriptions of Britain* (Oxford, 1965-95)

SCPP   *Senatus Consultum de Pisone Patre*

SHA   *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*

The names and titles of classical authors and texts are abbreviated in accordance with *OLD* and *LSJ*.

Journal titles are abbreviated in accordance with *L'Année philologique*.

The titles of Tacitus' works are abbreviated as follows:

Agr.   *Agricola* (*De vita e moribus Iulii Agricolae*)

G.   *Germania* (*De origine et situ Germanorum*)

D.   *Dialogus de Oratoribus*

H.   *Historiae*

A.   *Annales*

Editions of Latin texts used:

Agricola, *Germania*, and *Dialogus de Oratoribus*: Winterbottom and Ogilvie (OCT: Oxford, 1975)

Historiae: Heubner (Teubner: Stuttgart, 1978)

Annales I-VI: Borzsák (Teubner: Leipzig, 1992)

Annales XI-XVI: Wellesley (Teubner: Leipzig, 1986)

Translations:

The translations in this dissertation are the author's unless otherwise indicated.

Chapter I

Introduction

"Early does not mean "immature" or "inferior.""
David Hurwitz on the compositions of Joseph Haydn (2005, xii)

In a letter to his friend Cornelius Tacitus, Pliny the Younger predicted that the former's

Historiae would become immortal (*Ep.* 7.33.1). He turned out to be right, but for a long time his

prediction seemed unlikely to be fulfilled. Unlike Livy, Vergil, and others, Tacitus was never a popular

author in antiquity. There were only a few references to and quotations from his writings in

subsequent centuries. The 4th century *Historia Augusta* claims that the emperor Tacitus (275/6) ordered

all of Tacitus' works to be copied and distributed among public libraries (*Tac.* 10.3). The only

significant influence of Tacitus' writings in antiquity was in Jerome's commentary on *Zachariah*, where

the latter refers to the thirty books of Tacitus' historical writings in a note on the destruction of the

Temple of Jerusalem.[1] The view that the late 4th century historian Ammianus Marcellinus was

influenced heavily by Tacitus is unsustainable.[2]

The only references to Tacitus in antiquity are to his historical works, the *Historiae* (ca. AD

105/6 – 109/10) and the *Annales* (ca. AD 112/3 – 120), and the *Historia Augusta* simply calls him

scriptorem historiae Augustae (*Tac.* 10.3). His first three works – the shorter *Agricola* (AD 98), *Germania*

(AD 98), and *Dialogus de Oratoribus* (ca. AD 100-108/9)[3] – are never mentioned (aside from a possible

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[1] Jerome, *Comm. ad Zach.* III.14: "Cornelius Tacitus, qui post Augustum usque ad mortem Domitiani vitas Caesarum triginta voluminibus exaravit." See Syme 1958a, 211 n. 2, 687.

[2] Seager 1986, viii, 36, 95, 103, 131, 133, 136; Matthews 2007, 32 and n. 45, 456 and n. 11, 468, 549 n. 4.

[3] The dates of composition for Tacitus' different works are based on both internal references and information in other sources (e.g. Pliny's *Letters*). The dates of composition for the *Agricola* and the *Germania* are based on internal references (*Agr.* 3.1; *G.* 37.2). The dates of composition, revision, and publication for the *Dialogus* are discussed on pp. 217-18. The dates for the *Historiae* are based on

contemporary reference to *D.* 9.6 at Plin., *Ep.* 9.10.2). Tacitus, as R. Mayer says, "passed into historical consciousness as an historian."[4] Indeed, when in 1425 the Italian humanist Poggio Bracciolini was informed about the existence (at Hersfeld) of a manuscript containing the *Germania*, *Agricola*, and *Dialogus*, he notably wrote to Niccolo Niccoli that the latter were *nobis ignota*. Moreover, the Hersfeld codex only ascribes the *Agricola* and *Germania* to Tacitus. Later humanist scholars, such as Beatus Rhenanus and Justus Lipsius, questioned Tacitus' authorship of the *Dialogus*. Doubt about the text's authenticity remained widespread for two centuries and still surfaced as recently as 1995.[5] From antiquity onwards, Tacitus' *opera minora* (the *Agricola*, *Germania*, and *Dialogus*) were approached differently than his *opera maiora*, the *Historiae* and *Annales*. This distinction between the two sets of writing is also reflected in their divergent manuscript traditions.[6] *Annales* I-VI (with considerable losses in the fifth and sixth books) were transmitted in a single MS (the 'First Medicean' or M1), written in the mid-9th century, while *Annales* XI-XVI and *Historiae* I-V (the former break off at *A.* 16.35.2, the latter at *H.* 5.26.3) descend together in the 'Second Medicean' (M2), written in the mid-11th century. The MSS of the *opera minora* go back to an archetype of 9th century date, the Hersfeldensis, of which a mere quire survives. It is telling that in this MS the *Agricola*, *Germania*, and *Dialogus* are grouped not with the *Historiae* and/or *Annales* but with Suetonius' *de Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*, ergo as non-historiographical imperial texts. Similarly, in other MSS deriving from the Hersfeldensis, the texts are transmitted with Frontinus or with the *Bellum Troianum* of Dictys of Crete. It is also significant that, while the *Germania* and the *Dialogus* have overlapping traditions, the *Agricola*'s transmission followed a different path in the 15th century. By the end of that century numerous copies had been produced containing one or more of the *opera minora*, via two or three (now lost) hyparchetypes. It was not until

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Tacitus' correspondence with Pliny (see Birley 2000, 241-42). I follow Syme (1958a, 465-80), Rutledge (1998, 141-43), Potter (1991, 287-91), Birley (2000), Pagán (2012, 3), and others in seeing a Hadrianic date for the completion of the *Annales:* see p. 159.
[4] Mayer 2001, 18-19.
[5] Crook 1995, 10, 174, 184.
[6] On the manuscript tradition of Tacitus' works, see Goodyear 1972, 3 ff.; Reynolds 1983, 406-11; Martin 2009, 239-252; Murgia 2012, 15-22, and the further references provided in each of those discussions.

the modern period that the three texts were united with the coherence they possess today.

The printed editions reflect the manuscript preservation. The *editio princeps* of Tacitus, printed ca. 1470 in Venice by Vindelin de Spira, contained *Annales* XI-XVI, followed by *Historiae* I-V, the *Germania*, and then the *Dialogus*. We note the prominence accorded to the historical narratives and the absence of *Annales* I-VI and the *Agricola*. It was not until 1515 that the former were brought to a wider audience, when Philippus Beroaldus the Younger published the *editio princeps* of the complete corpus. The latter's successor Beatus Rhenanus stands out for publishing an edition (1533, revised 1544) containing all of the *Historiae* and *Annales* and for arguing that both of Tacitus' historical works should be called *Annales*, a view that underlines the perceived unity of the *opera maiora* and, implicitly, their distinction from Tacitus' non-historiographical writings. Justus Lipsius, whose editions (1574-1606) included all of Tacitus' works, initially ascribed the *Dialogus* to Quintilian and was the first to make canonical the division of Tacitus' historical works into *Annales* and *Historiae*. In the following centuries, editions of Tacitus became increasingly sophisticated (critical editions really started with Ernesti in 1752) and over time the corpus was reconstructed with a coherence that did not exist before the modern period. This is reflected, *inter alia*, by the institution of series like the Teubner library of Greek and Latin texts and the Oxford Classical Texts series. The *opera minora* now are grouped together as a unit in critical editions, while the *Historiae* and the *Annales* have their own standard editions. There is no standard edition, however, that includes all of Tacitus' works and the conceptual distinction between the *Agricola*, *Germania*, and *Dialogus*, on the one hand, and the *Historiae* and *Annales*, on the other, remains firm today.

The divergent approach to Tacitus' works that has existed since antiquity is mirrored in the secondary scholarship. The bibliographic reviews of Tacitean scholarship show that the *Historiae* and especially the *Annales* have taken up most scholarly attention. The greater attention given to the historical works is informed, in part, by a tacit assumption (in turn informed by what seems to be the

usual progression of ancient literary careers) that Tacitus' early works are immature or preliminary to

his historical works, which are seen as the culmination of a stylistic and intellectual development: in

other words, a teleological approach in which the *opera minora* are reduced to "a marginal infancy."[7]

The earlier works often have been done away with as mere exercises or Vorarbeit, allowing Tacitus to

experiment with different genres and with the techniques he required for his historical projects.[8] One

may note Sir R. Syme's chapter "A Historian's First Steps," R. Martin's chapter "The Lesser Works,"

and other designations that imply or assume the immaturity of Tacitus' early work.[9] S. Borszák, in his

1968 *RE* article on Tacitus, endorsed (p. 399) F. Klingner's claim (1965, 509) that "keimhaft ist das

historische Weltbild und der Aufriß seiner Geschichtsschreibung schon in der Einleitung zum Leben

des Agricola vorhande." Martin, despite aptly noting that the monographs enunciate enduring Tacitean

concerns, still characterizes the *Germania* as "a part of Tacitus' preparation for his new vocation, the

writing of history."[10] The *Dialogus*, despite its recognized sophistication, has fared little better, having

been called an "anomaly" within the corpus and having, like the other monographs, been studied

mostly in isolation.[11] In the most recent monograph on Tacitus, W. Suerbaum prioritizes the *Annales*

and excludes the *Germania* and the *Dialogus*.[12] One consequence is this heuristic distinction between

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[7] Sailor 2004, 139. Bibliographic interceptions: Benario 1986; 1995; 2005. On the perceived difference in quality between the monographs and the historical works, cf. Syme 1958a, 128: "like the first essays of Sallust, the two Tacitean monographs [i.e. the *Agricola* and *Germania*] stand at the threshold of a magnificent achievement." On the common progression of ancient literary careers and consequent assumptions about Tacitus' works, see Ash 2007a, 2-3.

[8] It has been suggested that the historiographical and ethnographical sections of the *Agricola* were taken from a historiographical study of Domitian' reign and were meant as a preliminary study for the *Historiae* (Andresen 1874; Furneaux-Anderson 1922, xxiii for a forceful rejection of this hypothesis). It has been proposed that the *Germania* was written as an ethnographical excursus for the *Historiae* (Mommsen 1886; Wissowa 1921, 14-15; Paratore 1962, 205-28). Their view has not won acceptance (Rives 1999, 48; 2012, 53). For the monographs as 'Vorarbeit,' cf. also Flach 1998, 190. The scholarly approach to the monographs at times is inconsistent. So Syme claims that Tacitus, like Sallust, "benefited from preliminary essays" (1958a, 128), but elsewhere writes that "the *Agricola* does not have to be understood as preface and preliminary to a full-length history" (129), or that "to regard the Germania as *in any sense* [my italics] an introduction to the *Historiae* of Tacitus is premature and misleading" (148).

[9] Von Fritz, in an otherwise excellent article, calls the *Agricola* a "little pamphlet" (1957, 74). Cf. Syme (1958a, 129) on the *Germania*: "ethnographic pamphlet." Syme (1958a, 673) also refers to the *Dialogus* as possibly a "by-product" of the *Historiae*. In German scholarship, the phrases "kleine Werken" and "große Werken" commonly are used to designate the monographs and historical narratives. Such remarks or terms perpetuate a vision of Tacitus' first three works as inferior or immature (cf. Whitton 2015, 448). To avoid perpetuating this vision, in the remainder of this study I refer to the latter not as the 'minor works' but as the 'monographs.' Similarly, I refer to the *Historiae* and the *Annales* not as the 'major works' but as the 'historical' works or narratives.

[10] Martin 1981, 43.

[11] Anomaly: Goldberg 1999, 73-74. Isolation: Sailor 2008, 5; Suerbaum 2015, 6-7. For more discussion on the *Dialogus*' reception, see pp. 200-203.

[12] Suerbaum 2015, 6-7.

'early' and 'late' Tacitus is that the different works often are studied in isolation. It is telling that in a recent volume collecting seminal articles and book chapters on Tacitus, a five-page outline of current themes in Tacitean scholarship omits any mention of the relationship among Tacitus' different works.[13] Another consequence is that, when they *are* read together, the relationship between the monographs and the historical works most often is articulated in terms of difference on stylistic, generic, and conceptual grounds.[14]

Scholarly attitudes are reflected further by the relative shortage of English commentaries on the monographs. At the start of this study, the standard English commentary on the *Agricola* was still that of R. Ogilvie and I. Richmond produced in 1967 (now superseded by Woodman and Kraus 2014). The standard commentary on the *Germania* by J. Rives (1999) was the first English commentary on the work in approximately sixty years, while R. Mayer's commentary on the *Dialogus* (2001) was the first English commentary on that work in nearly a century. Moreover, the *Agricola* and the *Germania* predominantly have been the domain of British and German scholarship, respectively, and often have been studied within national(istic) frameworks and interests.

In the past decade, scholarly attention to the monographs has gained some momentum. Several scholars, such as D. Sailor (2004, 2008), R. Ash (2007b), and J. Rives (2012), have begun to argue against the perceived preliminarity of Tacitus' early writings.[15] Sailor's monograph *Writing and Empire in Tacitus* (2008), which embraces within its scope the *Agricola*, the *Historiae*, and some essential chapters from the *Annales*, is a welcome addition. Even so, the conscious exclusion from that study of the *Germania* and the *Dialogus*, and the relatively small space devoted to the *Annales*, is noticeable. Elsewhere, A. J. Woodman and C. S. Kraus published a fine new commentary on the *Agricola* (2014), which, however, does not discuss the text's place within the corpus or its relationship with the later

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[13] Ash 2012, 11-15. It should be noted, however, that Ash consciously chose to include chapters on the monographs, thus usefully creating a more balanced volume.
[14] As Sailor (2004, 139) and Ash (2007b, 434-35; 2014, 186 n. 5) also have pointed out.
[15] Classen 1988, 93-116 also draws attention to commonalities between the *Agricola* and the historical works.

works. C. S. van den Berg published a monograph (2014), originating from his 2006 Yale dissertation, devoted entirely to the *Dialogus* and its place within literary history and criticism. The volume succeeds admirably in its aim to "recover the *Dialogus*" and to dismantle some of the major assumptions that have kept modern scholarship from fully appreciating the text. However, van den Berg does not entirely deliver on his promise that his study of the *Dialogus* will "offer some purchase on Tacitus' historical works," the volume being nearly wholly devoted to the dialogue and its interactions with other texts in the rhetorical tradition.[16] In a 2012 article, van den Berg rightly stated that, "as modern scholarship refines its opinions of the *Dialogus* in other respects, there is an opportunity to recognize further commonalities across Tacitus' oeuvre. The *Dialogus* ought to become an essential part of the equation."[17] To date, that call largely has remained unanswered. Finally, near the completion of this study appeared a volume, edited by O. Devillers (2014), devoted to the monographs and with some chapters directly exploring the relationship between the latter and the historical works. The volume, issuing from a 2012 conference in Bordeaux, is divided into three sections ("Approches générales," "Regards singuliers sur les *opera minora*," "Confrontations ponctuelles entre *opera minora* et *opera maiora*") and offers welcome discussions on a range of Tacitean themes, both broader (the Principate and the Empire) and more circumscribed (e.g. the concepts of freedom and peace, fear, political boldness, and youth) in nature. It is encouraging finally to see a volume dedicated to Tacitus' monographs, so long marginalized. Still, only four out of the twelve chapters fit what one contributor states is the broad remit of the volume, namely "to explore the interaction between Tacitus' minor works and his later historical narratives."[18] The *Germania* receives only one chapter, while in-depth examinations of the interactions between the *Dialogus* and the historical works are a conspicuous absence. It should also be noted that, while some of the volume's contributors stress continuities across Tacitus' oeuvre, others

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[16] Van den Berg 2014, 49-50.
[17] Van den Berg 2012, 209. Devillers 2015, 137-53 explores the way in which the *Dialogus* interacts with the historical narratives, focusing primarily on Tacitus' shifting attitudes towards various emperors.
[18] Ash 2014, 185. The discrepancy is noted also in a recent review (Audano 2015): "quest'ultima risulta però alquanto trascurata nell'economia generale del volume."

continue to emphasize difference, thereby maintaining the distinction between 'early' and 'late' Tacitus and perpetuating the assumed inferiority or immaturity of his earlier writings.[19]

While interest in the monographs has gained some momentum in the past decade, a full-length and inclusive examination of the connections among Tacitus' different works is lacking. My purpose here is to engage in a holistic examination of the corpus and to confront the heuristic distinction between 'early' and 'late' Tacitus.' Rather than approaching the corpus from assumptions and then finding evidence in the texts to support them, I propose to look at what the texts themselves tell us about Tacitus and his thinking. In other words, I use Tacitus to get at Tacitus. What emerges from this approach is not only that the three monographs set out many of the major themes and concerns that appear in the historical narratives, but that Tacitus' outlook on the Principate and the Empire, and on more circumscribed issues, remains, on the whole, consistent.[20] The *Agricola*, *Germania*, and *Dialogus* explore, from their own particular perspectives, the central issues in the *Historiae* and *Annales*.

While it is perhaps not unreasonable to assume that Tacitus saw his early works as exercises or as preliminary to future historiographical projects (there is some hint at this at *Agr.* 3.3: *hic interim liber*), the argument of preliminarity does not help us understand what Tacitus was trying to do, for all work is in some sense preparatory for what comes after it but not predictive of the form that something will take. Even if Tacitus saw the monographs as in some way preparatory to his historical works, he surely could only have seen them as preparatory to the *Historiae* since there is no reason to believe that he envisioned the *Annales* before he wrote the *Historiae*. Furthermore, even if we assume that Tacitus saw his early work as preparatory to his later work, there is no need to make the additional assumption that there is, or has to be, a major qualitative discrepancy between those works.[21] A crucial difference

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[19] Acknowledged also in a recent review by Whitton (2015, 447-48).

[20] Cf. Keitel 2014, 70: "Tacitus began in the *Agricola* as he meant to go on. He already had found themes that he would pursue in his major works and already had a gift for using selective details and amplification to create unforgettable scenes that crystallized those themes and roused the reader to pity and indignation."

[21] The vision of Tacitus setting out as a rookie and increasingly developing into a mature historian is reminiscent of Jacoby's teleological model of Greek historiography (1956, 16-64, orig. 1909, 80-123), now discounted as being too linear.

between Tacitus and other ancient authors was that he was no rookie when he came to the *Agricola*. On any chronology, he began his literary career after age 40, having reached the pinnacle of his senatorial career, having acquired a reputation as being one of Rome's foremost orators, and having lived through the reigns of four emperors. By the time he came to the *Agricola*, "the main lines of his political thought were already firmly established."[22] We would do well to take the monographs on their own merit and approach them as mature and well-considered works of literature.

To analyze the connections among the monographs and the historical narratives, I have divided my study into three major parts, each devoted to exploring one of the monographs in conjunction with both historical works. This format preserves the order in which Tacitus conceptualized the issues with which he engages as well as the order in which an ancient reader encountered his works. It is important to stress this point. Modern scholarship all too commonly reads the monographs against the background of the *Historiae* and the *Annales*. Suerbaum, for instance, explicitly prioritizes the *Annales* in his 2015 study, on the theory that it is impossible not to read the monographs in light of Tacitus' final work, just at it would be impossible not to let one's knowledge of Vergil's *Aeneid* skew one's reading of his *Eclogues* or *Georgics*.[23] First of all, I simply do not think this is true. More importantly, the approach of reading the monographs through the lens of the historical narratives is fundamentally flawed and comes with serious drawbacks. It fails to interpret the monographs on their own terms, investing them with meanings, intentions, and aspects they may not have or convicting them for what they do not do. Tacitus wrote the *Agricola* and the *Germania* first, in close conjunction. Around the same time, he worked up the funeral oration for Verginius Rufus and the prosecution speech against Marius Priscus, both of which are lost. He then moved to the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae*, on which he was at work at or around the same time, with the *Agricola* and the

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[22] Martin 1981, 41. Cf. Devillers 2014a, 30: "les *opera minora*... forment une expression déjà aboutie de la pensée, et dans une certaine mesure de l'art, et de l'auteur."
[23] Suerbaum 2015, 6.

Germania in mind. Finally, he moved to the *Annales*, which he composed and conceptualized against the background not only of an entire historiographical tradition but also of his own writings. Indeed, it is clear from reading the different works in conjunction that Tacitus expects his readers to be familiar with his analysis of the themes he explores in the monographs before they come to his historical works. As F. Goodyear aptly notes, "the author Tacitus interacts with most is himself."[24] Tacitus' works never were meant to be read in isolation, and to examine the monographs or even the *Historiae* in light of the *Annales* is to reverse the order in which the historian came to the themes and issues he explores.

In the second chapter, I examine the connections between Tacitus' first surviving work, the *Agricola*, and both historical narratives. For the sake of clarity and completeness, I systematically move through the monograph, at each stage demonstrating how the concerns and viewpoints enunciated there recur in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*. I first explore what the preface reveals about Tacitus' outlook on the imperial system of government and the relationship between socio-political and generic change. Reading the *Agricola* and the historical works in conjunction shows that Tacitus saw the Principate as a system of government that encouraged broadly similar conduct in its emperors, regardless of their personality. While Vespasian and Trajan may be acceptable emperors, the nature of the Principate is such that it imposes systemic restrictions on *libertas* and is hostile toward the eminent.

The chapters on Agricola's early years in Gaul and his military apprenticeship in Britain under Suetonius Paulinus set out Tacitus' view of the importance of upbringing and mentorship in the development of young Romans. The concern with childhood, education, and training recurs throughout the corpus, and Tacitus frequently points to childhood as a factor explaining stained adult character. These sections also set out Tacitus' view of Paulinus, whose characterization becomes more complex in the historical works but which largely remains based on Agricola's example and on Tacitus'

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[24] Goodyear 1981, 90.

bias against equestrian officials, whom he blames throughout the corpus for failures of provincial policy.

The sections on Agricola's early offices in Asia, Rome, and Britain enunciate Tacitus' concern with the proper conduct of subordinate officials toward their superiors. One of Tacitus' principal concerns here is Agricola's conduct under a despotic emperor (Nero), which is described as a 'middle-of-the-road' approach that avoids the extremes of servility and open resistance. Agricola's conduct mirrors that of Tacitus himself, as well as that of Nerva, Trajan, and a range of other senators who survived the final years under Domitian. In the historical narratives, Tacitus frequently condemns senatorial servility or the open resistance of men like Thrasea Paetus, and he emphasizes the behavior of senators who mirror Agricola, whose conduct becomes an *exemplum* for how one can behave honorably under bad emperors. Both in the capital and the provinces, Agricola's conduct is characterized by respect for authority and avoidance of *discordia* or destructive *aemulatio* with superiors, colleagues, and subordinates. This is another concern that frequently recurs in the historical works, where Tacitus identifies *discordia/aemulatio* as a major cause of the disintegration of provincial administration and stability in the capital.

The chapters on Agricola's governorships in Aquitania and Britain in turn explore the proper behavior of those in positions of authority. These sections articulate Tacitus' outlook on the proper government of non-militarized and militarized provinces, that is of the qualities necessary for good provincial government and generalship. Once more, while Tacitus' characterizations become more nuanced and multifaceted in his historical works, the qualities ascribed to Agricola in his capacity as governor remain the core criteria by which Tacitus assesses the conduct of other officials. Moreover, the qualities that Agricola is said to possess and the faults he is said to avoid reveal what Tacitus considers some of the more objectionable ways in which Roman governors and officials typically operate. A common view is that Tacitus' attitude towards Roman provincial rule increasingly becomes

more pessimistic throughout his corpus. I argue, instead, that Agricola's virtues stand out against a general background of provincial maladministration: Tacitus' attitude is pessimistic from the start.

I should here address head-on a potential critique of my approach. Tacitus ascribes to Agricola the outstanding qualities of earlier Romans – Metellus, Pompey, Caesar, Quintus Cicero, Cato – and in turn ascribes the same qualities to other governors and generals in the historical works. Many of these qualities (foresight, courage, deliberation, etc.) are commonplace in ancient military narrative, and one may rightly ask why it matters, if all ancient authors think that the same set of behaviors and qualities are the hallmark of good leadership, that Tacitus emphasizes those same behaviors and qualities in his different works. While this is a valid point, it should be recalled that, although many aspects in ancient historiography are conventional, authors distinguish themselves both by the emphasis they place on particular aspects and by the techniques they use to do so. Conventional qualities that are positive in republican authors (e.g. *facilitas*) can be pejorative in Tacitus and yet retain their positive meaning in particular cases.[25] Politically charged terms like *obsequium* and *libertas* have different shades of meaning and denote different kinds of behaviors when applied to Agricola, fellow senators, or provincial populations. *Moderatio*, too, is a term whose traditional meaning Tacitus variously transforms in his works.[26] Moreover, in the *Agricola*, allusions to the great generals of old function to set up Agricola as a republican-style general, while emphasis on the same qualities in the historical works serves the related, but different, purpose of evoking Agricola and setting him up as an important *exemplum*. The similarities in Tacitus' description of Agricola and other Roman officials should not be dismissed as the mere repetition of hackneyed topoi.[27]

The chapters on Agricola's governorship of Britain explore a range of issues and concerns that remain essential in the historical works. One is the importance of experience in provincial government.

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[25] Benferhat 2011, 63-66.

[26] Classen 1988, 98 ff.

[27] Cf. Hinds 1998, 34-47 on this mode of reading: "the so-called commonplace, despite our name for it, is not an inert category... but an active one, with as much potential to draw poet and reader into, as away from, engagement with the specificities of its history" (40).

Agricola's service as military tribune, legionary legate, and governor in the same province is unique, as far as we know, and Tacitus' account of the man's governorship reveals an enduring interest in the tension between the benefits and drawbacks of lengthy provincial tenures. Tacitus' account further sets out a theory of Roman imperialism and methods of acculturation and reveals an interest in the role of *auxilia* in the Roman military. What emerges is that Tacitus favors imperial expansion on emotional and moral grounds, but that, at the same time, he is acutely aware of existing pressures on the Empire and the drawbacks of continued expansion. This complex attitude towards Roman foreign policy and the Empire's maintenance recurs in the *Germania* and the historical works. Like his literary predecessors, Tacitus balances Roman perceptions of empire against that of non-Romans. The criticism of Rome's empire placed in the mouth of the Caledonian chief Calgacus evokes similar accounts of the Empire in Caesar, Sallust, and Livy and in turn is recalled frequently in analogous speeches in the historical narratives. Finally, throughout the work, Agricola's conduct as governor is set in marked contrast with that of the emperors in the capital. This type of indirect commentary on the Principate is mirrored in the *Germania* and the *Dialogus*, which, as will be seen throughout this study, share essential organizational and analytical aspects with the *Agricola*.

In the third chapter, I move to the *Germania* and its relationship with the historical works. Here I take a new approach to the text as being principally a reflection upon the challenges and problems inherent in imperialism and *imperium* and on the practicability of a potential conquest and annexation of trans-Rhenane Germania. In offering an account of Germania's geography, natural and mineral resources, and customs, the *Germania* engages with the chief considerations of foreign policy. In the first section of this chapter, I undertake a detailed analysis of the work's description of the Germani and their land, focusing on the two ethnographic categories of interest – *situs* and *mores* – and unpacking in each case the supposed implications for any projected foreign policy with regard to the region. The text paints a complex picture of Germania and its tribes, pointing up ways in which

conquest and occupation could be practicable, but at the same time establishing ways in which these objectives are impracticable, costly, and time-consuming. Given the cultural and economic limits on empire, Tacitus suggests that leaving the Germani to their internal discord and retaining influence through cultural attraction ('soft power') may be the most prudent policy. But, crucially, he nowhere advocates a single policy, leaving his readers to draw their own conclusions about the appropriate policy in Germania.

In the second section, I explore what the *Historiae* and the *Annales* reveal about Tacitus' attitude towards Rome's *imperium* and towards Germania and its tribes in particular. Here I show that, while Tacitus' analysis of imperial rule becomes more detailed and nuanced in the historical narratives, it remains consistent at its core: he ties expansion to morality, but continues to point up internal and external pressures on the Empire that encourage defensive limitation and consolidation. Although persistently restive contexts vindicate military intervention, Tacitus generally advocates consolidation and avoidance of financial and military overextension. For the historian, indirect power is real power. Reading the *Germania* and the historical works in conjunction shows that Tacitus' outlook on imperial rule largely remains consistent. The final section of the chapter is devoted to the characterization of Germania and its tribes across the three works. While modern scholarship often emphasizes the differences between the Germani of the three works, the fact is that, some departures notwithstanding, they are depicted consistently across the corpus. Tacitus' depiction of the Germani becomes more multifaceted in the historical works, but crucially remains based on the essential characteristics ascribed to them in the *Germania*.

The description of the Germani and their land, particularly the former's propensity to discord and violence and the latter's economic drawbacks, would seem to support a defensive and cost-efficient foreign policy based on indirect ('soft') power. In one sense, the *Germania* and the historical works may be taken as endorsing Tiberius' decision to recall Germanicus and re-establish the empire's

frontier at the Rhine – a decision, I argue, was not Augustus,' as still commonly thought, but Tiberius.'

In the fourth and final chapter, I turn to the *Dialogus* and its connections with the *Historiae* and the *Annales*. Like the *Agricola* and the *Germania*, the *Dialogus* sets out concerns and methods of analysis which Tacitus subsequently applies in the historical works. I start by giving an overview of the text's reception from antiquity to the present and of the prevailing scholarly responses to it. I follow van den Berg (2014) in embracing the text's chronological and conceptual inconsistencies and propose to read these from the perspective of Roman memory and methods of computing time and reconstructing the past. The interlocutors, associating socio-political and generic change with major individuals and/or events, reconstruct the development of *eloquentia* and its aspects in broad chronological schemas that are plausible but internally inconsistent. The dialogue further establishes tensions between concepts and values (*laus* and *ingenium*, *libertas* and *eloquentia*) that run through the text and ultimately remain unresolved. Laying out these tensions and chronological reconstructions, I argue that the competing viewpoints, and the chronological and conceptual opacity they establish, serve to demonstrate that different narratives and realities are possible and that socio-political and generic change cannot be analyzed accurately in tidy frameworks. In this way, the *Dialogus* is revealed to be reflective of the nature and practice of historical and cultural analysis.

The dialogue's speakers take up various stances toward the Principate and imperial ideology, which relies on tidy reconstructions of the past and Romans' propensity to think and remember in such terms. One of my arguments is that the *Dialogus* serves not only to promote a more critical analysis of cause and effect in discussions of oratory, but to bring greater intellectual rigor to discussions of time, periodization, and history generally. In my analysis, I bring recent approaches to ancient historiography to bear on the dialogue. The text forces readers to adjudicate between competing viewpoints and reconstructions of the past and in doing so trains them to apply a more nuanced analysis to the past and their own present. This may be seen as analogous to the way that

Tacitus educates his readers in the historical works by recounting how characters in the narrative (fail to) scrutinize their past and present.

In the second part of the chapter, I explore several examples of this technique. The *Dialogus'* purpose to work against simplistic reconstructions of the past recurs in both historical works. In each case, I start with the preface, which takes up essential concerns set out in the prefaces of the *Agricola* and *Dialogus*. All of Tacitus' prefaces are concerned with the relationship between socio-political and generic change and with the transition from the Republic to the Principate. As in the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus*, in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, Tacitus challenges polarizing distinctions between the past and present and undermines the notion of a radical change in the world, showing that social, cultural, and generic change follows political change gradually. Throughout both historical works, moreover, he continues to undermine imperial ideology, pointing up the continuity of discord and civil violence from Rome's early past into the Augustan Principate as well as from the civil wars of 68-69 into the Flavian Principate.

The concern to complicate superficial reconstructions of the past recurs in the historical narratives, where Tacitus describes the emperors and other characters analyzing the past and present, only to correct their analysis with his own, more nuanced, reconstruction. Examining the *Historiae*, I show how Galba, Piso, Otho, and Vitellius fail in their analysis of the republican, Julio-Claudian, and recent Neronian past and consequently fail to navigate the *horror vacui* left by Nero's death. Vespasian and Mucianus, in contrast, reveal themselves to be better 'historians,' aware of historical precedent and understanding the nature of social-political transition. Elsewhere, Tacitus recounts how the Romans in 69 analyze the civil wars against the background of the republican civil wars (*H.* 1.50), only to show in a digression (*H.* 2.38) that their analysis is simplistic and, consequently, of little value in their present circumstances.

From the *Annales*, I examine two scenes in which Tacitus puts on display Roman 'anniversary'

thinking and the tendency to reconstruct the past in terms of major personalities and events: *A.* 1.9-10 (the reception of Augustus' reign in the direct aftermath of his funeral) and *A.* 15.38-44 (public perceptions of the great fire of AD 64). In both cases, Tacitus shows how thinking in tidy chronological schemas ignores essential details and occludes reality. Finally, in several digressions – on the history of Roman law (*A.* 3.26-28) and luxury (*A.* 3.55) – Tacitus shows that socio-political development is not linear but changes its course depending on one's perspective. Here, too, he reinforces a crucial observation made in the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae*, namely that the past is not always better and ought not always be used as the benchmark against which to analyze the present.

In each of the chapters, in sum, I illustrate how principal Tacitean themes and concerns, narrative aims and techniques, and methods of analysis are set out in the monographs and taken up in the historical works. What emerges is that, in each of the monographs, Tacitus establishes theories of analysis that he subsequently applies in his account of the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*. In the *Agricola*, *Germania*, and *Dialogus*, Tacitus theorizes, respectively, the Roman state, imperial rule, and the nature and practice of historiography, revealing himself to be a wide-ranging intellectual, a theorist, educator, and social commentator, as well as a highly skilled author. He remains all this in the *Historiae* and *Annales*, where he brings an already rich and mature mind to the project of writing history. In his historical works, he applies the theories set out in the monographs to produce an incisive account of a period well known to most members of his class. While his thinking progressively develops, his methods of analysis remain, by and large, consistent. This is a fundamentally different picture than the one common in modern scholarship, which sees Tacitus progressing from early exercises to his true vocation and which assumes a substantial shift in his thinking. A holistic reading of the corpus suggests a more leveled and gradual development. It also suggests that we should approach the monographs as the mature pieces of literature that they are.

I should clarify here what my study does not do. I consciously do not focus on the

development of Tacitus' style, on the ground that the latter is predominantly a function of genre and hazardous to analyze in terms of development or changes in preference.[28] The reception of the *Dialogus* – particularly the way that early scholarship assigned a pre-Domitianic date to the text and ascribed it to others authors due to its Ciceronian style – constitutes sufficient warning.

My method is grounded in traditional philological analysis, based on the close reading of each of the texts and of the continuation of language, thought, and analysis across them. This approach is apt, since the allusion to, and the recall and re-appropriation of, the language, themes, and analysis in prior literary works was the *modus operandi* of ancient authors. In attempting to establish the nature of an author's analysis and his works, this method is crucial, as it relies on information offered by the author himself, as opposed to relying on 'outside' information that often is speculative and of little hermeneutical value. Not only does Tacitus frequently engage with literary predecessors, but he constantly evokes and elaborates on scenes, concepts, and concerns set out in his earlier works. I stress here that my approach is not solely literary, however, as I aim at every turn to uncover the historical significance of what Tacitus writes about the workings of the Principate and the Empire, about the nature of historical analysis, and about what this means about the practice of writing history in imperial Rome.

The approach and format of my study offer, I hope, several benefits to our reading of the Tacitean corpus. One is that any arguments about Tacitus' thinking and his concerns are based on the texts themselves, as opposed to using details of his life to explain them, a method that rightly has been criticized for committing the "biographical fallacy."[29] While at times helpful, such methods often are based on speculation and unverifiable facts. Moreover, unless we use events or details that are peculiar to Tacitus, we essentially treat him as just another senator with literary, oratorical, and legal expertise,

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[28] The bibliography on Tacitus' style is extensive. In general, see Martin 1981, 214-35; Hellegouarc'h 1991. See also Syme 1958a for the style of the *Historiae* (191-202) and for Sallustian language in Tacitus (728-32). Van den Berg 2014 illustrates the masterful ways in which the *Dialogus* follows, challenges, and ultimately supersedes its Ciceronian forerunners.

[29] Morford 1991, 3422.

thus failing to distinguish the individual from the group. Tacitus was far from a typical ancient historian. Aside from the fact that he was over 40 years old and a seasoned orator and politician when he came to the *Agricola*, he remained, unlike some of his predecessors, active in politics and close to the center of power during his literary career. This fact has major implications for the nature of his writings, as A. Momigliano and others have shown.[30] The approach I adopt here focuses on what Tacitus himself tells us are his principal concerns.

Another benefit of the format here is that it allows for a broad analytical scope. Early imperial historiography had a tendency to think more biographically in terms of individuals than ideologically in terms of systems: the *princeps*, in accordance with imperial realities, became the organizing principle around which to structure narratives. The format I employ to some extent takes the focus away from the emperors and their lives and shifts it to the nature and workings of the Principate and the Empire.

A third advantage of paying close attention to the monographs is that the *Agricola* allows us to reconstruct what some of Tacitus' public speeches – none of which, if they were ever published, survive – might have looked like. The *Agricola* is closely connected in time to the funeral oration for Verginius Rufus, which Tacitus delivered in 97, and further gives us a sense of what the main points might have been in his prosecution (in 100, together with Pliny the Younger) of M. Priscus, proconsul of Africa (Plin., *Ep.* 2.11).

A final benefit is that it allows us to fully appreciate the monographs in coming to a more holistic understanding of Tacitus and his corpus. The comparative lack of attention devoted to the monographs is remarkable when we consider the luxury of possessing them at all; they survived by the narrowest of margins. It is worth considering what our estimation of Tacitus would be if we had lost the three works. Our assessment would have to be based solely on what we have of the *Historiae* and

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[30] Most recently Sailor 2008. Thucydides and Xenophon were exiles, Polybius a political hostage, Sallust had been expelled from the senate before later departing from public life, and Asinius Pollio had withdrawn from politics. Herodotus, too, wrote from the 'outside.' Livy seems not to have belonged to the social class that usually furnished historians. Caesar, Velleius, and Josephus, like Tacitus, wrote from the 'inside' (cf. Pagán 2012, 3-4).

the *Annales*, in the knowledge that we did not possess three works that contained the first instantiations of the author's principal concerns, methods of analysis, and stylistic preferences. Yet, in the unbalanced approach I confront here, our assessment of Tacitus *still* is based predominantly on the historical narratives, on the theory that his earlier works were really only small steps on the way to a grand achievement. We have not fully utilized the luxury of possessing Tacitus' earlier works. This is especially evident when we consider how modern scholarship has analyzed what survives of the corpus of Tacitus' predecessor Sallust. Of the latter's works we have the two monographs *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Iugurthinum* but only fragments of his *Historiae*. This has not stopped us, however, from formulating Sallust's principal thematic and intellectual concerns, his stylistic preferences, and his qualities as an historian, even though using the monographs to get at Sallust's later work is not without problems.[31] The scholarly attitude to Tacitus' oeuvre has been the opposite to that of Sallust. Whereas the latter's monographs, in the absence of much of his *Historiae*, have been granted great prominence in formulating our estimation of him as an historian, Tacitus' monographs, perhaps because so much of the *Historiae* and the *Annales* survives, have been granted comparatively little attention.

The method I advocate can usefully be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to other authors and genres. I show that there is a core group of Tacitean concerns that crosses the generic boundaries that might be seen to divide a biographical or historiographical work from an ethnography or a rhetorical treatise. In looking for conceptual and thematic consistency across the different works, I seek to complicate the generic determination on Tacitus' corpus and, concomitantly, on Latin literature more broadly. My method of looking for unifying issues within a corpus may reasonably be expanded to other authors and used to recover aspects of Roman thought that are environmentally determined rather than, as is often the case now, dictated by the form in which they are composed.

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[31] A pertinent example is Sallust's treatment of Sulla. At *Jug.* 95.2, Sallust writes he will not relate Sulla on any future occasion. Yet the fragments of the *Historiae* betray an obvious interest in the dictator's character and actions. Either Sallust did not conceive of writing the *Historiae* when he composed the *Jugurtha* or he simply changed his mind as regards Sulla. Either way, the example illustrates the potential hazards in using Sallust's monographs to get at the fragmentary *Historiae*.

Chapter II

Agricola, *Historiae*, *Annales*

The relationship between Tacitus' *Agricola* and his historical works often is articulated in terms of difference on stylistic, generic, and analytical grounds.[32] The work, moreover, when read alongside the historical narratives, often is ascribed a sense of preliminarity and immaturity. This approach risks a fundamental misunderstanding of Tacitus and his works. It overlooks the fact that the *Agricola* enunciates many enduring Tacitean concerns and occludes the ways in which the historical narratives recall, expand on, or are informed by, scenes in the monograph. In this chapter, I explore several of the *Agricola*'s principal themes and concerns and illustrate how they make their way into the historical narratives. My first aim is to demonstrate the essential thematic and conceptual connections among the three works. My second aim is to illustrate that Tacitus' broad outlook on the Principate and the Empire and on the proper functioning of Roman officials within these power structures remains, by and large, consistent throughout.

The overarching theme of the *Agricola* is the question of how a senator can flourish within the imperial system of government, a question that remains prominent throughout the corpus. This central question can be divided into a number of subsidiary ones that likewise recur frequently in the later works: a) what is the relationship between the *princeps* and the senatorial class and how can and should a senator position himself vis-à-vis the former? b) what is the proper career development for a senator and how is this achieved in an honorably manner? c) what is the appropriate conduct and what are the

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[32] Ash 2007b, 434-35. Scholarship on the *Agricola* is quite extensive. Benario's reviews of Tacitean scholarship offer useful summaries of earlier scholarship on the text (1986, 94-98; 1995, 108-12; 2005, 271-75). Plentiful and up-to-date bibliographies can be found in König 2013 and Woodman and Kraus 2014, 1-35, 333-48. The major commentaries are Furneaux-Anderson 1922; Forni 1962; Ogilvie and Richmond 1967; Heubner 1984; Woodman and Kraus 2014. Birley 1999 offers useful comments as well.

attending virtues of a senator in contemporary Rome? d) what makes good governors and generals and what is their role within the Roman imperial mission?

After a short introduction, which situates the *Agricola* within its socio-political and literary context, I discuss Tacitus' view of the nature of the Principate and its systemic effects on the position and conduct of its emperors, on emperor-senate relations, and on the functioning of Roman officials in both the capital and the provinces. In the third section, I examine the chapters about Agricola's early years in southern Gaul and his military apprenticeship in Britain under Suetonius Paulinus, illustrating the importance of education and mentorship in the development of young Romans as well as the ways in which Agricola's early years impact the execution of his future offices. In the fourth section, I move to Agricola's career as governor of Aquitania, exploring the proper progression of a senator's career and identifying both the challenges governors faced and the gubernatorial qualities Tacitus describes as essential for the proper execution of their office. Of particular significance here is the interaction with superiors, colleagues, and subordinates and the avoidance of destructive competition. In the fifth section, I discuss Agricola's governorship of Britain, exploring the qualities Tacitus considers crucial for the execution of military command and provincial administration. In the final section, I consider what the *Agricola* reveals about larger questions concerning the empire and foreign policy, analyzing the complexities of Tacitus' attitude towards imperialism and towards the use of *auxilia* and their value. What ties these sections together is the simple, but crucial point, that each of the above themes, and Tacitus' analysis of them, recurs largely unchanged in the historical narratives. The *Agricola* enunciates many of Tacitus' principal concerns and sets out the broad lines of his attitude towards the Principate and the Empire, the two power structures that govern Roman life.

II.1 Introduction: the *Agricola* within its Socio-Political Context

Examining the connections between the *Agricola* and the later works makes good sense. The

Agricola and the *Historiae* cover roughly the same historical period, making it likely that there are many points of contact, while even the *Annales*, covering the earlier Julio-Claudian era, reveal many material connections with the monograph. Furthermore, there is good reason to consider the significance of the *Agricola* in the Tacitean corpus. The intriguing thing about Tacitus is that chronologically he wrote about his 'latest' subject matters first, before going further back in time as his literary career progressed, a point that has implications for the position of the *Agricola*. On the one hand, Tacitus' portrait of Agricola informed those of Germanicus, Corbulo, Paulinus, and other senators in the *Annales*, while Domitian often is seen as a model for the later portraits of the Julio-Claudian emperors, especially Tiberius.[33] On the other hand, the portraits of Agricola and Domitian likely were themselves inspired by the literary and oral traditions that existed about earlier emperors and senators.[34] Tacitus' first work, then, both was informed by his views of the personalities and events of the early Principate and, in turn, informed his account of that same period in the later *Annales:* the *Agricola* looks both backward and forward.

The text is notoriously difficult to classify. In its short compass (under a 1000 lines) it contains elements common to the genres of biography, historiography, ethnography, funerary eulogy (*laudatio funebris*), and forensic oratory, making for a rich text containing many stylistic features that recur in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*.[35] The text's ostensible purpose is to record for posterity the life and career of the author's father-in-law. But it does much more than that. Published in AD 98, when imperial power had passed from Domitian to Nerva and then to Trajan, the *Agricola* is intimately engaged with the socio-political issues of its time.[36] As such, it is part of the range of surviving post-Domitianic literature

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[33] Cf. Walker 1952 [1968], 219.

[34] Taking Tiberius as the model for Domitian would be logical given that Domitian was known to have read nothing but Tiberius' *commentarii* and *acta* (Suet., *Dom.* 20.1). There were also acknowledged similarities between Nero and Domitian: Plin., *Pan.* 53.5.

[35] On the work's stylistic diversity, see Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 21 ff.; Woodman and Kraus 2014, 1-5, 30 ff. Cf. Beck 1998, 63-65. As Sailor (2008, 51-118) shows, the *Agricola* also performs the work of certain social practices, such as the triumph and *damnatio memoriae*. For bibliography on Tacitus' style generally, see n. 28.

[36] On the way the *Agricola* positions itself in this transitional period: Sailor 2008, 53 ff.; König 2013, 361-65, with plentiful references in the notes; Woodman and Kraus 2014, 1-30; Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 14 ff. remains useful as well.

which sought to interpret the immediate past and present and which, in concert with the new regime, portrays Trajan and life under him in opposition to the old regime.[37] The text, moreover, engages with topical questions about the proper behavior of a senator, about senate-emperor relations, and about the qualities expected of an emperor. In the aftermath of Domitian's regime and the unstable years under Nerva, and with Trajan not yet in Rome, the senatorial class faced the challenge of defining its position and "to turn some of the new rhetoric into reality, if it can."[38]

Pliny the Younger's letters showcase the tense atmosphere in post-Domitianic Rome, when the late emperor's victims, who had openly resisted his regime and paid for it with their lives, enjoyed sympathy and those who had actively collaborated with the old regime were attacked and criticized.[39] Two exponents of the senatorial opposition were Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio, Stoic philosophers who were executed for composing *Lives* of Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus, themselves Stoics who likewise had given their life in opposition to their regimes (*Agr.* 2.1). These senators (commonly referred to as the "Stoic Martyrs") were celebrated in contemporary literary works: Titinius Capito wrote *Exitus Illustrorum Virorum* ("Deaths of Famous Men", Plin., *Ep.* 8.12.4) on the victims of Domitian, while C. Fannius wrote three books on Nero's victims (*Ep.* 5.5.3).[40] In addition, Tacitus' close friend Pliny, who had enjoyed success under Domitian, openly professed his support for the emperor's victims, whether out of sympathy for the circle of Helvidius to which he was tied or out of a desire to distance himself from the old regime, or both.[41]

It is within this broader cultural response to the Domitianic past and the Trajanic present that

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[37] Martial's late work, Pliny's *Panegyricus*, Dio Chrysostom's speeches, Juvenal's *Satires*, Suetonius' *Lives*, and Tacitus' *Agricola* all present Domitian as a tyrant and explicitly or implicitly endorse the renewed sense of freedom and openness under Trajan. Yet we should not uncritically follow post-Domitianic literature in envisioning a rigid break between the Domitianic and Trajanic regimes. See Liebeschuetz 1966, 132-33; Whitmarsh 2006, 311-12; Wilson 2003 (a critical assessment of post-Domitianic literature and its depiction of Domitian). See Waters 1964 and Jones 2002 for redeeming accounts of Domitian.

[38] König 2013, 365.

[39] On the complexities of the reputation of the Martyrs in post-Domitianic Rome, see the discussion in Sailor 2008, 11-33.

[40] On this genre: Devillers 2003, 43-45 with many useful references. For general discussion of the Martyrs: Sailor 2008, 10 ff. with further bibliography.

[41] Note *Ep.* 1.5, 3.11, 7.19, 7.33, 8.12, 9.13. For Pliny's attack on Helvidius Priscus' prosecutor Publicius Certus, see *Ep.* 9.13; cf. 4.21.3, 7.30.5 and (possibly) 1.2.6. On Pliny's character assassination of Aquilius Regulus, see Gibson and Morello 2012, 31, 40-73.

the *Agricola* is situated. It simultaneously is concerned with denunciating Domitian's reign, with articulating the values of the new regime, and with formulating and promoting the proper behavior of a senator in contemporary Rome. That behavior, as is evident from both the *Agricola* and the historical narratives, differed from that of the Martyrs, whose courage and open resistance, however admirable in principle, Tacitus criticizes as "useless to the state" (*in nullum rei publicae usum*, *Agr.* 42.4).[42] In contrast, Agricola exemplifies a conduct of moderation and useful service for the state, a conduct Tacitus would continue to advocate throughout his works.[43] This is the conduct that Tacitus himself and other senators, such as Verginius Rufus, Vestricius Spurinna, Pliny, Nerva, and Trajan, had adopted as well. The *Agricola* thus serves a wider purpose of vindicating the careers of many who had come through Domitian's reign unscathed.

In its effort to endorse the ideology of the new regime by commemorating the life of a prominent individual, the *Agricola* is likely to have had much in common with the funeral oration Tacitus delivered the previous year for Verginius Rufus, one of the figureheads of Nerva's regime.[44] We do not have the oration, but we know enough from other sources to imagine what its main themes would have been and how Verginius and Agricola were connected: successful governorship of an imperial province, military success in the service of the state, *uirtus*, *gloria*, and moderation.[45] Tacitus likely used the occasion to advocate a specific set of values and to hold up Verginius as an example to

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[42] Tacitus saw the avoidance of political boldness as the only way to achieve stable government: cf. Walker 1952 [1968], 198-202. Cf. the introduction to V. Max. 6.2 on the concept of *libertas* as harmful failure of self-restraint. On the apparent inconsistencies between *Agr.* 42.4 and Tacitus' treatment of individual Stoics, such as Helvidius and Thrasea, in the later works, cf. Sailor 2008, 17, who suggests that Tacitus disavows the Martyrs "as a category" but praises individuals to preserve his allegiance to the views of his peers. Tacitus "pays them respect, while furnishing the material for a serious critique of them" (p. 23).

[43] "In all his writings it is to moderate men that his most unstinted praise is given, to such as Manius Lepidus, Memmius Regulus, Julius Frontinus, and others who served their country well in trying times": Furneaux-Anderson 1922, xxx; cf. Devillers 2014a, 28, n. 153 with further references there; cf. Keitel 2014, 62 ff. on Tacitus' style as reflecting Agricola's stance.

[44] Advertising a break with Domitian's regime, Nerva surrounded himself from the start with prominent senators who were either retired or had been away from public life for some time: Frontinus, Spurinna, and Rufus. In 97, Verginius (now 83) was recalled from retirement and persuaded to become co-consul with the emperor: Syme 1958a, 3.

[45] Verginius' refusal of the title *princeps* when offered to him by his troops became an example of moderation and loyalty to the state (Plin., *Ep.* 9.19; Plut., *G.* 6.2-3, 10; cf. Tac., *H.* 1.8.2, 1.52.4). Pliny, describing the funeral and the qualities of his guardian, suggests some of the buzzwords: *maximi et clarissimi ciuis* (*Ep.* 2.1.1), *exemplar aeui prioris* (2.1.7), *uirtutibus* (2.1.3), *gloria* (6.10.3), *optimi... et maximi uiri* (6.10.1), *cuius memoria orbem terrarum gloria peruagetur* (6.10.3), *tanta in praedicando uerecundia quanta gloria ex facto* (9.19.4). Pliny plainly echoes the *Agricola* in numerous places: *Ep.* 2.1.3 ~ *Agr.* 1.3, 44.5; *Ep.* 2.1.10 ~ *Agr.* 46.1, 4; *Ep.* 9.19.4 ~ *Agr.* 8.3; also cf. *Ep.* 8.14.9 ~ *Agr.* 3.1. Cf. Whitton 2010 on the interactions between Pliny's letters and Tacitus' *Agricola*. In the *Historiae*, Tacitus throws up some doubt about Verginius' modesty and altruism, saying that he had hesitated to refuse the purple and to back Galba (*H.* 1.8.2, 1.52.4).

be emulated (*exemplar aeui prioris*, Plin., *Ep.* 2.1.7). The funeral was a memorable event (*insigne atque etiam memorabile… spectaculum*, *Ep.* 2.1.1) that brought honor to Nerva and the times (*magnum ornamentum principi magnum saeculo magnum*, *Ep.* 2.1.6).[46] As such, it served an analogous purpose to the *Agricola*, which, through the commemoration of the life of another prominent senator, played its role in the formation of the new Trajanic regime and its values.[47]

Most of Agricola's career took place outside of Rome. Aside from his early offices under Nero and Galba (*Agr.* 6.3-5), the short interval between his legionary legateship and first governorship (9.1), the consulship between his governorships of Aquitania and Britain (9.5-6), and his final years under Domitian (40-43), the narrative unfolds in the provinces. The text's main focus is on the governorship of Britain because it was there that Agricola earned the lion's share of his glory and because narrating his father-in-law's tenure allowed Tacitus to explore the realities of provincial government and to juxtapose most forcefully Agricola's leadership there with that of Domitian in Rome. The conceptual analogy between the authority of a governor within the confines of his province and that of the *princeps* in Rome allows Agricola's governorships to function as a foil to the rule of the emperors in Rome, that of Domitian in particular.[48] As some have noted, the symbolic significance of Britain being an island, separated from the mainland and hence from the rest of the empire, only reinforces this contrast.[49] By publicizing Domitian's oppression, moreover, the text urges, almost forces, Trajan to do things in an opposite manner. Thus the *Agricola* functions much like Pliny's *Panegyricus*, which, in praising Trajan's conduct early in his reign, essentially lays down the 'rules' and senatorial expectations of that reign as well.[50] Finally, Agricola's qualities closely resemble those of Trajan himself.[51] The conduct of the ideal

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[46] On the significance of public funerals as a means of advertising (imperial) ideology, see Flower 1999, 136-45.

[47] On Trajanic propaganda: Bennett 1997, 64-74; Schwarte 1979, 139-75; Sailor 2008, 52-53.

[48] See Devillers 2014b, 163-174, recapping much of the recent scholarship on this analogy and its implications.

[49] Clarke 2001 [= Ash 2012, 37-72]; Sailor 2008, 79-80.

[50] On the coercive force of the *Agricola*, see Wilson 2003, 533: "in complimenting Nerva and Trajan for their restoration of *libertas*, [Tacitus] puts pressure on the new Emperor to live up to the high standards of tolerance for which he is being acclaimed." Cf. Sailor (2008, 153), who notes that Tacitus "leaves the present *principes* little to do but positively to support the present text." On the similar force of Pliny's *Panegyricus*: Ramage 1989, 643-44; Morford 1992, 578; S. Braund 1998, 66–8; Griffin 1999, 153. Bennett 1997, 63-73 shows that some of Dio Chrysostom's speeches had a similar function. On the *Panegyricus*, see the volume edited by Roche (2011). Cf.

senator is also the conduct of the ideal emperor: Tacitus characterizes Agricola as a proto-Trajan.

Through the idealized portrait of his father-in-law, Tacitus advocates a fundamental and consistent set of values that ought to guide a senator, governor, or emperor, values that have their origins in the Late Republic and the works of the outstanding authors of that age: Cicero, Caesar, Sallust, and Livy. In various ways Agricola, in his capacity as general, governor, or senator, is made to resemble renowned men like Q. Caecilius Metellus, Marius, Pompey, Caesar, Quintus Cicero, and Cato the Younger. In his own turn, Agricola becomes one of Tacitus' most important *exempla*, informing the portraits of many of the prominent personalities in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, in both Rome and the provinces, in both military and domestic contexts. Thus Tacitus marks out for his father-in-law a place within the long tradition of eminent Roman senators and generals and for the *Agricola* a place within the Roman literary tradition.[52]

II.2 The Nature of the Imperial System of Government

One of Tacitus' persistent critiques of the imperial system of government is its restriction on the public glorification of the achievements of people other than the sitting *princeps* and his family. He points to this issue in the opening words of the *Agricola*, where he blames the advent of the Principate for the decline in public performance and morality and for the decline in (auto)biographical literature. Connecting political with generic change, Tacitus draws a broad distinction between the past (*apud priores*: presumably the Republic, but left undefined), when individual merit (*uirtus*) was recognized and encouraged, and the present (*nostris temporibus*: probably the Principate generally, but again left undefined), which is hostile to it and seeks to suppress and silence it (*Agr.* 1; cf. *D.* 1).[53] Within this

Frontinus' endorsement of Nerva's regime in *de Aquis Urbis Romae*, with König 2013, 371-74.

[51] "[The *Agricola*] stands in close relation to the training and career of the Imperator himself, to his character and his virtues": Syme 1958a, 19.

[52] See also Sailor's intriguing article (2004) on the way the *Agricola* positions itself within the Roman literary tradition.

[53] Almost every aspect of the preface is controversial. Tacitus, I suspect deliberately, withholds precise definitions. On the preface: Büchner 1964, 321-43; Liebeschuetz 1966, 132-33 [= Ash 2012, 82-83]; Leeman 1973, 199 ff.; Martin 1981, 39-41; Whitmarsh 2006, 311-12; Sailor 2004; 2008, 53 ff.; Woodman and Kraus 2014 *ad loc*. The prefaces of the *Dialogus*, *Historiae*, and *Annales* draw

broader distinction, he differentiates between the immediate past under Domitian and the Trajanic present. The hostility and restrictions that mark the Principate generally were extreme under Domitian, who imposed silence, executed opponents and burned their books, and all but abolished *libertas* (*Agr.* 2).[54] Under Nerva and Trajan, says Tacitus, things improved: Nerva reconciled what was once considered irreconcilable, *principatus* and *libertas*, while Trajan daily increased Rome's happiness (3.1).[55] As R. Ash notes, Tacitus' decision to publish the *Agricola* and the *Germania* (on which he had probably worked since 93, the year of Agricola's death) only in 98 was an inventive way to underline this ideological message: under the new *princeps*, literature is revived and *uirtus* once more allowed to shine.[56]

Despite his praise of the new regime, Tacitus betrays a sense of skepticism that is revealing of his attitude towards the Principate. Not only does he need to seek indulgence (*uenia*, 1.4) from his *princeps* to narrate Agricola's life, his praise of the new regime is expressed in a concessive clause (3.1) that problematizes the clean break between the Domitianic and Trajanic regimes and hints at the fact that "like all imperial accessions, Trajan's innovation must be at once a return to the same."[57] The question of whether *uenia* is directed at Domitian or Trajan remains highly contentious and defies a conclusive answer. I concur with those who argue that Tacitus draws a broad distinction between the Republic and the Principate and that "the age which is so hostile to virtue" (*tam saeua et infesta uirtutibus tempora*, 1.4) necessarily includes the reigns of Nerva and Trajan as well.[58] Hostility to *uirtus* and curtailment of free speech (written or spoken) were institutional aspects of the imperial system of

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distinctions between past and present as well, albeit it in different ways. See Leeman 1973 and Marincola 1999 on the prefaces of both historical works; Sailor 2008, 119-82 on the preface of the *Historiae*.

[54] Note the connections between *Agr.* 2 and *A.* 4.35, 14.50 on the prosecution of authors and the burning of books, and the futility of attempts to wipe out memory and fame with posterity. Prosecution (i.e. imperial attention) bestows fame, while availability and impunity (i.e. imperial disinterest) risk oblivion. Cf. Plin., *Ep.* 9.27. See Sailor 2008, 46-47 and the preceding discussion; 250-313.

[55] On the theme of *libertas* in Tacitus and the present passage in the *Agricola*, see Wirszubski 1950, 160-67; Hammond 1963, 93-113; Ducos 1977, 194–217; Morford 1991, 3420–50; Oakley 2009, 184-94. Cf. Giua 2014, 45-57 for an overview of Momigliano's views of *libertas* and *pax* (and the influence of Mussolini's regime on those views), and the application of these concepts throughout the Tacitean corpus. Cf. Pagán 2014, 73 on the complexities of the temporal distinction here.

[56] Ash 2007a, 2; Woodman and Kraus 2014, 6, 74-79, 82-88. Cf. Haynes 2006 on the *Agricola* as a renewal of speaking, writing, and memory in the aftermath of a regime marked by terror and suppression.

[57] Whitmarsh 2006, 311.

[58] So Liebeschuetz 1966, 133 [= Ash 2012, 83], Leeman 1973, 201-202, and Whitmarsh 2006, 312. Woodman and Kraus (2014 *ad loc.*) and Pagán (2014, 73) argue for Domitian.

government that essentially were independent of its *principes*.[59] On this view, perhaps we do not need to

choose: one would need to seek *uenia* from *any* emperor. Whatever the precise meaning of Tacitus'

words, now unrecoverable, what is certain is that he does not explicitly direct the mark at Domitian,

which is significant given the historical moment during which the *Agricola* was published.[60] That

Tacitus was skeptical about the possibility of the new *princeps* remedying systemic restrictions is

suggested by the final words of the preface: the *Agricola* either will receive *laus* or be excused (*aut*

laudatus erit aut excusatus, 3.3). Unlike Domitian, Trajan might be expected to excuse the work. Whether

Rome would return to the ideals of the Republic, when there was a healthy economy of representation

(to use Sailor's term) and excellence (in action or writing) earned *laus*, remained dubious.[61] The fact

that Tacitus has to avoid a charge of *gratia* or *ambitio* – by professing to have written the work out of

pietas (3.3) – reflects the relations of reciprocity that compromised imperial literature rather than the

libertas that marked the Republic.

Ambivalence about the new regime was not peculiar to Tacitus. Pliny, in the second book of

his *Letters*, betrays similar uncertainty, balancing relief and optimism with skepticism and negativity.[62]

Despite its promises, Nerva's rule had been marked by uncertainty and instability, when civil war and

the question of succession again had threatened the imperial framework.[63] Hadrian's regime would be

inaugurated by the destruction of several eminent Trajanic commanders.[64] While, to be sure, Trajan's

reign was welcomed after Domitian's oppressions, every new age made claims about 'freedom' and

'restoration,' and seasoned men like Tacitus and Pliny understood the nature of the Principate,

regardless of the personality of the sitting *princeps*.[65]

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[59] See the discussion in Sailor (2008, 119-82). Cf. Giua 1985, 12 on *A*. 4.32 and Tacitus' historiographical endeavor: "ma nella sulla digressione sulla storiografia Tacito intende fare una ricostruzione storico-politica globale, che non rifugge da generalizzazioni e semplificazioni, perché il suo obiettivo è quello di bollare il principato."

[60] Sailor (2008, 58-59) notes that the ambiguity is there, perhaps intentionally.

[61] Sailor 2008, 57 ff. For further discussion of the preface and the economy of representation, see pp. 223 ff. below.

[62] Strunk 2012; Whitton 2013, 8.

[63] See König 2013, 362-63, which offers plentiful references to scholarship on the crises during Nerva's regime.

[64] On the influence of Hadrian's accession and early reign on Tacitus' depiction of Tiberius, see Syme 1958a, 236-52, 465-503.

[65] Cf. Sailor 2008, 41: "Trajan may well have been that benevolent, liberal *princeps* described in the contemporary chorus of praise, but

About a decade later, in the preface of the *Historiae*, Tacitus reveals similar ambivalence. He describes Trajan's reign as "a time of rare felicity, when you may think what you please and say what you think" (*H.* 1.1.4; cf. Plin., *Pan.* 66.4). While these words seem to reveal genuine optimism, here, too, there are hints of uncertainty. Just as he had to beg for indulgence to compose the *Agricola*, so in the *Historiae* his topic is not the "happy present" (*testimonium praesentium bonorum*), which he mentioned as a possibility at *Agr.* 3.3, but the safer subject of the Flavian Principate.[66] The *Historiae* fulfill the other possibility announced at *Agr.* 3.3, a work on the *prioris seruitutis* under Domitian, but the scope notably is expanded to include the civil wars of AD 68-69 and the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, a decision that "changed the implications of Tacitus' work, and revised his relationship to the current regime."[67] Moreover, his praise of Trajan, as in the *Agricola*, is offset by remarks elsewhere on the nature of imperial power that reflect contemporary concerns at the time Tacitus was writing.

Particularly significant are the events surrounding Vespasian's accession, which bore plain resemblances to the aftermath of Domitian's reign and Trajan's accession. For one thing, Piso's adoption by Galba in 69 had obvious relevance to Trajan's adoption by Nerva in 97, as did the power of the army in creating and maintaining an emperor. The deaths of Nero and Domitian, moreover, both were followed by a determination to take revenge against *delatores* active during their reigns. At Vespasian's accession, Helvidius Priscus used the political moment to attack Eprius Marcellus, one of the informers who had ruined his father-in-law Thrasea Paetus in 66 (*H.* 4.6-8). Soon a second feud broke out between Curtius Montanus and Aquilius Regulus, another notorious *delator* and one of Pliny's enemies in his *Letters*, which in turn provoked another altercation between Priscus and

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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*." On the discrepancies between Nervan and Trajanic rhetoric and reality, see Syme 1958a, 12, 131, 220-221; Waters 1969, 385-405; Bartsch 1994, 166-67; Bennett 1997, 71-73, 106, 208. Note Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 37 on imperial rhetoric: "a studied display of respect for senate and people sustained the illusion of the supremacy of those bodies, while in fact it ceremonially demonstrated the supremacy of the emperor."
[66] Damon 2003, 4. A work on the Trajanic Principate was never delivered. Ahl 1984, 207 notes that Latin poetry flourished under Domitian, not under Trajan. Cf. Pelling 2009, 150; Giua 2014, 50; Pagán 2014, 86 with further references there. Pliny, in a letter to Titinius Capito (*Ep.* 5.8), expounds on the dangers of writing recent or contemporary history.
[67] Sailor 2008, 122.

Marcellus (*H*. 4.42-43). Mucianus and Domitian, after conferring with Vespasian (*H*. 4.40.3), made a decisive intervention on behalf of the informers (*H*. 4.44), with the result that Marcellus and Regulus got off and the senate abandoned its newfound *libertas*. Tacitus' description of these debates and the remarks he puts into the mouth of different senators are telling and seem reflective of his attitude towards the imperial system of government and Trajan's reign in particular.[68] He has Marcellus remind the senate that "even the best emperors want some restriction on freedom" (*libertatem*, *H*. 4.8.4), while he has Montanus ask senators whether they think Nero was the last of the tyrants (*extremum dominorum*, *H*. 4.42.5). Those who had survived Tiberius and Caligula, says Montanus, had made the same mistake and been disappointed; Vespasian's age and character were reassuring, but examples (in this case, the punishment of notorious informers) last longer than men's characters (*non timemus Vespasianum; ea principis aetas, ea moderatio: sed diutius durant exempla quam mores*), and it had become a principle that the first day after a bad emperor was the best one (*optimus est post malum principem dies primus*, *H*. 4.42.6; cf. *H*. 1.4.2: *finis Neronis...*). Moreover, earlier in the work, Tacitus had claimed that Vespasian was the only *princeps* who was changed for the better while in power (*solusque omnium ante se principum in melius mutatus est*, 1.50.3), a claim that makes that emperor an exception that proves the rule. It is hard not to see behind these debates, which showcase failed senatorial efforts at *libertas*, Tacitus' own disillusionment with Trajan's regime, which had been welcomed (*Agr*. 3; *H*. 1.1) but naturally (and, I think, for Tacitus not unexpectedly) had not turned out the inverse of that of his predecessors.[69]

By the time of the *Annales* prefatory statements about *libertas* under Trajan are dropped altogether. Tacitus' outlook is not that of a man who started out a confirmed believer of a system of

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[68] Whether Tacitus himself ascribed to the views he reports remains ultimately unverifiable. Cf. Syme 1970, 131, 138-39; Martin 1981, 94, 99; Luce 1986, 143-57 [= Ash 2012, 339-56].

[69] Syme 1958a, 209; Martin 1967; Whitton 2012, 360-62. There were plain resemblances between these debates and the contemporary situation under Trajan. The individuals connected with these debates point up "an obvious parallelism between the contemporary situation and events of AD 70": Martin *op. cit.*, 113. Montanus' speech against Regulus was "no doubt highly relished by Trajanic readers": Syme 1958a, 209 n.4. Note Whitton 2012, 361-62: "Vespasian's establishment as emperor paves the way for the tyranny of Domitian, a future which hangs like a shadow over the surviving books: the Senate's failure to suppress delators in this inaugural moment is the first step toward the devastation of 93. The memory of that year most obviously scars the *Agricola* and Pliny's *Epistles*."

government in which he gradually lost faith.[70] It is the attitude of a man who understood the Principate and its institutional drawbacks and whose outlook remained, by and large, consistent. The Republic, despite its continued moral and ethical force in imperial Rome, was a dead letter, as Tacitus knew. Rome had not, as Velleius could suggest, moved from Republic to a better Republic,[71] but from Republic to Principate, a move necessitated by the persistent discord and civil warfare that had torn apart the old configuration (cf. *A.* 1.1.1). But the Principate was a far from perfect substitute, an institution that suffered from systemic problems that were independent of the particular *princeps* in charge. While it would be wrong to say that Tacitus saw the Republic and the Principate as wholly divergent systems of government,[72] from the *Agricola* to the *Annales* he associates *libertas* with the Republic and depicts the Principate as a system of government in which independence, in its various manifestations, is curtailed by imperial restrictions.

Such restrictions were a natural consequence of the social and political nature of the Principate, in which supreme power resided with one man who had to ensure that he was more prominent than everyone else. The achievements of others could threaten his position, especially if anyone excelled him in areas in which he was supposed to be preeminent.[73] To preserve their position, starting with Augustus, emperors imposed restrictions on the public display of other people's achievements, curbing literary and oratorical freedom,[74] restricting the traditional avenues for the public display of military glory,[75] and essentially forcing self-celebration of members outside the

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[70] The old thesis continues to be prevalent. Sailor confronts it in his 2008 monograph, though not decisively. Note Whitton 2011, 196: "still, one misses a head-on confrontation with the old thesis – which underlies in many ways Sailor's own tracking through Tacitus' literary career – that his works reveal a gradual descent from optimism to disenchantment."

[71] On Velleius' computation of time and his construction of a *res publica Tiberiana*, see Gowing 1995, 41-48.

[72] In the final chapter, I explore in detail how Tacitus challenges the polarizing distinction between Republic and Principate and the notion of a radical change in the world.

[73] Sailor 2008, 52. Cf. Walker 1952 [1968], 78-81; Habinek 2000, 264-303.

[74] See Sen., *Ben.* 3.27.1 (with Roller 2001, 157 ff.) and Dio 53.19.3-4, 56.27.1 on Augustus. See Sen., *Con.* 10 pr. 5 ff. on the case of T. Labienus, Tac., *A.* 1.72.3-4 on that of Cassius Severus, 4.34-35 on that of Cremutius Cordus, 14.48-50 on those of Antistius Sosianus and Fabricius Veiento, *Agr.* 2.1 on that of Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio. On the perils of writing history from the advent of Augustus onwards, see *H.* 1.1; *A.* 1.1; Plin., *Ep.* 5.8; Hor., *Carm.* 2.1. Note also *Agr.* 2.3 and *A.* 4.69 on the way informers scrutinize people's words. On imperial scrutiny of people's words, spoken or written, see Bartsch 1994.

[75] L. Cornelius Balbus in 19 BC was the last senator outside the imperial family to celebrate the traditional Roman triumph, Junius Blaesus in AD 23 the last to assume the title of *Imperator* (*A.* 3.74.4). Generals could now earn an *ovatio* or, on imperial initiative, the

imperial family into municipal contexts.[76] Jealous emperors are recorded as exiling or killing potential

rivals, downplaying other people's achievements, and inflating their own successes. In contrast, good

emperors could be praised for allowing the virtues of others to shine.[77] To what extent these

institutional limitations were in fact imposed is hard to say, as imperial hostility is recorded so

pervasively and consistently in our sources as to constitute somewhat of a topos.[78] What matters here

is how Tacitus viewed emperor-senate relations, and from both the *Agricola* and the historical

narratives it is evident that he saw all emperors, to various degrees, as suspicious of the eminent.[79] The

qualities of prominent senators made them a potential threat to their emperor's authority. This was the

alleged cause of Domitian's hostility toward Agricola, whose military success in Britain threatened to

"raise him above the emperor" (*supra principem attolli*, *Agr.* 39.2). Tacitus writes that envy and suspicion

inspired Domitian to recall Agricola, even though, after seven seasons and the ostensible completion

of the province's conquest, and with military demands on the Danube frontier, a recall and

redeployment of forces would be the natural course of events. This view of an emperor's motives

recurs in the later descriptions of Germanicus' recall by Tiberius (*A.* 2.26.4) and that of Corbulo by

Claudius (*A.* 11.19-20), likewise sensible decisions which Tacitus ascribes in part to imperial jealousy.

Elsewhere, he describes Suetonius Paulinus (*H.* 2.37.1), Corbulo (*H.* 2.76.3; cf. *A.* 14.58.2), Junius

Blaesus (*H.* 3.38-39), Helvidius Priscus (*H.* 4.8.3-4; cf. *Agr.* 2.1), Calpurnius Galerianus (*H.* 4.11.2), L.

Piso (*H.* 4.48 ff.), Agrippa Posthumus (*A.* 1.6), Asinius Gallus (*A.* 1.12-13), L. Arruntius (*A.* 1.13.1-3;

cf. 6.48.1), M. Lepidus (*A.* 1.13.2), Cn. Piso (*A.* 1.13.3), Valerius Asiaticus (*A.* 11.1), C. Sulla (13.23.1,

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ornamenta triumphalia (Chaplin 2000, 184-92; Campbell and Tritle 2013, 40-41). The grant of these *insignia* was regularly combined with the offer of the title of *Imperator* to the emperor, who thus ensured that he maintained his preeminence despite other people's achievements. The emperor and his family also monopolized the right to construct public monuments with the spoils of conquest (*ex manubiis*), Balbus again being the last Roman senator outside the imperial family to do so: Plin., *Nat.* 36.60; Dio 54.23.

[76] Cf. Eck 1984, 139-42.

[77] Pliny praises Trajan for recognizing the merit of successful generals (*Pan.* 18-20, 44), while Hadrian, at his own expense, set up a public monument to the Trajanic general J. Quadratus Bassus (Campbell 1984, 322). On Tiberius Plautius Silvanus Aelianus' epitaph Vespasian is recorded as saying that the latter "governed Moesia in such a way that the conferment of his honors should not have been left to me" (*ILS* 986), an implicit condemnation of Nero's hostility to eminent men (Griffin 1984, 118).

[78] Rutledge 2001, on the activities of *delatores* under the early Principate and their skewed representation in our hostile and biased senatorial sources, is a worthwhile read in this regard.

[79] Tiberius and Germanicus: *A.* 2.26; 2.69 ff.; Claudius and Corbulo: *A.* 11.19-20; Nero and Corbulo (*Agr.* 5.3; *H.* 2.76.3; *A.* 14.58.2; Dio 63.17.1-5); Vespasian and Helvidius: *H.* 4.4-4.9; Suet., *Ves.* 15; Dio 66.12; Epictetus 4.1.123; Domitian and Agricola: *Agr.* 39-42.

13.47), Rubellius Plautus (*A.* 14.22), Memmius Regulus (*A.* 14.47.1), Torquatus Silanus (*A.* 15.35),

Calpurnius Piso (*A.* 15.48), L. Silanus (*A.* 15.52.2-3; 16.7), L. Annaeus Seneca (*A.* 15.65; cf. 14.52), C.

Cassius (*A.* 16.7), P. Ostorius Scapula (*A.* 16.15), and Thrasea Paetus (*A.* 16.22; cf. *Agr.* 2.1) as

potential candidates for, or threats to, the purple on account of their qualities, position, or ancestry.[80]

While it is difficult to estimate precisely how Domitian's reign influenced Tacitus, on one view

his experience under that emperor predisposed him both to view Julio-Claudian times in a more

pessimistic light and to perceive broad similarities between Domitian and his predecessors.[81] We

recognize many of Domitian's defining features – anger (*iram,* 42.3), hatred (*odium,* 39.3; *odisse,* 42.3),

cruelty (*saeuitum,* 2.1; *saeuitia,* 3.2; *saeuae cogitationis,* 39.3), dissimulation (*dissimulari,* 39.3; *dissimularet,*

43.3), silent scrutiny of people's thoughts and expressions (45.2), and the storing up of anger only to

fully express it later (39.3) – in the portraits of his predecessors, for whom Domitian, in many ways,

served as a literary and conceptual model.[82] Especially Tiberius resembles Domitian, mirroring his *ira,*

odium, and, above all, his *saeuitia* and dissimulation.[83] Since Tacitus wrote with the benefit of hindsight,

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[80] Note also the analogous beginnings of the reigns of Tiberius, Nero, and Vitellius, i.e. by the murder of potential rivals; Augustus' alleged hatred of the *primores ciuitatis* (*A.* 1.8); Tiberius' suspicions of Asinius Gallus (*A.* 1.12); Tiberius' bestowal of pro-consular *imperium* on Germanicus while the latter served in Germany, but not on Drusus, who was in the capital (*A.* 1.14). Cf. the claims about imperial power at *H.* 1.21.1, *H.* 3.66.2-3, and *A.* 1.69. Mucianus' position is complex. He possessed both 'princely' qualities and many vices (*H.* 1.10, 2.5). He is said to have chosen to make an emperor instead of aiming to become one (1.10, 2.77), but at the same time to have acted more as Vespasian's colleague than his subordinate (2.83, 3.75, 4.4, 4.11, 4.39, 4.68). The details of his death (he was dead by 77: Plin., *Nat.* 33.62) are unknown. Sejanus' position is similarly complex. Tacitus nowhere suggests that he possessed the qualities that would make him *capax imperii,* but he maneuvered his way to a very powerful position before being executed in 31. In the lost books of both historical works, there would have been others designated as worthy of the purple or as threats to it. Annius Vinicianus and L. Arruntius Camillus Scribonianus were candidates for the purple after Caligula's death and initiated a revolt against Claudius in 42 (Dio 60.15.1-2; cf. Suet., *Cl.* 13.2; Tac., *H.* 1.89.2; *A.* 12.52.2; Plin., *Ep.* 3.16.7-9). Appius Silanus, governor of Spain with three legions during Claudius' succession, was another potential candidate and was executed in 42 (Dio 60.14.2-15.1; Suet., *Cl.* 29.1). M. Vinicius, another candidate for the purple, had earned Messalina's suspicions and was destroyed in 46 (Dio 60.27.4). The lost portions on Nero's reign likely covered the *coniuratio Viniciana* (Suet., *Ner.* 36.1; Tac., *H.* 4.42.1), initiated in 66-67 by Corbulo's son-in-law Vinicianus, as well as Corbulo's eventual destruction (Dio 60.17.2, 5-6). As a final example we may think of the destruction, shortly after 95, of Flavius Clemens, who was Domitian's cousin, and his two sons Vespasian and Domitian, who were designated as Domitian's successors (Suet., *Dom.* 15.1; Dio 67.14.1-2). On those considered *capax imperii* in Tacitus, cf. Benario 1972, 14-26.

[81] Walker 1960, 204-20. It is significant that none of the extant historians who write about the early Principate – Velleius, Suetonius, and Dio – paints Julio-Claudian times quite as bleakly as Tacitus does. Cf. Giua 2014, 54 (elucidating Momigliano's views).

[82] Note the *ira* of Caligula (*Agr.* 4.1), Galba (*H.* 1.65.1), Otho (1.21.1, cf. 1.45.2), Vitellius (2.91.3), Tiberius (*A.* 1.4.4, 1.12.4, 1.13.1, 1.69, 2.57.3, 3.15.2, 3.22.2; 4.19.3, 4.21.1, 5.4.4, 6.50.3), Claudius (*A.* 11.26.2), and Nero: 14.49.2, 16.6.1 (*iracundia*); the *odium* of Vitellius (*H.* 2.59.2, 2.64.1), Tiberius (*A.* 4.18.3; 4.29.2), Claudius (*H.* 1.10.1, *A.* 11.38.3) and Nero (*A.* 13.15.3, 15.52.3; 15.68.3; 16.5.2; 16.20.1); the *saeuitia* of Galba (*H.* 1.87.1), Otho (2.31.1), Vitellius (1.68.2, 2.73., 2.77.3), Tiberius (*A.* 1.4.3, 1.10.7, 1.53.3, 1.72.4, 1.74.2, 4.1.1, 6.6.2, cf. 6.19.3, 6.23.2, 6.51.3: *intestabilis saeuitia,* 16.29.2), of Claudius (13.43.2) and Nero (13.52.1, cf. 14.63.2, 15.44.5, cf. 15.50.3, 15.62.2, cf. 15.67.4, 16.10.2, 16.13.2, *H.* 4.8.2). Note also the analogy between the senate's *inertiae dulcedo* under Domitianic oppression (*Agr.* 3.1) and the *dulcedo otii* that gripped all Romans (*cunctos*) after Augustus solidified his power (*A.* 1.2.1.).

[83] Note the cross-references at *Agr.* 39.1 ~ *A.* 3.2.3; *Agr.* 39.3 ~ *A.* 2.82.4. Both reigns deteriorate toward the end; both emperors

it is only natural that he perceived and constructed broad analogies between different *principes*, especially given his view of human nature and the imperial system of government: an innate lust for supreme power, Tacitus judges, constitutes the common and consistent driving force behind human action (*uetus ac iam pridem insita mortalibus potentiae cupido*, *H.* 2.38.1; cf. *a principio…reges… dictaturae… dominatio… principis imperium*, *A.* 1.1.1; *cupidine dominandi*, *A.* 1.10.1; *cupido dominandi cunctis adfectibus flagrantior est*, *A.* 15.53.4).[84] This instinctive drive for self-aggrandizement and power – present ever since Rome's foundation (*A.* 1.1.1; cf. 3.26-28) – was fed, on the part of the emperors, by the system of government they headed, since it required them to be pre-eminent and to protect their position against rivals. On this view, human nature and the system of government combine to incline different emperors to conduct themselves along broadly similar patterns. To be sure, Tiberius is no Claudius and Nero no Vespasian, but all Tacitean emperors, to greater or lesser degrees, are hostile to the eminent, have a strained relationship with the senate, and display the sorts of tyrannical features ascribed to Domitian in the *Agricola*. The echo of *subit… inertiae dulcedo* (*Agr.* 3.1) at *A.* 1.2.1 (*cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit*) links Domitianic with Augustan oppression, framing the early Principate. Under a man like Vespasian, the Principate may be a tolerable institution, but even under such an emperor Romans faced systemic restrictions.[85]

What would seem to follow from the apparent similarities between Domitian and his predecessors is that Tacitus saw the former as the latest product of a system of government that, by its

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curtail freedom of expression (compare Domitian's prosecution of the Stoics Rusticus and Senecio with that of the historian Cremutius Cordus by Tiberius); *delatores* have a wide scope under both emperors; both have a strained relationship with the senate; both display similar character traits. The broad similarities between these emperors seem to have been recognized: Suetonius writes that Domitian read nothing but the *commentarii* and *acta* of Tiberius (*Dom.* 20.1).

[84] The significance of *a principio*, instead of *principio*, at *A.* 1.1.1, has long been noted. See p. 284-85 and n. 686.

[85] Even Vespasian, the most positively portrayed of the Tacitean emperors, restricts freedom and exhibits oppressive traits. Note the restrictions felt by Frontinus (*Agr.* 17.2), the reports of financial oppression (*H.* 2.84), the way he deals with potential rivals (*H.* 3.66; 4.11), the restriction on senatorial liberty at the start of his reign (*H.* 4.44), and the sentiments expressed by the senators Eprius Marcellus (*H.* 4.8) and Curtius Montanus (*H.* 4.42). Note also the significance of the dramatic date of the *Dialogus* (ca. AD 75), hinting at Helvidius Priscus' destruction (Williams 1978, 34). Augustus, too, whose reign Tacitus did not narrate in detail, is portrayed as a despot displaying the violence and hypocrisy that typify Tiberius and Domitian (*A.* 1.1-10; cf. 3.56). At *A.* 1.9.1, Tacitus describes Augustus' reign as lasting 56 years (from his first consulship in 43 BC, after the demise of Hirtius and Pansa, until his death; the *RG*, Suetonius (*Aug.* 8.3), and Aper (*D.* 17.2) offer similar computations), intimating that he aimed at supreme power from the start. On the continuity between Augustus' violence and duplicity during the civil wars and his conduct as emperor, see Keitel 1984.

very nature, leads to oppressive rule. This is not to say that individual character does not matter – on the contrary, for Tacitus personality and character are important factors affecting people's behavior. It is to say, rather, that the nature of the Principate is such that it generates patterns of behavior, relatively consistent over time, on the part of its *principes*, regardless of their individual character.[86] Tacitus' conception of human nature and power may usefully be compared with that of Marcus Aurelius, who similarly perceived a continuity in the nature of supreme power: "reflect constantly on the fact that all such things as happen now also happened before, and on the fact that they will happen again. The whole dramas and the analogous scenes that you know from your own experience or from history, such as the whole court of Hadrian and that of Antoninus, of Philip, of Alexander, of Croesus: all these were similar, just the actors different" (*Med.* X.27).[87] Such a conception of power and control helps to explain Tacitus' simultaneous sense of hope and skepticism about Trajan in the prefaces of the *Agricola* and the *Historiae*. It also explains, as Tacitus says at *A.* 4.33.2-3 (cf. *digna cognitu*, 6.7.5), why recording events under earlier emperors (the programmatic statements there are expansive, not limited to their immediate context) may help Romans 'read' their own *princeps*.[88]

Tacitus' outlook is underlined by his concern, throughout his corpus, to link different emperors by stressing commonalities between their reigns. In the preface of the *Historiae*, Tacitus significantly links (or at least does not distinguish among) the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and

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[86] Reflecting on the history of the early Principate, it would not have been difficult for Tacitus and his readers to recognize in Domitian features that had marked the personality and conduct of his predecessors, or vice versa. That there were broad similarities between the reigns of Tiberius and Domitian and between the latter and Nero was recognized (Suet., *Dom.* 20.1; Plin., *Pan.* 53.5). In the *Agricola*, Tacitus points up similarities between Caligula, Nero, and Domitian, and also connects Vespasian with Nero and Domitian (pp. 36-37). Cf. Syme 1958a, 517: "Tacitus was writing about the time of Tiberius, he recalled Domitian – and he was not oblivious of the present." Cf. Clarke 2002, 84: "for Tacitus, as for many other Roman writers, Roman history was so predominantly a history of kings that it made little difference at what point one started the story."

[87] Cf. Millar 1992, 3: "Marcus' words reveal the consciousness of a real continuity; for, just as the memory of Alexander exercised an enduring influence on the military role of the emperor, so there persisted long-established conceptions of what a 'king' should be which did indeed help to transform a Roman *princeps* into a descendant of the Hellenistic kings."

[88] See the lucid discussion in Sailor 2008, 259 ff. Cf. p. 256: "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*." Of course, Roman readers could read a text in whatever way they saw fit. But if we agree, as Sailor himself does elsewhere in his study, that oppression under the Principate was essentially institutional in nature, the utility of Tacitus' work would seem to lie more in the implicit analogies between the rule of previous emperors and that of the sitting *princeps* than in implied differences. Cf. Clarke 2002, 98-99: "if one of Tacitus's concerns is the static scenario of the Principate, this might support the idea of learning by example how to deal with an ongoing situation."

Domitian, describing the subject matter of that work (the civil wars of 68-69 and the Flavian Principate) as one period "rich in disasters, dreadful in its wars, rent with sedition, ferocious even in peace" (*opimum casibus, atrox proeliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace saeuum*, *H.* 1.2.1). This notion is reinforced in the opening words of Book Four, which marks the transition from the war to the advent of Vespasian' reign: "upon Vitellius' death, it was not so much that peace had begun as that war had ceased" (*interfecto Vitellio bellum magis desierat quam pax coeperat*, 4.1.1). Moreover, *pace saeuum* at *H.* 1.2.1 is mirrored by *saeuae pacis* at *H.* 1.50.2, which commonly is taken to characterize the whole of the Julio-Claudian Principate and so creates the impression of a continuous period of oppression from Augustus to Domitian. The homogenization of periods or dynasties is reinforced by connections among the reigns of individual emperors. A well-known example is the analogous start to the reigns of Tiberius and Nero, which both are initiated by the murder of a potential rival (*A.* 1.6.1, 13.1.1) and which in turn mirror the start of Vitellius' reign (*H.* 2.64.1). Tacitus further links the Tiberian and Neronian Principate in two programmatic statements about the monotony of his narrative material – consisting, on his account, of unending death and disaster (*A.* 4.32-33, 16.16). The totality of these links contributes to the impression that the persistent oppression and restriction under the Julio-Claudian and Flavian Principates was an institutional problem independent of the individual character of the emperors.[89]

This outlook and technique are already fully at work in the *Agricola*, where Tacitus pairs Nero and Domitian through the similarly restrictive effects of their regimes on Agricola (5.3, 6.3-4, 40-42) and where he intimates that Vespasian's rule restricted the true potential of another eminent senator, Frontinus (*uir magnus, quantum licebat*, 17.2). In fact, the mention of Helvidius Priscus, executed under Vespasian, and Priscus' father-in-law Thrasea Paetus, destroyed under Nero, in the list of Domitian's victims Rusticus and Senecio (*Agr.* 2.1), at once connects the three emperors in tyranny and type of

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[89] A conspicuous element of this impression is the activity of the *delatores*, depicted by Tacitus as a continuous menace posing the same threat as civil war. See Sailor 2008, 190-91; cf. Bablitz 2015. On Tacitus' depiction of the *delatores* Rutledge 2001 is essential.

crime (against men and books), underscoring the recurrent oppression of the imperial system of

government and calling into question the claim that Nerva had reconciled *libertas* and *principatus*. A.

König points out the force of the impersonal verb *licebat* at *Agr.* 17.2, which "makes Frontinus the

passive object of some external, institutional force, not (just) Vespasian personally."[90] Along the same

lines, the fact that Tacitus conspicuously leaves Domitian unmentioned in a preface that emphasizes

oppression and hostility to *uirtus* may, in addition to illustrating the enduring effects of Domitianic

terror in the Trajanic present, hint at the fact that such oppression was not tied to specific *principes* but

a systemic problem under the Principate.

Tacitus sees imperial restrictions and the hostility that success may incur as having destructive

effects on the functioning of Roman officials. His claim that "virtues are best appreciated in the age in

which they thrive most easily" (*adeo uirtutes isdem temporibus optime aestimantur, quibus facillime gignuntur,*

Agr. 1.3) also implies the inverse: virtues thrive most easily in the age in which they are best

appreciated. The freedom to display merit is thus connected with its further production.[91] This notion

recurs in the *Dialogus*, the *Historiae*, and the *Annales*, where Tacitus connects the production of *eloquentia*

and unbiased historiography with freedom of expression and opportunities to showcase talent (*D.* 1,

27.3, 36-41; *H.* 1.1.1: *pari eloquentia et libertate*; *A.* 1.1.2: *donec gliscente adulatione deterrerentur*). In the *Agricola*,

Tacitus characterizes the Republic as a time when there existed "a greater inclination and a more open

path to the achievement of memorable deeds" (*agere digna memoratu pronum magisque in aperto erat*, 1.2),

while the Principate suffers from *ignorantia recti et inuidia* (1.1), with the result that people are

discouraged from pursuing fine deeds and prevented from realizing their full potential. Agricola's

moderation, the outstanding quality throughout the work, at once hints at the limits imposed on his

talents and at what else he might have achieved. It is no coincidence that he conceived his ambition for

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[90] König 2013, 367 n. 34.
[91] The destructive effect of imperial power on Romans is mirrored by the impact of the Empire on subject peoples, as the maxim ascribed to the Caledonian chief Calgacus serves to show: "virtue and high spirit in subjects is unwelcome to those in power" (*uirtus porro ac ferocia subiectorum ingrata imperantibus*, *Agr.* 31.3). The Principate and the Empire are contrasted implicitly throughout the text (cf. n. 145).

military glory outside of Rome, away from the orbit of the sitting *princeps* (*Agr.* 5). Frontinus, Agricola's predecessor as governor of Britain, is said to have been a great man "insofar as it was permitted" (*uir magnus*, *quantum licebat*, 17.2), while in the *Annales* Tacitus depicts the senator Memmius Regulus as "famous for his authority, integrity, and reputation, as far as this was possible in the shadow cast by imperial greatness" (*auctoritate constantia fama, in quantum praeumbrante imperatoris fastigio datur, clarus*, *A.* 14.47.1). In the same vein, Germanicus might have overtaken in military glory even Alexander the Great, if Tiberius had not obstructed his ambitions (*A.* 2.73). The examples, spanning the Tacitean corpus and the whole of the early Principate, reinforce the impression of systemic restriction.

Tacitus' view that a lack of appreciation of *uirtus* negatively impacts public performance is not novel. Sallust saw his times as suffering from similar problems and likewise distinguishes his own age from a better past (as did Cicero in his studies of oratory). In the Early and Middle Republic, says Sallust, Romans enjoyed the freedom to display their talents (*Cat.* 7; cf. *Agr.* 1.1-2). This era was marked by great (military) achievement and so, like Tacitus, Sallust connects the public recognition of merit (*uirtus*) with its further production. In Sallust's own day, however, when power is held by a few men (*potentiae paucorum*, *Jug.* 3.3), *uirtus* meets with such hostility that the historian questions the desirability of performing public office. Worse even, Sallust questions why Romans should produce any public good on the ground that "to struggle to no purpose and to gain nothing for one's strenuous efforts but public hatred is the extreme of madness" (*frustra autem niti neque aliud se fatigando nisi odium quaerere extremae dementiae est*, *Jug.* 3.1). The analogies between the contexts described by both authors are plain and we can see how Tacitus could make Sallust's analysis of late republican politics relevant to his own times. There is little doubt that Sallust's view of the hostility of monarchs toward the eminent inspired Tacitus' view of Domitian's hostility toward Agricola.[92] Sallust is a constant reference-point in the *Agricola*, as he would remain in the historical narratives.

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[92] *Nam regibus boni quam mali suspectiores sunt semperque iis aliena uirtus <u>formidulosa</u> est* (*Cat.* 7.1) ~ *Id sibi maxime <u>formidolosum</u>, privati hominis nomen supra principem attolli...* (*Agr.* 39.2). The intertext is well known and duly noted by all commentators.

The publication of a work that explicitly[93] sets out to celebrate the *uirtus* of a senator, not the *princeps*, was one way to work against the restrictive aspects of the Principate and the distortions it promotes.[94] This is another element shared by the *Agricola* and the historical narratives, in which the recording of people's *uirtutes* continues to be one of Tacitus' principal concerns.[95] The disproportionate attention given to Agricola in the *Agricola*, in which the emperors virtually are written out of the narrative (the *Germania* and *Dialogus* have a similar non-imperial focus),[96] prefigures Tacitus' accounts of Germanicus and Corbulo, who, like Agricola, function as major foci away from the capital and the emperors. This technique was one way to bestow upon eminent commanders the prestige once accorded to them under the Republic, but now monopolized by the emperors, under whose auspices they executed military campaigns. Writing the emperors out of the narrative allowed Tacitus to play up the personal leadership of these senators and to create the impression that they were personally responsible for the major decisions during their tenures.[97] This representation of gubernatorial and military success, which restored glory where it was due, will have been pleasing to his senatorial readers

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[93] Note the repetition of the word *uirtus* (four times in the first chapter alone) and the allusion in the opening words (*clarorum uirorum facta moresque...*) to Cato the Elder's *Origines*: Martin 1981, 41. For possible allusions to Xen., *Sym.* 1.1: Woodman and Kraus 2014, 68.

[94] Syme 1974; Marincola 1999, 318-20; Kraus 2005, 199-200. On the *arcana imperii* and the monopoly on knowledge and information held by the emperors and their families, see *H.* 1.1 (with Sailor 2008, 121 ff.), *A.* 1.6.3, and Dio 53.19 (cf. Suerbaum 2015, 80-87). Tacitus' focus in the *Agricola* stands in noticeable contrast with Suetonius' imperial focus. In fact, in all three of Tacitus' monographs the emperors are mostly absent, in contrast with his historical narratives: Devillers 2014a, 29. As König (2013, 371-74) shows, Frontinus, in his *de Aquis Urbis Romae*, achieves a similar focus on a senator's excellence (himself). Pliny, too, in his *Epistles*, conspicuously celebrates contemporary *exempla* over those from the distant past: Whitton 2013, 9.

[95] *Quod praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne uirtutes sileantur utque prauis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit* (*A.* 3.65.1). See Woodman-Martin 1989 *ad loc.* on *A.* 3.65; cf. Sailor 2012, 41-42. I agree with most that Tacitus here refers to what he considers the main aim of annalistic history. Woodman 1995 [= 1998, 86-103] argues that Tacitus does not indicate a general rule, but refers to the narration of senatorial motions. The passage is complex. Cf. Turpin 2008, 361 ff. *A.* 3.65.1 ought to be read in conjunction with *H.* 1.3 and *A.* 4.33.2-3. Tacitus' first work does on a grand scale what individual passages do in the historical works: to preserve for posterity noble deeds and characters worth emulating and to dissuade ignoble conduct by recording negative examples. This aim of biographical and historical writing stands in close connection with the function of praise and blame in epideictic oratory. On the didactic function of Tacitus' works, see also Reitzenstein 1926, 20; Streng 1970, 7-8; Griffin 2009, 174-75.

[96] With one exception (*Agr.* 17.2), the activity of Britain's governors is described without mention of the emperors, creating the impression of a provincial system working independently from the center of power in Rome, an impression underlined by Britain's actual physical separation from the mainland: Schwarte 1979, 162-63; Sailor 2008, 78-79; 2012, 78-80.

[97] While it is likely that Titus, who had little experience of Britain, and Domitian, who had none, left much to Agricola's own judgment on the spot, he would (like any governor or proconsul) have set out for his province with formal instructions (*mandata*) from his *princeps* and communicated with him to report on his activity, to seek instructions, or to ask permission before undertaking major operations. So in his fifth season he refrained from invading Hibernia, a move he thought manageable and salutary (*Agr.* 24), presumably because his request to do so was denied. Tacitus' account leaves it unclear how often Agricola corresponded with his *princeps* or what his precise instructions were. Like Agricola's activity in Britain, Corbulo's activity in the East is accorded great space, and the emphasis is not on the eastern policy of the Roman government, but on Corbulo's personal initiative, on his (moral) qualities, and the power of his command. See Furneaux 1896, vol. II, 109, 114, 117-18, 123; Syme 1958a, 493 ff., 579; Campbell 1984, 352-53.

and offered obvious narrative advantages: just as the description of Agricola as an independent leader reinforced the contrast between him and Domitian, so the lengthy accounts of the campaigns of Germanicus and Corbulo, and their elaborate characterizations, serve as a foil to the character and record of Tiberius, and Claudius and Nero, respectively.[98]

Above I showed how the imperial system of government, because it forces one man to be preeminent, engenders oppressive rule. An additional problem with having one man at the top of the power structure is that it makes him vulnerable to the influence and manipulation of those nearest him. Throughout his corpus, Tacitus is concerned with the degree to which emperors are influenced, for better or for worse, by their advisers, freedmen, and other intimates. That concern, too, is set out in the *Agricola*, where Tacitus stresses the malicious influence of Domitian's intimates on his conduct and decision-making: his freedmen enjoy considerable influence and carry out public duties (40.2, 41.4); they denounce Agricola to him (41); they urge him to select unsuitable officials over the seasoned Agricola when military disaster threatens the Empire's security (41);[99] they play a part in forcing Agricola to decline a governorship of Asia or Africa (42.1-2) and in engineering his death by poison (although this is only an unsubstantiated rumor: 43.2-3). Tacitus' description of Domitian's refusal to re-employ Agricola is particularly significant, as it points up a persistent problem in the imperial system of government: emperors who, out of a desire to preserve their position or through the influence of malicious advisors, appoint officials who pose no threat to themselves, but who are not the most suitable men for the job.[100]

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[98] For in-depth examinations of the characterization of Corbulo, on the one hand, and Claudius and Nero, on the other, see Geiser 2007, 30-152 and Hausmann 2009, 223 ff.

[99] Domitian preferred men who were connected in various ways to the Flavian house and to himself personally. While Tettius Julianus and Funisulanus Vettonianus happened to hold their own and perform well, C. Oppius Sabinus and Cornelius Fuscus turned out to be unfortunate selections, losing their life and their legions against the Dacians (Suet., *Dom* 6.1; Dio 67.6.5; Jord., *Get.* 13.76-77; Oros., *Hist.* 7.10.3 ff.; Eutrop., *Brev.* 7.23). Sabinus, as far as we know, did not have significant military experience before being appointed governor of Moesia, while Fuscus, though he had held important military and political positions (including that of Praetorian Prefect under Domitian) was no *uir militaris* of the caliber of an Agricola, Paulinus, or Corbulo. He was also a known risk-taker, "thriving on what was unknown and always looking for danger" (*H.* 2.86.3; cf. *H.* 3.4; cf. Juv. 4.111-2); his rashness proved his ruin in battle (*Agr.* 41.2).

[100] It sometimes is argued that Domitian did not re-employ Agricola because the latter was a "one province man," not suitable for the challenges on the Danube frontier. This claim can be discounted, as it is incompatible with the way the Roman military system

The influence of freedmen and intimates (including women) on the emperors remains a crucial

concern for Tacitus in his historical narratives. In the *Historiae*, he stresses Galba's ruin, despite his

awareness of the dangers (1.15.4), at the hands of malicious and competitive advisors (1.13 ff., 1.32,

1.39),[101] points up the destructive influence on Otho of his freedmen and intimates (1.22, 1.26), and

shows Vitellius to be "at the mercy of treacherous advice" (*infidis consiliis obnoxius*, 3.55.3), failing, at the

crucial juncture in the war with the Flavians, to heed the advise of his most experienced centurions

because his intimates kept them away from him (3.56). In the cases of these three emperors, bad

advice invariably leads to disaster, in contrast with the Flavian party, whose success is based on

prudent decision-making.[102] In Tacitus' analysis of the civil wars, the influence of intimates on the

various combatants was a crucial factor in the way events played out. A generalizing maxim is placed in

the mouth of Helvidius Priscus: "there is no better instrument for good government than good

friends" (*nullum maius boni imperii instrumentum quam bonos amicos esse*, *H.* 4.7.3). After the Flavian victory,

it was Priscus, too, who argued that the delegation to be sent to Vespasian ought to consist of senators

selected on the basis of their character (not by ballot, as Eprius Marcellus advocated), as this would

allow Vespasian to see whom he could trust and prevent him from exposure to malicious advisers (*H.*

4.7.3; cf. *prauis magistris*, 2.84.2). A similar concern compelled the seasoned Mucianus to deny Domitian

a command against the Gauls during the Batavian Revolt (4.68, 85-86). Mucianus feared that the

young prince, if given access to an army, might be led by bad advisers (*prauis impulsoribus*, 4.68.3) to do

something foolish and ruin everything (*ne… paci belloque male consuleret*, 4.68.3), either by compromising

the situation in Gaul or by making war on his father and brother (4.68, 86). The extant portions of the

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operated. Almost no men served in the same province on multiple occasions and few served even twice with the same army. Having
limited or no experience in one province did not disqualify good generals from holding command in another, as the careers of
Corbulo, Paulinus, Frontinus, and Cerialis illustrate (Benario 1979, 171). Tacitus' claim that imperial jealousy was the cause of
Agricola's lack of re-employment should not simply be dismissed as malicious. Tiberius, too, is suspected of having passed over the
best candidates to protect his own position (*A.* 1.80; but cf. *A.* 4.6.2).

[101] Keitel 1991, 2790-94; 2006, 224 ff.; Damon 2003, 166 for further discussion. Keitel 2006, 224-235 shows that Tacitus is more
concerned than Plutarch with the destructive role played by Galba's advisors Vinius, Icelus, and Laco.

[102] Keitel 1991, 2790 ff.

Historiae contain few examples of powerful and destructive women. The outstanding example is Lucius Vitellius' wife Triaria (*H.* 2.63-64, 3.77.3), whose destructive influence is contrasted negatively with the modesty and high character of Galeria, wife of Aulus Vitellius (the *princeps*), and Sextilia, mother of the two Vitellii (2.64.2; 3.67.1).

The most prominent examples in the *Annales* are the malicious influence of Livia and Sejanus on Tiberius, that of Messalina, Agrippina the Younger, Narcissus, and Pallas on Claudius, and that of Agrippina, Poppaea Sabina, Capito, and Tigellinus on Nero.[103] Freedmen like Helico, notorious under Caligula (Philo, *Leg.* 168-83, 203-4), likely received similar treatment in the lost books. Much of the action in Tacitus' account of the Julio-Claudian Principate is driven by the influence and machinations of those close to the *princeps*, whether freedmen, informers, slaves, women, or other intimates. An apt example is offered by a passage that has plain affinity with the situation described at *Agr.* 41. At *A.* 13.6 Tacitus describes the Roman response to an alleged Parthian invasion of Armenia under a young Nero. Both passages are concerned with the influence on the *princeps* of his close advisors and with the question of whether the former, in the face of a serious military threat, would appoint a distinguished commander, or whether jealousy and the influence of advisers would make him appoint a less suitable candidate: "the emperor would give clear proof of whether he was advised by good friends or otherwise, if, having put aside all jealousy, he were to select a distinguished general, rather than, out of canvassing, a rich man backed by favor" (*daturum plane documentum, honestis an secus amicis uteretur, si ducem amota inuidia egregium quam si pecuniosum et gratia subnixum per ambitum deligeret, A.* 13.6.4). The passage relates the same issue raised at *Agr.* 41. In both cases, Tacitus suggests that jealousy may urge the *princeps* to pass over a renowned candidate and that the ruinous influence of advisors may produce a man of dubious qualifications. Unlike Domitian's passing over Agricola, however, Nero appoints the

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[103] Note also the way that Agrippina the Elder and Plancina curry favor with the legions in their husbands' province: *A.* 1.69.4, 2.55.6. Cf. *A.* 3.4.2.

seasoned Corbulo, the prudence of which decision Tacitus praises explicitly.[104]

Finally, in addition to the selection of unsuitable officials, the restrictive nature of the Principate is shown to have two distinct, but equally destructive, effects on Roman military performance. In the *Agricola*, Tacitus reveals his distaste for the hackneyed nature of military distinctions. There is a clear sense that the *triumphalia ornamenta* were distributed so readily ("whatever else is granted instead of a triumph": *quidquid pro triumpho datur*, 40.1) as to signify no true honor, a sentiment that recurs in the *Annales*, where Tacitus writes disapprovingly that these decorations were conferred even for nonmilitary reasons.[105] As we have seen, in both the *Agricola* and the historical works Tacitus works against this practice by restoring to generals the glory they had earned and rectifying the distortion of military achievement perpetrated by the emperors. Moreover, in both the *Agricola* and the *Annales* Tacitus is concerned to point out the negative effects of the triviality of the *triumphalia ornamenta*, pointing out that it made some governors, unwilling to expend energy or to risk their life for minimal glory, indifferent to military action. For example, he criticizes A. Didius Gallus, governor of Britain, for attempting to gain credit for conquest while merely consolidating his predecessors' gains and advancing a few positions (*Agr.* 14.2). In the *Annales*, Tacitus, recalling this scene, further criticizes that same governor for being content to leave action to his subordinates and himself to sit back (*A.* 12.40.4, 14.29.1). Elsewhere, he writes that under Nero conquest on the Rhine stalled "due to the inclination of our commanders, who, since the triumphal *insignia* had become commonplace, were expecting greater honor from prolonging peace" (*ingenio ducum*, *qui peruulgatis triumphi insignibus maius ex eo decus sperabant, si pacem continuauissent*, *A.* 13.53.1; cf. *socordia ducum*, *H.* 3.46.1). More critical for the Empire's security was the conduct of men like Furius Camillus, L. Apronius, and Junius Blaesus, who unnecessarily prolonged the war against Tacfarinas because they

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[104] *Locus uirtutibus patefactus*, *A.* 13.8.1; cf. *Agr.* 8.2, 31.3. Note also Nero's appointment of men of proven competence elsewhere: *A.* 13.29.
[105] See Campbell 1984, 359-61 on the *triumphalia ornamenta*. On the prodigality with which Claudius and Nero are said to have distributed these: *A.* 11.20, 13.53; cf. Suet., *Cl.* 24.3, *Ner.* 15.2; Dio 60.23.2. Tiberius is said to have awarded *triumphalia* to informers (Dio 58.4.8). On Tiberius and the *triumphalia*: *A.* 4.23. Nero rewarded Petronius Turpilianus, the later emperor Nerva, and Ofonius Tigellinus with *triumphalia* for their participation in killing the victims of the Pisonian Conspiracy: *A.* 15.72.

did only the bare minimum to earn the *triumphalia* before leaving the Numidian in peace and allowing him to recover (4.23). These cases, occurring in the reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, and Domitian, point to a systemic problem that obstructs expansion and imperils frontier security.

Other passages suggest that some senators *did* appreciate the *triumphalia* and were eager to undertake campaigns to win military glory: so Suetonius Paulinus' motivation for attacking Mona (*A.* 14.29.2; *Agr.* 14.3). Desire for glory, however, frequently engendered rivalry (*aemulatio/discordia*) between Roman officials, who as a result struggled more against one other than against the enemy.[106] In the historical narratives, Tacitus offers many examples of foreign incursions facilitated by rivalry between Roman officials in the provinces.[107]

To sum up, the imperial system of government, as Tacitus describes it, by its very nature poses challenges to both *princeps* and senatorial class. To the former, because the system of government he superintends pushes him, despite his character and intentions, to oppressive and restrictive rule; to the latter, because the system discourages outstanding achievement and engenders destructive rivalry. Consequently, Roman socio-political life demanded constant negotiation between ruler and ruled: for the *princeps* between preserving his position, on the one hand, and avoiding oppression and subsequent alienation of the senatorial class, on the other; for a senator between carrying out one's duties honorably, on the one hand, and avoiding the emperor's hostility and the enmity of colleagues, on the other. All this raises the principal question underlying the *Agricola*: given the problems inherent in the institution of the Principate, how can a senator flourish in imperial Rome? The answer, as it emerges in the *Agricola* and the historical works, lies in adopting an attitude that manages to steer clear of the above problems, allowing one to perform honorable deeds while avoiding conflict with the emperor

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[106] The organization of Rome's government (in both the Republic and the Principate), in which too many candidates continuously competed for too few positions, was such that it readily fuelled rivalry between Romans at every stage of their career. Note Tacitus' claim that "it is difficult for power and concord to coexist" (*arduum sit eodem loci potentiam et concordiam esse, A.* 4.4.1). Cf. *A.* 2.36.

[107] The civil wars of 69 encourage an incursion by the Rhoxolani (*H.* 1.79), unrest in Britain and Dacia (3.45-46), and the Batavian revolt (4.12 *et passim*). Note other examples at *H.* 4.54; *A.* 1.36, 12.49, 13.9.

and other officials.[108] In the following sections, I explore how Tacitus, in narrating Agricola's career,

formulates this mode of life. I examine both the challenges faced by a senator progressing through his

career and the conduct and choices that Tacitus ascribes to Agricola at every stage. I begin with the

chapters on Agricola's youth and first military experience, arguing that, despite their short span, these

chapters enunciate Tacitus' enduring concern with the importance of education and mentorship in the

development of young Romans. For Tacitus, upbringing and early experiences are crucial factors in the

formation of adult character and form the foundation for a public career.

II.3 Mentorship: Laying the Foundation for a Public Career

Simply put, one learns to become a good Roman, in the first instance, from other good

Romans. Sallust began his two monographs by claiming that it is not nature or fate that determines a

man's character but his education, environment, early experiences, and mental cultivation (*Cat.* 2.8, 5;

Jug. 1). Like Sallust and other Roman authors,[109] Tacitus sees parentage, early upbringing, and

education as crucial factors in the development of young Romans, and in his historical works he often

points to childhood as a factor in explaining adult character.[110] After the preface, the *Agricola* opens

with two short chapters on Agricola's upbringing and first military experience, illustrating the impact

on his life of two early mentors: his mother Procilla and his governor Suetonius Paulinus. Tacitus

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[108] This mode of life constitutes a 'middle course' between two extremes which Tacitus frequently denounces: many senators, in the face of imperial oppression, adopt a 'servile' attitude in collusion with the regime or choose the opposite course of open resistance – neither of which, Tacitus claims, does much good for the state. The mode of life exemplified by Agricola allows one to work within the system and benefit the state at large. Comments on the servile attitude of senators are ubiquitous in Tacitus: *H.* 1.35, 1.85, 1.90, 2.17, 2.71, 2.87, 2.90, 2.101, 3.37, 3.44, 3.56, 3.64, 3.67, 3.74, 4.4, 4.8, 4.40, 4.49, 4.81; *A.* 1.7.1, 1.12.1, 2.12, 3.47, 3.57, 3.65, 3.66, 3.69, 4.17, 6.8, 6.13, 6.20, 11.25, 13.8, 13.41, 14.10, 14.12, 14.49, 14.56, 15.61, 16.2, 16.11, 16.19, 16.24; cf. *D.* 13.4. For Tacitus' view of the behavior of public dissidents, esp. the Stoic philosophers, note *Agr.* 42.4. See Martin 1981, 47; Sailor 2008, 10 ff.; 2012, 26-27.

[109] Tacitus' contemporary Quintilian perhaps offers the best evidence for Roman notions of character. Discussing the factors he considers relevant to determining a man's character or actions, he points to family and *genus,* nationality, education and training, and station in life, in addition to natural disposition (*Inst.* 5.10.23-27). Similar categories are found in Cicero (*Inv.* 2.29-30; *Part. Or.* 35) and in the rhetorical treatise *Ad Herrenium* (3.7 ff.). Cf. Hor., *S.* 1.6.65-92. Cf. Levene 2010, 175 ff. On ancient notions of character, the work of Gill is essential (1983; 1986; 1990). For Tacitus' understanding of character(-development): Gill 1983.

[110] See *H.* 1.13.3 on Otho's childhood as explaining his proclivity toward destructive *luxuria*; *H.* 1.66.2 on Valens' inability to handle sudden riches because of a youth spent in poverty; *H.* 1.72.1 on the *foeda pueritia* of Ofonius Tigellinus; *A.* 1.4.4-5, 6.51.1 on Tiberius' difficult early years in the imperial household; *A.* 4.1.2 on Sejanus' youth, in which he is said to have prostituted himself to the disreputable M. Apicius; *A.* 4.13.3 on the youth of one C. Gracchus, who shared his father's exile; *A.* 6.20.1, 6.48.2 on Caligula's depraved childhood and corrupted character; *A.* 13.2 on Burrus and Seneca restraining a young Nero and shielding him from his mother's *ferocia*; *A.* 15.34.2 on the disreputable P. Vatinius having grown up in a shoemaker's shop.

stresses three points about Agricola's upbringing: the fact that he grew up in the moderate

environment of southern Gaul; the important role of his mother in his upbringing; and the fact that,

unlike the Stoic Martyrs, Agricola's love for philosophy left him with a sense of moderation.

Tacitus depicts Agricola's father as a virtuous man devoted to oratory and philosophy (4.1).

The man's virtues were the cause of an untimely death under Caligula, who destroyed him because he

had refused to prosecute a certain M. Silanus.[111] Agricola's upbringing thus became the sole

responsibility of his mother Procilla, whom Tacitus describes as a woman of "exceptional chastity"

(4.1). She nurtured Agricola's "good nature" and "upright disposition" by raising him in her own

home and by sheltering him from "other people's vices" (*peccantium*, 4.2-3). Tacitus' concern with

childhood and education is not an idle one, for in the *Germania* (*G.* 20.1) and the *Dialogus* (*D.* 28-9) he

reaffirms education by the mother in the household as the proper way for young Romans to be raised,

as opposed to the recent practice of entrusting them to the care of servants, who instill in them not

"uprightness and modesty" but "impudence" and "disregard for themselves and others" (*D.* 29.2).[112] It

was his mother, Agricola himself had told Tacitus, who kept his love for philosophy within bounds

when he risked being carried into extreme thoughts. Soon good judgment (*ratio*) and experience (*aetas*)

mitigated his desire and he "retained what was most difficult to retain from philosophy: a sense of

moderation" (*modum*). We are reminded at once of the Stoic Martyrs of the preface (2.1), who were

destroyed precisely for such extremism and whom the young Agricola may well have desired to

emulate.[113] Tacitus locates the origins of Agricola's defining qualities in his early upbringing in southern

Gaul, where his natural disposition was nourished by proper guidance and education. Allusions to

Catiline's youth, which Sallust says was corrupted in Sullan Rome, and to Jugurtha and Marius, who

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[111] *Agr.* 4.1; Suet., *Cal.* 23.3; Sen., *Ep.* 29.6; *Ben.* 2.21.5; Dio 59.8.4-7.
[112] Note the intertext between the following passages in the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus*: *in huius sinu indulgentiaque educatus*, *Agr.* 4.2 ~ *sed gremio ac sinu matris educabatur*, *D.* 28.4, with Gudeman 1914 *ad loc.* and Mayer 2001 *ad loc. D.* 28.5 praises Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, Caesar's mother Aurelia, and Augustus' mother Atia for raising their sons in a similar way as Procilla. The Gracchi, Caesar, and Augustus, like Agricola, lost their father at a young age. Note Sailor 2014, 101-13 on the way Tacitus' treatment of youth in the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus* reflects the development of his own career.
[113] Sailor 2008, 113.

like Agricola grew up outside of Rome, underline the point and allow Tacitus to contrast contemporary Rome with the simplicity and integrity of provincial life.[114] That distinction remains prominent throughout the corpus.[115]

The chapter on Agricola's youth prefigures Tacitus' interest in domestic life and the role of mothers in the reigns of the Julio-Claudian emperors.[116] The destructive influence of Livia on Tiberius and that of Agrippina the Younger on Nero at once come to mind.[117] Chaste mothers receive special mention, as do cases in which people other than the parents teach their pupils the wrong way of doing things.[118] It should be noted here that Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and Domitian all endured difficult childhoods, most growing up without reliable parental support.[119] The first steps of a young Roman on the way to a public career were in the home, where the environment in which one grows up, the people one has around, the education one enjoys, and the experiences one has are crucial in the formation of one's character and moral fiber.[120] While men like Catiline, Otho, Tigellinus, and several of the emperors suffered troubled childhoods that left stains on their adult character, in his youth Agricola developed the disposition and the qualities that stand at the base of his future success.

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[114] Cf. Cogitore 2014, 150: "Agricola symbolise une époque et un lieu... qui surpasse Rome en vertus." For the allusions: Guerrini 1977, 481-84. On Catiline's youth and career: Syme 1964, 65-66. Allusions to Sallust are ubiquitous in both the *Agricola* and the historical narratives: cf. Sailor 2004, 162; Pagán 2014, 78-79.

[115] The distinction underlies much of the *Germania*, which variously contrasts contemporary Rome with the physical and moral purity of the unconquered Germani. Note also *D.* 28.1-3, *A.* 3.55.3-5, 13.54.3, 15.30, 15.44.3, 16.5.1.

[116] On women in imperial Rome, see Milnor 2012, 458-75.

[117] Aside from the many comments on the excessive influence of Livia and Agrippina, Tacitus identifies their deaths as major turning points in the reigns of Tiberius (*A.* 5.3.1) and Nero (*A.* 14.13-14). Their response to their mothers' death should be contrasted with Agricola's levelheaded response to the death of his mother Procilla (*Agr.* 7.2) and that of his second son (*Agr.* 29.1; his first son had died young, too: 6.2). Tacitus' tendency to identify the deaths of important individuals as turning points in imperial regimes is revealed at *Agr.* 44.5. Note, too, the alleged effect of Drusus' death on Tiberius (*A.* 4.7).

[118] For the first point, note Vitellius' mother Sextilia (*H.* 2.64.2) with Ash 2007a *ad loc.* For the second point, note Calvia Crispinilla, whom Tacitus describes as *magistra libidinum Neronis* (*H.* 1.73.1). Also note Tacitus' comments on the influence of Lepida and Agrippina the Younger on a young Nero (*A.* 12.64). Livia, according to Tacitus, was a *mater impotens* (*A.* 5.1.3).

[119] Tiberius spent much of his infancy and youth in flight with his parents (to Naples, Sicily, and Achaea) and then lived in the imperial household vying with rivals (*A.* 6.51.1; Suet., *Tib.* 6). A young Caligula lived with his mother, Agrippina the Elder, until her exile, then with his great-grandmother Livia until her death, then with his grandmother Antonia until, at age nineteen, he was called to Capri by Tiberius, who there inculcated him with his vices (*A.* 6.20.1, 6.45.3, 6.48.2; Suet., *Cal.* 10). Claudius lacked parental support, losing his father when still an infant and being abused and neglected by his mother Antonia, his grandmother Octavia, and his sister Livilla (Suet., *Cl.* 2-3; Dio 60.2). Nero lost his father at age three and soon thereafter Caligula exiled his mother. He was brought up by his aunt Lepida almost in actual want, under two tutors, a dancer, and a barber (Suet., *Ner.* 6.3). Vitellius spent his boyhood and early youth on Capri with Tiberius (Suet., *Vit.* 3.2). A young Domitian lost his mother and, with Vespasian and Titus often away on military service, grew up in virtual solitude (Waters 1964, 52-53; Jones 2002, 13-14).

[120] At *D.* 28.3 ff. Messalla argues that poor upbringing and education lead to an accumulation of vices at every stage of life. The *Dialogus*, of course, relates an important moment in the youth of Tacitus himself: Sailor 2014, 101-13.

A second important mentor for the young Agricola was Suetonius Paulinus, under whom he served as military tribune in the province of Britain. Like the short chapter on his early years, this chapter is inconspicuous, yet it is crucial, as it explains the principal motivation behind Agricola's career and the origin of some of his outstanding qualities. The chapter emphasizes two main points: the experience and the skills that Agricola gained during these years and the fact that his governor's suppression of the Boudiccan revolt instilled in him a desire for military glory (*cupido militaris gloriae*, 5.3). Tacitus starts by writing that Paulinus, "a painstaking and moderate commander" (*diligenti ac moderato duci*, 5.1) and so a suitable mentor for the moderate Agricola (*modum*, 4.3), rewarded the latter's efforts and personally promoted him to his own headquarters.[121] In contrast with many young Romans, who, Tacitus complains, waste their military tribunate, Agricola used these years to "familiarize himself with the province" (*noscere prouinciam*, 5.1), to "become known to the army" (*nosci exercitui*, 5.1), and to "learn from experienced men and follow the best" (*discere a peritis, sequi optimos*, 5.1).[122] Tacitus does not elaborate on these points, but we know that these were formative years for Agricola. The knowledge of Britain he gained (*noscere prouinciam*), and to which he would add during his legionary legateship there, forms the basis for his future success as governor of the province.[123] The rapport he established with the legions (*nosci exercitui*) may well be the reason why in AD 70 the prospect of his arrival as legionary legate restored to discipline the mutinous *legio XX* (*Agr.* 7.3), which was stationed in Britain during his military tribunate and had participated in the suppression of the Boudiccan revolt (*A.* 14.34.1). Such loyalty of a legion to a former officer recurs in the *Historiae*, where Tacitus recounts that during the civil wars the legions stationed in Britain, in which were many centurions and soldiers promoted by Vitellius, declared for Vespasian on the initiative of *Legio II*

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[121] Agricola's promotion under Paulinus recalls P. Scipio Cornelius Aemilianus' endorsement of a young C. Marius, who, as military tribune, had impressed him at Numantia (Sal., *Jug.* 63.3). Cf. Pagán 2014, 78-79 on the allusion.

[122] Cf. Lewin 2005, 131: "l'impegno personale rimaneva però un elemento decisivo."

[123] Richmond 1944, 35; Streng 1970, 11 ff. One of the advantages of serving as military tribune, legionary legate, and governor in Britain is that Agricola came to know the province and the legions very well.

Augusta, which remembered the merit of its former commander (*H.* 3.44).[124] Drusus Caesar's military

tribunate in Illyricum (*A.* 2.44.1) likewise was aimed in part at procuring the affection of the army (cf.

Titus' military tribunates in Germania and Britain: Suet., *Tit.* 4.1). Finally, the connections Agricola

established with Paulinus, Petilius Cerialis (legate of the Ninth Legion), and a young Titus (possibly his

fellow military tribune during these years) will have served him in good stead in the early stages of his

career.[125]

The events of these years, that is the attack against the island of Mona and the subsequent

Boudiccan revolt, were crucial and provided Agricola with unparalleled experience: "never indeed had

Britain been more excited or in a more critical condition. Veteran soldiers had been massacred,

colonies burnt, armies cut off" (*non sane alias exercitatior magisque in ambiguo Britannia fuit: trucidati ueterani,*

incensae coloniae, intercepti exercitus, 5.2). Under Paulinus' leadership, says Tacitus, the province was

recovered and, while the governor received immense glory for his victory over the rebels, Agricola

gained essential experience and conceived a desire for military glory (5.3). Further allusions to Sallust

and perhaps to Alexander the Great serve to underline the importance of this motivation.[126] Tacitus

ends the chapter by saying that such ambition was "unwelcome in an age in which a good reputation

was as perilous as a bad one" (*ingrata temporibus quibus sinistra erga eminentis interpretatio nec minus periculum*

ex magna fama quam ex mala, 5.3), a claim that recalls the sentiments of the preface and that refers to

Corbulo's fate under Nero and foreshadows Agricola's under Domitian (39-41). D. Sailor elucidates

the significance of these words, in that the Principate, because it is hostile to success, potentially

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[124] Cf. Wellesley 1972 *ad loc.*

[125] All enjoyed influence with Vespasian, who appointed Agricola as legionary legate and then as governor in Britain. Paulinus' influence with the Flavians is difficult to estimate: after 69 he disappears from the record. On Paulinus: Birley 1981, 54 ff.; *PIR² S* 694. Paulinus was not the father of the imperial biographer, as recently has been stated (Villalba Varneda 2011, 322). Cerialis was closely related to Vespasian (*H.* 3.59.2, Dio 64.18.1). Townend (1961, 59) suggests that he was Vespasian's son-in-law, but the evidence is inconclusive (cf. Syme 1958a, 595; Birley 1981, 67). On Titus' military tribune in Britain: Birley 1975, 140. Cerialis, under whom Agricola served as legionary legate, may well have recommended Agricola to Vespasian for his service in Britain. Titus, upon becoming emperor, extended Agricola's governorship, even though the latter already had spent three seasons there and could have expected a recall. On the workings of personal patronage in Rome: Pflaum 1950, 198 ff.; Millar 1967; Saller 1982; cf. Lendon 1997 on reciprocity of honor in the army, esp. 237-266; cf. Potter 2006, 17-19.

[126] *tanta cupido gloriae*, *Cat.* 7.3; *gloriae maximum certamen*, *Cat.* 7.6; *adpetens gloriae militaris*, *Jug.* 7.1; *tantummodo gloriae auidus*, *Jug.* 63.2. Borszák 1982, 39 on the reference to Alexander. On the significance of the allusions to Sallust: Lausberg 1980, 422 n.21.

discourages young Romans from pursuing a military career.[127] Clearly we are led to believe that Paulinus' example trumped such deterrents and fuelled Agricola's ambition. Tacitus' focus is squarely on demonstrating Paulinus' positive influence on the young military tribune.

Chapters 14-16 of the *Agricola* offer further information about the revolt that sheds light on its causes and on what Agricola would have learned about governing a province. Here we are told that Paulinus, by attacking Mona, had left his rear exposed and so facilitated the revolt on the mainland (14.3).[128] One of its principal causes is said to have been the misconduct of Paulinus' procurator Catus Decianus (15.2), another significant indicator of Tacitus' outlook, for throughout his corpus the senator holds equestrian officials responsible (not always justly) for provincial mismanagement. Tacitus next tells us that the rebels gained momentum, attacking Roman garrisons, storming forts, and bursting into the headquarters, until Paulinus, in a single engagement, brought the province back to obedience (16.2). Finally, in the aftermath of the revolt, Paulinus' cruel and aggressive policy towards the rebels (*adroganter in deditos et ut suae cuiusque iniuriae ultor durius consuleret*, 16.2) made them continue their resistance, until Petronius Turpilianus was sent to replace him (16.3). Intimidation and the infliction of harsh punishment on rebels were hallmarks of the Roman military system (as we shall see in the second chapter), aimed at cowing enemies into obedience and preventing unrest and unnecessary cost. But such methods are salutary only if they succeed in preventing further unrest (as Agricola's methods did: *Agr.* 38.2-4). Paulinus' response was excessive (*durius*) and engendered further resistance, hence receiving Tacitus' disapproval.[129]

The expanded account in the *Annales* is in many ways similar to that in the *Agricola*. In both cases, the revolt breaks out during Paulinus' attack against Mona (*Agr.* 14.3; *A.* 14.29-30.1). In both cases (though presented with very different degrees of detail), Roman oppression, greed, and abuse

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[127] Sailor 2008, 75; 2012, 28.
[128] Cf. Gambash 2015, 65 ff.
[129] Cf. Gambash 2015, 78 ff.

spark the revolt (*Agr.* 15; *A.* 14.35) and the misconduct of the procurator Decianus is identified as a principal cause (*Agr.* 15.2; *A.* 14.32.2-3). In both accounts, Paulinus hurries to the seat of action and wins a glorious battle (*Agr.* 16.2; *A.* 14.37.2), only to be replaced due to his reported arrogance and cruelty in the aftermath (*Agr.* 16.3; *A.* 14.38). However, there are some notable differences as well. In the *Annales*, Tacitus, apparently not entirely fairly, places even greater emphasis on the misconduct of Paulinus' procurators, stressing that the quarrelsome behavior of Decianus' replacement Classicianus (*Suetonio discors*, *A.* 14.38.3) largely was responsible for the continued British resistance and, ultimately, the governor's recall (*A.* 14.38-39).[130] Likewise, Tacitus, decoding in greater detail the preparation and execution of the response to the revolt, stresses that it was Decianus' decision-making that initiated a chain of military disasters. The procurator, with Paulinus far away during the outbreak of the revolt, refused to send sufficient troops to relieve Camulodunum (14.32.2), forcing Cerialis to rush there only to be routed (14.32.3) and causing Paulinus to face the rebels with a legion short (14.33.1). In the *Annales*, moreover, Tacitus records the casualties during these events, information he refers to only implicitly in the *Agricola*: *Legio IX* was annihilated, Londinum and Verulamium destroyed, and nearly 70,000 allies and citizens killed (*A.* 14.33.2). In both the *Agricola* and the *Annales*, then, admiration for Paulinus' military achievements is mixed with criticism of his post-revolt policies and, with notable emphasis, of the conduct of his procurators. As is evident from the remainder of the *Agricola*, these events made an impact on the young Agricola, making him acutely aware of the importance of securing one's rear before moving forward. Furthermore, seeing Paulinus' arrogance and severity negate the fruits of victory and seeing quarrelsome procurators engender continued unrest and, ultimately, the governor's recall, taught Agricola a keen lesson about consolidating success and

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[130] According to Tacitus, Classicianus had spread rumors among local tribes about Paulinus' cruelty and urged them to continue resisting until a more moderate governor would replace him (*A.* 14.38.3). In addition, the procurator sent a rapport to Rome making allegations against Paulinus and claiming that no cessation of fighting should be expected unless the governor be replaced (*A.* 14.38.3). Tacitus stresses that the discord between the two men interfered with the public interest: *bonum publicum priuatis simultatibus impediebat* (14.38.3). It is significant, as Gambash (2012, 4-5; 2015, 78 ff.) notes, that Tacitus does not refute Classicianus' allegations. On the merits of having the latter, a man of Gallic origins and hence possibly regarded as sympathic by local British populations, replace Decianus in the aftermath of the revolt, see Gambash 2012, 4-5; 2015, 109-10, 114 ff.; cf. de la Bédoyère 2015, 42-46.

cooperating with other officials, as becomes clear later in the text. Despite his faults, Paulinus' example

fuelled Agricola's military ambition, and his promotion of the young military tribune afforded the latter

essential experiences that shaped his defining qualities and skills.[131]

Tacitus similarly is concerned to demonstrate the positive influence of Cerialis' leadership

during Agricola's legionary legateship:

> *Habuerunt uirtutes spatium exemplorum, sed primo Cerialis labores modo et discrimina, mox et gloriam communicabat: saepe parti exercitus in experimentum, aliquando maioribus copiis ex euentu praefecit. nec Agricola umquam in suam famam gestis exultauit; ad auctorem ac ducem ut minister fortunam referebat. ita uirtute in obsequendo, uerecundia in praedicando extra inuidiam nec extra gloriam erat.* (*Agr.* 8.2)*

> Agricola's merits now had room for display. At first Cerialis let him share only toils and dangers, soon also *gloria*: often he put him at the head of a part of the army to test him and sometimes, based on the outcome, of larger forces. Never did Agricola boast of his exploits to enhance his fame; he always referred his success, as a subordinate ought to, to his director and general. So, by his virtue in obeying orders and by his modesty in reporting success, he escaped jealousy without losing *gloria*.

Like Paulinus, Cerialis is described as promoting and encouraging Agricola, allowing him to gain honor

and accumulate experience.[132] What Tacitus shows both governors have in common is that they

recognize and reward the merit of their subordinate officers. Their influence on Agricola emerges later

in the text: as governor of Britain, Agricola likewise would pursue a forward military policy to achieve

military renown and would circulate *gloria* fairly among his subordinates: "he never greedily

appropriated the achievements of others" (*nec Agricola umquam per alios gesta auidus intercepit*, 22.4).

Tacitus characterizes Paulinus and Cerialis as key mentors to the young Agricola, positively influencing

his development from a young man into a competent Roman official.

Tacitus' emphasis on the proper circulation of *gloria* under Paulinus, Cerialis, and Agricola

serves to contrast the nature of their administration in Britain with that of Domitian in Rome. While

the *princeps* is depicted as hostile to and suspicious of other people's merit, the governors in Britain

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[131] Agricola's development under Paulinus and Cerialis reflects Rome's military apparatus functioning ideally, with young Romans emulating their commanders and seeking glory by similarly pursuing a forward military policy. If the system works well, these new generals in turn inspire the next batch of young Romans, thus creating a continuous supply of experienced commanders who expand the Empire in successful campaigns: Sailor 2008, 74-75.

[132] See Sailor 2008, 76-77 (following Lendon 1997) on the reciprocity of honor between Cerialis and Agricola.

maintain a fair circulation of glory that motivates their subordinates.[133] It is no accident that in Pliny's *Panegyricus* Trajan, too, is praised for letting the virtues of others shine again (*Pan.* 18-20, 44). By blackening Domitian's regime, and thus showing how things should not be done, and by setting it in contrast with positive examples that reinforce the right way of doing things, Tacitus promotes the proper conduct expected of a senator, governor, or emperor, while at the same time endorsing the values of the new regime.

The leadership qualities of those in positions of power and the effects of their conduct on their subordinates, enunciated as a topic of interest in the *Agricola*, remains a principal concern in the historical works. In the extant books of the *Historiae*, military leadership continually is on display and Tacitus ascribes the outbreak and the prolongation of the civil wars in part to the failed leadership of the emperors and the generals fighting on their side. Vitellius' character and the effects of his conduct on his generals and soldiers is the most obvious example. His self-indulgent lifestyle and poor leadership negatively impact his troops, who increasingly emulate his behavior, losing in the process their discipline and ultimately their respect for their commander-in-chief.[134] Other pertinent cases are the positive example set by Vespasian (*H.* 2.82) and the negative examples set by Otho and Hordeonius Flaccus, who corrupt their forces by setting an example of immorality, lack of discipline, or timidity. The famous scene of a nighttime riot among Othonian soldiers after the unauthorized opening of an arsenal (*H.* 1.80-85) and the mutiny of Flaccus' troops, which eventually resulted in the murder of their commander-in-chief (*H.* 1.9, 1.54, 1.56, 4.19, 4.24, 4.27, 4.36), are symptomatic of the way in which the behavior of soldiers and other officials mirrors that of their commanders. In the *Annales*, Tacitus stresses the positive effects of Corbulo's leadership on the performance of his men

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[133] Sailor 2008, 77-78: "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... This arrangement is desirable not only because 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..."

[134] Note Mucianus' words at *H.* 2.76.4 (*principis imitatione*). Cf. *H.* 2.56, 62, 67, 68, 76, 87, 93 etc. For discussion: Ash 1999, 113 ff.

(*A.* 11.18.2-19.1, 13.8.3, 13.35, 14.24.1-3) and records that Vespasian, by his personal example, put an end to moral decline through luxury (3.55.4). As we shall see below, Germanicus, Antonius Primus, Suetonius Paulinus, and others are depicted as competent leaders as well, variously evoking the exemplary Agricola. Tacitus, conceiving of the behavior of those in positions of power as having a 'trickle-down' effect and gradually impacting all ranks, formulates a general rule: legates and tribunes follow the character of their supreme commanders and either imitate their strictness or become indulgent. Further down the chain of command, soldiers likewise are either disciplined or lax (*H.* 2.68.1).[135] Emperors, governors, and legates play a vital role in the motivation, training, and performance of their subordinate officers. This notion is already fully at work in the *Agricola*.

In addition to articulating enduring Tacitean concerns, the chapters on Agricola's youth and military tribunate help to elucidate two famous Tacitean statements in the *Annales* on the question of whether the major events of life are governed by chance or fate.[136] While a close reading of Tacitus' works reveals no consistent creed about the workings of fate or chance,[137] Agricola's life is presented as an example of the ways in which education, proper guidance, and experience play their role in shaping adult character and behavior, thus refuting the popular belief "that the future of an individual is ordained at the moment of his entry into life" (*A.* 6.22.3).[138] Elsewhere, in explaining the steady career of M. Lepidus, Tacitus is compelled to ask "whether it is due to fate or chance of birth that emperors incline favorably to some and take offense at others, or whether there is anything in our policies that allows us to proceed between sheer contumacy and ugly servility on a path that is free from ambition and dangers" (*A.* 4.20.3). Agricola's career plainly reflects the second alternative, as do the careers of others who resemble him, such as Lepidus, L. Piso (*A.* 6.10.3), Poppaeus Sabinus (*A.*

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[135] As noted by Ash 1999, 113; Ash 2007a, 248, 264, 278. For examples: *H.* 2.62, 2.67, 2.68, 2.74, 2.82, 2.84, 3.41 etc.
[136] *A.* 4.20.2-3, reflecting on the career of Marcus Lepidus, and *A.* 6.22: "as for myself, when I listen to this and similar narratives, my judgment wavers. Is the revolution of human things governed by fate and changeless necessity or by accident? You will find the wisest of the ancients, and the disciplines attached to their tenets, at complete variance..."
[137] Furneaux 1896, Vol. I, 29-31.
[138] Similarly, the flawed characters of Otho, Tigellinus, Sejanus, Caligula, and Tiberius are explained not as the inevitable result of fate, but of a difficult childhood: see n. 119.

6.39.3), L. Volusius (to some extent, *A.* 13.30.2), and Memmius Regulus (*A.* 14.47.).[139] The careers of such men suggest that, with the right character and conduct, one can exercise some control over how events turn out and one is not entirely given over to fate. It stands to reason that Tacitus was attracted to such an outlook, for otherwise his own success and survival under Domitian, as well as that of others, must be attributed not to the right attitude and an understanding of the times, but to luck or the uncertain workings of fate.

Tacitus is concerned to show how Agricola's upbringing and military tribunate prepared him for his next posts, as quaestor in Asia, tribune and praetor in Rome, and legionary legate in Britain. Aware of his station in each of these posts, Agricola displays the sorts of qualities that allowed him to move ahead in his career, qualities that have their origins in his early years in Gaul and Britain and that, as we shall see, remain the core criteria in Tacitus' assessment of officials in the historical narratives. The *Agricola* sets out what Tacitus considers the proper conduct for subordinate officers.

II.3.1 Career Development: the Proper Conduct for Subordinate Officers

Soon after his military tribunate, Agricola was appointed quaestor in Asia (AD 63-64), a challenging post, as the province was notorious for the corruption it often inspired in Roman officials.[140] Tacitus writes that Agricola did not allow himself to be corrupted by his proconsul and the province, "even though it is rich and lies open for corrupt men" (*quamquam et prouincia diues ac parata peccantibus*, *Agr.* 6.2).[141] Word-choice suggests that Tacitus wants us to see Agricola's integrity in part as the result of his shielded upbringing in Gaul, which had kept him away precisely from such individuals (*arcebat eum ab inlecebris peccantium*, *Agr.* 4.2). Agricola's refusal to be involved in his proconsul's corrupt practices (6.2) suggests that he had learned something from the troubled relations between Paulinus

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[139] Cf. Sailor 2008, 28-29 on the implications of taking the third way between the two extremes ways of life.

[140] Cicero can praise his brother Quintus for managing to preserve his "integrity" and "restraint" in such a "depraved and corrupt province" (*Q. fr.* 1.1.19). He likewise praises Murena for living an honorable life there (*Mur.* 12). Cf. Sal., *Cat.* 11.5-6 on Sulla's forces succumbing to Asia's riches. On the ways in which senators enriched themselves in the provinces, see Shatzman 1975, 53-63.

[141] Corrupt business between proconsuls and subordinates was a subject Tacitus likely addressed in the case against M. Priscus as well.

and his procurators. In fact, Tacitus makes the avoidance of strife, competition, or other difficulties with fellow officials a defining characteristic of Agricola's career, both in Rome and the provinces.[142] The chapter on Agricola's quaestorship prefigures the chapters on his governorships of Aquitania and Britain, where Tacitus reveals a strong interest in the functioning of Roman governors and their often difficult relationship with colleagues.

Like his quaestorship in Asia, Agricola's execution of his early offices in Rome was marked by caution and careful avoidance of discord with other Roman officials (6.3-4). The year between his quaestorship and tribunate (AD 65), as well as the year of his tribunate, he spent in "quiet inactivity" (*quiete et otio*), realizing (*gnarus*) that under Nero "idleness is the same as wisdom" (*inertia pro sapientia*). His praetorship (AD 68), too, he spent in continued silence (*idem... tenor et silentium*). Some have seen in these words implicit criticism of Agricola's conduct.[143] The reason for this is, first, that the terms *quies* and *otium* elsewhere in Tacitus often have a negative connotation.[144] A second reason lies in the implicit comparison, drawn in the work, between the condition of senators under the emperors and that of provincials under Roman rule.[145] The *quies* and *otium* that Tacitus here ascribes to Agricola are ascribed later to the Britons, on whom Agricola as governor imposes *quies* and *otium* (21.1) to turn them into docile subjects (*seruitutis*, 21.2; cf. 11.4). Following the analogy in the condition of senators and provincial subjects, it could be suggested that Agricola conducts himself in similarly 'slavish' way towards his *princeps*.[146] While the *Agricola* certainly sets the nature of imperial power in Rome in dialogue with that of Rome's *imperium* in the provinces, a dialogue that persists throughout the

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[142] As tribune and praetor: *Agr.* 6.3-5; as legionary legate: 8.1-3; as governor of Aquitania: 9.4; as governor of Britain: 22.4; after returning from Britain: 40.3-4.

[143] Bastomsky 1982, 389; Sailor 2008, 98-99; Lavan 2011, 305. Cf. Whitmarsh 2006, 319 ff.

[144] *Otium* in Tacitus often denotes lack of valor, discipline, or good order, while *quies*, though sometimes denoting peace and calm in the absence of warfare, often refers to indolence and passivity on the part of Romans or Rome's subjects. Note the following examples of *otium*: *Agr.* 11.4, 16.3, 21.1, 40.4; *G.* 14.2; *D.* 18.5, 38.2; cf. *H.* 1.46.2, 2.34.1, 2.67.2, 2.93.1, cf. 3.83.2, 4.5.2, 4.70.1; *A.* 1.16.2, 12.12.1; of *quies*: *Agr.* 21.1, 40.3; cf. *H.* 1.21.2, 2.15.1, 2.97.1; *A.* 13.53.1.

[145] Essential for the study of the connections between the Principate and the Empire in the *Agricola* are Liebeschuetz 1966; Whitmarsh 2006; Sailor 2008, 97 ff.; 2012, 29-37; Lavan 2011. The *communis opinio* is that the British and Roman narratives need to be read in conjunction. Whitmarsh 2006 demonstrates the ambiguities in the *Agricola*'s underlying political and ethical message. Lavan (2011; 2013) is excellent on the various connections between the Roman and British narratives and the unity of the theme of 'slavery'. Sailor 2012, 29-37 offers further ambiguities in the analogies between the Principate and Empire. Cf. also Devillers 2014b, 163-74.

[146] Lavan 2011, 305. Much of Lavan 2011 reappears on pp. 124-54 of Lavan 2013.

corpus,[147] the significance of Tacitus' description of Agricola here is more subtle, situated in the latter's conduct during the Pisonian Conspiracy of AD 65. The conspiracy is recorded at length in the *Annales*, once more allowing us to see how that work and the *Agricola* elucidate one another.

Tacitus' account of the conspiracy makes clear its extent: its participants came from every social and political rank, including senators, knights, tribunes, quaestors, centurions, praetorian officers, freedmen, and even mothers, wives, and other female participants (*A*. 15.48.1, 15.54.1). Among them were prominent men like Lucan (one of the ringleaders: *A*. 15.49.3), Seneca (who, however, seems at most to have an accessory: *A*. 15.56.2; Dio 62.24.1) and "many provincials, men of Agricola's own age and class."[148] Tacitus' claim that Agricola remained quiet and inactive during these years thus points to what he did *not* do, that is participate in the conspiracy against his *princeps*.

Agricola's stance helped him survive where others fell. Among Nero's victims were not only those guilty of joining the conspiracy, but men who otherwise had incurred his wrath, notably Corbulo (*Agr*. 5.3; *H*. 2.76.3; *A*. 14.58.2; Dio 62.17), Seneca (*A*. 15.61 ff.), Petronius (16.18-19), Thrasea Paetus (16.21 ff.), and Barea Soranus (16.21 ff.). This was a time that offered opportunities for *delatores*, making any form of conspicuousness, obstruction, or display of independence perilous and the ability to adjust one's conduct crucial. Agricola's attitude stands in contrast with that of Thrasea, who, despite earning Tacitus' sympathy, is described as conducting himself in overt opposition to his regime.[149] His conduct caused increased tension between the senate and the *princeps* and invited hostility from powerful officials, such as Eprius Marcellus and Cossutianus Capito, who inflamed Nero against him and set in motion the events that spelled his end (*A*. 16.21 ff.). Agricola's silence as tribune further

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[147] On this broad topic, which I do not examine in detail in this study, see Devillers 2014b, 163-74, who offers many examples and plentiful references.

[148] Syme 1958a, 21. Cf. Bartera 2011, 178-81 on the way Tacitus varies the "beginning-of-year" formula for the year 65 to underline the importance of the revolt.

[149] He walked out of the senate when Agrippina's memory was being condemned (*A*. 16.21.1), absented himself from the vote of divine honors to Poppaea, and failed to assist at her funeral (16.21.2). He avoided the annual oath to maintain Nero's *acta* (16.22.1), refused to sacrifice to Nero's health or his divine voice, shirked his priestly duties, and did not set foot in the curia for three years (16.22). He also openly displayed his admiration for Cato, among other things by writing a *Cato*. Capito exploited the association (16.22.2). For further discussion, see Rutledge 2001, 115 ff.

stands in contrast with the indiscretion of Thrasea's associate Arulenus Rusticus, who was Agricola's colleague for the year and who had to be kept from rashly exercising his veto during Thrasea's trial (*A.* 16.26.4-5). Finally, Agricola's attitude stands in contrast to the conduct of Barea Soranus, who as proconsul of Asia had displayed *industria* by helping the city of Pergamum prevent the looting of its statues and paintings by Nero's freedman Acratus (*A.* 16.23). This activity, however admirable and fitting for a proconsul, directly interfered with Nero's designs and, according to Tacitus, was one cause for his destruction.[150] Agricola's conduct thus continues to be contrasted implicitly with that of the Stoic Martyrs. The destruction of Thrasea, Soranus, and others forms the background against which to assess the calculated inactivity of Agricola and others whom Tacitus describes as operating similarly: Galba lived through the reigns of five emperors by maintaining a quiet appearance (*quod segnitia erat, sapientia uocaretur*, *H.* 1.49.3), while Memmius Regulus, marked by Nero as a potential successor and hence a target for hostilities (note the force of *tamen* at *A.* 14.47.1; cf. *suspectum semper inuisumque dominantibus qui proximus destinaretur*, *H.* 1.21.1), came through the latter's reign *quiete defensus* (*A.* 14.47.1; cf. *segnem*, *A.* 5.11.1). Agricola's stance allowed him to execute his offices without incurring the wrath of his emperor or other powerful officials, setting a paradigm followed by similarly moderate senators in the historical narratives and by men like Tacitus himself.[151]

Finally, and arguably most significantly in terms of what Tacitus' generation would have remembered of those years, Agricola's inactivity points to the fact that he did not, like other prominent men, become an instrument of his emperor and participate in putting down fellow Romans. Silius Italicus, author of the *Punica*, was believed to have turned *delator* during these years, earning himself a consulship in 68 (at a young age for a *nouus homo*) and with it a questionable reputation (Plin., *Ep.* 3.7.3). Likewise, Ofonius Tigellinus, Petronius Turpilianus, and Nymphidius Sabinus were rewarded

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[150] The official charge was friendship with Rubellius Plautus and an attempt to stir Asia to revolt. See Rutledge 2001, 119-21. The looting in Pergamum was to make up for the losses incurred during the great fire of 64: *A.* 15.45.1-2; Suet., *Ner.* 38; Dio 62.18.5.

[151] Cf. Joseph 2014, 140-41 on Agricola's disavowal of political boldness (*audacia, contumacia*).

handsomely for their role in suppressing the conspiracy (*A.* 15.72). But the most dubious, and for

Tacitus' readers most significant, role was that of the future emperor Nerva. Praetor designate at the

time, Nerva actively helped put men like Seneca and Lucan down. In accordance with his sordid role,

Tacitus explicitly pairs him with the disreputable Tigellinus: "Nero exalted Nerva and Tigellinus so far

that, not content with triumphal statues in the Forum, he placed their effigies in the palace itself" (*A.*

15.72.1), where they presumably still stood when Nerva himself moved in as *princeps* four decades later.

Nerva's portrait in the *Panegyricus* is wholly favorable and, like others, Pliny fully buys into the praises

of the former emperor. But behind Nerva's proclamation of *libertas* and *felicitas temporum*, and his vows

for the safety of his fellow Romans (*me securitatem omnium quieti meae praetulisse*, Plin., *Ep.* 10.58.7), lay an

ugly precedent. In 98, Tacitus could not criticize the deified Nerva explicitly for his conduct under

Nero, but there was always room for subtle criticism: behind the praise of Agricola's *quies* and *otium*

lurks an indirect jab at Nerva's conduct during those same years.

In the account of the next stages of Agricola's career, Tacitus continues to stress the man's

respect for authority and avoidance of discord with colleagues. When Agricola served as legionary

legate in Britain and his first governor, Vettius Bolanus, pursued a passive military policy that forced

him to restrain his ambition, he duly subordinated himself to his superior, advancing his reputation but

not growing too important. Tacitus musters traditional philosophical and rhetorical concepts (*utilitas*

and *honestum*) and Ciceronian language (*peritus* and *eruditus*) to underline Agricola's qualities: "he knew

how to obey and had learned to combine the expedient and the honorable" (*peritus obsequi eruditusque*

utilia honestis miscere, *Agr.* 8.1).[152] Under his next governor, Cerialis, expansion was renewed and Agricola

could gain glory, but he downplayed his own achievements and, as a subordinate ought to (*ut minister*,

8.3), referred them to his superior. The words *ut minister* – "as a subordinate ought to" – underline the

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[152] The terms *utilitas* and *honestum* were common in philosophical and rhetorical doctrine, esp. in Cicero. Tacitus engages with these concepts in the *Dialogus*. Cicero combines *peritus* and *eruditus* at *Brut.* 205, *Font.* 43, and *Leg.* 2.66. In a methodological statement in the *Annales*, Tacitus writes that the writing of history is useful since most people do not know how to distinguish *honesta* and *utilia* from *deterioribus* and *noxiis*, an ability that marks *prudentia* (*A.* 4.33.2). See Woodman and Kraus 2014, 118 for further references.

propriety of Agricola's attitude.[153] The result was that "by his virtue in obeying orders and his modesty in reporting success, Agricola avoided envy but still gained renown" (*ita uirtute in obsequendo, uerecundia in praedicando extra inuidiam nec extra gloriam erat*, 8.3). Likewise, as governor of Britain, his dispatches to Rome would stand out for their respectful spirit. He neither boasted about his successes nor emphasized his personal renown, thus honoring his position as a subordinate to his *princeps*.[154]

Tacitus' concern with the appropriate conduct of subordinate officers toward their superiors continues into the historical narratives, where he frequently condemns officials for failing to act in accordance with their station. A notable example from the *Historiae* is the attitude of the otherwise gifted general Antonius Primus, who "fails to temper his words, is immoderate in speech, and unaccustomed to defer to others" (*nec sermonibus temperabat, immodicus lingua et obsequii insolens*, *H.* 3.53.1 ~*Agr.* 8.3); who treats Mucianus, second-in-command after Vespasian, with contempt (3.49.2); who, after his success at Cremona, "was becoming too great a man" (*quippe nimius iam Antonius*, 3.52.1); who writes letters "in a manner too boastful to use to an emperor" (*iactantius*, 3.53.1 ~ *iactantia*, *Agr.* 39.1); who is arrogant (*infestum* and *tumidum; superbia* and *adrogantia*, 4.80) and oversteps his rank (*uiri aequalium quoque, adeo superiorum intolerantis*, 4.80.1). Primus lacks the qualities that Tacitus singles out in Agricola. A good example from the *Annales* is the conduct of C. Silius – governor of Upper Germany, victor against the rebel Sacrovir, and close associate of Agrippina the Elder – whose "presumption" (*intemperantia*) and "immoderate boasts" (*immodice iactantis*, *A.* 4.18.2) provoked Tiberius and hastened his destruction in AD 24.[155] Silius had claimed that his own troops (*suum militem*; note the insult in calling the legions, legally the emperor's, his own; cf. *suas legiones* at *H.* 3.49.1) had remained loyal

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[153] This is the sense favored by most commentators. But cf. Whitmarsh 2006, 321. Tacitus points to similar loyalty on the part of Germanic officials (*G.* 14.2). Cf. Sallust on Jugurtha: *plurimum facere, minimum ipse de se loqui* (*Jug.* 6.1).

[154] He refrained from attaching the customary laurel to the letter(s) detailing his suppression of the Ordovices (18.6; cf. Plin., *Nat.* 15.133). Likewise, in his report to Domitian about his victory at Mons Graupius he did not magnify his own success (39.1). Agricola's letters conveyed that he was loyal, unassuming, and no threat to his emperor's authority. That this was the expected effect of moderate reports seems clear from Tacitus' claim that Domitian received Agricola's letter(s) with anxiety and hatred, "even though (*quamquam*) it contained no boastful language whatsoever" (39.1). On the importance of striking the appropriate tone in letters to superiors, especially the *princeps*, note *H.* 2.55.2, 3.9.5, 3.53.1; *A.* 4.29.3.

[155] On the case against Silius and his connections with Agrippina, see Rutledge 2001, 140-42.

during the great mutinies of AD 14 and that Tiberius' reign could not have lasted if his (i.e. Silius')

legions, too, had desired revolution (*A*. 4.18.1). It was widely agreed (*credebant plerique*) that this claim

was a grave insult to the emperor's supremacy. Other cases of men overstepping their station are

Mucianus (whom Tacitus depicts as enjoying excessive influence and as acting more like Vespasian's

colleague than his subordinate: *H*. 2.83.1, 3.75.2, 4.4.1, 4.11, 4.39.2), Sejanus (still an *eques* and

notorious for having grossly overstepped his bounds: *A*. 4.40-41, 6.8; cf. Sen., *Dial*. 6.22.4), and Macro

(like Sejanus an *eques* with excessive influence: *nimia... potentia*: *A*. 6.45.3, 6.49-50).

Delatores, too, many of whom were *novi homines*, are condemned by Tacitus for acting beyond

their station and for seeking rewards and rapid advancement by destroying men of superior social

class.[156] But arguably the most prominent example is the conduct of Cn. Calpurnius Piso, governor of

Syria, who in AD 20 was tried at Rome for treason. A summary of the outcome of the trial is

preserved on an inscription (the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre*), which records as one of the charges

that Piso had ignored Tiberius' injunctions (*mandata*) and further instructions contained in letters

(*epistulae*) sent to him by Germanicus (*SCPP* 38-39).[157] Piso was accused of having acted as if everything

in Syria ought to be subject to his own decision and control (36-37), although his *imperium* was

subordinate to that of Germanicus and Tiberius (29-36). Acting on his own volition and ignoring the

majesty of the imperial house (33), Piso was charged with, among other things, having stirred up an

Armenian and Parthian war and even civil war (37-38, 47). Tacitus follows the decree in stressing

Piso's insubordination, pointedly calling him *obsequii ignarum* (*A*. 2.43.2) and recording that he was

accused of "having ignored the limits of his commission and the deference owed to his superior" *(si*

legatus officii terminos, obsequium erga imperatorem exuit, 3.12.2).[158] These examples, and many others,[159] attest

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[156] For an in-depth examination of *delatores* under the early Principate and their (skewed) depiction in our sources, see Rutledge 2001.
[157] For the text of this trial, see Eck, Caballos, and Fernández 1996, 38-51; Potter and Damon 1999, 13-42; cf. Potter 1996, 49 and Potter 1999, 65-88. Tacitus relates the trial in the Third Book of the *Annales*. As we may well expect, he does not everywhere uphold the details of the trial faithfully: Damon 1999, 143-62.
[158] For Piso's insubordination towards Germanicus or Tiberius: *A*. 2.55, 2.57, 2.69, 2.71, 3.14. Piso's inability to stomach rivals is reflected in his conviction that Drusus would be content with Germanicus' death, as with the removal of a rival (*A*. 3.8.1). As Keitel

to a continued sensitivity on Tacitus' part to the traditional hierarchies of power and to the proper

behavior of officials in accordance with their rank.[160] Agricola exemplifies the respect that a

subordinate owes to his commander-in-chief and that a governor or senator owes to his *princeps*. Not

only does the *Agricola* enunciate this enduring theme, but it was a topical concern at the time. Pliny lays

special emphasis on Trajan's subordination and service: it was obedience that had made him *princeps*.

He had shown respect as a subject to his emperor, as a legate to his governor, as a son to his father,

and he had accepted the commands of his superiors.[161] The key term is *obsequium*, the trait singled out

in Agricola; Tacitus continues to present his father-in-law as a proto-Trajan, exemplifying the

emperor's qualities and reasserting traditional values that were advertised as hallmarks of the new

regime.[162]

   In addition to establishing a paradigm for the proper behavior of subordinate officials,

Agricola's career reflects the way that Romans establish the kind of reputation that allows them to

move ahead. While at the start of a career the patronage of influential individuals (for Agricola:

Paulinus and Cerialis) is crucial, demonstrated ability was ever more important the more senior a

person became. The proper execution of his offices and the respect he showed to colleagues and

superiors made Agricola a suitable candidate for important assignments. The succinct description of

his return from Britain and his immediate departure for his governorship of Aquitania (9.1) underlines

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suggests (2014, 62 ff.), Piso's insubordination is underlined by his ostentatious arrival in the capital (*A*. 3.9.2-3), which possibly recalls Agricola's quiet return from Britain (*Agr*. 40). On this contrast, see also Woodman-Martin 1996, 126 with further examples.

[159] For examples of proper respect or disrespect shown by Roman officials or of officials acting beyond their station: *H*. 1.52, 1.82, 83-84, 3.53, 4.3, 4.8, 4.15, 4.74, 5.1; *A*. 1.19, 1.28, 1.34, 1.43, 2.22, 2.26, 2.59, 2.69, 3.12, 4.15, 4.18, 4.40, 6.8, 6.45, 13.2, 13.40, 14.37, 15.17, 15.25; cf. Mithridates' conduct at *A*. 12.21. Note esp. Tiberius' words to Sejanus about the latter's station (*A*. 4.40) and his rebuke of Germanicus, who entered Egypt without his permission, an ostensible transgression of his command, an insult to Tiberius' authority, and a violation of Augustan precept (*A*. 2.59). Tacitus' critical assessment of Germanicus here is reflected by the fact that he rejected the more popular and apologetic version recorded by Suetonius (*Tib*. 52.2): Goodyear 1981 *ad loc*. Livia and both Agrippinas, too, are frequently condemned for acting beyond their station.

[160] Note the words Tacitus ascribes to the knight M. Terentius: *nobis obsequii gloria relicta est* (*A*. 6.8.4) with Syme 1958a, 227. This concern extends outside the military and provincial spheres, as is clear from Tacitus' frequent comments about the inappropriate behavior of women like Livia, both Agrippinas, and Plancina, and the excessive influence enjoyed by imperial freedmen. On the last point, again a concern manifested early in the corpus, see *Agr*. 19.2 and *G*. 25.2.

[161] Plin., *Pan*. 9.3-5: *ad principatum obsequio peruenisti... An non obsequeris principi ciuis, legatus imperatori, filius patri? Ubi deine disciplina, ubi mos a maioribus traditus, quodcumque imperator munus iniungeret, aequo animo paratoque subeundi?*

[162] See Syme 1958a, 28, 58, 227 on the continued importance of the concept of *obsequium* in Tacitus.

the favor he enjoyed with the Flavian court. Similar succinctness marks the end of the same chapter, where Agricola, upon returning from Aquitania, at once is assigned to the governorship of Britain (9.6). It is to the account of these governorships that I now turn. Just as the chapters on Agricola's early career reveal what Tacitus considers the appropriate conduct for subordinate officers, so the chapters on Agricola's governorships set out the qualities Tacitus deems essential for those in positions of authority. Once more, the qualities here ascribed to Agricola remain the core criteria in Tacitus' assessment of officials in the historical works. Moreover, the description of Agricola's governorships offers indirect commentary on the Principate, as the governor's conduct in his province is compared and contrasted implicitly with that of the *principes* in Rome.

II.4 Governorship of Aquitania

Agricola's first governorship was in the province of Aquitania. Although one of the three imperial provinces of Gaul, Aquitania did not have legions at the time, making Agricola's responsibilities mainly administrative and judicial. Consequently, one of his principal tasks was to tour Aquitania and visit assize-centers (*conuentus*) to hear cases that were brought before him.[163] Tacitus offers a broad description of Agricola's conduct as governor, recalling previous writings on governorship and selecting for mention traditional (moral) qualities seen as essential to provincial government. The chapter shows particular affinity with Cicero's first letter to his brother Quintus (*Q. fr.* 1.1), a treatise about the latter's governorship of Asia,[164] and with Sallust's paired characterization of Caesar and Cato (*Cat.* 54).[165] I cite the passage in full and underline words, or synonyms, that also appear in Cicero's letter and Sallust's chapter:

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[163] For a survey of a governor's duties (incl. the workings of the *conuentus*), see Burton 1975, 92-106; Talbert 1980, 412-35.
[164] Dated to the end of 60 or the start of 59 BC, "this is no ordinary letter... it is rather a tract, *commentariolum de prouincia administranda*, doubtless intended for a wider circulation": Shackleton Bailey 2004 [1980], 147. Also see D. Braund 1996, 24 ff.
[165] Cic., *Q. fr.* 1.1 lauds *abstinentia*, *aequitas*, *auctoritas*, *clementia*, *comitas*, *constantia*, *continentia*, *facilitas*, *grauitas*, *humanitas*, *integritas*, *mansuetudo*, *moderatio*, *prudentia*, *seueritas*, and *temperantia*. Cicero ascribes some of these qualities to Pompey (*de Imp. Cn. Pomp.* 13.36-42) and himself (*Att.* 5.9.1, 15.2, 17.2, 18.2, 20.6; *Fam.* 15.4.1). Sallust praises *abstinentia* (*Cat.* 3.3), *aequitas* (*Cat.* 2.5), *constantia* (*Cat.* 54.3), *continentia* (*Cat.* 2.5), *facilitas* (*Cat.* 54.3), *integritas* (*Cat.* 54.2), *mansuetudo*, (*Cat.* 54.2), *seueritas* (*Cat.* 54.2-5), and *temperantia* (*Jug.* 45.1).

credunt plerique militaribus ingeniis subtilitatem deesse, quia castrensis iurisdictio secura et obtusior ac plura manu agens calliditatem fori non exerceat. Agricola naturali __prudentia__, quamuis inter togatos, __facile iusteque__ agebat. iam uero __tempora curarum remissionumque diuisa__: ubi conuentus ac iudicia poscerent, __grauis__, __intentus__, __seuerus__ et saepius __misericors__: ubi officio satis factum, nulla ultra potestatis persona; tristitiam et __adrogantiam__ et __auaritiam__ exuerat. nec illi, quod est rarissimum, aut __facilitas auctoritatem__ aut __seueritas__ amorem deminuit. __integritatem atque abstinentiam__ in tanto uiro referre iniuria __uirtutum__ fuerit. ne __famam__ quidem, cui saepe etiam boni indulgent, ostentanda uirtute aut per artem quaesiuit: procul ab __aemulatione__ aduersus collegas, procul a __contentione__ aduersus procuratores, et uincere inglorium et atteri sordidum arbitrabatur. minus triennium in ea legatione detentus ac statim ad spem consulatus reuocatus est, comitante opinione Britanniam ei prouinciam dari, nullis in hoc ipsius sermonibus, sed quia par uidebatur. (*Agr.* 9.2-6)

It is a common belief that the character of soldiers lacks subtlety, since jurisdiction in the camp, which is unscrupulous and rather blunt, and which decides most matters 'by the strong hand,' does not make use of the skills of the Forum. But Agricola, from his natural good sense, as though he were acting among civilians, executed his duties with ease and fairness. Moreover, he kept times of work and relaxation distinct: when assize-centers and courts demanded his time, he was serious, attentive, strict and more often merciful. When business was done, he no longer maintained the image of power; he had already discarded despair, arrogance, and greediness. And in his case (and this is very rare) his affability did not diminish his authority nor did his strictness diminish the affection of others. To speak of the integrity and restraint of such a man would be an insult to his virtues. Fame, to which even good men often given themselves up, he sought neither by showing off his merits nor through intrigue. Far from competing with colleagues, far from quarreling with procurators, he considered it inglorious to have the upper hand, but disgraceful to suffer injury in his dignity. Less than three years he was kept in that post and was then recalled with an immediate prospect of a consulship. A general belief went with him that the province of Britain would be given to him, not because he had made any statements to that effect, but because he seemed equal to the task.

Cicero, in his letter to Quintus, writes that, since his brother's assignment is not military in nature and Asia at peace, "the entire province mainly depends on the administration of justice" (*Q. fr.* 1.1.7). He further writes that, in the absence of troops and expected military danger, the quality of Quintus' governorship depends less on fortune and more on the careful execution of his tasks and on his virtue and self-control (*diligentia... uirtute ac moderatione*, 1.1.1). Agricola's governorship of Aquitania was similar in nature, as his province was at peace when he arrived and likewise depended on the execution of judicial and administrative duties.

Tacitus at once points to two important qualities, *subtilitas* ("discernment") and *calliditas* ("astuteness"), terms common in Cicero's rhetorical discussions and denoting, respectively, the ability to make fine distinctions and a sense of perceptiveness.[166] Using a conventional topos, Tacitus writes

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[166] For further commentary on the terms Tacitus uses at *Agr.* 9, see Woodman and Kraus 2014, 120 ff. *Calliditas*, often ascribed by

that military men often lack such qualities, but that Agricola possessed a natural sense of prudence (*naturali prudentia*) that allowed him to dispense justice with ease and fairness (*facile iusteque*).[167] Such prudence, which Cicero singles out in Quintus as well (1.1.18, 35, 36, 45), was essential, as governors dealt with a wide variety of people, both Roman and native, with divergent interests, demands, and legal statuses.[168] Keeping these different parties content and under control without resorting to corruption, oppression, or injustice was no sinecure and good governors are described as conducting themselves with moderation and balance: Agricola executed his tasks with firmness (*grauitas*) and strictness (*seueritas*), but often was lenient (*misericordia*) when it was warranted. The maintenance of peace and satisfaction is articulated as depending on a governor's ability to be strict but moderate, allowing him to meet different demands without causing conflict and unrest. Allusions to Cicero's Quintus[169] and to Sallust's Caesar and Cato, whose defining traits are, respectively, *misericordia* and *seueritas*, serve to underline these qualities: Agricola unites in himself the outstanding qualities of these men.[170] Later, as governor of Britain, Agricola would adopt a similarly balanced approach, showing leniency (*ueniam*) towards minor offenses but treating serious offenses harshly (*seueritatem,* 19.3).

Toward his subordinates and in his private capacity Agricola conducted himself with like balance: without losing his "authority" (*auctoritas*) and "strictness" (*seueritas*), he showed "affability" (*facilitas*) and retained the "affinity" of his friends (*amor*). As Y. Benferhat shows, *facilitas* is a positive term in republican authors but in Tacitus it most often takes on a pejorative sense.[171] Its positive meaning here once more underlines Agricola's republican virtues – all the more so since *facilitas* was

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Roman authors to Carthaginians and denoting 'deception,' 'trickery,' and so forth, elsewhere has a positive connotation: Cic., *Off.* 1.108; *Har. Resp.* 19, 4.66; Nep., *Han.* 9.2; Sal., *Jug.* 95.3; Liv. 22.22.15.

[167] Camp justice was notoriously brutal: *A.* 1.29.4-30.1, 1.44.2-5.

[168] Cicero calls this part of a governor's duties "exceedingly burdensome and demanding the greatest prudence" (*Q. fr.* 1.1.7). It involved reconciling things that were "opposite in interests, aims, and almost in nature" (1.1.36).

[169] *Q. fr.* 1.1.19-21, 45. Note esp. *quibus ille rebus fortasse nimis lenis uideretur, nisi haec lenitas illam seueritatem tueretur... Haec illius seueritas acerba uideretur, nisi multis condimentis humanitatis mitigaretur* (*Q. fr.* 1.21). Cicero singles out C. Octavius (1.1.21) and Cyrus the Great (1.1.23) for their ability to balance severity and leniency. Elsewhere, Cicero claims that he adjusts his own conduct to his circumstances, showing vigor and strictness (*uis et seueritas*) against Catiline, but leniency and humanity (*misericordia et humanitas*) towards his client Murena (*Mur.* 6). See also Cic., *Off.* 1.88 on balancing *placibilitas*, *clementia*, and *severitas*; Sen., *de Ira* 1.18.3-6 on Cn. Piso's conduct; Plin., *Pan.* 80.1.

[170] Lausberg 1980, 420. Tacitus' Agricola also resembles Sallust's Metellus: *Jug.* 45.

[171] Benferhat 2011, 63-66.

one of Caesar's defining qualities in Sallust (*Cat.* 54.3). Again, moderation is the key quality and Tacitus' words insinuate that many officials lacked it. The claim that Agricola's affability did not diminish his authority and that his strictness did not diminish his friends' affinity implies that many officials *did* fall into either of those extremes. Such extremes were understood to be harmful for both the governor and the people he stood over: excessive severity, as the Boudiccan revolt had shown, could engender local resistance and alienate the governor from other Roman officials, who were well connected in the capital, while excessive leniency ran the risk of engendering misconduct and corruption.[172] For Tacitus, the key to good governorship lies in maintaining a balance and adjusting one's conduct to the disposition of one's subordinates and the native population.

As good Romans were expected to do,[173] Agricola kept his public duties and private life distinct and did not let the one intrude upon the other: he was "serious" (*grauis*), "attentive" (*intentus*), and "strict" (*seuerus*) when conducting official business, but upon completing his duties he discarded his official persona and was affable and affectionate. His conduct once more resembles that of Cato, who was known to be "stern and terrible" in the senate and the courtroom, but "kind and benevolent" in his private capacity (Plut., *Cat. Min.* 21.5), as well as that of Scipio Africanus (Vell. 1.13) and Sulla (Sal., *Jug.* 95.3), who were known for their ability to keep their public and private lives distinct.

Tacitus further identifies several faults which Agricola avoided, but which we are to understand as common in the magistracies of other officials: "gloominess" (*tristitia*), "arrogance" (*adrogantia*), and "greed" (*auaritia*).[174] *Auaritia* and *adrogantia* (or *superbia*) were considered especially indicative of foul character and were stock traits ascribed to incompetent or immoral officials unable to maintain their integrity.[175] In line with his literary predecessors, Tacitus identifies greed and

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[172] Cf. Cic., *Q. fr.* 1.1.20-22, 39; Ulp., *Dig.* 1.18.13
[173] Cic., *Mur.* 74: "the Romans are men who set aside times for pleasure as well as for work." Romans were expected to separate work and pleasure from an early age: Tac., *D.* 28.5.
[174] On the difficulty of this sentence, which at first seems to indicate that Agricola possessed these faults while performing his duties, but only discarded them in private life, see Ogilvie and Richmond 1967 *ad loc.*; Woodman and Kraus 2014 *ad loc.*
[175] Cicero stresses Verres' *auaritia*, while at *Prov.* 11 he charges Aulus Gabinius with *auaritia* and *superbia*. See Frazel 2009 for analysis of

arrogance as stock traits of bad governors. As we have seen, he charges Suetonius Paulinus with acting

adroganter in the aftermath of the Boudiccan revolt (*Agr.* 16.2), while one of the complaints he places in

the mouths of the British rebels Boudicca and Calgacus is the *auaritia* of Roman officials, procurators

in particular (*Agr.* 15.4, 30.4-5). As these speeches are Tacitus' own invention, it is significant that he

includes *auaritia* among the charges which local tribes plausibly could be thought to have leveled

against Roman officials. Agricola's conduct, in contrast, serves to show that Roman power in the

provinces can be just when it is executed by competent and righteous men.

Arguably the most important quality of a good governor is self-control (*moderatio, temperentia,*

abstinentia, continentia), for only if a governor can control himself can he effectively control others (note

Cic., *Q. fr.* 3.1.7). Self-control is the principal quality that Cicero enjoins upon Quintus, that Sallust

praises in Cato, and that Greek authors like Plato and Xenophon ascribe to good kings.[176] It was the

ability to restrain himself that was supposed to allow a governor or king to rule with moderation and

justice and to steer clear of corruption and oppression. At the same time, it was a quality that was most

difficult to acquire (Cic., *Q. fr.* 1.1.7) and, in light of the various opportunities for self-enrichment in

the provinces, most difficult to maintain. Tacitus underlines Agricola's self-control by writing that "to

speak of the integrity and restraint of such a man would be an insult to his virtues" (*integritatem atque*

abstinentiam in tanto uiro referre iniuria uirtutum fuerit), a plain allusion to Cicero and Velleius, who ascribe

similar self-restraint to Quintus and Cato, respectively.[177]

Agricola shows similar restraint when it comes to his reputation, neither showing off his merits

nor procuring fame in crooked ways (*per artem*).[178] Moreover, he avoids competition (*aemulatio*) and

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Cicero's rhetorical strategies in the *Verrines* and the emphasis on Verres' *auaritia* (the word appears 48 times in the speeches). For Sallust, greed and arrogance are cardinal sins of immoral officials, Roman and non-Roman, and defining traits of Roman society as he saw it: *Cat.* 3.3, 5.8, 9.1, 10.3-4, 11.1-5, 12.2, 40.3, 52.7, 52.22; *Jug.* 13.5, 28.5, 29.1, 31.12, 32.4, 42.9, 43.5, 49.2, 80.5, 81.1, 85.45-46, 91.7, 103.5. Livy speaks of *magistratuum Romanorum auaritia superbiamque* (43.2, cf. Tac., *A.* 1.2.2, 4.6.4) and ascribes these flaws to Romans and non-Romans alike. Cf. Velleius on P. Quinctilius Varus' governorship of Syria, marked by excessive greed (2.117.2).
[176] D. Braund 1996, 24 ff.
[177] Cic., *Q. fr.* 1.1.18: *tua primum integritas et continentia*; Vell. 2.45.5: *cuius integritatem laudari nefas est.*
[178] The words are agreed to refer to the 'votes of thanks' which provincial subjects could vote to good governors, but which at times were procured illegitimately by the latter. Both Augustus (Dio 56.25.6, with Swan 2004 *ad loc.*) and Nero (*A.* 15.20-22, with Furneaux

rivalry (*contentio*) with colleagues and the legates of other provinces. A governor's relations with procurators were especially delicate.[179] The emphasis on these particular qualities reflects the way other governors, as Tacitus has it, coped with the pressure to acquire fame and honor during their term abroad.[180] The pressure to establish one's reputation was substantial, as is reflected by the claim, repeated in the later works, that "even good men often give themselves up to fame."[181] We should understand as common responses to such pressures what Agricola here is said to avoid.

The chapter on Agricola's governorship of Aquitania depicts a governor properly managing his judicial and administrative duties, while preserving peace and stability in his province. In describing Agricola's principal qualities, Tacitus not only shows the way the governor established the kind of reputation and social standing in the eyes of his peers and his *princeps* that earned him immediate promotion to the governorship of Britain, but reveals what our author sees as some of the more objectionable ways in which governors commonly operated.

Tacitus advocates a fundamental and consistent set of values that ought to guide a governor, known from the Late Republic onwards. His allusions to the works of his predecessors place Agricola in line with renowned individuals from the past and reaffirm, at a time of socio-political transition, traditional values to which Rome (as Trajanic propaganda had it) would return under the new emperor. In order to condemn Domitian and endorse the values of the new regime, Tacitus places Agricola's conduct in Aquitania in implicit contrast with Domitian's in Rome. Agricola's moderation and self-control stand in marked contrast to the oppressive conduct of the *princeps*, who anxiously

1896 *ad loc*) tried to curb the practice due to its abuse by governors and provincial magnates.
[179] As the emperor's personal agents, procurators were powerful officials who, from the time of Claudius, held judicial authority to decide financial cases in which they were involved (*A.* 12.60). Ulpian, in *de Officio Proconsulis*, writes that a governor, despite possessing supreme judicial authority in his province, should stay away from cases involving procurators, whose acts and deeds carry the same force as if they were carried out by the *princeps* himself (*Dig.* 1.16.9.1, 1.19.1). As a military tribune, as we have seen, Agricola had witnessed the *discordia* between his governor Suetonius Paulinus and the procurators Decianus and Classicianus.
[180] Caesar's *Commentarii* and Cicero's letters about his governorship of Cilicia well illustrate the concern of Roman governors with the reputation they earned in the eyes of their peers in Rome. For the importance of the reputation that a governor acquired abroad for his standing in the capital, see Cic., *Pis.* 96; *Q. fr.* 1.1.41-44.
[181] Tacitus makes similar claims at *H.* 4.6.1 (*etiam sapientibus cupido gloriae nouissima exuitur*), recording contemporary views of Helvidius Priscus and at *A.* 3.66.4 (*quod multos etiam bonos pessum dedit...*), where the overambitious Bruttedius Niger is the example.

suppresses other people's fame (*Agr.* 2, 39-45). It is no coincidence that Domitian's reign is marked by arrogance (*in adrogantiam compositus*, 42.2), profligacy (*licentiam*, 7.2), and cruelty (*saeuitia/saeuitum/saeuus*, 2.1, 3.2, 39.3, 45.2), vices that Agricola explicitly is said to avoid. Many of Agricola's qualities in turn are ascribed to Trajan in the *Panegyricus*, which continues to mirror the *Agricola*.[182]

The qualities that Tacitus here highlights continue to be principal criteria in his assessment of Roman officials in the historical narratives. For instance, the ability to adjust one's behavior to the disposition of one's subordinates remains an essential quality of good Tacitean governors or generals, and the historian often comments on the degree of severity or leniency that officials apply in specific circumstances.[183] A good example is Galba's excessive severity (*nimia seueritas*) towards the praetorians, which Tacitus twice portrays as "old-fashioned morality" backfiring completely (*H.* 1.5, 1.18).[184] Minicius Justus, camp prefect of the Seventh Legion, displays a strictness too severe for civil war (*H.* 3.7.1). Indeed, as Thrasea Paetus claims, "inflexible strictness" (*seueritas obstinata*), while usually a virtue, often is hated (*quaedam immo uirtutes odio sunt*, *A.* 15.21.3); hence the importance of carefully adjusting one's methods. Corbulo's severity has positive effects on his troops (*A.* 11.19; but cf. Ash 2006, 363), as does L. Apronius' *seueritas* (*A.* 3.21), but Aufidienus Rufus' effort to impose *antiquam duramque militiam* fails miserably with the particular men he is assigned to train (*A.* 1.20.2). Likewise, Fabius Valens displays *utilis moderatio* in dealing with mutinous forces (*H.* 2.29.3), but Hordeonius Flaccus is criticized for not being strict enough and for failing to contain his men (*H.* 1.56.1, cf. 1.9.1; 4.19).[185] The ability to gauge the disposition of one's subordinates or troops remains an essential aspect of good Tacitean leadership.

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[182] The terms *modestia* and *moderatio* each are mentioned over twelve times in the *Panegyricus*. Pliny praises Trajan's *uirtus* (3.2, 13.5, 16.5, 31.1, 55.10, 59.5, 70.2, 72.5) as well as his recognition of other people's *uirtutes* (13.1, 44.6-45.1, 70.8, 85.7). Like Agricola, Trajan is lauded for his *abstinentia* (2.6), *facilitas* (2.7), *seueritas* (4.6, 46.6, 80.1), *grauitas* (4.6, 46.5), and *integritas* (92.2, cf. 44.7). Note how Pliny, possibly recalling *Agr.* 9, praises Trajan for balancing different qualities: *ut nihil seueritati eius hilaritate, nihil grauitati simplicitate, nihil maiestati humanitate detrahitur* (4.6); *in omnibus cognitionibus, quam mitis seueritas, quam non dissoluta clementia* (80.1).

[183] Note *H.* 1.5, 1.18, 1.36, 1.51, 1.69, 2.68, 2.69; *A.* 1.29 (cf. 4.3), 1.36, 3.21, 3.54, 6.30, 11.9, 13.2, 13.35, 13.48, 14.29.

[184] Tacitus' critical view of Galba's conduct is evident when we compare his account with the parallel tradition in Plutarch and Dio: Geiser 2007, 160-68. Cf. Otho's words on Galba at *H.* 1.37.

[185] Cf. Otho's efficient speech to his unruly soldiers, marked by *seueritatis modus* (*H.* 1.85.1). Note also the reputation of Cn. Lentulus Gaetulicus (*effusae clementiae, modicus seueritate*, *A.* 6.30.2) and Q. Veranius (*seueritatis fama*, *A.* 14.29.1).

Similarly, the ability to keep one's public and private life distinct, singled out as one of Agricola's virtues, remains an important quality in the historical works, where Tacitus comments on the conduct of distinguished Romans in this respect: the failure of Vitellius, who lets his private excesses infect his performance as commander-in-chief (*H*. 2.68.1-2), and the cases of Mucianus (*H*. 1.10.2), Sallustius Crispus (*A*. 3.30), Otho (13.46.3), and C. Petronius (16.18), who balance a private life of luxury and refinement with diligence in public duty, constitute intriguing examples.

The greed and arrogance that Agricola is said to avoid remain defining traits of Roman officials in the historical works.[186] I see no conclusive evidence that Tacitus undergoes a fundamental shift from the *Agricola* to the *Annales* in his view of the goodness and validity of Roman rule, becoming, as some argue, ever more pessimistic.[187] Throughout the corpus he reveals his conviction that Roman rule can be good when executed by righteous and competent men, but that the latter are the exception rather than the rule. On Tacitus' account (however skewed), Agricola's virtues stand out against a background of maladministration:[188] prosecutions of extortion (*de repetundis*) and other cases of provincial mismanagement occur frequently in Tacitus[189] and continued unabated (except, notably, under Domitian) under Vespasian (Suet., *Ves.* 16.2), Nerva, and Trajan (*Dom.* 8.2).

Finally, the discord and competition that Agricola avoids remain a principal concern in all of Tacitus' works and in the historical narratives constitute a major cause of the disintegration of provincial and military commands and of stability within the capital.[190] The constant manifestation of

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[186] *Auaritiam magistratuum* (*A*. 1.2.2), *auaritia aut crudelitate magistratuum* (4.6.4), *auaritia praefectorum* (12.39.3), *auaritiam praefecti* (12.45.4). The Frisii revolt *nostra magis auaritia quam obsequii impatientes* (4.72.1). Cf. Valerius Messalinus' words at *A*. 3.34.2. Civilis ascribes *auaritia* and *superbia* to Roman officials (*H*. 4.14.1), as does Arminius (*A*. 2.15.3). Cf. Boudicca's words at *A*. 14.35. Tacitus calls *auaritia* and *adrogantia* "the principal vices of the stronger" (*H*. 1.51.4), attributes the combination *superbia* and *auaritia* to Antonius Primus (twice: *H*. 3.49.1, 4.80) and Agrippina the Younger (*A*. 14.1.2), and has Otho ascribe the combination *tristitia* and *auaritia* to Piso and Galba (*H*. 1.51).
[187] So Paratore 2012, 183-84 (= 1962, 183-84); Benario 1968, 47.
[188] Cf. Rutherford 2010, 318-19.
[189] *Agr.* 15, 30-31; *H*. 1.77, 4.45; *A*. 1.74, 2.54, 3.38, 3.66, 3.70, 4.13, 4.15, 4.19, 11.6-7, 12.22, 12.39, 13.30-31, 13.33, 13.59, 14.18, 14.28, 14.31, 14.35, 14.46, 15.20-21, 16.21. Cf. 2.56 (*mitius…*), 3.33-34. On Tacitus' description of *delatores* and prosecutions *de repetundis*, see Rutledge 2001, 54-84, esp. 65-71 and 84. Brunt 1961, 189-227 [= 1990, 53-95] shows that abuse in the provinces was not infrequent after the establishment of the Principate. *A*. 1.2.2 and 15.21.4 should not be pressed to argue that Tacitus thought provincial administration became markedly less corrupt after the advent of the Principate (cf. *D*. 41.2).
[190] In the *Germania*, internecine discord is a defining trait of the Germani; in the *Dialogus*, Maternus distinguishes between the Republic, marked by discord and sedition, and the Principate, characterized by peace and stability. In the historical works, discord

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discord in Tacitean Rome reflects the historian's concern with this aspect of Roman life, as it manifests itself in the capital and in provincial administration. Fittingly, Tacitus sees it as a defining trait of many Romans that they, unlike Agricola, cannot stomach rivals or show deference to others.[191]

Tacitus analyzes Agricola's career on the basis of a set of criteria and qualities that recur in his later works and that inform his depiction of other Roman officials. In some cases Agricola's portrait seems to have directly informed later portraits, most notably those of Germanicus, Paulinus, and Corbulo.[192] While it often is impossible to be certain that Tacitus had Agricola in mind when crafting his later characterizations, the similarities in the depiction of Agricola and others show that Roman officials faced the same challenges and that there is a fundamental set of qualities, articulated in the *Agricola*, that Tacitus considers essential for the proper execution of public office.

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between officials is a principal cause of military and governmental instability. The rivalry between Caecina and Valens (*H.* 1.52, 1.66-67, 2.30, 2.92, 2.99, 2.101), between Trebellius Maximus and Roscius Coelius (*H.* 1.60), between Mucianus and Antonius Primus (*H.* 3.53, 4.80), between Mucianus and Vespasian (*H.* 2.5), between Mucianus and Flavius Sabinus (*H.* 3.75), and between L. Piso and M. Silanus (*H.* 4.48) are exemplary cases in the *Historiae*. In the *Annales*, the discord between Piso and Germanicus in the East (*passim* book 2), between Piso and Sentius (*A.* 2.78 ff.), between Antonius Felix and Ventidius Cumanus in Judaea (*A.* 12.54; *H.* 5.9), between Corbulo and Quadratus (*A.* 13.9) and Corbulo and Paetus (*A.* 15.6) in the East, between C. Silius and Visellius Varro (*A.* 3.43), and Curtius Rufus' *difficilitas* with colleagues (*A.* 11.21; cf. Agricola's *facilitas*) are outstanding examples. Note Tacitus' claims about the rarity of concord amongst powerful men at *A.* 4.4.1 (*arduum sit eodem loci potentiam et concordiam esse*) and 13.2.1 (*rarum in societate potentiae concordes*). Also note the points that Nero makes at the inauguration of his reign (13.4): the *domesticis discordiis*, *odia*, *iniurias*, and *cupidinem ultionis*, which Nero claims not to bring to the job, are, of course, systemic problems from which the Principate suffers.

[191] So Drusus Caesar (*A.* 4.3.2), Suetonius Paulinus (*A.* 14.29.1), Domitius Corbulo (*A.* 15.6.4), Caesennius Paetus (*A.* 15.3 ff.), Antonius Primus (*H.* 3.53.1), Cn. Piso (*A.* 2.43.2), and Agrippina the Elder (*A.* 6.25.2).

[192] <u>Agricola and Paulinus</u>: *auctoritatem* (*Agr.* 9.3) ~ *auctoritas* (*H.* 1.87.2); *ratio ducis* (*Agr.* 18.4) ~ *ducis ratio* (*H.* 2.26.2); *tanta ratione* (*Agr.* 20.3) ~ *cui cauta potius consilia cum ratione* (*H.* 2.25.2); *clarus et magnus* (*Agr.* 18.5) ~ *militia clarus gloriam nomenque* (*H.* 2.37.1); *naturali prudentia* (*Agr.* 9.2), *prudens* (*Agr.* 19.1) ~ *prudentia* (*H.* 2.37.2, 2.39.1); *et adloquente adhuc Agricola militum ardor eminebat* (*Agr.* 35.1) ~ *is ardor uerba ducis sequebatur* (*A.* 14.36.3); *constantia ducis* (*Agr.* 18.4), *constantiam* (*Agr.* 41.3), *constans* (*Agr.* 45.3) ~ *mira constantia* (*A.* 14.33.1); Paulinus at Mona divides his troops into three parts (*A.* 14.34; Dio 62.8.3) ~ Agricola does the same at Mons Graupius (*Agr.* 25.4); Domitian sends a freedman across the Channel to communicate his wish that Agricola take up the governorship of Syria (*Agr.* 40.2) ~ after Paulinus' repression of the Boudiccan revolt, Nero sends his freedman Polyclitus to Britain in response to alarming letters from Paulinus' procurator Classicianus (*A.* 14.39.1-2; cf. Sailor 2008, 80 n. 74). Also note key differences: *mira concordia* (*Agr.* 6.1), *procul ab aemulatione aduersus collegas, procul a contentione aduersus procuratores* (*Agr.* 9.4) ~ *aeque discordiam praepositorum...* (*Agr.* 15.2), *Suetonio discors* (*A.* 14.38.2). <u>Agricola and Germanicus</u>: *tristitiam et adrogantiam et auaritiam exuerat* (*Agr.* 9.3) ~ *inuidiam et adrogantiam effugerat* (*A.* 2.72.2). Like Agricola, Germanicus is modest (*modestia*: *A.* 2.26.4), self-controlled (*temperentia*: 2.73.3), and kind towards friends (*clementia*: 2.73.3). Both mingle with and encourage their men (*Agr.* 20.2; *A.* 1.71.3). Both are recalled from their commands by allegedly jealous emperors (*Agr.* 39 ~ *A.* 2.26). Tiberius' dispatch of Germanicus to the East in order to remove him from his legions in Germania (*A.* 2.5, 2.43) mirrors Domitian's offer of the governorship of Syria to Agricola to induce him to leave Britain (*Agr.* 40.2). Both men's deaths are depicted similarly: *Agr.* 43.1-2 ~ *A.* 2.71 (esp. *interceptum ueneno* ~ *ueneno interceptus*). On the connections between Agricola and Germanicus, cf. Cogitore 2014, 149-62. <u>Agricola and Corbulo</u>: *multus in agmine, laudare modestiam, disiectos coercere* (*Agr.* 20.2) ~ *in agmine, in laboribus frequens adesse, laudem strenuis, solacium inualidis, exemplum omnibus ostendere* (*A.* 13.35.4); *tanta... curaque* (*Agr.* 20.3), *gloria* (*Agr.* 39.2, 41.1, 41.4) ~ *magna cum cura et mox gloria* (*A.* 11.18.2); *... seu patientia ac labore paene aduersus ipsam rerum naturam opus fuit...* (*Agr.* 33.2) ~ *sola ducis patientia mitigabantur, eadem pluraque gregario milite tolerantis* (*A.* 14.24.1).

II.5 Governorship of Britain

In Britain, Agricola faced a new set of responsibilities, for not only was Britain an imperial province with legions, but it was unstable and its conquest ongoing. In addition to the type of judicial and fiscal duties he had carried out in Aquitania, Agricola would be in charge of the four legions and the auxiliary cohorts stationed in the province. As governor and commander-in-chief, he was responsible for the preparation and execution of military operations and pitched battles, the conditioning of the army in times of military inactivity, the consolidation of newly gained territory, and the imposition of Roman power and administration on the province. At the same time, as a subordinate to his *princeps* in Rome, Agricola constantly had to negotiate his position vis-à-vis the latter, mainly in the form of dispatches, through which he received instructions (*mandata*) and reported about his achievements. In the twenty-two chapters that cover Agricola's governorship, Tacitus lays out these challenges, articulating the qualities essential for the management of an imperial province with legions. Like the chapter on Aquitania, the account of Agricola's record in Britain reveals many material connections with the historical narratives, where Tacitus assesses Roman officials on the basis of the same gubernatorial and military qualities. The *Agricola* sets out Tacitus' philosophy of provincial governorship and military leadership.

II.5.1 Britain and Agricola's Predecessors

Tacitus sets the stage for Agricola's governorship by means of a long digression, in which he describes the geography and people of Britain (10-12) and the history of its occupation from the time of Augustus to Frontinus (13-17). These chapters are significant for what they reveal about Tacitus' thematic and intellectual concerns. The sections on Britain, which show close affinity with Sallust's description of Africa in the *Jugurtha* (*Jug.* 17-19), pronounce Tacitus' ethnographic interests, which are on display in the *Germania*, in the sections on the Jews in the extant *Historiae* (*H.* 5.2-10, which mirror

the organization of the chapters on Britain and the history of its occupation), and in those on

Germania, Britain, Armenia, and Parthia in the *Annales*. The chapters on Britain offer a background to

Agricola's governorship and serve to accentuate his success and his conquest of the province.[193] The

remainder of the digression consists of a swift survey of the previous governors of Britain, which

serves in part as a foil to Agricola's achievements.[194] I am not concerned here with the veracity of these

chapters, which has been debated elsewhere. Rather, I am interested in what points Tacitus selects for

mention and what this tells us about his concerns.

It is clear from the outset that Tacitus favors expansion and military initiative. He disapproves

of Augustus' abstention from expansion into Britain and of Tiberius' deference to Augustan precept.[195]

Claudius' conquest is duly noted and Vespasian is lauded for renewing the forward movement in

Britain abandoned by Nero after the Boudiccan revolt. Aulus Plautius, Publius Ostorius Scapula,

Suetonius Paulinus, Petilius Cerialis, and Julius Frontinus all are commended for advancing the

frontier, while the remaining governors are castigated for making only limited advances or keeping

themselves to consolidating territory. Tacitus' scornful comments about those of Agricola's staff who

tried to dissuade him from pursuing war against British tribes confirm his outlook (18.2, 25.3, 27.1).

Already in the *Agricola* do we see Tacitus connecting expansion and military initiative with morality, in

the sense that he considers lack of military initiative a sign of imperial weakness. I explore this notion

further in the third chapter.

The subjection of native tribes is one aim of good foreign policy, while a region's wealth and

mineral resources are essential for bearing the cost of campaigns and annexation (12.6). A practical

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[193] The chapters highlight the warlike character of the Britons and underline that Agricola's conquest confirmed Britain's status as an island and disclosed lands hitherto unknown: cf. Sablayrolles 1981, 55-56. The description of Ocean and its mystical qualities adds emphasis to the achievements of Agricola and his fleet. On Ocean and its imagined mystique in the Roman mind, see D. Braund 1996, 10-23; Fear 2008, 304. The account of the previous campaigns into Britain highlights the fact that Agricola, as the definitive conqueror of Britain, succeeded where eminent predecessors, like Julius Caesar, had failed (13.2). On the implied comparison between Caesar and Agricola, see Fear 2008, 304-16.

[194] The standard interpretation of these chapters is that Tacitus aims to highlight Agricola's excellence by focusing on the faults of his predecessors. See esp. McGing 1982, 15-20. Martin 1998 refutes this idea, showing that the description of some of Agricola's predecessors is quite favorable. I agree with the latter view.

[195] Tiberius' deference to Augustus' precept is another concern that recurs in the *Annales*. Note esp. *A*. 1.77.3, 4.37.3, 4.73.3.

advantage of military action is that it keeps troops disciplined and so forestalls the enervating effects of prolonged inactivity or peace.[196] Military action, however, should be pursued only when the rest of the province is consolidated and prospects of success are good. This explains why most of Britain's governors keep themselves (to Tacitus' chagrin) to consolidation. The Boudiccan revolt stands as a stern warning against rash military decision-making. Tacitus decided to present the revolt here as a failure of intelligence as opposed to a failure of government as in the *Annales*. That is significant in this context because it bears on the issue of what he thinks a governor should know. It is in these chapters, too, that he first hints at some of the drawbacks of using client kings (14.1), a concern that preoccupies him throughout the *Annales*.[197]

II.5.2 Accumulated Experience in One Province

A principal ingredient of military and gubernatorial success is knowledge based on experience, while entering office without prior experience jeopardizes the implementation of projected policy. Tacitus stresses that Agricola, in contrast with his predecessors, had great knowledge of Britain and the indigenous mindset (*animorum prouinciae prudens*, 19.1).[198] This knowledge was the result of an accumulated experience in the province from his previous terms there as military tribune and legionary legate. This exposure allowed him not only to get to know the province very well but to witness firsthand, as we have seen, gubernatorial and military errors on the part of his predecessors (*doctus per aliena experimenta*, 19.1). Agricola accumulated the type of experience that a governor seeing a province for the first time did not and could not ever possess.

In terms of gubernatorial efficiency, it is quite remarkable that extended tenures in one province were a rarity under the Principate. Agricola is unique, as far as we know, in having served as

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[196] Tacitus stresses the enervating effects of "prolonged peace" (*longa pax*) under Roman rule: most Britons are still fierce, while sloth and inactivity (*segnitia cum otio*) has made the once warlike Gauls weak (*Agr.* 11).
[197] See Gowing 1990, 315-330 on Tacitus' treatment of client kings.
[198] As far as we know, Cerialis is the only one of Agricola's predecessors who certainly had seen Britain before being appointed its governor. For the careers of these men, see Birley 1981, 37 ff. It is possible that Aulus Didius Gallus (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 191) and Suetonius Paulinus (Birley 1981, 55) had accompanied Claudius to Britain as his *comes*.

military tribune, legionary legate, and governor in the same province.[199] The reasons for this are plain.

Extended time in one province allowed governors to develop a dangerous hold on the affections of

their troops, while some used their long-accumulated power to corrupt ends (cf. *A.* 2.36).[200] Moreover,

keeping the same men in provinces for extended periods interfered with the proper rotation of office,

inspiring protests from the senatorial class (cf. *A.* 2.36), "for whom provincial governorships were

perquisites to be shared."[201] Despite such drawbacks, long tenures, when held by competent and

righteous officials, come with palpable advantages, allowing men to build up experience on the spot

and become more efficient administrators. The question of how long governors should be kept in

their province was complicated (one could never accurately predict how anyone's tenure would turn

out: *A.* 3.69) and emperors adopted divergent policies. Dio – reflecting idealized Severan/Antonine

ideology – describes Maecenas as advising Augustus to institute tenures of three to five years, allowing

governors to gain experience and implement desired measures, but preventing them from gaining too

much power and becoming corrupt (52.23.2). Tiberius was innovative in keeping governors in the

same province for extensive periods, but he was exceptional and his motivations are much debated.[202]

Tacitus' comments on Tiberius' policy in the *Annales* and his assessment of officials who held long

tenures reveal his concern with the matter and his attitude is characteristically complex.[203] He

commends the administration of Poppaeus Sabinus, who governed Moesia for 24 years (*A.* 6.39.3),

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[199] Birley 1975, 139: "A rapid survey of known careers can produce about fifty senators who held all three posts; but none held them all in the same province and only a handful served even twice with the same army."

[200] See Brunt 1961, 209-11 [= 1990, 75-77], pointing to C. Silius (Upper Germany, AD 14-21), L. Apronius (Lower Germany, AD 28-34), Pomponius Labeo (Moesia, AD 26-34), Pontius Pilatus (Judaea, AD 26-36), and C. Galerius, prefect of Egypt (AD 16-31).

[201] Goodyear 1981, 181. Cf. Syme 1958a, 441-42; Brunt 2004, 172 on restrictions on provincial commands.

[202] For lists of officials with extended tenures under Tiberius, see Brunt 1961, 210-11 = Brunt 1990, 76-77; Griffin 1995, 46 n. 23; cf. Goodyear 1981, 182. Such long tenures are not found again after Tiberius. Marsh (1931, 157) ascribes this policy to Tiberius' care for provincials (cf. Syme 1958a, 441). Others see more sinister reasons, such as the removal from Rome of potential rivals or unwillingness to make continuous changes in appointments. Cf. Griffin 1995, 44 ff.

[203] At *A.* 1.80 he records the popular complaint that Tiberius prevented many from earning promotions, assigned to provinces 'mediocre' men, and at times kept men whom he had appointed to provinces in the capital (e.g. L. Arruntius: *A.* 6.27.3; *H.* 2.65.2; P. Anteius: *A.* 13.22). But elsewhere Tacitus claims that Tiberius' selection of officials was careful and that he always made sure to pick the most suitable man for any office (*A.* 4.6.2-3). It should be noted that Tacitus does not explicitly endorse these public opinions. Tiberius tends to prefer extended tenures for governors, but at the same time knows that such tenures encourage corruption and arrogance (*A.* 2.36). He urges the senate to select a suitable and experienced man to assume command against Tacfarinas in Africa (*A.* 3.32), while he lets accumulated experience dictate the right moment for Drusus Caesar to be granted tribunician power (*A.* 3.56). Under Sejanus' influence, however, Tiberius makes questionable decisions (*A.* 4.2.3).

but stresses that C. Silius and Gn. Lentulus Gaetulicus, governors of Upper Germany from AD 14-21 and 29-39 respectively, developed dangerous holds on the affections of their legions (*A.* 4.18, 6.30). Silius would be destroyed in 24 on charges of extortion and conspiracy with the Gallic rebel Sacrovir (4.19; he certainly was guilty of the former), while Gaetulicus, in the final year of his command, was accused of leading a conspiracy against Caligula and consequently executed.[204] While long tenures, then, could lead to dangerous developments, Tacitus can condemn governors and generals for being unfamiliar with their troops or their province, something that longer tenures would remedy.

While in the *Annales* Tacitus does not unequivocally endorse or oppose the practice of long provincial tenures, in the *Agricola* he presents a case where accumulated experience in one province plainly is beneficial. This is especially clear upon Agricola's arrival in the province, often a treacherous moment, as local tribes looked to the substitution of one governor by another as an opportunity for revolt (*Agr.* 18.1-2; *A.* 12.31.1; cf. *transitus rerum*, *H.* 1.21.2; *mutatus princeps*, *A.* 1.16.1; *mutatione principis*, *A.* 2.64.3). The Ordovices in North Wales had wiped out an allied cavalry unit and stirred up other tribes, who were waiting to see how the new governor would respond: if Agricola proved weak and hesitant, they would revolt *en masse*. Though summer was past and others recommended consolidation, Agricola swiftly defeated the Ordovices and capitalized on this success by at once moving against the island of Mona and taking it. What allowed for the rapidity and decisiveness of these campaigns was Agricola's prior knowledge of the topography of North Wales and the strait between Mona and the mainland (*Agr.* 14.3, 18.4-5).[205]

It is equally crucial that a governor can rely on experienced subordinates to carry out his

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[204] Suet., *Cal.* 24.3; *Cl.* 9.1; *Ves.* 2.3; Dio 59.22.5, 8; 59.23.1-2, 5, 7-8. Gaetulicus was supposed to have organized the plot together with M. Aemilius Lepidus. The nature and extent of the conspiracy are highly uncertain. See Rutledge 2001, 162-63, 372 n. 28.

[205] Richmond 1944, 35. This passage is interesting on stylistic grounds as well. A common technique in the *Historiae* and the *Annales* is the one whereby Tacitus, in addition to relating what *actually* happened, hints at alternative outcomes that *might* have happened if circumstances had been different, often by asking the question "what if?" Pagán (2006, 197) calls this technique "side-shadowing," while O'Gorman (2006) uses the term "virtual history." We may consider the current passage an early example of this technique, with Tacitus hinting at a potential major revolt, had not the experienced Agricola but a governor without prior knowledge of Britain been appointed. Further examples: *Agr.* 4.3 (*ni prudentia matris...*), 16.2 (*quod nisi Paulinus...*), 23 (*ac si uirtus...*), 26.2 (*quod nisi paludes...*), 31.4 (*ac nisi felicitas...*), 37.1 (*ni... Agricola*), 37.4 (*quod ni... Agricola...*).

projected policies. Tacitus stresses that Agricola (again much like Cicero's Quintus) selected only the best men for each position: "he conducted no public business through freedmen and slaves. He was not led by personal feelings, recommendations, or entreaties in his selection of centurions or soldiers, but it always was the best man whom he thought most reliable" (19.2-3). These points not only bear on what a governor should know or do, but they reflect on Roman society, where the proper recognition of merit (*uirtus*) is awry, where patronage and nepotism are the principal means for the appointment and promotion of public officials, and where freedmen had come to hold increasing power and influence in the imperial service.[206] In the contemporary *Germania*, Tacitus raises similar points, showing that among the Germani *uirtus* is the principal criterion for the selection of officials (*G.* 7.1, 13.2-3) and that freedmen have no influence in state affairs (*G.* 25.2). It is a shared aspect of both monographs that, by ascribing particular traits and values to Agricola and the Germani, they offer critical commentary on contemporary Roman society. In the *Dialogus*, Aper and Maternus highlight the power and influence of freedmen in imperial Rome (*D.* 7.1, 13.4).

Tacitus' concern with experience and the appointment of seasoned officials continues into the later works, where he stresses the importance of having tested men occupy major governmental and military posts. I have noted the emphasis Tacitus places on Nero's selection of Corbulo to deal with the Parthian invasion of Armenia in 54 (*A.* 13.8), a selection that "seemed to open up a place for merit" (*uidebaturque locus uirtutibus patefactus*). He again commends Nero for re-appointing Corbulo to handle the continued affairs with the Parthians, for this general was "familiar for years with his troops and the enemy" (*A.* 15.25.2), whereas the incompetence of an inexperienced substitute like Caesennius Paetus (with whom people were now thoroughly disgusted: *Paetus piguerat*) might endanger frontier security and the execution of foreign policy (15.25.2). It was their accumulated experience in their respective areas that made men like Agricola and Corbulo suitable candidates for their posts.

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[206] Millar 1977, 69-83 on freedmen in the imperial service. Cicero urges Quintus not to use slaves in public business (*Q. fr.* 1.1.17), not to trust men whose reliability is suspect (1.1.10-14) and not to listen to "false, deceitful, profit-seeking whispers" (1.1.13).

Elsewhere, Tacitus writes that Tiberius took special care to appoint the best men available, meticulously scrutinizing each candidate's past record.[207] The historian praises Junius Blaesus for selecting men of "tested virtue" (*uirtutis expertae*, *A.* 3.74.3), stresses the extensive experience of Germanicus' legate Caecina (who had taken part in 40 military campaigns as a subordinate or commander, *A.* 1.64.4, 3.33.1), and ascribes Vespasian's success as governor of Judaea in part to his "first-rate subordinates" (*egregriis ministris*, *H.* 5.10.1).

In contrast, the over-promotion of incompetent men remains an unpalatable aspect of the Principate for Tacitus. Note, for instance, his bitter remarks on the appointment of Aulus Vitellius (the future emperor) to the command of Lower Germany (*H.* 1.9.1; cf. *H.* 3.86.1) and his description of Otho's ill-placed reliance on Licinius Proculus, who lacked military experience (*bellorum insolens*) but could surpass in influence seasoned men like Suetonius Paulinus, Marius Celsus, and Annius Gallus (*H.* 1.87.2). A good example of the selection of a wholly unsuitable candidate and its consequences is Claudius' appointment of Julius Paelignus as procurator of Cappadocia (*A.* 12.49), apparently the result of personal favor (*Claudio perquam familiaris*). Tacitus recounts how the incompetent and morally corrupt man plundered the province, how his troops abandoned him and left him defenseless against barbarian incursions, how the legate Helvidius Priscus needed to intervene with a legion, and how all of this nearly caused a Parthian war. The above examples reflect Tacitus' continued concern with the appointment of seasoned officials, serve to further contrast Agricola with Domitian, and point up problems in Rome that are absent from Agricola's administration in Britain.

II.5.3 Agricola the Commander-in-Chief

In narrating Agricola's record as commander-in-chief, Tacitus stresses the following qualities: (a) personal leadership and display of authority (b) eloquence in front of large bodies of men (c)

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[207] "He used to confer offices by taking into account the nobility of a candidate's ancestry, the distinction of his military service, and the brilliance of his civil attainments, so that it be sufficiently clear that no better choice had been available... the Caesar entrusted the imperial property to the most tested men, at times to a personal stranger on the strength of his reputation"(*A.* 4.6.2, but cf. *A.* 1.80 with n. 100).

willingness and ability to endure hard labor and danger (d) experience, foresight, and deliberation (e) ability to exploit and consolidate success (f) ability to keep one's troops disciplined in times of military inactivity. These qualities, as we shall see, are described as essential for maintaining the line of command, for preventing mutiny, for the successful planning and execution of campaigns and pitched battles, and for the consolidation of success and gained territory. The composite of these qualities constitutes, to use K. Wellesley's term, Tacitus' "philosophy of military leadership,"[208] a philosophy that is enunciated in the *Agricola*. I should reiterate here that, although many of the qualities ascribed to Agricola and other generals are commonplace in ancient military narrative, authors distinguish themselves not by the introduction of novel elements but by the emphasis they place on particular aspects and by the techniques they use to do so. I have already noted how conventional qualities that are positive in republican authors can be pejorative in Tacitus and yet retain their positive meaning in particular cases. The similarities between Agricola and other generals ought not be dismissed out of hand as the mere repetition of hackneyed topoi.

II.5.3a Leadership and Display of Authority

Good Tacitean generals lead by example, both on and off the battlefield. As we have seen, Tacitus envisions the conduct of those in positions of power as having a 'trickle-down effect' through the ranks (*H.* 2.68.1-2; p. 54). In the *Agricola*, he lays special emphasis on Agricola's leadership and personal initiative. The general often shows himself on the march (*multus in agmine*, 20.2; *saepe in agmine*, 33.4), praising good discipline and keeping stragglers in order (*laudare modestiam*, *disiectos coercere*, 20.2).[209] He personally selects the location of military camps and personally explores forests and estuaries (*ipse... ipse*, 20.2). He personally initiates battles against the Ordovices and Caledonians against the advice of his overcautious officers and, when he crosses the river Clyde, he does so "in the leading ship" (*naue*

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[208] Wellesley 1969, 89.
[209] Agricola mirrors Sallust's Sulla: *in agmine... multus adesse* (*Jug.* 96.3). Trajan also leads on the march (Dio 68.23.1).

prima, 24.1). In battle, Agricola is conspicuous too, placing himself in front of the ranks (*ipse ante agmen*, 18.2, 35.4) and being present everywhere (*frequens ubique*, 37.4). In the historical works, Tacitus continues to stress the importance for commanders to lead by example, in some cases seemingly recalling his father-in-law. Like Agricola, Vespasian (*H*. 2.82.1), Titus (*H*. 5.1.1), Germanicus (*A*. 1.71.3), and Corbulo (*A*. 13.35.4) mingle with and encourage their subordinates, both at work and on the march. Paulinus' leadership at Mona and against Boudicca is similar to that of Agricola (n. 192), while Tacitus emphasizes the conspicuousness in battle of Arminius (*A*. 2.17.4), Germanicus (2.21.2), Sacrovir (3.41.3, 3.45.2), and Pharasmanes and Orodes (6.35.2). Commenting on Antonius Primus' leadership, Tacitus offers a generalizing maxim: it is the duty of a determined general (*constantis ducis... officium*, 3.17.1)… to be conspicuous and present when difficulties arise (*...insignis hosti, conspicuus suis*, H. 3.17.1 ~ *frequens ubique*, *Agr*. 37.4; cf. Caes., *Gal*. 2.21.1).[210]

In contrast, failure to display authority prevents commanders from controlling their troops and invariably comes with dangerous consequences. About the governorships of Trebellius Maximus and Vettius Bolanus, which he treats at greater length in the *Historiae*, this is the point Tacitus selects for mention: their lethargy engendered mutiny and their lack of *auctoritas* left them unable to restore order.[211] Tacitus' silence here about the quarrelsome conduct of Trebellius' legate Roscius Coelius, who inflamed the army against him (*H*. 1.60), is significant, as it underlines the fact that it lay with the governor, as the supreme authority in the province, to preserve stability and order.

The notion that lack of *auctoritas* engenders mutiny frequently recurs in the historical works. Its prevalence in the *Historiae* hardly requires elaboration; the failure of Hordeonius Flaccus is exemplary. The best examples from the *Annales* are the great mutinies in Pannonia and Germania, which, among

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[210] Note the extraordinary weight Antonius Primus enjoyed with the common soldiers. It was one of his defining abilities to generate this kind of authority (*H*. 3.1-3, 3.10, 3.20 etc.). Cf. Shotter 1977, 24.

[211] The mutiny during Trebellius' term is related in more detail at *H*. 1.60 (Chilver 1979 *ad loc.*; Damon 2003 *ad loc.*). Tacitus' focus in the *Agricola* is on Trebellius' poor leadership and the consequent lack of discipline in the ranks. Similarly, Tacitus omits Bolanus' honorable conduct as legate under Corbulo (Stat., *Sil*. 5.2.34-47) and focuses on his poor leadership in Britain. Tacitus' concern with concord among military forces accords well with the message of Nerva's *CONCORDIA EXERCITUUM* coinage.

other things, reflect Tacitus' continued interest in the reaction of armies to the conduct of their commanders.[212] He ascribes the outbreak of the mutinies in part to the inability of the legates Blaesus (1.16.2) and Caecina (1.32) to assert their authority, and he is concerned to point out the flawed manner in which Blaesus, Caecina, Germanicus, and Drusus attempt to restore order. I do not treat the mutinies at length.[213] What matters here is that the response of armies to competent or flawed leadership is another persistent Tacitean concern that is enunciated in the *Agricola*.

II.5.3b Eloquence in Front of Large Bodies of Men

In addition to displaying leadership and maintaining *auctoritas*, good Tacitean generals are able speakers. The ability to speak well in front of crowds allowed generals to prevent unrest in the ranks (an important theme in the *Historiae*) and to boost morale.[214] The importance of military rhetoric is reflected by the common practice in Greek and Roman historiography of inserting pre-battle speeches into the narrative, either in direct (*oratio recta*) or indirect (*oratio obliqua*) discourse. In the *Agricola*, Tacitus inserts one such speech in *oratio obliqua* (Boudicca: *Agr.* 15) and a set pair of pre-battle speeches (Calgacus: *Agr.* 30-32; Agricola: *Agr.* 33-34) in *oratio recta*, thus giving the biography a distinctly historiographical character. Agricola's exhortation at Mons Graupius serves to illustrate the impact of a good speech on a large body of men. Using persuasive arguments, which reveal knowledge not only of the enemy and the landscape but of the failures of his predecessors, Agricola fires up his men. He points out their common bond, calling them his *commilitones*,[215] recalling the campaigns, battles, and marches they shared and stressing that they now stand before the enemy together. At the same time,

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[212] None of the other authors covering the revolts (Velleius, Suetonius, Dio) is as concerned with the behavior of the commanders and the army's response to them: cf. Shotter 1968, 197.

[213] See Shotter 1968 and Ross 1973 on Germanicus' conduct during the revolt; Woodman 2006 on the mutinies in general. For an examination of the Roman response to mutinies (with case-studies of Caesar at Placentia in 49 BC, of Octavian during his Illyrian campaigns in 34-33 BC, and of Germanicus on the Lower Rhine in AD 14), see Brice 2015, 103-21.

[214] On the description of leaders and crowds in ancient historiography and its connections with Greek and Roman epic: Hardie 2010.

[215] Comparing the use of the term in the *Agricola* and the historical works reveals something about its currency and force in different eras. Augustus abandoned its use after the civil wars (Suet., *Aug.* 25.1) and it was not until 68, as far as we know, that the term makes its way officially into public documents and speeches (Campbell 1984, 32-59). This is reflected neatly by the term's appearance in several of the speeches in the *Agricola* and the *Historiae* and its absence in the speeches in the *Annales*. Tacitus puts the term in the mouths of Piso (*H.* 1.29.2, 1.30.2), Galba (*H.* 1.35.2), and Otho (*H.* 1.37.1, 1.38.1, 1.83.2, 1.84.2).

he maintains a firm distinction between his own role as commander-in-chief and that of the common soldiers (*Agr.* 33.2-3), an important distinction that recurs in the speeches of Otho (*H.* 1.83.3, 84.2) and Antonius Primus (*H.* 3.20.1-2). Tacitus is concerned to show that Agricola's speech had the desired effect: "even while he was still speaking the ardor of the troops was rising and the end of his speech was met with an outburst of enthusiasm" (*et adloquente adhuc Agricola militum ardor eminebat, et finem orationis ingens alacritas consecuta est*, 35.1). Agricola's eloquence is presented as an important ingredient of his military success and identified as an essential quality in the ideal general.

In the *Historiae* and *Annales* (though paired set-pieces in *oratio recta* are fewer in the latter), Tacitus continues to stress the importance of military eloquence. He continues to ascribe speeches to commanders, but not only to those who are successful speakers.[216] He also grants speeches to men whose lack of eloquence harms their authority.[217] Other narrative purposes aside, such speeches underline the necessity for those in positions of power to speak well in front of crowds and illustrate the consequences for those who fail to do so. In a number of contexts, the impact of efficient speeches seems to recall Agricola's exhortation at Mons Graupius. The speeches of Galba (*H.* 1.36), Valens (*H.* 1.52), Germanicus (*A.* 1.49, 2.15), Ostorius Scapula (*A.* 12.35), Corbulo (*A.* 13.39; cf. 15.12), and Paulinus (*A.* 14.36) all are described as raising the *ardor* of their troops, just as Agricola had raised the *ardor* of his.[218] What we have here is a technique, articulated in the *Agricola*, whereby Tacitus signifies a speaker's success by the reaction it produces in his listeners. Whether he actually had Agricola in mind in each of these contexts is impossible to know, but in any case the textual links attest

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[216] Note Tacitus' comments on Antonius Primus (*H.* 2.86, 3.2-3, 3.10, 3.20, 3.24, 3.60), Vespasian (*militariter locutus*, *H.* 2.80.2), Junius Blaesus (*multa dicendi arte*, *A.* 1.19.2), and Corbulo (*A.* 15.26.3). Note also the positive impact of the speeches of Valens (*H.* 1.52.3), Cerialis (*H.* 4.72-74, 5.16), Mucianus (*H.* 2.76-78, 4.46), Germanicus (*A.* 1.49, 2.15), Paulinus (14.36), and Corbulo (*A.* 13.39, 15.12).

[217] Note the speech of C. Dillius Vocula (*H.* 4.58-59) with Rutherford 2010, 322-23, who speaks of "futile rhetoric." Cf. the failed attempt of Sacrovir to encourage the townsmen of Augustodunum (*A.* 3.46). Some men, in accordance with their lack of *auctoritas*, get no speech at all: so Hordeonius Flaccus and Vitellius. Cf. Levene 2009, 212-24 on speeches in the *Historiae*.

[218] Especially Paulinus' speech recalls Agricola's in more ways than one (cf. McGing 1982, 17-18). Note also the *clamor* that the speeches of Primus (*H.* 3.24.3), Mucianus (*H.* 4.46.3), Cerialis (5.16.2), and Silius (*A.* 3.46.3) produce in their men. Arnaldi (1945, 44) and Paratore (2012, 188-90 = 1962, 187-88) note similarities between *Agr.* 30-34 and *H.* 4.68-74, where the speech of a native chief is set against that of a Roman general. Laird (1999, 123 ff.) identifies similarities between *Agr.* 29.4, *H.* 1.15, and *A.* 2.40 in the use of the *locutus fertur* expression.

to a continuity in analysis and thought across the three works. Good generals in Tacitus are able speakers capable of gaining their men's confidence.

II.5.3c Willingness and Ability to Endure Hard Labor and Danger

Another important quality that Tacitus ascribes to Agricola is the willingness to endure "hard labor and danger" (*labor et periculum*, 18.5). The combination of these words has a long history in Roman literature, ultimately stretching back to the Alexander-tradition, and it usually is ascribed to hardy generals or soldiers capable of enduring military toils and dangers.[219] The combination recurs six times in the *Historiae*, but for some reason is dropped entirely in the *Annales*. Tacitus uses the combination to criticize the Vitellian forces for their lack of discipline and to describe the Flavian forces in the opposite manner.[220] Moreover, he often describes recruits and enlisted forces as unable to cope with the burdens of military training and *labores*.[221] In each of these cases, Tacitus evokes for his readers the standard he ascribed to his father-in-law.

II.5.3d Experience, Foresight, and Deliberation

While courage and personal initiative are crucial military qualities, without expertise and good judgment they readily devolve into rashness. As Tacitus continually shows, while speed is crucial in military contexts and unnecessary delay can throw away victory, there is a thin line between speed and rashness. Repeated comments show that Tacitus deems rashness in a general inexcusable, even if events turn out well.[222] A good general, as Tacitus shows in the *Agricola*, deliberates in anticipation of

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[219] Note Velleius on Agrippa: *labore, uigilia, periculo inuictus* (2.79.1) with Woodman 1993 *ad loc.* The combination appears over 35 times in Livy; 5 times in Sallust; 5 times in Caesar; 45-50 times in Cicero; 2 times in Velleius; 5 times in Valerius Maximus; 4 times in Seneca. Borzsák (1982, 40) suggests that the words ultimately derive from the πόνοι καὶ κίνδυνοι ascribed to Alexander. Cf. Xenophon on the willingness of Epaminondas and his troops to face πόνος and κίνδυνος (*Hell.* 7.5.19), as well as the καὶ πόνον καὶ κίνδυνον that Augustus is said by Tiberius to have endured on behalf of the Roman people (Dio 56.41.5).

[220] On the Vitellians: *H.* 1.51, 2.69 with Ash 2007a *ad loc.*; 3.69, 3.84 on the Flavian troops. Note Antonius Primus' complaint at *H.* 3.53.3 and that of Civilis at *H.* 4.32.2. Cf. *discrimina et labor* (*H.* 2.4.4); *labori et audaciae* (*H.* 3.59.3).

[221] Ash 2007a, 120. Examples: *H.* 1.23.2, 1.51.2, 2.16.2, 2.19.1, 2.62.1; *A.* 1.16, 13.35.1-3. Titus and Corbulo, in contrast, are portrayed as readily sharing the toils of their men (*H.* 5.1.1; *A.* 13.35). Cf. the Sixth and Third Legions that Corbulo took with him from Syria, *integrum militem et crebris ac prosperis laboribus exercitum* (*A.* 15.26.1).

[222] Wellesley 1969, 90. See n. 230.

his enemy's moves, allowing for swift execution of strategy without encountering unexpected dangers. In addition to deliberation, the key qualities are experience and foresight. It was Agricola's experience of North Wales that allowed for his swift and decisive attacks against the Ordovices and Mona. In his sixth season, foreseeing a movement from remote tribes and aiming to forestall danger (*timebantur*, 25.1), Agricola reconnoiters the harbors with his fleet (*explorauit*, 25.1). He employs scouts to learn about his enemy's line (*exploratoribus edoctus*, 26.1), adjusts his own line in anticipation of his enemy's movements (*cognoscit*, 25.3; *ueritus*, 35.4), and takes into account his enemy's strengths and weaknesses as well as the surrounding landscape.[223] His topographical expertise allows him to avoid being hemmed in by Caledonian tribes (*cognoscit... ne... circumiretur*, 25.3-4), to foresee the emergence from the hills of additional British troops and keep them from attacking his rear (*id ipsum ueritus*, 37.1), and to prevent heavy losses when pursuing the enemy into forests, aware that these are more familiar to the latter than to his own forces (37.4).[224] His topographical expertise is reflected further by his careful placement of new fortifications (*ratione curaque*, 20.3; *opportunitates locorum sapientius legisse*, 22.2), which consolidated won territory and allowed him to proceed further north without facing revolt in his rear.[225]

Tacitus accentuates Agricola's prudence by recording the rashness and demise of the young auxiliary prefect Aulus Atticus (*iuuenili ardore et ferocia*, 37.6), the only one of Agricola's subordinates to be mentioned by name in the work. This dramatic technique recurs in the *Historiae*, where the recklessness of Arrius Varus serves to underline Antonius Primus' qualities (*H.* 3.16-17) and in the *Annales*, where the rashness and death of one of Corbulo's cavalrymen underscores the discipline of the rest (13.40.3). Throughout the *Agricola* Tacitus underlines Agricola's experience and prudence by

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[223] At Mons Graupius he employs light-armed auxiliary forces instead of the legions in part because they move better in the mountainous terrain and match up well with the Britons (36.1; cf. 35): Gilliver 1996, 54-67. Similar considerations may explain the deployment of auxiliary troops by Germanicus at Idistaviso in AD 16 (*A.* 2.16), by L. Apronius against the Frisii in AD 23 (*A.* 4.73), and by Cerialis against Civilis in AD 70 (*H.* 5.17).

[224] Caesar, too, is aware of the danger posed by forests in Britain, as he stresses throughout the fifth book of the *Bellum Gallicum*. Caesar (*Gal.* 3.29) and Agricola (31.1) clear forests in Britain, as does Germanicus in Germania (*A.* 1.50).

[225] Whatever the veracity of Tacitus' claims (variously confirmed or negated by continued archaeological findings: cf. Hanson 1980; 1987, 177 ff.), they show that he considered the careful placement of fortifications essential for consolidating territory.

describing him with such adjectives as *gnarus/non ignarus*, *(e)doctus*, *peritus*, *prudens*, *expertus*, with nouns like *peritia*, *ratio*, *ars*, *cura*, adverbs like *sapientius*, and verbs like *cognoscere*, *timere*, *uereri*, *explorare*.[226] Tacitus continues to use these terms to the same effect throughout his historical narratives.

As in the *Agricola*, in the historical narratives foresight, experience, and deliberation remain the hallmarks of good generalship. Like Agricola, the outstanding Tacitean generals display foresight,[227] know when to hurry or delay a campaign, know how to use the landscape in which they operate,[228] and consolidate their gains.[229] Bad generals in Tacitus generally fail at one or more of these aspects, displaying either rashness or unnecessary caution,[230] lack of foresight,[231] or failure to adjust to the surrounding landscape.[232] They also fail to capitalize on success or to exploit opportunities.[233]

II.5.3e Ability to Exploit and Consolidate Success

Tacitus is particularly sensitive about this last aspect, as he reveals in the *Agricola*. There he writes that Agricola, upon defeating the Ordovices, used the momentum to move against Mona, "aware that renown must be followed up and that, in accordance with the result of the first attack, would be the terror inspired by other operations" (*non ignarus instandum famae ac, prout prima cessissent, terrorem ceteris fore*, 18.3). After his victory at Mons Graupius, Agricola pursued a similar policy, inspiring

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[226] See Pagán 2014, 77-81 on the positive value of fear (in the sense of anticipation) in the character of Agricola.

[227] Note the foresight of A. Caecina (*H*. 2.17), Vespasian (*H*. 2.74), the Flavians (*H*. 3.5), Antonius Primus and Arrius Varus (*H*. 3.6), Antonius Primus (*H*. 3.15, 60), Titus (*H*. 5.1), Germanicus (*A*. 1.56, 2.10, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14), Poppaeus Sabinus (*A*. 4.47 ff.), C. Cassius (*A*. 12.12), and Corbulo (*A*. 13.38, 13.39, 13.40; 15.3-5, 15.12).

[228] Note the geographical expertise of Aulus Caecina Alienus (*H*. 3.9), Civilis (*H*. 4.22, 5.14 ff.), Germanicus (*A*. 1.56, 1.60, 1.61, 1.63, 2.5, 2.14, 2.20-24), Aulus Caecina Severus (*A*. 1.64, 1.67), Poppaeus Sabinus (*A*. 4.47), Ostorius Scapula (*A*. 12.35), and Corbulo (*A*. 13.39). Consider also the description of the competing views of the Flavians on the capture of Verona (*H*. 3.8).

[229] For some examples of proper fortification or consolidation, note Germanicus (*A*. 2.7), Blaesus (3.74), Dolabella (4.24), Sabinus (4.49), Corbulo (11.18-19), and Ostorius Scapula (12.32). Cf. *A*. 14.31.4 on Suetonius Paulinus' governorship: "nor did there seem any great difficulty in the demolition of a colony unprotected by fortifications – a point too little regarded by our commanders, whose thoughts had run more on the agreeable than on the useful." Cf. Tacitus' comments on the military acumen of the Chatti at *G*. 30.2-3. The Column of Trajan emphasizes that emperor's careful consolidation during his crossing of the Danube into Dacia: Bennett 1997, 93.

[230] On rashness, note Tacitus' comments on the conduct of Cerialis: *H*. 3.79, 4.71, 4.77-78, 5.14, 5.20-22; *A*. 14.33. On unnecessary delay, note Tacitus' remarks on Suetonius Paulinus (*H*. 2.25-26) and Fabius Valens (3.40).

[231] Note Vocula at *H*. 4.33-34 and Paetus at *A*. 15.8-9. Comments on lack of foresight and caution on the part of generals or armies (*incaute*, *temere*, *improuide* etc.) are ubiquitous in the historical works.

[232] Note the positioning of the Vitellians at *H*. 2.14; Cerialis at *H*. 5.15. Vitellius (*H*. 3.56) and Caesennius Paetus (*A*. 15.6 ff.) exemplify the faults typical of bad Tacitean generals.

[233] Note the comments on Civilis and Vocula at *H*. 4.34, on Cerialis' delay at *H*. 4.75 (but note *secutusque fortunam* (4.78) and *salubri temperamento* (4.86)), and the failure of the Roman fleet to be present at crucial junctures (*H*. 5.18, 5.21). Comments on the failure to build on success or exploit opportunities are ubiquitous in the historical works.

terror by sending his fleet around Britain and by slowly leading his infantry and cavalry through the newly conquered territory (38.3-4). Intimidation was a common method in Roman foreign policy, aimed at cowing subjects and enemies into obedience and thus preventing unnecessary warfare and expense.[234] One case in which Tacitus seems to evoke Agricola's exploitation of success and imposition of terror is in his account of the start of Ostorius Scapula's governorship of Britain (*A.* 12.31 ~ *Agr.* 18). Like Agricola, Ostorius faces provincial unrest upon his arrival. In both cases, the Britons use the arrival of a new governor to rise up. In both cases, the campaigning season is already over. Unlike Agricola, Ostorius faces the additional challenge that he does not know his army. Nonetheless, like Agricola, he takes the field, "aware that the first results are those which engender fear or confidence" (*ille gnarus primis euentibus metum aut fiduciam gigni*, 12.31.2 ~ *Agr.* 18.3) and, having cut down the insurgents, he immediately launches another campaign "to prevent a second rally and an unstable peace thereafter" (12.31.2). Elsewhere, Tacitus writes that A. Caecina decided to assault the town of Placentia with great force, "aware that the initial successes of the war would determine his reputation thereafter" (*gnarus ut initia belli prouenissent famam in cetera fore*, *H.* 2.20.2),[235] and that Corbulo capitalized on the destruction of Artaxata to seize Tigranocerta (*utendum recenti terrore ratus*, *A.* 14.23.1). The terror imposed by first impressions and the notion that success, where possible, should be followed up is another point that is articulated in the *Agricola* and taken up in the later works (cf. Cerialis at *H.* 4.78.2: *secutusque fortunam*). Tacitus' emphasis on Agricola's ability to capitalize on success places into perspective his frequent comments about those who allow their enemies to recover. This is another important concern for Tacitus, who accuses (not always justly) several eminent generals of knowingly prolonging wars or even preferring war to peace.[236] This notion, too, surfaces in the *Agricola*, where Tacitus has Agricola urge his troops to "prove to the state that this army could

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[234] Cf. Mattern 1999, 115-22, 221-22. The word *terror* in the *Agricola* is almost exclusively ascribed to the Britons: Pagán 2014, 75.
[235] Cf. Tacitus' description of Corbulo: *qui ut inseruiret famae, quae in nouis coeptis ualidissima est* (*A.* 13.8.3).
[236] He accuses Furius Camillus, L. Apronius, and Junius Blaesus of having prolonged the war against Tacfarinas (*A.* 4.23) and charges Mucianus (*H.* 3.52), Vocula (*H.* 4.34), and Corbulo (*A.* 15.3, 15.6, 15.10) with protracting war and preferring war to peace. See Chilver-Townend (1985, 48) on the unjust charge against Vocula.

never have been accused of protracting a war" (*adprobate rei publicae numquam exercitui imputari potuisse aut moras belli aut causas rebellandi*, *Agr.* 34.4). Tacitus' comments here and in the later works suggest that it was common for military setbacks to be followed by such accusations.

II.5.3f Ability to Keep One's Troops Disciplined in Times of Military Inactivity

An important duty of a governor was to ensure that, in times of peace or military inactivity, he keeps his troops trained and disciplined. Agricola, says Tacitus, used the beginning of the summers to train his men, being present himself and constantly encouraging them (20.2). He combined the interests of military exercise and preservation of peace by making sudden incursions against local tribes, which kept the latter honest and offered his troops welcome action.[237] He further engaged his troops in the erection of fortifications and in helping native tribes in the construction of temples, fora and houses (21.1), as good governors were supposed to do (Ulp., *Dig.* 1.18.7). Agricola, in sum, offered his troops regular military action and, in times of military inactivity, kept them exercised through training and civil and military projects. In contrast, failure to keep soldiers active regularly leads to mutiny and discord: lack of military action under Trebellius Maximus and Vettius Bolanus engenders *discordia* and *petulantia* among the soldiers (*Agr.* 16.3-5).

In the historical narratives, the proper conditioning of military forces remains a principal concern. The notion that military discipline lapses during civil war and through lack of training is prevalent in the *Historiae* and Tacitus' comments on Vitellius are exemplary. The historian, by showing what Vitellius does not do, demonstrates what a commander-in-chief should do. The emperor "did not try to inspire his troops by addressing them or having them drilled" (*H.* 3.36.1). His forces increasingly take after his example: in Rome they "did no guard-duty... were not kept in condition by service... and their physical strength was weakened through inactivity and their courage through

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[237] The Germani, too, forestall the consequences of inactivity and peace by actively seeking war (*G.* 14.2). Also note Tacitus' remarks on the enervating effects of peace on the Gauls (*Agr.* 11.4) and the Cherusci (*G.* 36.1).

debaucheries" (*H.* 2.93.1; cf. 2.69.2). Similarly, Cn. Piso, governor of Syria under Tiberius, by allowing idleness in the camp and licentiousness in the cities, and by letting the soldiers roam through the countryside to indulge their pleasures, loosened discipline so much that he perversely was called *parens legionum* (*A.* 2.55.5, 2.80.2, 3.13.2). In addition to showing what incompetent commanders do not do, Tacitus reinforces the right way of doing things. During the Batavian Revolt, Herennius Gallus and C. Dillius Vocula, upon deciding not to engage the enemy, set up a camp and exercised their men by having them form in the order of battle and construct fortifications and entrenchments (*H.* 4.26). In the *Annales*, Tacitus highlights the rigorous discipline and training imposed by Corbulo (11.18-20, 13.35-36) and C. Cassius (12.12.1), as well as the riverine projects initiated by L. Vetus and Pompeius Paulinus to keep their troops active during times of inactivity (13.53.1-2; contrast the "indiscriminate grants of furloughs" that weakened Caesennius Paetus' army: *A.* 15.10.1). The necessity of military training for the preservation of discipline is underlined by the outbreak of the great mutiny in Pannonia (AD 14), the source of which Tacitus locates in part in Blaesus' decision to suspend the normal round of duty (*intermiserat solita munia*, 1.16.2).[238]

II.5.4 Roman vs. Other

The discipline and order of well-led Roman armies often is articulated in contrast with the rashness and disorganization of barbarian forces. Greek and Roman authors typically ascribe Rome's imperial success to the *disciplina* or ἄσκησις of its armies, denoting tactical and organizational sophistication as well as moral discipline, in contrast with barbarian disorder and softness.[239] This Roman vs. Barbarian polarity is prominent throughout the Tacitean corpus and already fully at work in

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[238] The effect of prolonged idleness on the morale of individuals and nations is a concern not limited to military contexts. Tacitus envisions idleness as having similarly detrimental effects on the morale of senators under bad emperors (*Agr.* 2-3) and on native tribes under Roman rule (*Agr.* 11.4, 21; cf. *G.* 36.1). While it is good policy to accustom, say, Gauls or Britons to inaction (21.1), its presence among senators is castigated and should be avoided at all cost in the military sphere.

[239] See Mattern 2004, 189. Selected examples are in Strabo 4.4.2, 7.3.17; Sen., *de Ira* 1.11.1-4, 3.2.6; Luc. 8.368-90; Tac., *G.* 4.3, *A.* 11.10; App., *Gall.* 3; Dio 38.45.4-5, 40.15.6; Aelius Aristides 86-88; Vegetius 1.1. Compare the imagery on Trajan's Column, on which "Roman calm is constantly opposed to Dacian panic" (Davies 1997, 63).

the *Agricola*: Boudicca and the Iceni display "barbarian cruelty" (*in barbaris saeuitiae genus*, 16.1);

Calgacus' forces receive his exhortation with discordant and frenzied cries, "as is common among

barbarians" (*ut barbaris moris*, 33.1); the organized battle line, strategy, and discipline of Agricola's forces

is contrasted with the disorganized and confused movements of British chariots and cavalry (35.3-4,

36.3); Roman arms trump the unwieldy British weapons (33.5, 36.1-2); the Romans display valor, while

the Caledonians are called *fugacissimi*, *ignaui*, *timentes* (34.1-2); the Caledonians are urged on in battle by

their wives and parents, who stand by as spectators (15.4, 32.2: *uictoriae incitamenta*), a distinctly un-

Roman custom. In some cases, local tribes have the advantage, knowing their own territory better

(25.4, 32.2, 33.5, 37.4) and possessing particular skills. Germanic tribes, for example, are known for

their swimming skills and their experience in operating in shallow waters (18.4).

This constructed opposition between Romans and non-Romans continues in Tacitus' other

works in much the same way. In the *Germania*, the Germani are unable to endure hard work (*G.* 4.1)

and spend much of their time sleeping, feasting, and drinking (*G.* 15.1, 22.1, 23.1). In the *Historiae*, the

Roxolani, invading during the civil wars of 69, were "scattered and negligent" and weighed down by

"desire for booty," while on the Roman side "everything was ready for battle" (*H.* 1.79.2). In the

Annales, a painstaking Germanicus defeats the intoxicated Marsi, who had feasted all night and

neglected to place watchmen around their camp (*A.* 1.50-51; cf. *Agr.* 26.1).[240] Barbarian tribes continue

to be described as waging war with their relatives present as *uictoriae incitamenta* (Germani: *G.* 7.2, 8.1,

H. 4.18.2 (*hortamenta uictoriae*), 5.17.2; Thracians: *A.* 4.46.3, 4.51.2; Britons: *A.* 12.34, 14.34.2), while

Roman generals exhort their men to fight for what is dear to them at home (*quae domi cara*, *A.* 1.67.2).

Roman custom in this respect is underlined by a senatorial debate about the harmful influence of the

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[240] Other examples: during the Batavian Revolt Civilis' forces recklessly enter battle after feasting all night only to be cut down by organized and disciplined Roman forces (*H.* 4.29.1). Cerialis gains an unexpected victory over combined Gallic and Germanic forces because the latter engage in a "perverse struggle amongst themselves to secure booty and forget the enemy" (*H.* 4.78.2). Likewise, in the *Annales*, the Numidian Tacfarinas is defeated in a night battle, since "on the Roman side the infantry was in compact order, the cavalry was disposed in companies, and everything was prepared for battle, whereas the enemy, completely surprised, without arms, order or a plan, was seized, killed, or captured like cattle" (*A.* 4.25.2).

presence of women in the provinces (*A.* 3.33) and by Tiberius' anger about Agrippina the Elder's influence with Germanicus' legions (*A.* 1.69). Moreover, the "extraordinary harmony" (*mira concordia*, 6.1; cf. *concordem sibi coniugem*, *A.* 3.33.1) between Agricola and his wife, who accompanied him to Asia and Britain (*Agr.* 6.2; 29.1), by its exceptionality underlines common Roman practice.[241] The notion, finally, that local tribes know their own territory well and that this posed dangers to Roman armies recurs in the historical narratives, too, particularly with Germanic forces, whose swimming skills and expertise in fighting in marshy conditions continue to be their defining trait. The Batavian chief Civilis, for instance, by diverting the Rhine and flooding the plains, creates favorable ground for his forces against Cerialis, whose men cannot move well in these conditions (*H.* 5.14 ff.). The account of the campaigns of Germanicus and A. Caecina against Arminius (*A.* 1.63 ff.) illustrates the same issue, showing the challenges of dealing with the treacherous woods, marshes, and swamps that were natural advantages for the Germani.

While the constructed opposition between Romans and non-Romans largely continues unchanged from the *Agricola* to the *Annales*, Tacitus does not everywhere uphold a firm polarity. At times, he ascribes conventional barbarian traits to Romans, such as Domitian, Vitellius and his forces, and Cerialis.[242] In the *Historiae*, moreover, the distinction between Roman and non-Roman becomes faint, one of the effects of the civil wars being a near breakdown of Roman identity.[243] Contrasts also are not always in Rome's favor. Tacitus can contrast Rome's corruption and depravity with the simplicity of life in the provinces, while the *Germania* in many ways sets Germanic custom in positive contrast with Roman practice. Furthermore, despite their 'barbarian' traits and faults, Tacitus plainly respects the abilities of men like Arminius, Caratacus, and Civilis.

In his later works, Tacitus continually revisits the *Agricola*'s central themes and concerns, in

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[241] The section on Agricola's wife, which enunciates Tacitus' interest in governors' wives, should be read in conjunction with the debate in the *Annales*. On the role of wives and women in the provinces, see Marshall 1975, 109-27. On this senatorial debate, which is modeled on the debate in Livy concerning the Oppian law (195 BC), see Ginsburg 1993, 86-103.

[242] In the *Agricola*, Domitian and the Britons share *ira*, *adrogantia*, and *saeuitia*. On the Vitellians: *H.* 2.21, 2.73. On Cerialis: *H.* 5.22.

[243] Ash 1999; 2009, 85-99; Master 2008.

terms of broader issues, such as the nature of the Principate and imperial rule, and more circumscribed subjects, such as the length of provincial tenures, Roman perceptions of non-Romans, and the qualities of the ideal governor and general. In the final sections of this chapter, I move to what the *Agricola* reveals about the nature of Rome's empire and its maintenance, focusing on perceived dangers associated with auxiliary forces and on how Romans justified the Empire's existence.

II.6 Imperial Expansion and the Role of Auxiliary Forces

Good generalship should lead to few losses and, like Sallust, Tacitus explicitly praises generals who gain victory without shedding much Roman blood.[244] That the preservation of Roman life in battle was important to Tacitus is clear from his description of Agricola's battle formation at Mons Graupius, which had the auxiliary infantry in the front and the legionary forces held in reserve. Tacitus says Agricola did this in part because "the glory of victory would be greater if won without the loss of Roman blood" (35.2). Tacitus, the only ancient author to ascribe this purpose to the use of auxiliaries, takes up this notion in the *Annales*, where he writes that Corbulo, when attacked by the Mardi, sent Iberian forces against them and so gained victory at the cost only of foreign blood (*externo sanguine*, *A.* 14.23.3).[245] Tacitus further points out the utility of auxiliaries in certain contexts, such as the use of lighter-armed Batavian and Tungrian troops at Mons Graupius, better suited to the mountainous terrain than the more heavily armed legionaries. The use of auxiliaries in great numbers was not Agricola's innovation, as Richmond argued, but seems to have been common practice by this time.[246]

Despite their utility in offering tactical variability and preserving Roman lives, Tacitus points up the danger inherent in the growing reliance on these troops or in entering battle with a majority of

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[244] Servius on Verg., *Aen.* 11.421: *et hoc est unde laudat Sallustius duces, qui uictoriam incruento exercitu reportauerunt*. Examples in Tacitus: *Agr.* 35.2; *H.* 2.15, 2.44, 3.8, 3.13, 3.60; *A.* 2.18, 2.46, 3.39, 12.17, 12.46, 13.39, 14.23. According to the 5th century historian Orosius (*Hist.* 7.10.4), Tacitus in the *Historiae* preferred not to give figures for Roman casualties, invoking the example of Sallust and others. But cf. *Agr.* 37.6, *H.* 2.17.2, *A.* 4.73.4, 14.37.2. On the fragments of the *Historiae*, see Barnes 1977, 224-31; Cornell 2013, Vol. 1, 101.
[245] Gilliver 1996, 54-55.
[246] Richmond 1944, 42; Gilliver 1996, 54-56. The same strategy was used by Germanicus at Idistaviso in 16 (*A.* 2.16), by L. Apronius against the Frisii in 23 (*A.* 4.73), and by Cerialis against Civilis in 70 (*H.* 5.17). Ostorius Scapula used only auxiliaries against the Iceni in 51, but it is unclear whether he had legionaries available and opted to keep them in reserve (*A.* 12.31). Many scenes on Trajan's Column depict auxiliaries doing the fighting, with legionary forces held in reserve (Richmond 1944, 43). See also Hanson 1987, 175.

them. The arguments placed in the mouth of the Caledonian chief Calgacus illustrate the point:

> *An eandem Romanis in bello uirtutem quam in pace lasciuiam adesse creditis? nostris illi dissensionibus ac discordiis clari uitia hostium in gloriam exercitus sui uertunt; quem contractum ex diuersissimis gentibus ut secundae res tenent, ita aduersae dissoluent: nisi si Gallos et Germanos et (pudet dictu) Britannorum plerosque, licet dominationi alienae sanguinem commodent, diutius tamen hostis quam seruos, fide et adfectu teneri putatis. metus ac terror sunt infirma uincla caritatis; quae ubi remouerisi, qui timere desierint, odisse incipient…*
> *In ipsa hostium acie inueniemus nostras manus: adgnoscent Britanni suam causam, recordabuntur Galli priorem libertatem, tam deserent illos ceteri Germani quam nuper Usipi reliquerunt. (Agr. 32.1-4)*

Do you think the Romans are as courageous in war as they are licentious in peace? They owe their fame to our strife and dissension and they turn the errors of the enemy to the glory of their own army, an army that, made up as it is of the most diverse nations, is held together as much by success as it will fall apart by disaster. Unless you think that these Gauls and Germani, and (it is a shame to say) these many Britons, who, though they lend their lives to support a foreigner's domination have been its enemies longer than its slaves, are bound by faithfulness and affection. Fear and terror are their weak bonds of attachment; when you'll have removed these, those who have ceased to fear will begin to hate...
In the very ranks of the enemy we will find our own forces. Britons will acknowledge our cause as their own; Gauls will remember their past freedom; just as the Usipi recently abandoned them, so will the other Germani...

Calgacus' words demonstrate the danger in the make-up of Roman armies and the reliance on *auxilia*. While auxiliary regiments regularly were stationed in provinces other than those in which they originally were levied (*A.* 4.5), there were contexts in which they were pitted against forces of their own nationality (the Batavian Revolt is a good example). Much like in civil war, Calgacus argues, their recognition of their kinsmen will urge the Britons to defect.[247] Not only that, the Gallic and Germanic forces will abandon Agricola, just as the Usipi had recently done, when they recall their past freedom and current state of servitude under the Romans, who impose on them military levies, physical labor, and exactions of tribute and grain.[248] That all this is not merely a debating point is shown by the 28th chapter, in which Tacitus relates the actual mutiny of a cohort of Usipi, who killed a centurion and a number of soldiers who had been training them (28.1). While the story of the mutiny perhaps is better known for the extraordinary naval journey undertaken by the rebels (28.2-3), a primary purpose of its

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[247] In Herodotus' account of the battle of Mycale, the general Hegesistratos argues that the Ionians serving in the Persian army will defect upon seeing their kinsmen (9.90.2) and recalling their past freedom (9.98.3). At 9.103.2 they indeed do. As regards the drawbacks of composite armies, Pagán (2014, 83-84) also finds connections with Pericles' funeral oration (Thuc. 2.39.1-2).
[248] Again we note Tacitus' debt to his predecessors, who ascribe similar denunciations of Rome's empire to native chiefs. Calgacus' speech, as is well known, evokes the speeches of Sallust's Mithridates (*Hist.* 4.69) and Caesar's Critognatus (*Gal.* 7.77).

inclusion is to "show the capacity of auxiliaries to desert Rome."[249] Without any explicit statement,

Tacitus hints at Agricola's potential abandonment by his auxiliaries. That this did not happen might be

to Agricola's credit or his good fortune, but does nothing to invalidate its potentiality.[250] Tacitus

balances the utility of auxiliary regiments against the frailty of their loyalty and the danger for Roman

armies when that loyalty is compromised. This view may well reflect a contemporary debate about the

use of these forces.[251]

No less important is the fact that Tacitus conceptually separates Agricola's auxiliaries from his

legionaries. By the time of writing, auxiliary units were embedded within the imperial system, and the

distinction in identity between Roman and non-Roman forces had become increasingly blurred.[252] As

early as the AD 60s, "auxiliaries emerge as significant agents of change within provincial society. They

are no longer (if indeed they ever really were) helping forces ancillary to the legions; rather, they are a

significant source of power in their own right."[253] Contemporary authors, such as Josephus, describe

auxiliary cohorts under the broader label of "Romans," underlining the fact that such forces had

become ever more Roman. Along the same lines, Tacitus' frequent allusions to Jugurtha in his portrait

of Agricola, and his depiction of Calgacus as the 'ideal barbarian,' point up how 'Roman' such figures

had become.[254] For Tacitus, the increasing 'barbarization' of Roman armies was an alarming trend and

his concern to emphasize that there existed a difference in status between auxiliaries and legionaries is

telling.[255] This concern persists throughout the corpus. In the *Historiae*, as we have seen, the distinction

between Romans and non-Romans is very faint, the civil wars causing a near collapse of Roman

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[249] Ash 2010, 278.
[250] Ostorius Scapula dangerously entered battle with only his auxiliary forces (*sine robore legionum socialis copias ducebat*, *A*. 12.31.4). According to Dio (68.11.3), several auxiliaries, having deserted Trajan for Decebalus, were caught in an attempt to gain access to and assassinate the emperor during the second Dacian War.
[251] Timpe 2007, 438; I. Haynes 2013, 60-63.
[252] I. Haynes 2013, esp. pp. 51-73. Note also Tac., *H*. 2.80.3 (with Ash 2007 *ad loc.*) on the ties of intimacy and kinship formed between Roman soldiers and local populations.
[253] I. Haynes 2013, 59.
[254] Pagán 2014, 84. Grethlein (2013, 155 n. 173) suggests that Tacitus' narrative of foreign events often is less ambiguous than that of events in Rome and that one reason for this may be the "Romanness" of particular native chiefs (e.g. Calgacus or Caratacus).
[255] I. Haynes 2013, 61-62.

identity. As in the *Agricola*, in the *Historiae*, Tacitus explicitly separates *auxilia* from legionary forces. In

his account of the mutiny under Trebellius Maximus (*H.* 1.60), he stresses that the *auxilia* did not join

at once in the mutiny and relates their defection from their governor separately.[256] In the *Annales*, too,

although the 'barbarization' of Roman armies is less of a concern there, we find contexts in which

Tacitus carefully distinguishes between *auxilia* and legionaries, stressing the divisive discord between

both groups and often describing *auxilia* as initiating conflict (see n. 448).

The Caledonian revolt in the *Agricola* prefigures many episodes of auxiliary desertion or local

resistance in the historical works that consistently recall Calgacus' language and arguments. Like the

Caledonian, the Batavian Civilis (*H.* 4.14, 4.17, 4.32), the Tencteri (*H.* 4.64), the Trevirans Valentinus

(*H.* 4.68) and Tutor (*H.* 4.76.4), the Batavians (*H.* 5.25), the Germanic chief Arminius (*A.* 1.59, 2.9.10,

15), the Gauls Florus and Sacrovir (*A.* 3.40), the Numidian Tacfarinas (*A.* 4.24), the Thracians (*A.*

4.46, 4.48), and the Britons Boudicca (*A.* 14.35; cf. 14.31) and Caratacus (*A.* 12.34, 12.37) all are given

speeches in which they use similar arguments of freedom and slavery to rouse their fellow natives,

describing the Romans as *domini* and condemning the burdens they impose.[257] The frailty of auxiliary

loyalty is underlined by the response of Gallic auxiliaries to the Vitellian defeat at Cremona (*adfectu*, *H.*

4.31.1 ~ *adfectu*, *Agr.* 32.1; cf. *H.* 4.76.4), by the transfer of loyalty of Germanic and Gallic cohorts to

Civilis during the Batavian Revolt (*H.* 4.17-19, 21, 25, 37, 54-57, 65-66), and by the report that

Arminius and Inguiomerus possibly were aided in escaping from battle by some auxiliary Chauci, who

knew them and let them pass (*A.* 2.17.4). What Tacitus describes as particularly dangerous are cases in

which desertion or revolt is initiated by allied chiefs who themselves once served as auxiliaries. Such

men, retaining bonds of affection with fellow native tribes, use the experience they gained in Rome's

armies to invest those tribes with military discipline and exploit their knowledge of Roman military

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[256] I. Haynes 2013, 60.

[257] For a comprehensive study of barbarian speeches in Roman historiography, see Adler 2011; 2013, 291-304. Cf. Rutherford 2010, 319 ff. See Master 2012, 98-99 on Tacitus' depiction of provincial anger against Rome and its implications for managing the Empire.

strategy and the shortcomings of the Empire's defenses.[258] Arminius, Tacfarinas, Gannascus, Florus, Sacrovir, and Civilis all are examples of this phenomenon and they all recall Sallust's Jugurtha, who used the experience he gained under Scipio Aemilianus at Numantia (*Jug.* 7; 101.6 on his using the Latin language in battle) against the Roman generals sent out against him. A dangerous corollary of Rome's military success, Tacitus shows, is that it made the city increasingly dependent on auxiliary forces to defend the Empire and that serving in Roman armies gave those forces military expertise that made them more formidable opponents in case of revolt.

II.7 The Rationale of Empire

The arguments placed in the mouth of the British rebels serve to point up the negative impact of Roman power on provincials and offer a pretext for why the latter would revolt against it. The attribution of speeches to enemies or provincial subjects was a useful technique to present a non-Roman perspective on the Empire to a Roman reader. Against the non-Roman viewpoint stands the Roman one, which articulates the Empire as a beneficial or necessary power structure. This broad outlook underlies Tacitus' description of Agricola's policies in Britain:

> *Sequens hiems saluberrimis consiliis absumpta. namque ut homines dispersi ac rudes eoque in bella faciles quieti et otio per uoluptates adsuescerent, hortari priuatim, adiuuare publice, ut templa fora domos extruerent, laudando promptos, castigando segnis: ita honoris aemulatio pro necessitate erat. iam uero principum filios liberalibus artibus erudire, et ingenia Britannorum studiis Gallorum anteferre, ut qui modo linguam Romanam abnuebant, eloquentiam concupiscerent. inde etiam habitus nostri honor et frequens toga; paulatimque discessum ad delenimenta uitiorum, porticus et balinea et conuiuiorum elegantiam. idque apud imperitos humanitas uocabatur, cum pars seruitutis esset. (Agr. 21)*

> The following winter was spent executing a number of highly salutary designs. For in order that people who are scattered and uncultivated, and therefore easily inclined to war, might become accustomed through pleasures to peace and quiet, Agricola encouraged them privately and offered them public assistance in the construction of temples, fora, and houses, praising those who were quick to the task and criticizing those who were sluggish: thus a competition for honor took the place of compulsion. He moreover educated the children of chiefs in the liberal arts and showed such preference for the natural talents of the Britons over the studied efforts of the Gauls that, as a result, those who shortly before

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[258] Timpe 2007, 438. Note the training Civilis gained in Roman camps: *addito si quid militaris disciplinae in castris Romanorum* (*H.* 4.17.5). Arminius learned the Latin language when commanding Germanic auxiliaries: *nam pleraque Latino sermone interiaciebat, ut qui Romanis in castris ductor popularium meruisset* (*A.* 2.10.3). Cf. *A.* 2.13.2: *inter quae unus hostium, Latinae linguae sciens*; *A.* 2.45.2: *quippe longa aduersum nos militia insueuerant sequi signa, subsidiis firmari, dicta imperatorum accipere.* Cf. Vell. 2.110.5 (Pannonians), 2.118.2 (Arminius).

disavowed the Roman language now longed to be eloquent in it. Then they considered it an honor to dress like us and togas became prevalent; and little by little they went astray towards the allurements of vices, that is colonnades, baths, and the refinement of banquets. Among those unfamiliar with such practices this was called "civilization," although it was but a part of their enslavement.

This passage has raised a great deal of debate since it unmistakably shows Agricola executing measures aimed at the moral corruption and the enslavement of the Britons.[259] The ostensible incongruity between this depiction of the governor and the otherwise wholly positive presentation of his career has urged some to explain away Tacitus' words and lay the blame for their corruption with the Britons themselves.[260] It is unnecessary, however, and ultimately unhelpful, to resort to such measures since exculpating Agricola here leaves unsolved a later passage in which he explicitly says that the conquest of Hibernia would be beneficial in that it would deprive the Britons even of the sight of freedom (*e conspectu libertas tolleretur*, 24.3). The envisioned policy is clear and so is Tacitus' approval of it.

Rather than explaining away Tacitus' statements, we need to understand the underlying vision of the Empire on which this policy is based. This vision is based on a set of unspoken assumptions – not peculiar to Tacitus – about the nature of the Empire and the people living under it, and about the greater benefit that both Britons and Romans are supposed to derive from the former's subjection to the latter.[261] The principal aim of Agricola's measures is to accustom the Britons to "peace and quiet" (*quieti et otio*, 21.1), that is the pacification of a turbulent province.[262] The Britons' warlike nature (*faciles in bella*, 21.1) is supposed to be the result of their lack of civilization, making them savage, unruly, and mutually discordant. Their 'civilization' by the Romans, then, is seen as salutary in that it is supposed to make them more orderly and soft and consequently less inclined to and fit for war. This is what happened to the once warlike Gauls, who were 'softened' under Roman rule (*Agr.* 11.4). The projected

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[259] Cf. the condemnation of Roman imperialism expressed by the Tencteri, who urge the Ubii to "renounce the pleasures through which, rather than through their arms, the Romans prevail over subject nations" (*abruptis uoluptatibus, quibus Romani plus aduersus subiectos quam armis ualent*, *H.* 4.64.3).

[260] So, for instance, D. Braund 1996, 161 ff.

[261] As Sailor (2012, 31) rightly notes. Since the nature of Roman imperialism and the concept of Romanization continue to be hotly debated (see esp. Mattingly 2011), I advisedly state here that the following pages reflect what I understand to be Tacitus' view of the Empire and its administration, not my personal view of the realities of the processes he describes.

[262] On the Roman policy of conciliation in the aftermath of the Boudiccan revolt, see Gambash 2012, 1-15.

benefit, then, of the spread of Roman culture and 'softening peace' across the provinces is the prevention of continuous warfare between native tribes and between the latter and Romans. Put differently, the moral degeneration and enslavement of the Britons serves the larger aim of preserving peace and order. That this outlook is not peculiar to Tacitus is clear from the words of Cicero, who likewise articulates Roman control as ensuring stability within the provinces (*Q. fr.* 1.1.34), and of Pliny the Elder, who also sees the process of 'acculturation' (for lack of a truly satisfactory term) as a key element in Rome's imperial mission (*Nat.* 3.39).

The second assumption justifying the Empire lies in the ugly alternative it is supposed to prevent: given the prevalence of discord and persistent warfare among native tribes, termination of the Empire can only result in universal strife and possibly even mutual destruction.[263] The mutiny of the Usipi and their subsequent fate (*Agr.* 28) demonstrates the consequences when Roman control is removed. The Germanic cohort, after killing the centurion and Roman soldiers that were training them, fled in a few vessels and circled around Britain in a disorganized and uncertain fashion. Having run out of provisions, they were forced to raid the property of the coastal Britons – who fiercely defended themselves – and finally were reduced to cannibalism. Having next lost their vessels from not knowing how to control them (it is implied that removing their Roman preceptors prevented them from learning such skills), they eventually were picked up by fellow Germanic tribes, who sold some into slavery; what became of the others we are not told. Other narrative purposes aside, the passage shows that all the Usipi gained from killing their Roman superiors is that it left them helpless in a violent world intent on their destruction: "they destroy the very forces that enable them."[264]

From this perspective, the Empire is justified because, despite the moral degeneration and enslavement it imposes upon native tribes, it protects them from internal strife and foreign wars. This,

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[263] Note the words ascribed to Cerialis at *H.* 4.74.3: *nam pulsis, quod di prohibeant, Romanis quid aliud quam bella omnium inter se gentium existent?* See Evans 2003, 270. Discord among barbarian tribes is ubiquitous in Tacitus.
[264] Evans 2003, 271; Sailor 2012, 33. Cf. the similar fate of the Ampsivarii (*A.* 13.56).

in turn, is also why the 'burdens of empire,' that is the tribute and the conscription, are legitimate, because without it the Empire cannot be maintained. Cicero formulates the same rationale in his letter on governorship to his brother Quintus.[265] What Cicero there spells out is what Tacitus takes for granted in the *Agricola*. According to this view, the role of the provinces is that of imperial 'partners' sharing the financial and military burdens of maintaining the Empire, the structure that provides universal peace and quiet (*pacem ... otium*, *Q. fr.* 1.1.34 ~ *quieti et otio*, *Agr.* 21.1).

This vision of the Empire and its purpose is reiterated in the historical works. In the *Historiae*, Cerialis, attempting to restrain rebellious Gallic forces, expresses the same rationale, arguing that, until the establishment of the Empire, Gaul had been on a course of self-destruction due to incessant internal strife (*quos discordiae usque ad exitium fatigabant*, *H.* 4.73.2; *bellaque per Gallias semper fuere*, 4.74.1; cf. *prouinciarum aemulatio... nondum uictoria, iam discordia erat*, 4.69.2; cf. Caes., *Gal.* 6.15) and had suffered persistent attacks from Germanic tribes (4.73-74; cf. *G.* 37.5). The Empire, Cerialis claims, serves to protect the Gauls from both these evils, and all the Romans demand in exchange is a financial and military contribution to ensure its maintenance (4.74.1-2):

> *nam neque quies gentium sine armis neque arma sine stipendiis neque stipendia sine tributis haberi queunt: cetera in communi sita sunt. ipsi plerumque legionibus nostris praesidetis, ipsi has aliasque prouincias regitis; nihil separatum clausumue.*

> For tranquility among nations cannot be maintained without armies; armies cannot be maintained without pay; pay cannot be maintained without tribute; all else we have in common. You often command our legions. You rule these and other provinces. There is no privilege and no exclusion.

While Cerialis acknowledges that the Empire is not perfect and difficult to endure when led by rapacious officials (4.74.2), it is still better than the dreadful alternative it is supposed to prevent. This notion helps to put into perspective Calgacus' arguments and his use of the Usipi as his example.

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[265] "Asia must also remember that, if it were not in our empire, it would have suffered every calamity that foreign war and strife at home can inflict. Since the Empire cannot possibly be maintained without taxation, let Asia not grudge a part of its revenues in exchange for permanent peace and quiet" (*Q. fr.* 1.1.34).

While his arguments are reasonable enough in light of the rapacity of Roman officials, and while the example of the Usipi suits his larger point, ultimately what he is striving to gain is worse than what he is enduring already. To this must be added the point that his arguments have no bearing on the conduct of Agricola, who neither is a *raptor orbis* nor "makes a desert and calls it peace" (30.4-5). Agricola's conduct disproves Calgacus' claim that the Empire is always and inherently evil, showing that it can be just when executed by righteous men.[266] Cerialis, drawing a significant analogy between domestic and provincial administration, stresses this very point: much like the Principate, the Empire is difficult to endure when led by bad men, but it is worth waiting for the appointment of more suitable ones (*H.* 4.74.2; cf. Eprius Marcellus' claims at *H.* 4.8).

The rationale expressed by Cerialis is taken up in the *Annales*, where Tacitus has both Romans and non-Romans expound on the benefits offered by the Empire. For instance, he ascribes a speech to the Cheruscan chief Segestes, in which the latter affirms his loyalty to Rome on the theory that peace is to be preferred over war (*pacem quam bellum probabam*, *A.* 1.58.1). Elsewhere, Tacitus has the Marcomannic chief Maroboduus exclaim that Arminius' revolt against Varus greatly hurt Germania (*magna cum clade Germaniae*, *A.* 2.46.1), unleashing (as indeed it would) recurrent internal discord and warfare. The Roman perspective is articulated most explicitly by Claudius in his speech on admitting Gauls into the senate (*A.* 12.24). The emperor, stressing the same points as Cerialis, reminds the senate of the benefits of incorporating foreign troops into Roman armies and celebrates the peace that had reigned in Gaul since its conquest by Rome. The vision of the Empire and the nature of the people it superintends, articulated from the inside and the outside, remains consistent throughout.

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[266] An analogous discussion of the nature of Rome's empire can be found in Sallust, which should be read in conjunction with that in the *Agricola*. Like Tacitus' Calgacus, Sallust's Mithridates argues that Rome's rule is inherently evil and therefore should be abolished. Yet, just as the example of Agricola's conduct disproves Calgacus' claims, so Sallust himself identifies a historical moment (146 BC) when Rome's rule turned evil and unbearable (*Cat.* 10.6), suggesting that the problem is not the Empire itself but the particular men who superintend it. See the lucid discussion at Sailor 2012, 32-33.

II.8 Conclusions

The *Agricola* is a work of its time, intimately connected with the events surrounding the transfer of imperial power from Domitian to Nerva and then to Trajan. It deals with topical questions about the relationship between the *princeps* and the senatorial class and about the proper behavior expected of each. As such, it has much in common with another defining text of its time, Pliny's *Panegyricus*. Agricola's function as a proto-Trajan, heralding the new emperor and his regime, is of particular significance. Despite the fact that the *Agricola* is firmly grounded in its socio-political moment, Tacitus' later works constantly take up its principal themes and concerns.

The monograph enunciates Tacitus' outlook on the Principate and the Empire. Tacitus articulates the former as a system of government that, by its very nature, encourages restrictive rule, regardless of the individual character of the *principes*. This is not to say that individual character is inconsequential – far from it. For Tacitus, individual character is crucial for explaining human action and motivation. It is to say, rather, that the imperial system of government is such that it suffers from systemic problems independent from the particular *princeps* in charge. This explains the apparent similarities in his portraits of Domitian and the latter's Julio-Claudian and Flavian predecessors. It also explains Tacitus' skepticism during the early Trajanic regime (as expressed in the prefaces of the *Agricola* and *Historiae*) and his subsequent disillusionment. Trajan had established a welcome peace after Domitian's oppressions, but his regime gradually exhibited the same systemic faults that had marked past regimes. It often has been argued, on the basis of the prefaces of the *Agricola* and the *Historiae*, and of Maternus' description of the Principate at the end of the *Dialogus*, that Tacitus started out a believer in the system only to become ever more disillusioned during Trajan's regime; in other words, Tacitus' outlook shifted throughout his literary career. A holistic reading of the corpus shows that this view cannot be sustained. Tacitus' outlook on the Principate was pessimistic from the start and, while his analysis of the imperial system of government increasingly becomes more complex and multifaceted,

his analysis remains, on balance, consistent throughout.

The nature of the Principate was such that it required a senator constantly to negotiate his position vis-à-vis his *princeps*. The *Agricola* articulates what Tacitus considers the appropriate behavior for a senator in imperial Rome. Throughout the corpus he advocates the conduct exemplified by his father-in-law, a conduct of moderation and balance that allows senators to honorably execute their offices without incurring the wrath of their emperor and other officials. In both the *Agricola* and the later works, this conduct is contrasted with the type of boldness and ostentatious opposition that causes unstable government.

As regards the nature of the Empire and provincial administration, Tacitus' outlook remains generally consistent as well. The rationale of the Empire is articulated similarly across the corpus, as are the benefits and some of the drawbacks of continued expansion. Among the drawbacks identified in the *Agricola* are the growing reliance on auxiliary forces and the increasing 'barbarization' of Roman armies, concerns that continue to occupy Tacitus throughout. I explore the complexities of Tacitus' attitude towards imperialism and *imperium* in depth in the next chapter.

The *Agricola* sets out Tacitus' philosophy of generalship and provincial governorship. The gubernatorial and military qualities that Tacitus ascribes to Agricola remain the core criteria in his assessment of governors and generals in his later works. The particular vices that Agricola is shown to avoid are significant because they shed light on what Tacitus sees as the questionable conduct of rapacious Roman officials; Agricola's virtues stand out against a background of widespread provincial mismanagement. From both the *Agricola* and the historical works it is evident that Tacitus thinks provincial administration can be just when executed by competent and righteous men, but that corruption and maladministration are extensive. He identifies the appointment of seasoned officials as one way to prevent these problems, but points out that patronage and personal favor often lead to the promotion of unsuitable men.

Reading the *Agricola* and the historical works in conjunction reveals numerous thematic and conceptual connections and shows that Tacitus' outlook on the Principate and the Empire, and on more circumscribed issues,[267] generally remains consistent. My method of looking for unifying issues across different works offers tangible benefits. Scenes in the later works constantly evoke, elaborate on, or are inspired by scenes in the monograph. In fact, it seems that Tacitus expects his readers to be familiar with the themes he treats in the *Agricola* before they come to his later works. A holistic reading further elucidates Tacitus' selection of material[268] and raises crucial questions about his historical method: how, for example, are we to interpret his claim to impartiality in the historical works (*H.* 1.1.3; *A.* 1.1.3) against the background of his plainly biased treatment of Domitian in the *Agricola*?[269]

Finally, in light of the connections between the *Agricola* and the historical works, the former should be included in any list of Tacitus' sources for the *Historiae* and the *Annales*. Typically, treatments of Tacitus' sources focus on the works, in whatever genre, of his literary predecessors, on documentary, archival, and epigraphic evidence, and on oral traditions. But one of the most important sources for Tacitus was Tacitus himself.

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[267] A further connection between the *Agricola* and the historical works that I have not discussed in this chapter but that is worth noting is that between the end of the *Agricola* and the so-called 'obituaries' of the historical works, most developed in the *Annales*. On these obituaries, see Syme 1958b, 18-31 (= Syme 1970, 79-90 = Ash 2012, 245-58). There also are notable resemblances between *Agr.* 46 and *A.* 4.38 (Tiberius on posthumous fame) and 15.62 (Seneca's final words to his friends).

[268] Another notable example of Tacitus' selection of his material is his description of Agricola's inclusion of Domitian in his will (*Agr.* 43.4) and that of the wills of Fulcinius Trio (*A.* 6.38), L. Vetus (*A.* 16.11), and C. Petronius (*A.* 16.18). In the *Annales*, Tacitus reveals his distaste for the practice of including emperors (esp. bad ones) in wills, praising Vetus for refusing this "servile act" (*seruitio*; cf. *foedis… adulationibus*, *A.* 15.59.5; cf. *A.* 16.17.5-6) and recording how Trio included in his will terrible imputations against Macro and Tiberius and how Petronius' will detailed Nero's sexual outrages. In the *Agricola*, Tacitus naturally does not criticize Agricola for including Domitian in his will, but rather stresses that the latter did not deserve to be included in it.

[269] Ash 2007b, 434. And what are the implications of his treatment of the Julio-Claudians and Flavians in the historical works, and his reputation as an author concerned with rectifying official versions, for his promised account of the Trajanic regime (*H.* 1.1.3)?

Chapter III

Germania, Historiae, Annales

"Although the *Germania* often features as a point of comparison in linguistic studies of Tacitus' Latin, it is not often taken up as a conceptual or historiographical point of comparison for the later historical works (possibly because of its genre). Sailor 2008, for instance, omits the *Germania* and *Dialogus* from his study "because they do not form part of that arc of narrative works that imagine themselves as a sequence" (p. 5)... there is no doubt that the *Agricola* manifests more obvious points of contact with the *Histories* and *Annals,* but the *Germania* too deserves attention."[270]

The above excerpt from R. Ash's recent chapter on the *Germania* neatly encapsulates the prevalent scholarly attitude towards the work, which often is studied in isolation and largely remains untapped for thematic and conceptual connections with Tacitus' later works.[271] In this chapter, I seek to demonstrate that in fact there are significant connections between the *Germania* and the historical narratives and that the work has close affinities with the *Agricola* as well. The chapter has three main parts. In the first, I explore Tacitus' attitude towards Roman imperialism and *imperium* as it emerges from the monograph. Here I take a new approach to the work, reading it as primarily a reflection on the factors (geography, topography, climate, natural and mineral resources, national character and custom) that inform the formulation of Roman foreign policy.[272] This approach accommodates all of the text and its complexities and offers a reading that is less constrained by the work's genre. The *Germania*, I argue, illustrates and reflects the complexity of the question whether expansion into Germania (which Tacitus defines, with one exception (*G.* 29.3), as the area north of the Rhine and the Danube and west of the rivers Vistula and Hron; cf. *G.* 43.1), or indeed elsewhere, should be pursued.

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[270] Ash 2014, 186 n. 5. Suerbaum 2015 similarly excludes the *Germania* and *Dialogus* from his study.

[271] It is telling that in the recent volume on the *opera minora* (Devillers 2014) Ash's chapter is the only one devoted to the *Germania*.

[272] For an examination of the same factors at work in the conception and territorial organization of what would become the Seleucid Empire, see Kosmin 2014.

The moral desirability of extending the Empire's *termini*, the practical desirability of ending instability on the Rhine and Danube frontiers, and the perceived necessity of preventing a unified Germania, are offset by serious drawbacks of a northward campaign and annexation, such as financial strain, military impracticability, and cultural incompatibility. While Tacitus tends to favor expansion on moral and emotional grounds, he points up financial, cultural, and military considerations that impose limits on empire. I show that he does not direct the work in a conclusive direction but leaves his readers to decide what the proper foreign policy concerning trans-Rhenane Germania should be, a stance that is characteristically Tacitean and reflects the complexity of the question at hand.

In the second part, I discuss Tacitus' outlook on imperialism and foreign policy as it emerges from his historical narratives, arguing that the latter reveal similar complexity about extensibility and limitation and that Tacitus' view of *imperium* and its limits remains, on the whole, consistent throughout. Tacitus continues to advocate for extension and military initiative on moral and emotional grounds, but at the same time he draws attention to internal and external pressures on the Empire that make a defensive policy imperative. Imperial foreign policy, starting with Tiberius, was cost-efficient and conservative, aimed at maintaining Rome's *imperium* and the image of superiority without incurring unnecessary cost and loss of life. This policy was executed through methods of terrorization, diplomacy, and indirect control, while discord among foreign tribes located outside the Empire was incited and carefully exploited. This policy is enunciated in the *Germania* and recurs unchanged in the *Historiae* and *Annales*.

In the final part, I trace Tacitus' characterization of Germania and its tribes from the *Germania* into the historical works. Here I take issue with the common view that the Germani are described less favorably in the historical works than in the *Germania*.[273] A systematic examination of the three works shows that, although the depiction of individual tribes becomes more multifaceted in the later works,

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[273] Throughout this study, I employ the terms 'Germania' and 'Germani' in order not to confuse ancient Germania with modern Germany or the ancient Germani with the modern Germans. See Rives 1999, 1-11; cf. Krebs 2011, 81-104.

Tacitus ascribes to them the same stereotypical traits he had ascribed to them collectively in the *Germania*. Here I also illustrate how the monograph serves as a reference point in the later works, which continually recall and elaborate upon Tacitus' initial portrait of the Germani. The three parts combine to show that there are various conceptual connections between the *Germania* and the historical narratives and that their relationship is marked more by continuity than by change.

III.1 Introduction: the *Germania* within its Socio-Political, Literary, and Military Context

Examining the connections between the *Germania* and the historical narratives makes good sense, seeing that Germania features prominently in all three works. Moreover, all three works were composed at times when foreign policy was a principal concern in Rome, in the first instance around the accession of an experienced military emperor who governed Upper Germany at the time of his appointment and, subsequently, during the years of that emperor's expansion into regions bordering the Empire's *termini*. The questions about Germania raised at Trajan's accession will have been the same as those raised during his reign about Dacia, Arabia, Armenia, and Parthia and, upon the failures in the east, about Hadrian's policies.[274] Hence it is reasonable to look at the works side-by-side and consider how Tacitus' outlook on foreign policy developed over the course of Trajan's reign.

A major difficulty in assessing the *Germania* is that, unlike the *Agricola*, it lacks a preface, leaving us with the text itself and its socio-political and military context to reconstruct its aims.[275] Political events in Rome and military affairs abroad combine to shed light on Tacitus' choice of subject and its composition. While the nature of the work is ethnographic, as in the *Agricola* the generic framework serves as a vehicle for the exploration of broader issues. So the description of Germania and its tribes serves, by contrast and comparison, as a critical analysis of Rome itself, the 'mirror' culture in the

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[274] For a Hadrianic date for the completion of the *Annales*, see p. 159.

[275] The scholarship on the *Germania* is extensive. Bibliographic reviews can be found in Benario 1983, 209–230; 1986, 99-106; 1995, 112-20; 2005, 275-81; Lund 1991b, 1989-2222 (with a comprehensive annotated bibliography); Stadele 1997. The major commentaries are Much 1937, Anderson 1938, Lund 1988, Perl 1990, Benario 1999, Rives 1999 (now standard). Birley 1999 offers useful comments as well. On the text's narrative purpose(s): Rives 1999, 48-56. See also Timpe 1989; Lund 1991b, 2189-2215; Beck 1998, 9-13.

work.[276] It shares this aspect with the *Agricola*, which contrasts Agricola's administration of Britain with that of Domitian in Rome. Such analysis was intimately bound up with the transfer of imperial power from Domitian to Nerva and then to Trajan and with the formulation of the values of the new regime. The *Germania* is also bound up with foreign policy, as Roman-Germanic interactions, had continued to make Germania a major concern throughout the first century.

The Germani for long had loomed large in the Roman imagination, being formidable enemies that had inflicted crushing defeats on Roman armies and being a continued object of conquest for different emperors. Germania was the subject of various literary works before Tacitus' time. Evidence from Plutarch (*Mar.* 11) suggests that the Germani were recognized as a people separate from the Gauls by the late second to early first century BC.[277] This tradition was taken up and elaborated by Caesar, whose *Bellum Gallicum* offers ethnographic descriptions of the Germanic tribes he encountered. As is well known, Caesar characterizes the Germani as more savage and uncultivated, and as less tractable, than the Gauls and therefore as less suitable for inclusion within the Empire than their neighbors to the south.[278] To bolster his claim of having completed the conquest of Gaul, Caesar made the Rhine the border between the Gauls and the Germani, even though in reality that river did not constitute a polarizing cultural boundary.[279] Caesar's account of the Germani would remain the principal model for later authors. For Tacitus, who evokes the *Bellum Gallicum* in the opening words of the *Germania*, Caesar is still *summus auctorum* on the subject (28.1).

While there is no evidence for an ethnographic work on Germania before Tacitus' time, the area is mentioned in the geographical authors, and the wars against the Germani (and the notion of

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[276] For the notion that the *Germania* sets out to contrast the simplistic, virtuous, and hardy Germani ('noble savages') with the morally corrupted Romans, see Wolff 1934, 121–164. Cf. Anderson 1938, xvi–xix; Beare 1964, 69–73; Isaac 2004, 433, 436; cf. O'Gorman 1993, 147–149 [= Ash 2012, 112-14]; Krebs 2005, 41–43.

[277] Plutarch, through his sources, transmits the contemporary view of the invading Teutones and Cimbri as being Germanic: "the most prevalent conjecture was that they were some of the Germanic peoples which reach as far as the northern ocean, a conjecture based on the size of their bodies, their light-blue eyes, and on the fact that the Germani call robbers 'Cimbri'" (καὶ μάλιστα μὲν εἰκάζοντο Γερμανικὰ γένη τῶν καθηκόντων ἐπὶ τὸν βόρειον ὠκεανὸν εἶναι τοῖς μεγέθεσι τῶν σωμάτων καὶ τῇ χαροπότητι τῶν ὀμμάτων, καὶ ὅτι Κίμβρους ἐπονομάζουσι Γερμανοὶ τοὺς λῃστάς, Plut., *Mar.* 11.3).

[278] See now Schadee 2008, 175-78. See also Rives 1999, 24 ff.; Dench 2005, 52-54.

[279] Schadee 2008, 162-63 with further references there; Rives 1999, 25.

Germania as a locus of war) frequently appear in the works of historians as well. Livy, in the now lost Books 104 and 108, related Caesar's campaigns in Gaul and his encounters with Germanic tribes, including an account of the *situm Germaniae moresque*. In Books 139-142, he related Drusus the Elder's campaigns of 12-9 BC, but the nature of the account and the way he depicted the Germani remains uncertain.[280] Velleius, who served under Tiberius in Germania, published a two-book summary history of Rome in AD 30, in which he covers Tiberius' campaigns of 12-9 BC (2.97), those of AD 4-6 (2.105-109), and those of AD 10-11 (2.120-121.1), including an account of the Varian disaster and remarks on Germanic *mores* and Varus' failure to deal with them (2.117-119). The next account of note is the now lost *Bellum Germanicum* of the early imperial historian Aufidius Bassus, which either covered the campaigns of AD 4-16 or those of 10-16.[281] Aufidius' second work, a general history from at least the time of Cicero's death (Sen., *Suas.* 6.18.23) to at least AD 31,[282] and continued by Pliny the Elder (*A fine Aufidii Bassi*), probably covered the campaigns in Germania, but, as with his *Bellum Germanicum*, we do not know the scope of the work. While it is accepted that Tacitus used Aufidius as a source for the *Annales*, it is uncertain whether he did for the *Germania*.

The most important work on the Germani close to Tacitus' time was Pliny the Elder's 20-book *Bella Germaniae*, which covered "all the wars with the Germani" (*omnia quae cum Germanis gessimus bella*, Plin., *Ep.* 3.5.4), probably starting with those against the Cimbri and ending either with Corbulo's campaigns and recall in 47 or continuing up to the mid-to-late 50s, Pliny's own time.[283] Tacitus certainly used the work for the *Annales* (*A.* 1.69.2) and is agreed to have done so for the *Germania*.[284] Despite a few remarks of Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 3.5.4), Suetonius (*Cal.* 8.1-2), and Tacitus himself (*A.* 1.69), we know nothing about the nature of the work. Having served under Corbulo against the

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[280] Given that in the *Agricola* Tacitus cites Livy as an authority on Britain (Book 105 on Caesar's expedition into the island), it is likely that he read Livy on Germania as well.
[281] For AD 4-16: Syme 1958a, 274 and appendix 38 (697-700); Syme 1983, 9; for AD 10-16: Timpe 1968, 12-15, followed by Pelling, *OCD*⁴ 204; cf. Fabia 1893, 407; Cornell 2013, Vol. 1, 519 ff.
[282] Cornell 2013, Vol. 1, 519-21.
[283] Cornell 2013, Vol. 1, 530.
[284] Cornell 2013, Vol. 1, 531.

Chauci in 47 (*Nat.* 16.2-4) and later in Upper Germany under P. Pomponius Secundus, Pliny had

personal experience in Germania, and observations about the Germani in his *Naturalis Historia* (9.45,

10.53, 22.8) make it likely that the *Bella Germaniae* contained many practical facts about Germania and

its tribes as well. Pliny further wrote a now lost two-book biography of Secundus (Plin., *Ep.* 3.5.3),

which presumably contained observations about that man's command in Upper Germany. Finally, his

30-book history *A fine Aufudii Bassi*, covering the later Julio-Claudian period, will have contained

sections on Germania, but unfortunately this work, too, has been lost.

In addition to historical works, geographical works like those of Strabo or Pomponius Mela

contained sections on Germania that reflect the increase of knowledge following the campaigns under

Augustus and Tiberius.[285] As Rives notes, Strabo was the first to describe the rivers Elbe, Ems, Weser,

and Lippe and the first to write about the Bructeri, Chatti, Quadi, Chauci, Semnones, and

Langobardi.[286] It is uncertain whether Tacitus consulted these works. Frontinus' *Strategemata* contained

eyewitness remarks about Domitian's campaigns in Germania, including observations about the

Germani's ferocity (1.1.8) and experience fighting in forests (1.3.10, 2.3.23), but, while Tacitus clearly

respected Frontinus, we do not know whether he used his work. Another lost work on Germania

written during Tacitus' lifetime was Statius' *de Bello Germanico*, a poem on Domitian's Chattian

campaigns that we may reasonably imagine eulogized the emperor's endeavors.[287] Finally, it is likely

that governors and legates who had served in Germania composed *commentarii* or other accounts of

their service. L. Antistius Vetus, who served as governor of Upper Germany, is credited with having

written a geographic and ethnographic work that may have contained firsthand observations about the

Germani.[288] Moreover, it is possible (though unverifiable) that Corbulo composed *commentarii* about his

operations in Germania in addition to those about his command in the East (*A.* 15.16). There was, in

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[285] Rives 1999, 39.
[286] Rives 1999, 39.
[287] The poem is referred to by Valla in a scholion to Juvenal 4.94.
[288] Devillers 2003, 39-40 with further references there.

sum, a wide range of literary works on Germania on which Tacitus could have drawn. While Caesar

and Pliny the Elder seem to have been his primary sources, it stands to reason that he consulted all the

material on Germania readily available to him.

While the majority of this material primarily dealt with the wars against the Germani, Tacitus'

monograph notably is ethnographic. This seems to mark a departure from previous work on the area

and, as far as we know, from Roman ethnographic literature generally. Ethnographic monographs as a

genre were not as prevalent among the Romans as they were among the Greeks and, aside from

Arrian's *Indika*, the *Germania* is the only extant ethnographic monograph of ancient times. Tacitus'

ethnographic focus is significant in light of the work's socio-political and military context. The account

of Germanic society and culture offers a critical inward look at contemporary Rome, while the

description of Germania's *situs* and *mores* points up the complex considerations that bear on

imperialism and *imperium*. To understand the work's military context, we should briefly consider the

military balance at Trajan's accession.

The Germani had constituted the *terminus* of Caesar's conquests and were one of the objects of

Augustus' imperial ambitions. Tiberius and his brother Drusus had reached the Elbe in 9 BC and by

AD 6 the area was stabilized and its provincialization well advanced, though not formally completed.[289]

In that year, Tiberius conducted a campaign into the territory of the Marcomannic chief Maroboduus

(modern Bohemia and Moravia), which, if successful, would have closed the land bridge between the

North Sea and the Balkans. But the outbreak of a major revolt in Dalmatia and Pannonia (AD 6)

forced Tiberius to abandon these aims and strike an agreement with Maroboduus, three years after

which the Varian disaster forced Augustus to evacuate the area between the Rhine and the Elbe.

It has been the traditional view that Varus' defeat urged Augustus to re-establish the Rhine as

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[289] To what extent the area between the Rhine and Elbe had been provincialized and municipalized between 9 BC to AD 9 remains a contentious question. The evidence from Lahnau-Waldgirmes and Haltern has illustrated that the process had advanced considerably by the time of the Varian defeat. Eck (2004; 2010) argues persuasively that a *prouincia Germania* embracing territory west and east of the Rhine was in fact established at this time. Further archaeological evidence will be needed to clear up the matter decisively.

the northern boundary of the Empire. Archaeological evidence, however, coupled with contemporary

(Ovid's *Tristia*) and later (Tacitus' *Annales*) literary testimony, and a reassessment of the date of the

composition of the *Res Gestae*, suggests that Augustus aimed at re-establishing provincial control in the

area between the Rhine and Elbe and that it ultimately was Tiberius' decision to forgo re-annexation.[290]

The archaeological evidence from Lahnau-Waldgirmes seems to suggest that the site was abandoned in

AD 9 but that it continued to be used intermittently as a military base until 16, the year of Germanicus'

recall, after which it was given up for good.[291] The sites at Hedemünden and Bentumersiel seem to

support this impression.[292] The final abandonment of these trans-Rhenane sites in 16 reflects a change

in the way the Romans saw the area they had previously occupied.

As regards the *Res Gestae*, A. Cooley has argued that the text was not composed in 2 BC and

subsequently edited but written towards the end of Augustus' life, in June of AD 14.[293] This re-

assessment bears on the document read in the senate after Augustus' death, which included his advice

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[290] At *Tr.* 2.225-230, which should be dated to shortly after AD 9 (Thakur 2008, 76-77), Ovid anticipates Tiberius' successes in Germania after the Varian disaster. At *Tr.* 3.12.45-48, dated by Syme (1978, 38) to AD 10, Germania not only is called *rebellatrix* (cf. *ceteras rebellium gentis*, Tac., *A.* 2.26.3; Sen., *Apoc.* 12.21-2: *ille rebellos fundere Parthios*), a term that conceives of the Germani still as Roman subjects (Potter 1990, 197), but also is described as "finally placing her sad head under the foot of the great leader [i.e. Tiberius]" (*teque, rebellatrix, tandem, Germania, magni triste caput pedibus supposuisse ducis*). *Tristia* IV (dated to AD 11) anticipates Tiberius' triumph (which he would receive in AD 12) and reaffirms the image of the Germani as a subjugated people (*iam fera Caesaribus Germania, totus ut orbis, uicta potest flexo succubuisse genu*, 4.2.1-2), in line with traditional visual representations of captured nations trampled underfoot. Ovid's poetry, which carefully reflects imperial discourse, points to a policy aimed at re-establishing control in the area between the Rhine and Elbe abandoned in the aftermath of the Varian setback. Tacitus' *Annales* confirm this: *uetere in prouincia* at *A.* 1.58.5 suggests Rome still laid claim to a new trans-Rhenane province. In the next chapter, Tacitus has Arminius urge the Cherusci to follow him against Germanicus if they prefer "their fatherland, parents, and ancient life to masters and new colonies" (*si patriam parentes antiqua mallent quam dominos et colonias nouas*, 1.59.6). *Colonias* here refers to nothing less than re-establishment of Roman control across the Rhine (Goodyear 1981, 90, 225; cf. Woolf 2009, 207). At *A.* 2.14.4, Germanicus exhorts his forces by reminding them that the Elbe is now closer than the Rhine and that this will be the final battle. Arminius implies the same thing at 2.15.3 (*libertatem... seruitium*), while at 2.19 the Germani, upon a crushing defeat, are prepared to abandon their settlements and retreat beyond the Elbe. At 2.41, Tacitus writes that Germanicus was prohibited from completing (*conficere*) the war, suggesting more than a series of vindictive campaigns. Indeed, at 2.73 Tacitus writes that imperial jealousy prevented Germanicus from "crushing Germania into subjection" (*seruitio premere*).

[291] The archaeological evidence from Lahnau-Waldgirmes suggests the construction of a series of planned towns and market spaces east of the Rhine aimed at long-term occupation. The construction of the site seems to have commenced ca. 4 BC. It probably was abandoned in AD 9 or shortly thereafter, in the wake of the Varian disaster. Evidence of what seems to have been a temporary camp (Rasbach and Becker 2007, 110-11) suggests that the site continued to be used as a military base during the campaigns of Tiberius and Germanicus, before being abandoned permanently upon the latter's recall. Waldgirmes likely is one of the sites referred to by Dio at 56.18.1-4. For the archaeological record at Lahnau-Waldgirmes, see Becker 2003, 337-350; von Schnurbein 2003, 93-107; Rasbach and Becker 2003, 147–199; 2007, 102-116. For a succinct summary of the findings, see Wolters 2008, 65-69. Becker 2003, 338 n. 5 offers a good sample of opponents against AD 9 as the year of initial abandonment.

[292] Hedemünden: Grote 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015. Bentumersiel: Strahl 2009; 2011, 293-306.

[293] Cooley 2009, 42-43, following Ramage 1988; endorsed by Galinksy (2011, 131), Rowe (2011, 245), Rich (2011, 506), and Potter (2013, 330).

that the Empire be preserved within the boundaries extant at the time.[294] In light of the above evidence, it seems that the boundary in question is the Elbe, not the Rhine. Augustus' claim to have advanced the Empire's boundary to the Elbe (*RG* 26.1) "indicates that he did not regard the area as lost for good after the death of Varus."[295] It is evident from the *Annales* that Germanicus' original assignment was not only to avenge the Varian disaster but to re-establish control of the area between the Rhine and the Elbe.[296] But costly losses, the failure to gain a decisive victory, and the breakdown of Rome's network north of the Rhine under pressure from Arminius forced Tiberius to decide that the cost of re-annexation was too high. In AD 16, he redefined Germanicus' mission as revenge (now achieved) and elected to pursue diplomacy in the future.[297] Germanicus' successes had served the purpose of revenge, and the demonstration of Roman power and authority, reinforced by two inscribed tropaea erected by Germanicus in the territory of the Cherusci (AD 16), was ideologically and diplomatically sufficient. The point was reinforced in AD 19 by the display, across the Empire, of the senatorial bill recording Germanicus' commemorative honors and achievements (preserved in part of the *Tabula Siarensis* and the *Tabula Hebana*) and by the erection of a triumphal arch on the bank of the Rhine.[298] In Rome itself, the senatorial bill, the erection of an arch commemorating the recovery of the Varian standards (*A.* 2.41.1), and Germanicus' triumph (2.41.2) successfully advertised the war as

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[294] Tac., *A.* 1.11.4; Dio 56.33.5-6. The fact that Suetonius does not mention this document has been the basis of an argument that it is Tiberian, meant to seek posthumous Augustan sanction for the policies he wished to pursue (e.g. Ober 1982; Gruen 1990, 410; 1996, 188). The argument is intriguing but lacks evidence.

[295] Potter 2013, 330; cf. Griffin 2000, 127; Woolf 2009, 207; Eck 2014, 14.

[296] Cf. Woolf 2009, 207; Eck 2010, 14; Potter 2013, 330. Revenge merely was one part of the overall policy. Reconstructing the campaigns in Germania based on what he read on the *Tabula Siarensis* (which, after Germanicus' recall, records revenge (*uindicata*) as the campaigns' original purpose) and in written sources after AD 16 (e.g. Aufidius Bassus and Pliny the Elder, who presumably followed the official account as well), Tacitus initially wrote (naturally but erroneously) that revenge was Augustus' aim when he appointed Germanicus to the command of the German legions (*A.* 1.3.6). Tacitus' own narrative negates this claim. Of course, Tacitus did not possess the archaeological evidence we now have to aid his interpretation of Roman foreign policy at this time.

[297] Hence the surprise and dismay of Germanicus, who claimed he needed only one more year to complete his assigned task (*A.* 2.26).

[298] Germanicus' original assignment: Ridley 2003, 196-203; Potter 2013, 330. Cf. Lehnmann 1991, who also argues that the conquest of Germania was abandoned not by Augustus, but by Tiberius. Revenge: Gruen 1990, 408-09; Mattern 1999, 184-94; Potter 2013, 330. Losses during Germanicus' return journeys: *A.* 2.23 ff. Other costs and losses during the campaigns: *A.* 1.65, 1.71, 2.5. Tiberius' decision: *A.* 2.18, 2.22, 2.26.2, 2.43. That there was financial strain is evident from Tiberius having to default on Germanicus' promised monetary grants to the legions in AD 14 (*A.* 1.36.3, 1.52.3, 1.78.2). Tiberius reiterates this concern at *A.* 4.4.2, providing a pretext for a trip to the provinces that never took place. On military finances: *RG* 17.2; Suet., *Aug.* 49.2; Dio 55.24.9. Germanicus' victory inscriptions: *A.* 2.18, 2.22. Text and commentary for the *Tabula Hebana* and *Tabula Siarensis*: Lott 2012. Arch: *A.* 2.83.

completed and its original purpose as accomplished.[299]

Henceforth Roman policy toward the Germani was marked by diplomacy and indirect control.[300] In the aftermath of the Varian disaster, Rome maintained its *imperium* beyond the Rhine. Tribes like the Batavi, Frisii, and Chauci long remained loyal (*G.* 29.1, 34.1, 35), while Rome retained indirect influence by installing such client kings as Vannius of the Quadi (*A.* 2.63.6) and Italicus of the Cherusci (*A.* 11.16). At the same time, Germanic auxiliary cohorts continued to fight alongside Roman legions, while Rome offered assistance to certain tribes (e.g. when Domitian aided the Lugii against the Suebi: Dio 67.5.2-3).

All the same, the Germani remained the only foreign people successfully to have resisted the Roman advance and hence their conquest remained an alluring source of potential military glory. Caligula launched a campaign that, despite being depicted as a farce in our sources, reflects the continued appeal of a Germanic conquest. Corbulo's campaigns against the Frisii and Chauci again raised the issue of expansion, but Claudius preferred diplomacy (*A.* 11.18-20) and turned his attention to Britain. Under Nero, aside from a swiftly quelled insurrection of the Frisii (*A.* 13.53-57), matters in Germania were peaceful. Vespasian created a more permanent Roman presence north of the Main and in the upper Neckar area, but whether his aim was to improve communication with the Danube region or to lay the groundwork for further expansion, or both, remains hard to reconstruct.[301] During Vespasian's reign, Rutilius Gallicus, legate of Lower Germany from 76-79, campaigned east of the Rhine in the territory of the Bructeri and took captive the prophetess Veleda, who would play a major role in the Batavian Revolt and enjoyed great *auctoritas* among the Germani (*G.* 8.2, *H.* 4.61, 4.65, 5.22,

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[299] The show had worked: *bellum pro confecto acceptum est* (*A.* 2.41). Cf. Vell. 2.129.2 (of Germanicus): *domitorem… Germaniae*; Suet., *Tib.* 52.2: *gloriosissimas victorias*; *Cal.* 1.1: *hoste… devicto*; Dio 57.18: Γερμανικὸς δὲ τῇ ἐπὶ τοὺς Κελτοὺς στρατείᾳ φερόμενος εὖ μέχρι τε τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ προεχώρησε, καὶ τοὺς βαρβάρους κατὰ τὸ καρτερὸν νικήσας τά τε ὀστᾶ τῶν σὺν τῷ Οὐάρῳ πεσόντων συνέλεξέ τε καὶ ἔθαψε, καὶ τὰ σημεῖα τὰ στρατιωτικὰ ἀνεκτήσατο. Strabo, as Goodyear (1981, 315) notes, "writing soon after the triumph, gives the game away, when he says Arminius was still sustaining the war (7.1.4 καὶ νῦν ἔτι συνέχοντος τὸν πόλεμον). Arminius must indeed have been conspicuous by his absence on May 26, A.D. 17."

[300] For further discussion of Rome's foreign policy under the Julio-Claudians, see pp. 168-186.

[301] Levick 1999, 162; Rives 1999, 30.

5.24; Stat., *Sil.* 1.4.90; *AE* 1953, 25).[302] Domitian, wishing to emerge from the shadow of the military achievements of his father and brother, took all this a step further in the 80s, undertaking a successful campaign against the Chatti, bringing the Taunus area under Roman control, establishing the provinces of Lower and Upper Germany (which, however, consisted for the most part of long-held territory west of the Rhine), and transforming the frontier east of the Rhine into a fortified border area. While his aims and the extent to which he continued or departed from his father's designs remain uncertain, he presented himself as having completed Germania's conquest, by triumphing over the Chatti, adopting the name "Germanicus," and making the patently false claim, advertised on his coinage, that Germania had been subjugated ('*Germania capta*', '*deuictis Germanis*', '*Germania deuicta*'). These claims were, as we shall see, one reason why Tacitus might have chosen to write the *Germania*.

Finally, in the 80s and early 90s, while the Rhine border remained fairly stable, Rome's focus shifted to the Danube frontier, where it suffered a series of devastating losses that are significant for assessing the military balance at the time of Trajan's accession (see n. 99). In 85, the Dacians, upon invading Moesia, killed its governor Oppius Sabinus and annihilated a great number of his forces. This was followed only a year later by the destruction of the praetorian prefect Cornelius Fuscus, who lost both his life and a legion against the Dacians. These setbacks, the greatest since the Varian disaster, were followed by defeats (notably with Domitian himself in the field) against combined forces of Marcomanni, Quadi, and Iazyges (in 89), who another three years later (92) invaded Pannonia and caused the demise of yet another legion. The funerary altar at Adamclisi that likely commemorates one of these setbacks appears to have been designed in such as a way as to efface the memory of these losses and to highlight the extent of Rome's empire.[303] Tacitus, whether or not he knew about the altar,

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[302] Veleda is one of few Germani mentioned by name in the *Germania*. The other three are Aurinia, her fellow prophetess (*G.* 8.3), Maroboduus, chief of the Marcomanni, and Tudrus, chief of the Quadi (42.2). For Veleda, see Merkelbach 1981.
[303] See Turner 2013, 277-304. As Turner shows, the monument's design achieves two main goals. First, the commemoration of individual soldiers served to establish and increase the bond between the emperor and his troops. Second, the inclusion of the abbreviated origins of all the soldiers served to illustrate the massive extent of the Empire.

had a different take, emphasizing the losses, the incompetence of the generals, and the danger to the Empire's security (*Agr.* 41.2-3; cf. *H.* 1.2).

In light of past and current Roman-Germanic relations, the false claims of an emperor who had died only two years before, the succession of a *uir militaris* who commanded the Rhine legions at the time of his appointment, and the ongoing debate about the proper maintenance of the Empire, we can deduce several plausible aims underlying the *Germania*. I have noted already the social and moral commentary on contemporary Rome to which a work of this genre lends itself. Another principal aim of the work seems to have been to set the historical record straight. This is another concern that the *Germania* shares with the *Agricola*: just as the latter, by ascribing to Agricola the glory that Domitian had tried to devalue, serves "to restore a healthy and correct system of representation and to restore to all what they are due," so the *Germania*, by accurately describing Germania and its tribes, serves to rectify Domitian's distortions.[304] This is the sort of rectification of official versions with which Tacitus would continue to be concerned in his historical works. Connected with the concern to disprove Domitian's claims is the suggestion, first posited by Nicolet, that the work serves as a literary conquest of, or a means of symbolic power over, an area that remained unconquered militarily.[305] A similar aim may have informed the *Agricola*, which can be seen as a literary re-conquest of an area conquered by Agricola, but soon after abandoned by Domitian.[306]

It has been argued that the *Germania* serves as a call to arms urging Trajan to complete the subjugation of trans-Rhenane Germania that Domitian plainly had failed to accomplish.[307] While Tacitus stresses military weaknesses on the part of the Germani and hints at the potential danger of a unified Germania, the many points in the text that discourage conquest undermine this argument. As

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[304] Sailor 2008, 117 for the citation; Rives 1999, 52-53. Tacitus disparages Domitian's success at *Agr.* 39; *G.* 29.3, 37.2, 37.5.
[305] Nicolet 1991. See also O'Gorman 1993, 135-54 [= Ash 2012, 95-118]. Tan (2014, 1-24) argues that Tacitus' description of Germania's geography serves to create the opposite impression: "any sense of mastery over space is withheld from us, intellectual and physical dominion over the ends of the earth denied" (p. 6).
[306] On this notion, see Rutledge 2000, 75-95; Clarke 2001, 94-112; Sailor 2008, 81 ff.
[307] So, e.g., Isaac 2004, 436; Krebs 2005, 78-81.

significant is the fact that Tacitus nowhere takes an explicit stance nor directs the text in a conclusive

direction, instead leaving his readers to draw their own conclusions.[308] It was, as Syme acutely saw,

"not for the consular Tacitus to play the mentor to a military emperor."[309]

A more sensible suggestion would be that the work serves as a manual about Germania and its

tribes, to be utilized in considerations of foreign policy and by commanders and governors charged

with its execution.[310] This suggestion is attractive for several reasons. First, the plain allusion in the

opening words to the start of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* (*Gallia est omnis* ~ *Germania omnis*) may serve to

signify that, just as Caesar's work "was not a history, but a more practical type of document, the report

of a general and a contribution to public affairs," so the *Germania* had a similarly practical function.[311]

Second, the division of the work into two clearly demarcated halves – the first dealing with Germania

as a whole (1-27.1), the second with the individual tribes making up the whole (27.2-46) – serves to

point up the practical challenges of dealing militarily and administratively with an area that was both

categorically 'Germanic' and at the same time divergent in its socio-political, geographical, and military

makeup. The opening of the second half of the monograph (27.2) indeed is distinctly didactic.[312] Third,

given the Romans' lack of a formal military and governmental training-system, literary works –

especially ethnographies, histories, and military handbooks – were used by senators to learn the tools

of the trade.[313] The didactic value of the combination of the *Agricola* and the *Germania* is significant: the

former offers the exemplary portrait of the ideal governor and general, while the latter offers useful

information about a region whose conquest and annexation will have been discussed at the time. The

Germania offers detailed (if not always up-to-date) information about the names and origins of

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[308] The lack of a preface and conclusion is notable. In several places, Tacitus explicitly leaves room for multiple interpretations (*G.* 2.2-3, 3.3, 46.4). The first part of the work ends without conclusive remarks: "such, on the whole, is the information we have received concerning the Germani" (27.2). The introduction to the second part of the work is similarly non-committal: "now I shall set forth the institutions and religious rites of the different tribes – to what extent they differ – and also what nations have migrated from Germania into Gaul" (27.2). The final words of the work – *in medio relinquam* (46.4) – underline Tacitus' stance.
[309] Syme 1958a, 47, 125-29.
[310] See Beck 1998, 9-62; cf. also Momigliano 1975, 71: "Caesar went to conquer Gaul with Posidonius in his satchel."
[311] Rives 2012, 54.
[312] For a list of literary antecedents for similar didactic openings, see Thomas 2009, 62.
[313] See esp. Campbell 1987, 13-29 ("Teach Yourself"). Cf. Norden 1923, 186-88; Momigliano 1975, 71.

Germanic tribes, about their character, settlement patterns, natural and mineral resources, forms of

government, military apparatus and fighting style, religious practices, and even about such things as

clothing, education, and upbringing. It further offers information about Germania's geography and

topography and about forms of production and trade. The work offers precisely the sort of

information useful for a legate or governor who had not seen Germania before. It is also precisely the

information that is crucial when imagining conquest, annexation, and governance of a particular

area.[314] For example, the knowledge that the Germani are a people who place extraordinary value on

their *libertas*, are discordant, and are easily roused to violence and warfare is crucial information for a

governor attempting to impose Roman administration and control.[315]

Accurate and practical information about foreign lands was essential for the formulation and

execution of foreign policy, and we have evidence that information collected by officials on the spot or

that reached Rome in other ways often was inaccurate or simply false.[316] Caesar was criticized by his

legate Asinius Pollio for giving too much credence to the reports of his subordinate officers (Suet., *Jul.*

56.5). Pliny the Elder complains about officials disinclined to ascertain the truth (*Nat.* 5.12), while

Tacitus relates examples of officials sending inaccurate reports to Rome (e.g. Caesennius Paetus at *A.*

15.25; cf. 15.18.1). The publication of a fairly comprehensive account of Germania and its tribes, ahead

of potential northern campaigns, may have been deemed very practical indeed.

Modern scholarship has been quick to dismiss the notion that the work is aimed at practical

utility on the theory that Tacitus' information is outdated, that the nature of the work is literary and

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314 One of Trajan's military virtues is said to have been the collection of just this type of information about different people and their lands (*mores gentium*, *regionum situs*, *opportunitates locorum*, *et diuersam aquarum coelique temperiem*, Plin., *Pan.* 15.3). Caesar, too, was keen on acquiring first-hand knowledge about different nations and their inhabitants (*Gal.* 2.15, 3.7, 4.20). Note Cicero's advice to Quintus about the people of Asia Minor (*Q. fr.* 1.1). Tacitus stresses the importance of knowing a people's *animus* in the speech of C. Dillius Vocula, who praises Caesar's and Augustus' knowledge of Gallic character (*melius diuo Iulio diuoque Augusto notos eorum animos*, *H.* 4.57.2). Corbulo is aware of Armenian *mores* (*A.* 14.23). Striking examples of ignorance of a people's psyche are Varus' vision of the Germani as a peace-loving people (Vell. 2.117.4; Tac., *A.* 2.46.1), Caligula's order to the Jews to place a statue of himself in their Temple (*H.* 5.9.2; cf. 5.5), and Claudius' advice to Italicus and Meherdates (*A.* 11.16, 12.11). The Frisian revolt of AD 28 was caused by Olennius' ignorance of the size of Frisian livestock, which led him to impose too harsh a tribute (*A.* 4.72 ff.; cf. L. Piso and the Termestini at *A.* 4.45).
315 Something Varus seems not to have understood, imposing change too rapidly and forcefully (Vell. 2.11.4-118.1; Florus 2.30.29-39; Dio 56.18.2-5; cf. Tac., *A.* 1.58, 2.46.1). Roman incompetence caused the Frisii to revolt (*A.* 4.72-74).
316 See Woolf 2009, 207-17 on the generation of ethnographic knowledge through encounters between local informants (familiar with Roman culture), reporting on their traditions and customs, and Roman ethnographers, who had their own preconceptions.

not political, and that his works nowhere seek "an immediate practical effect."[317] These claims are difficult to sustain, both in light of Tacitus' explicit statements elsewhere about the value of his work and of the way Romans themselves claim to have utilized literary works as sources of knowledge.[318] In any case, a work's practical aims need not be denied at the absence of an explicit authorial statement about its value. The argument that the work does not include the type of information of a modern intelligence report or that it relies too heavily on literary sources instead of eyewitness observation to be of practical utility is anachronistic and fails to take into account common Roman practice.[319] Woolf demonstrates the likelihood that part of Tacitus' information came from local informants (see n. 316), while Rives suggests that Tacitus carefully arranged his material to reflect contemporary conditions.[320]

The *Germania* often is used to make assertions about the author's outlook on the Empire and imperialism. All too frequently the text is used to argue that Tacitus favors continued imperial expansion, while others use the text to make the opposite point, that Tacitus here is pessimistic and aims to discourage a renewed military offensive. The text offers much evidence that supports either of these positions, but both are problematic, since the only way to sustain them is by ignoring plain evidence to the contrary. Both arguments fail to take into account the entire text, focusing either on the geographical and/or ethnographical sections while omitting authorial statements, or vice versa.[321] There also is the risk of reading the *Germania* in light of what Tacitus writes in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*. It must be kept in mind that Tacitus wrote the *Germania* in 98, when the major Trajanic developments in Dacia, Arabia, and Parthia had not yet played out. Any examination of the text ought

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[317] Rives 1999, 52.

[318] Cf. p. 115 with the notes there. Tacitus lays special emphasis on the exemplary value of the *Agricola* and encourages his readers to contemplate and emulate Agricola's example (46.1-4). The *Dialogus* "stages itself as a model for imitation and the attempts to define rhetoric also detail a program of elite existence more generally" (van den Berg 2014, 12). Tacitus likewise stresses the utility of his historical works (note *H.* 1.3.1, *A.* 3.65.1, *A.* 4.33.2-3). On the exemplary and didactic nature of Roman thought and discourse, see Roller 2001; 2004; 2009. See also Turpin 2008. Cf. Classen 1988, 115-16; cf. Clarke 2002, 98-99.

[319] Syme in particular objected to Tacitus' use of outdated material (1958a, 125-29). So, too, Lund 1991a, 1951-54; Thomas 2009, 59.

[320] Rives 2002; 2012, 49.

[321] For example, the excellent article by Tan (2014) limits itself to the geographical sections of the *Germania* and does not take into account the ethnographic evidence (which offers contrasting evidence). Nor does it take into account Tacitus' claims about expansion (or its abandonment), which ought to be included to reach a comprehensive understanding of the author's outlook. Some recent accounts (e.g. Gruen 2011, 159-169; H. Haynes 2014, 41-43) are more attuned to the text's complexities, but interpret its ambiguity and contradictions mainly as instances of Tacitean wit and irony – unnecessarily, I think.

both to be comprehensive and limit itself to what Tacitus knew and could know at the time of writing. Taking this approach, it is evident, as we shall see, that Tacitus neither presents a case for nor a case against conquest and annexation of trans-Rhenane Germania.

Another reason why the *Germania* has not received a wholly satisfactory reading is that the text intrinsically is not about Germania itself but about the problems inherent in imperialism and *imperium*.[322] Germania was a logical topic for an exploration of foreign policy and *imperium* in light of contemporary concerns about the region and past Roman-Germanic relations. By the end of this chapter, I hope to have offered the reader an approach that can accommodate the entire text and its complexities. I begin with a number of citations from the work that reflect the complexity of Tacitus' attitude towards imperialism and *imperium* in 98.

III.2 Foreign Policy and Imperialism in the *Germania*

If you indulge their drunkenness by offering them as much as they want, they will be overcome no less easily by their own vices than by arms. (*G.* 23.1)

The Bructeri were driven out and utterly destroyed by a coalition of neighboring tribes, either from hatred of their arrogance, or from the attraction of plunder, or through some special favor of the gods towards us. It did not even grudge us the spectacle of the conflict. Over sixty thousand fell.... before our delighted eyes. (*G.* 33.1)

Long, I pray, may foreign nations continue if not love for us, at least hatred for each other, since with the destiny of our empire pressing onwards fortune can offer nothing greater than the discord of our enemies. (*G.* 33.2)

Drusus Germanicus indeed did not lack daring; but the ocean barred the explorer's access to itself and to Hercules. Subsequently no one has made the attempt and it has been thought more pious and reverential to believe in the actions of the gods than to inquire. (*G.* 34.2)

If we count from then until the second consulship of the emperor Trajan, it amounts to roughly two hundred and ten years: so long have we been in conquering Germania. (*G.* 37.2)

In recent times they [i.e. the Germani] have been more triumphed over than defeated. (*G.* 37.5)

A famous river [i.e. the Elbe] once known through experience but now through report alone. (*G.* 41.2)

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[322] The lucid account of Gruen (2011, 159-78), e.g., focuses primarily on the Germani as a literary construct, but not on the wider issues that that construct raises and serves to explore. Cf. H. Haynes (2014, 41-43) and Ash (2014, 185-200), whose focus likewise is predominantly literary and who do not explore the questions about foreign policy raised by the text.

These seven citations from the *Germania* illustrate the complexity of Tacitus' attitude towards Roman imperialism in 98 and towards Rome's relationship with Germania in particular. On the one hand, they reflect his natural proclivity towards expansion, as evidenced by his frustration over losses of Germanic territory and the false claims of his former emperor. On the other hand, there is the clear sense that leaving the Germani to their internal hostilities will result in their mutual self-destruction and keep their attention away from harassing Roman territory. On this view, diplomacy and indirect control ('soft power') would be preferred to military action.[323] Similar complexity marks the contemporary *Agricola*, where Tacitus endorses gubernatorial adventurism and praises governors in proportion to their military aggression, where he approves of Agricola's ambition to incorporate Hibernia (modern Ireland) into the Empire (*Agr.* 24) and stresses that the man's conquests disclosed lands and people hitherto unknown (*Agr.* 22.1, in contrast with the knowledge diminished by the loss of Germanic territory), but where at the same time he shows the drawbacks of continued expansion. Tacitus' attitude reflects the wider Roman outlook on the Empire and its boundaries in the post-Augustan age, in which "new arguments… were gradually advanced in favor of limitation, while arguments favoring extensibility were increasingly linked with assertions about Roman morality."[324] This outlook is mirrored in his description of Germania and its tribes, which reveals ways in which the Germani might be undermined and annexation could be practicable and which at the same time points up the military and administrative impracticability of a northern conquest and annexation.

In the following sections, I undertake a detailed examination of the description of Germania and its tribes, focusing on the two ethnographic categories of interest – *situs* and *mores* – and unpacking in each case the supposed implications for any projected foreign policy with regard to the region. While Tacitus' comments on Germania are significant on their own merit, they gain from being read in

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[323] Throughout this study, I follow Potter's definition of 'soft power' as implicit imperial control, as opposed to Joseph Nye's original definition of the term as cultural power and influence (Nye 1990; 2004).

[324] Potter 2013, 319. Even before the Augustan age there were fears about the decline of the Empire. When the censors prayed for its continued aggrandizement, Scipio Africanus claimed it was extensive enough and prayed for its consolidation (V. Max. 4.1.10).

conjunction with contemporary or near-contemporary accounts of other provincial populations. The obvious comparanda are Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*, to which Tacitus directs the reader in the opening line of the text, and his own *Agricola*, by virtue of its subject matter and contemporary publication. Accordingly, the sections on Germania's *situs* and *mores* are interspersed with reflections on how the perception of Germania and its tribes compares and contrasts with that of Gaul and Britain and, in some cases, Judaea. I begin with the description of Germania's *situs* – that is its geography, topography, climate, and natural and mineral resources.

III.2.1 Germania's *situs*: the (Im)practicability of Expansion and Annexation

Germania omnis a Gallis Raetisque et Pannoniis Rheno et Danuuio fluminibus, a Sarmatis Dacisque mutuo metu aut montibus separatur. cetera Oceanus ambit, latos sinus et insularum immensa spatia complectens, nuper cognitis quibusdam gentibus ac regibus, quos bellum aperuit. Rhenus, Raeticarum Alpium inaccesso ac praecipiti uertice ortus, modico flexu in occidentem uersus septentrionali Oceano miscetur. Danuuius molli et clementer edito montis Abnobae iugo effusus pluris populos adit, donec in Ponticum mare sex meatibus erumpat: septimum os paludibus hauritur. (G. 1)

Germania as a whole is separated from the Gauls, Raetians, and Pannonians by the Rhine and Danube rivers, and from the Sarmatians and Dacians by mutual fear or mountain ranges. Ocean, embracing wide peninsulas and islands of huge expanse, surrounds the rest, where certain tribes and kings recently have become known to us, revealed by war. The Rhine rises in an inaccessible and precipitous peak of the Raetian Alps and then with a slight bend turns westward to flow into the Ocean. The Danube pours down from a gentle and slightly rising slope of Mt. Abnoba and visits many nations before it bursts forth into the Pontic Sea through six mouths; a seventh mouth is lost in the marshes.

The opening of the *Germania* is significant for two reasons. First, because of the allusion in the opening words to Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*, for not only is Caesar the only literary authority Tacitus mentions explicitly in the work (28.1), but in the absence of a preface the allusion may serve to tell us something about the practical nature of the work (see p. 115). Second, because of the first impression of Germania it offers a reader. The opening chapter stresses the geographical unity of a massive region otherwise divided among a great number of divergent and rarely unified tribes.[325] The chapter further

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[325] According to Caesar, Gaul was neatly divided into three major parts by its principal rivers, while Germania, according to Tacitus, lacked substantial internal boundaries. This gave the Germani a certain 'mobility' and 'fluidity', as Riggsby articulates it, a feature commonly ascribed to the nomadic peoples of the north (e.g. Strabo and Diodorus' Celts and Germani, Herodotus' Scythians; cf. Sallust's Numidians). On this aspect and its implications, see Riggsby 2006, 21-72.

highlights the country's separation from its neighbors and its inaccessibility due to imposing natural barriers (cf. *G.* 44.3). The chapter is a powerful introduction to the first half of the work, which treats Germania as a whole (*de omnium Germanorum origine ac moribus*, 27.2) and in part serves to create the impression of a unified cultural, political, and military power. It describes a region that is difficult to access (and escape from), especially if the Germani should manage to unite their forces. The description, moreover, is of a dreadful place (*informem terris*, *asperam caelo*, *tristem cultu adspectuque*, 4.1), bounded on one side by Ocean, that formidable physical and conceptual boundary, and on the other sides by two mighty rivers, the Rhine and the Danube, and imposing mountain ranges.[326] The opening chapter at once establishes some of the potential military challenges posed by Germania's geography.[327]

This grim picture is developed in the rest of the work. Tacitus stresses the dangers posed by the immense and hostile Ocean, "seldom entered by Roman sails," and by "rough and unknown seas" (2.1; 17.1; cf. *A.* 2.15.2, 2.23 ff.).[328] Of the former expeditions into the northern Ocean only that of Drusus the Elder receives explicit mention, and the description is gloomy.[329] While Drusus in 12 BC sailed as far as Jutland in an attempt to reach the Pillars of Hercules (Plin., *Nat.* 2.167; Aug., *RG* 26.4; cf. Strabo 7.1.3) – the mythical northern pillars that balance those in the south in ancient theory – Tacitus stresses that "Ocean barred him from inquiring into itself and Hercules" and that "no one

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[326] There was a longstanding tradition that large bodies of water constituted major physical and conceptual boundaries. Note, e.g., Polybius' description of the destruction (in 255 BC) of a Roman fleet off Camarina, on the southern coast of Sicily (1.37); Diodorus' praise of Caesar's "astonishing skill" in bridging the Rhine (5.25.4); Augustus' claims about Ocean and distant rivers as the boundaries of the Empire (*RG* 26, 30, 31); Tacitus' claims to the same effect (*A.* 1.9.5; cf. Anicetus' words at *A.* 14.3.3). On the Rhine as a boundary: *H.* 2.32, 4.55, 4.64, 4.73, 5.24; *A.* 1.59, 1.36, 1.49, 1.69, 2.6, 4.5, 11.19, 12.27, 13.56. Note also Tacitus' description of Ocean (*Agr.* 10.6), of the strait separating the island of Mona from Britain (*Agr.* 18.4), and of the river Clota as a boundary cordoning off unknown tribes (*Agr.* 24.1; cf. *Agr.* 23.1). According to Suetonius, Claudius, after his campaign into Britain, set up a naval crown as a sign that he had crossed and, as it were, subdued the Ocean (*Cl.* 17.3). Caesar's Gaul is divided into three principal parts by its major rivers. For a lucid discussion of Ocean in the Roman imagination, see D. Braund 1996, 10-23. A good example of the conceptual force of bodies of water as boundaries is Tacitus' description of the Rhine and Danube as the boundaries of the Empire in his time (*G.* 1), which Tan (2014, 4) argues serves to deny the Flavian advances in the Neckar and Main river valleys.

[327] Tan 2014, 1-14 is excellent on the description of Germania's geography and the ways in which the text constructs an image of Germania as a formidable and inaccessible place.

[328] Tacitus personifies Ocean as a formidable opponent with an alien and terrifying nature: Rives 1999, 263.

[329] In addition to Drusus' expedition, Tiberius in AD 5 sailed over to and up the Elbe (Vell. 2.106.3), while Germanicus in AD 15-16 sailed down the *Fossa Drusiana* through the *Lacus Flevum* into the North Sea before reaching the Ems, on which he suffered disaster in a heavy storm (Tac., *A.* 2.23-26).

subsequently has made the attempt [to reach the Pillars]" (34.2). Reaching the Pillars seems to have

been an important Augustan objective to bolster claims to world rule (*RG* 26.4). Tacitus' words

undermine those claims and stress that after Germanicus' costly losses on the Ems in AD 16 (*A.* 2.23-

26) the fleet did not play a decisive role in Rome's more limited military operations in Germania.[330]

The perils of the Germanic waterways further stand out when read against the description of the

Ocean near Britain and the achievements of the fleet there. The Ocean around the northern and

western British coastline is described as similarly vast and imposing (*Agr.* 10.6; cf. Caes., *Gal.* 3.8), but,

while Agricola successfully circumnavigated all of Britain, the Ocean and seas in and around Germania

had proven obstacles to the designs of Drusus and Germanicus, and of Rome thereafter.

In other ways Germania's geography was uninviting and dangerous as well. The vast region

has many wide and open expanses of land (26.2; "deserts" (*solitudinibus*), *H.* 4.73.3; Caes., *Gal.* 6.23.1)

with few nucleated settlements, which provide suitable ground for Roman legions (*A.* 2.14.2: *campos*

militi Romano ad proelium bonos; cf. *A.* 1.51), but at the same time it is densely covered with "rough

forests and foul swamps" (*in uniuersum tamen aut siluis horrida aut paludibus foeda*, 5.1; cf. *H.* 4.73.3; Hor.,

Carm. 4.5.25), which were notoriously dangerous for Roman forces and favorable to local tribes, as

Varus, Germanicus, and Cerialis had experienced.[331] Tacitus, in the *Agricola* and the *Annales*, and

Caesar, in the *Bellum Gallicum*, draw attention to the prevalence of forests and swamps in Britain and

Gaul[332] and suggest ways in which Roman commanders might deal with these geographical realities.[333]

The absence of any such suggestions in the *Germania* reinforces the image of impenetrability. The

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[330] Campbell 2013, 183-84. Germanicus' officer Albinovanus Pedo, in a poem on this voyage that is partly preserved by Seneca the Elder (*Suas.* 1.15), wrote that "the gods call us back and forbid mortal eyes from knowing the ends of the world." Tacitus presumably hints at this naval disaster in chapter 37 of the *Germania*, where he points to losses under Germanicus.

[331] Varus: Dio 56.19-22; cf. 54.33. Germanicus and Caecina: *A.* 1.63 ff. Cerialis: *H.* 5.14 ff. For a lucid and concise account of the logistical challenges posed by Germania's geography and terrain, see Engels 2013, 363-66. Cf. Kosmin 2014 on the conception and territorial organization of the Seleucid Empire, especially the challenges posed by the "sheer expansiveness" (p. 254) of the land.

[332] Note the significance of swamps and forests in the case of the Belgic Menapii: this tribe, Caesar says, "was protected by one continued extent of swamps and woods" and, possibly due to this sense of security, "they alone out of Gaul had never sent ambassadors to Caesar on the subject of peace" (*Gal.* 6.5).

[333] On the clearing of forests by Caesar: *Gal.* 3.29; by Agricola: *Agr.* 31.1; by Germanicus: *A.* 1.50.3. On the construction of 'plank-roads' or 'long bridges' (*pontes longi*): *A.* 1.61.1, 1.63.3-4. On these *pontes*, see Schetter and von Uslar 1971, 201-24; Wells 1972, 240 n. 6; Chevallier 1976, 90-91; Lendering and Bosman 2012, 43-44.

Hercynian Forest, which stretched from the middle Rhine to the Vistula (28.2) and was formidable and mysterious due to its size and depth, stood out (*G.* 30.1; Caes., *Gal.* 6.25 ff.; Strabo 7.1.5). Caesar writes of Germani who, after 60 days of travel, did not reach its extremities (*Gal.* 6.25) and spends a further three chapters describing the wild beasts it contained, strange and unknown to Roman eyes (6.25-28; cf. Tac., *A.* 4.72.2: *ingentium beluarum feraces saltus*). Tacitus is less descriptive. Aside from telling us that the territory of the Chatti is coterminous with the forest (*G.* 30.1), he withholds information about its extent, emphasizing its vastness by leaving it undefined.[334] Germania, moreover, is broken up by substantial rivers, which were dangerous passageways during the storms that often raged there (Diod. 5.26.1; cf. storms in Pannonia: *A.* 1.30.2-3, 2.23 ff.), and by substantial mountain ranges (e.g. those dividing the tribes that make up the Suebi, *G.* 43.2). Several tribes inhabited forests and mountaintops that hardly were accessible (43.2).

The physical challenges were magnified by Germania's harsh climate, which had short summers and long winters and in which it was often cold, windy, and rainy (2.1, 4.1, 22.1; Caes., *Gal.* 4.1).[335] Britain, too, suffers from frequent rains, but extreme cold is rare, its climate being milder than the continental Germanic climate (*Agr.* 12.3; Caes., *Gal.* 5.12). The climate of northern Gaul is similar to that of Germania, with severe winters that arrive early (Caes., *Gal.* 4.20, 7.8, 8.5; cf. Tac., *H.* 1.51.2), but the rest of Gaul enjoys milder conditions. All of this is significant with regard to the general conditions in which Roman armies in Germania would have to operate. Aside from imposing harsh conditions, short summers and long winters meant shorter campaigning seasons (cf. *A.* 2.5.3), while climate governs agricultural production, which in turn determines army provisioning (cf. *H.* 4.26-27, 4.35). The climate also bears on what sorts of men Roman armies would be fighting. Common ethnographic conception had it that climate, soil, and the general conditions of a country determined

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[334] Tan 2014, 11.

[335] Diodorus (5.25.2, 5.25.5), Varro (*R.* 1.2.3-5), and Seneca (*Prov.* 4.14) also emphasize the harsh Germanic winter. The part of Germania bordering Noricum and Pannonia was drier (*G.* 5.1).

the basic physiology and character of its inhabitants: colder and harsher conditions were believed to create physically strong and courageous, but unintelligent people, while milder conditions were supposed to create handsome and smart, but physically weak and cowardly people (Vitr. 6.1.3-11; *G.* 4.1, 29.2).[336] According to this thought system, the harsh Germanic climate made the Germani fiercer and more formidable enemies than, for instance, the Britons and Gauls and, consequently, made the conquest of Germania a more challenging prospect than that of Britain and Gaul had been. The net impression of Germania gleaned from the text is that of an inhospitable and forbidding place, massive in size and difficult to define. While its vast open plains make suitable ground for Roman legions, the country presents serious challenges, making military campaigns there costly, inefficient, and dangerous. Tiberius had understood this.

While the description of Germania's geography, then, mostly discourages a military offensive, the account has more complex implications for the establishment of a Roman administration. For one thing, Tacitus implies that a Roman occupation of Germania would be impracticable. Roman-style habitation commonly was marked by large urbanized centers with a centralized organization, and, where possible, Rome inserted its own social and political institutions into the local proto-urban and socio-political fabric that had developed around Late Iron Age *oppida*.[337] This was one reason why the provincialization of Gaul could proceed *relatively* swiftly.[338] The proto-urban layout of Britain, as Caesar reports, was similar to that of Gaul (*multitudo creberrimaque aedificia fere Gallicis consimilia, Gal.* 5.12),[339] and hence the traditional methods of acculturation – the construction of temples, fora, and houses – had also worked well there (*Agr.* 21).[340] Judaea, too, despite consisting for the most part of scattered *vici*,

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[336] See Schadee 2008, 163 with further references there.

[337] It has long been recognized that areas that were urbanized before coming into contact with Rome were integrated more quickly within Roman territory than were non-urban areas. See, e.g., Kunow 1990; Edmondson 1990; Keay 2001.

[338] Kunow 1990, 92-3; Woolf 1998, 7 ff.

[339] Tacitus does not comment explicitly on the habitation patterns or degree of urbanization in Britain in the *Agricola*. Since he acknowledges the information related by earlier authors about Britain's *situs populosque* (10.1) and adds only novel information on Caledonia (whose shape was unknown to Fabius Rusticus and Livy) and the islands around it, we may infer that he follows the information transmitted by Caesar and other authors on habitation patterns in Britain.

[340] Despite the fact that they, like most barbarians, were seen as a "scattered" people (*dispersi, Agr.* 21.1).

had towns (*oppida*) and, most significantly in terms of its 'imageability' (see p. 126), was one of the few areas in the Empire that was centered, like Rome, on one major city (*H.* 5.8.1; Carthage is the other notable example). In most of Germania, however, as Tacitus describes it, this proto-urban fabric did not exist,[341] making the imposition of Roman habitation more costly and time-consuming. Moreover, the fact that the Germani live scattered over long distances (16.1), cannot bear to live in adjoining dwellings (16.1), and think of city walls as *munimenta seruitii* (*H.* 4.64.2) illustrates the stark differences between the Germani, on the one hand, and the Romans, "the most city-proud people known" (Procopius, *Bell.* 8.22.7), on the other, and points up the impracticability of establishing Roman-style settlements.[342] Archaeological evidence from sites deep into trans-Rhenane Germania, such as Lahnau-Waldgirmes, Anreppen, and Haltern, show early imperial attempts at urbanization as part of the establishment of a *prouincia Germania*.[343] Tacitus' description of Germanic living patterns suggests one reason for the failure of these attempts.

Connected with the absence of urbanization was the absence of an infrastructure of roads. The Germanic landscape, dominated by huge open expanses, swamps, and forests, was a configuration that in many ways was incompatible with the way Romans imagined space. The sheer vastness of Germania's territory would pose challenges for communication, security, and transport.[344] The lack of a road network made impossible the type of connectivity that was crucial for the administrative and economic framework of the Roman province. It is significant, as Lee notes, that the Peutinger Table includes routes deep into Persian territory, but that, aside from Roman roads within the former province of Dacia and the *Agri Decumates*, the information about regions north of the Empire is

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[341] "It is well known that none of the Germanic peoples live in cities... they do not lay out their villages in our style... they do not even use stones or bricks" (*nullas Germanorum populis urbes habitari satis notum est… Vicos locant non in nostrum morem conexis et cohaerentibus aedificiis... Ne caementorum quidem apud illos aut tegularum usus, G.* 16.1-2).

[342] Cf. Pomponius Mela, who notes the absence of cities among the Sarmatians (3.33), and Ammianus, who writes that the Alamanni, upon occupying northern Gaul in the 350s, avoided cities "as though they were tombs, surrounded by nets" (*ipsa oppida ut circumdata retiis busta declinant*, 16.2.12). Schadee (2008, 178) astutely points out that the prevalence of forests can be seen as the antithesis of civilization: "they are primeval landscape, untouched by human activities such as agriculture or the building of towns."

[343] Roymans 2004, 196-200.

[344] Cf. the weakness of the organization of the Seleucid Kingdom: "an insistence on the significance, symbolic and practical, of the monarch's mobile presence was undermined by the sheer expansiveness of the land" (Kosmin 2014, 254).

restricted to features like the "Marcian forest" (*silua Marciana*), the "Bastarnic mountains" (*alpes Bastarnicae*), the "Sarmatian wastelands" (*solitudines Sarmatarum*), and the "deserted regions" (*sors desertus*).[345] The absence of such features as an infrastructure of roads detracted from what K. Lynch calls the "imageability" of a region, making it difficult for Romans to visualize the establishment of a viable economic and administrative network in the "trackless wasteland" that Germania continued to be known as (*solitudines auias*, *Pan. Lat.* 12.5.2).[346]

In addition to infrastructural concerns, the nature of agricultural production, the quality of the soil, and the harsh climate raise questions about production levels and the economic viability of a Roman occupation. Germanic soil is fairly fertile and there are many extensive fields (5.1, 26.2). The country generally is rich in livestock, though these are mostly undersized (5.1; cf. *A.* 4.72.2). Tacitus further conjectures that the islands and lands in the west, like the remoter regions in the east, have unusually rich forests and groves (45.5). Moreover, the fact that wheat is the predominant crop grown in Germania (26.3; cf. 45.3) would seem to allow for the adequate provisioning of Roman armies operating in the region (cf. Caes., *Gal.* 8.17).[347]

At the same time, Tacitus points up factors that would seem to impede agricultural production. Germanic soil apparently was not rich everywhere, for Tacitus (like Seneca) could claim that the poor soil leads to hunger (4.1; Sen., *Prov.* 4.14) and that it is harsh to cultivate (2.1; cf. Var., *R.* 1.2.3-5). The soil will also not grow "fruit-bearing trees" (*frugiferarum arborum*, 5.1), by which Tacitus probably means olives (a main staple of the Mediterranean diet and economy) and certain fruits (cf. Var., *R.* 1.7.8; Col., *de Re Rust.* 3.1.3).[348] Diodorus, too, comments on the absence of some fruits due to the excessive cold (5.26.2). Indeed, the long and harsh Germanic winters prevented agricultural production during a large

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[345] Lee 1993, 90.
[346] I owe the reference to Lynch and to the fourth century oration to Lee 1993, 89-90. For a broad treatment of networks and road-systems in pre-modern societies, see the volume edited by Alcock, Bodel, and Talbert (2012), especially Hitchner's chapter on connectivity in the Roman world (pp. 222-34).
[347] In times of draught, however, the grain supply could become dangerously inadequate: *H.* 4.26-27; cf. 4.35.
[348] See Rives 1999, 131.

part of the year (16.3; cf. Var., *R.* 1.2.3-5). Even more detrimental to Germania's economic potential, as Tacitus has it, are the nature of agricultural production and Germanic attitudes towards it. Unlike the Romans, the Germani focused primarily on the production of wheat, neglecting other uses to which they might put their land ("they do not plant orchards, fence off meadows, or irrigate gardens," 26.3; cf. Caes., *Gal.* 6.22).[349] Furthermore, they are said to shun the labor necessary for productive agricultural work and to spend most of their time making war, devoting themselves to food and sleep, and leaving work in the field to women and old men (4.1, 14.3, 15.1, 26.3, 45.3).[350] All this bears on the logistics of military campaigns, for, despite the fact that wheat is the principal crop grown in Germania, the general lack of productivity might imperil the provisioning of Roman armies and limit the ability of commanders to fight in certain areas (cf. Caes., *Gal.* 6.29). The description of the Germani's disposition, moreover, is significant in light of what we are told in the *Agricola* about the Britons and Gauls. While those peoples, under the right kind of governor, could be encouraged to participate actively in establishing a Roman political and economic presence, the Germani's disinterest in common Roman practice, combined with their lethargy, would seem to prevent their being readily co-opted in setting up a Roman administration. Velleius and Florus made similar observations.[351]

In contrast with that of Germania, the soil and climate of Britain and Gaul allowed for the cultivation of most ordinary crops, while agriculture and animal husbandry were established practice.[352] As for Britain, with the exception of olives, vines, and other crops at home in warmer climates, the soil produces all ordinary crops and, though these ripen slowly due to the excessive moisture in the soil and sky, they grow rapidly and abundantly (*Agr.* 12.5; except perhaps in the far north: 31.2). As for

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[349] Gaul, with its generally rich agriculture, viticulture, and oleoculture plainly was more in tune with Roman forms of production.

[350] The attitude of the Fenni reflects the general disinclination towards agriculture (46.3), while the attitude of the Aestii forms an exception that proves the rule (45.3).

[351] Velleius, in describing the Varian disaster, shows how the Germani were "not softened by the imposition of law" (2.117.3) and pretended that "their own barbarous nature was being softened down by this new and hitherto unknown method" (2.118.1) in order to ambush an unsuspecting Varus, ignorant of their true nature. Florus similarly writes that Varus naively thought "he could restrain the violence of the Germani by the rod of a lictor and the proclamation of a herald" (2.30.31). In the words of the Cheruscan Segestes, Tacitus points up the impracticality of Varus' *leges* (*A.* 1.58.2; cf. *A.* 2.46.1). The prevailing thought seems to have been that the usual methods of 'acculturation' and 'softening peace' did not work with the Germani.

[352] Cf. Judaea, which had a rich soil (*uber solum*) that produced all ordinary crops (*fruges nostrum ad morem*, *H.* 5.6.1).

Gaul, despite the fact that the harsh winters in the north could impede harvests (Caes., *Gal.* 1.16), the country generally possesses a very fertile soil that produces all ordinary crops, the olive and vine included. Caesar writes that the fertility of the Gallic soil was a principal reason why Germanic tribes used to cross the Rhine into Gaul (*Gal.* 1.28, 1.31, 2.4; cf. *A.* 11.18.1). In fact, he lays special emphasis on the disparity between the richer Gallic and the poorer Germanic soil (*neque enim conferendum esse Gallicum cum Germanorum agro neque hanc consuetudinem uictus cum illa comparandam*, 1.31). In the *Historiae*, Tacitus has Cerialis make the same point in his speech to the Treviri and Lingones during the Batavian Revolt (*H.* 4.73.3). What emerges is that Germania's agricultural potential, despite various upsides, is perceived to be limited in numerous ways as compared with that of Britain and Gaul. While the Britons and Gauls had in place an agricultural system that was, on the whole, in tune with Roman agricultural practice – a system that continued to be the mainstay of those provinces – the nature of Germanic agricultural production is described as suffering from shortcomings that would make the imposition of a Roman-style administration more challenging and less viable economically.

Regarding the potential of mineral resources, trade, and networks of exchange, Tacitus leaves the reader with an ambivalent impression. He writes that the Germani lack silver and gold (5.2) and have no interest in their possession or use (5.3), but at the same time leaves open the possibility that gold and silver exist in Germania but have not yet been discovered (5.2). These comments are curious in light of what he writes in the *Annales*. There we learn that Curtius Rufus had his men expose silver-mines in the territory of the Mattiaci, but that their profits were slender and short-lived (*A.* 11.20.3). Their omission in the *Germania* underlines the scarcity of precious metals and reinforces the impression of Germania's economy as being generally underdeveloped.[353] Control of mineral resources was another important aspect of the Roman occupation of any given area, and, as with existing proto-urban networks, Rome tended to appropriate and expand the production of existing mining areas.

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[353] Resources from Gaul, Spain, and Italy (including taxes and gold) made up for losses during Germanicus' campaigns: *A.* 1.71, 2.6.

Britain's gold and silver mines (*pretium uictoriae*, *Agr.* 12.6; cf. Strabo 4.199)[354] and Gaul's rich mineral resources (*aurum et opes*, *praecipuae bellorum causae*, *H.* 4.73.3; *Gallos quid aliud quam praedam uictoribus*?, *H.* 4.76.1; *aurum et opes*, *A.* 11.24.6) were an important incentive for conquest and helped defray the cost of annexation. Judaea, too, possessed great wealth (*auctae… res*, *H.* 5.10.1) and offered rich mineral resources, such as bitumen and minerals for glass production ("of which there is an unlimited supply for exporters," *egerentibus inexhaustum*, *H.* 5.7). Caesar had laid the groundwork for Rome's control of lucrative mining areas in both Spain and Gaul of which Augustus was to take charge fully.[355] By Tacitus' time, Spain, Gaul, Britain, Dalmatia, Noricum, and Asia Minor had developed into substantial mining areas, but it was dubious, as the *Germania* suggests, whether Germania could offer such economic prospects.[356]

Continuing his treatment of metals, Tacitus further stresses a relative lack of iron in Germania (*ne ferrum quidem superest*, 6.1). The Aestii and Fenni serve as examples of tribes lacking this metal resource (45.3, 46.3), while the Cotini are said to be the only Germani to possess iron-mines (43.1; cf. Ptol., *Geog.* 2.11.11). The Chatti use iron tools (30.3), while an island in the Ocean, perhaps modern Als or Fyn, seems to possess iron weapons (40.3). The general scarcity of iron is another feature of Germania's *situs* that would prevent the Romans from using a valuable resource on the spot, and again Germania's resources stand in negative contrast with those of Gaul and Britain. The former possessed an extensive network of iron mines (*ferrariae*), which, Caesar notes, made the Gauls practiced experts in all kinds of tunneling (*Gal.* 7.22; Gaul also possessed substantial copper mines: 3.21). The iron

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[354] Caesar possibly refers to the use of gold coins in Britain at *Gal.* 5.12.4, but the reading is uncertain. Cicero, in his correspondence with Quintus and Caesar (who were in Britain at the time), says he hears "there is no gold or silver in Britain" (*Fam.* 7.7.1). To Atticus he writes that "there is not a scruple of silver on that island" (*Att.* 4.16.7). Cicero's words cannot be pressed as evidence for the absence of these precious metals, for elsewhere (*Att.* 4.17.3) he relates that Caesar, upon his departure, imposed monetary tribute on the Britons. Tacitus suggests that Caledonia has poorer natural and mineral resources than southern Britain: *Agr.* 31.2.

[355] The tribute that Caesar imposed on many tribes allowed him to pay his veterans lavishly and carry with him to Rome massive sums of gold and silver booty. Suetonius claims that Caesar, having organized Gaul into a province, imposed on it an annual tribute of 40,000,000 sesterces (*Jul.* 25.1). Caesar rarely refers to booty in the *Gal.*, but the wealth he amassed was notorious: Suet., *Jul.* 54; Vell. 2.56; App., *BC* 2.17.41; Oros., *Hist.* 6.121.

[356] Western Dacia boasted rich gold and silver mines that would be appropriated by Trajan after the Second Dacian War. The most important ancient sources on Roman mining are Strabo, Diodorus, and Pliny the Elder's *Nat.* (books 33-36). For the most recent treatment of mining and metal supplies in the Roman Empire, see Wilson and Bowman 2015.

production in Britain was fairly extensive as well, although Caesar claims that it was restricted to the coast and to small quantities (5.12).[357] Tacitus simply speaks of *alia metalla* (*Agr.* 12.6). Once more Germania's resources are presented as comparatively poor. The one exception to this pattern is the abundance of timber (*materia*, 16.2), with which Germanic dwellings were furnished (16.2) and which provided a necessary resource for Roman armies, as we are told in the *Historiae* and the *Annales* (*caedendis materiis*, *H.* 5.20.2; *latera concaedibus munitus*, *A.* 1.50.1).

Concerning coinage and trade, the text paints a similarly complex picture, one that once more suggests difficulty but leaves room for potential. Tacitus tells us that the majority of the Germani – that is those living in the interior – still rely on barter, while the tribes close to the frontier recognize the value of silver and gold for trade purposes (5.3). Moreover, the interior tribes are said to value older issues of Roman coinage, while the tribes near the frontier prefer newer types (5.3; cf. 15.2). Regardless of whether Tacitus here follows common ethnographic stereotypes (equating geographical proximity to the Empire with degree of civilization: he probably does) and of whether the numismatic and archaeological record bears out his observations (Rives shows it partly does), what matters is the image of Germania he shapes. That image is one of a generally primitive economy in which the monetary and economic devices long in use in the Empire had not yet been discovered. The apparent development of a small-scale economy near the frontier, however, suggests that continued interaction with Germania's tribes might effect a gradual (*diu...* 5.3; 15.2) change towards a more developed, Roman-style economy.[358] The difficulty, of course, lies precisely in the prolonged investment necessary to effect such change.

Another feature of Germania's landscape that might afford economic opportunity is the great number of rivers, tributaries, canals, and lakes, which might be developed into riverine networks to

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[357] The archaeological evidence from British sites refutes Caesar, who in any case did not progress deep into the island. On iron production in Iron Age and Roman Britain, see Davies 1935; Cleere and Crossley 1986; Sim and Ridge 2002; Schrüfer-Kolb 2004.
[358] Cf. O'Gorman 1993, 140-41 [= Ash 2012, 103-05].

facilitate transport and economic growth, much like the large river-systems in Gaul that had driven economic growth there.[359] Tacitus stresses the importance of the Rhine as a corridor for trade and economic development, and the text suggests that long-term interaction might extend economic activity into the interior. Against such prospects, however, stands the long-term investment necessary to effect this growth and, what is more problematic, the absence of an extensive road network that might cover Germania's huge open expanses (26.2) and connect the waterways with other far-lying areas. As any Roman knew, an extensive network of waterways is nothing without an extensive road network to support it.[360]

On the whole, the text paints a complex picture of Germania's *natura* and *situs*, pointing up ways in which a Roman conquest and occupation might be practicable, but, to a larger degree, establishing ways in which these objectives are impractical, costly, and time-consuming.[361] Many features of Germania's *situs* detracted from its imageability, making it difficult to envision the establishment of a trans-Rhenane province. Yet, it is crucial to note, Tacitus nowhere explicitly advocates a particular policy nor does he direct the text in a conclusive direction. If at this point the reader may draw a conclusion from the text, it would be that the problems inherent in Roman foreign policy are complex and defy a straightforward answer.

III.2.2 Germanic *Mores*: Renewing the Military Offensive?

Just as the work's geographical sections sketch a complex image of Germania's natural and mineral make-up, so the ethnographic sections shape a multifarious image that underlines, quite

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[359] On the riverine network in Gaul, see Campbell 2012, 263-78.

[360] On the importance of intra-terrestrial waterways along with land-based networks, see McCormick 2001, 77-82, 663-69; Hermon 2010; Campbell 2012.

[361] Krebs argues that the work's geography and ethnography point to the practicability of conquest and that the work therefore serves as a "Plädoyer" for military action into Germania (2005, 78-81). Tan (2014, 1-24), in contrast, argues that the text's geography serves to show that Germania is inviolate and inaccessible and, consequently, discourages a renewed military offensive. The arguments of Krebs and Tan reflect the general trend in scholarship on the *Germania*, in which scholars occupy opposing positions about the foreign policy advocated by the text. In light of the evidence thus far presented, neither position can be endorsed. As regards the economic downside of conquest and annexation of Germania, note the comments of Strabo (17.3.24-25; cf. 2.5.8 on the lack of profit to be had from Britain) and Appian (*Praef.* 7).

evenhandedly, the virtues and vices, and the strengths and weaknesses, of the Germani.

As regards Germanic character and custom (*mores*), the text provides much evidence in support of a northern military offensive. Tacitus principally defines the Germani as a number of dispersed and naturally discordant tribes that rarely combine their strength for common purposes (29.1, 33.1-2, 36, 40.1; the whole second half of the monograph underlines this point; cf. British (*Agr.* 12.1-2) and Jewish (*H.* 5.8.3, 12.3-4) discord). Their warlike character and fierce temper cause them to be impulsive (*licentia*, 11.2, 21.2; *cupiditas* and *impotentia*, 35.2) and to resort to war and violence rashly (14.2-3, 22.2), a trait that would seem to afford opportunities to experienced Roman generals.[362] Moreover, the Germani are said to be neither clever nor cunning (*gens non astuta nec callida*, 22.3), a curious description that stands in contrast with the reputation for deceit they had earned generally and with the image we receive of them in the later works.[363] Tacitus evidently followed ethnographic stereotypes, depicting the Germani as less formidable enemies on account of their lack of intelligence and prudence. Elsewhere, we are told that Germanic weapons, armor, and cavalry are substandard (6.1-3; cf. Agricola's claims about the inferior British arms: *Agr.* 33.5, 36.1-2) and that their bodies facilitate short bursts of energy but no sustained action (4.1). They also cannot function in the heat (4.1; cf. Plut., *Mar.* 3.4-5). Moreover, when they are not fighting, they constantly are drunk and indolent (15.1, 22, 23.1) and so ruin their military discipline. Finally, their military strategy, in terms of both cavalry and infantry, is quite one-dimensional (6.3-4). The military shortcomings of the Germani collectively are underlined by the qualities of the Chauci, who form a conspicuous exception:

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[362] Note the maxim about "barbarian rashness" at *A.* 13.36.2: *is quamquam incautos barbaros et bene gerendae rei casum offerri scripserat.*

[363] Like many Roman enemies, the Germani often were considered treacherous and cunning. Caesar characterized Ariovistus and the Tencteri as deceitful (*Gal.* 1.40.8, 4.13.1, 4.13.4). The Varian disaster, in which Varus' legions were ambushed and massacred by what appeared to be friendly Germanic forces, increased the Germani's reputation for deceit (Tac., *A.* 1.58.2, 2.46.2). Velleius calls the Germani "a race born to treachery" (*natum mendacio genus*, 2.118.1). The Batavian noble Civilis is characterized as an especially intelligent and cunning chief (Tac., *H.* Book 4 *passim*). Note esp. *H.* 4.13.2: "but Civilis was cleverer than the average barbarian" (*sed Civilis ultra quam barbaris solitum ingenio sollers*). In the same line, Tacitus pairs the Batavian with Sertorius and Hannibal, two other notoriously cunning generals. Civilis and Sertorius are linked conceptually through their similar facial disfigurement, which Tacitus underlines by means of an allusion to a passage about Sertorius in Sallust's *Historiae* (*ferens simili oris dehonestamento* (Tac., *H.* 4.13.2) ~ *dehonestamento corporis* (Sal., *Hist.* 1.88)). Tacitus' Civilis also recalls Velleius' Arminius (*ultra barbarum promptus ingenio*, Vell. 2.118.2). For the implications of this allusion, see Ash 2014, 189-90.

Duriora genti corpora, stricti artus, minax uultus et maior animi uigor. Multum, ut inter Germanos, rationis ac sollertiae: praeponere electos, audire praepositos, nosse ordines, intellegere occasiones, differre impetus, disponere diem, uallare noctem, fortunam inter dubia, uirtutem inter certa numerare, quodque rarissimum nec nisi ratione disciplinae concessum, plus reponere in duce quam in exercitu. Omne robur in pedite, quem super arma ferramentis quoque et copiis onerant: alios ad proelium ire uideas, Chattos ad bellum. Rari excursus et fortuita pugna. Equestrium sane uirium id proprium, cito parare uictoriam, cito cedere: uelocitas iuxta formidinem, cunctatio propior constantiae est. (G. 30.2-3)

This people possesses a *tougher* physique, tight limbs, a fierce countenance, and a *greater* mental vigor. *For Germans* they have a great deal of judgment and cleverness: they elect their leaders and obey them. They keep their ranks, recognize opportunities, and postpone their attacks. They plan their day, entrench themselves at night, regard fortune as doubtful and valor as unfailing and, *what is rarest of all* and owed to their judgment and discipline, they place more trust in their general than in the army. Their whole strength lies in their infantry, which they burden with tools and provisions in addition to arms: *other people* you may see going out to battle, the Chatti to war. Sallies are rare and so are unplanned engagements. It is, of course, characteristic of cavalrymen to win a quick victory and make a quick retreat. Speed and timidity go together; deliberation is a quality that goes more closely together with steadfastness.

By stressing what military qualities the Chatti possess Tacitus underlines what most Germani lack: Roman *disciplina*. The Germani's image as being rash, indolent, and drunk and as lacking the discipline and physical qualities necessary for enduring military action is directly at odds with the physical and moral qualities that formed the basis of Roman military success.[364] The above points, which bear similarities to what Tacitus tells us about the Britons, underline Roman military superiority and suggest ways in which seasoned generals could undermine Germanic forces.

These aspects are only part of the picture, however, for the Germani's virtues are no less on display than their shortcomings. Of particular interest is the contrast between pure and old-fashioned Germanic morality (the notion of the 'noble savage') and the moral corruption of contemporary Rome, which is significant not only for the perception of Germanic military strength but for the practicability of incorporating Germania into the Empire, as will be seen.

In the second chapter, we explored the notion that the imperial system of government is hostile to *uirtus* and noted the destructive impact of this hostility on the performance of public officials, both in the capital and the provinces. Tacitus' remarks in the *Agricola* about the lack of

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[364] Note Appian (*Gall.* 1.3), whose characterization of the Germani variously corresponds to that of Tacitus. Appian wrote that the Germani, though men of huge stature and great valor, lacked endurance and military discipline, causing them to be overcome by the "science and endurance" (ἐπιστήμη καὶ φερεπονία) of the Roman forces under Caesar.

appreciation of *uirtus* in Rome should be read in conjunction with what he writes about Germanic morality and the workings of *uirtus* in Germania. The concept of a pure and preserved Germanic morality runs through the work and touches on most aspects of Germanic life. The Germani are said to be an indigenous people that has preserved the purity of its race by its physical separation from other nations and by rejecting intermarriage (2.1-2, 4.1; the Jews have a similar practice and outlook: *H.* 5.5; cf. *A.* 15.44.4). This policy stands in marked contrast with the intermarriage between Gauls and Romans, which, as Claudius argues at *A.* 11.24, was one aspect of the successful acculturation of that province. The Germanic race is "distinct, pure, and only like itself" (*propriam et sinceram et tantum sui similem gentem*, 4.1; cf. *sincerus et integer... populus*, *H.* 4.64.3),[365] an image reflected by their typically Germanic appearance ("fierce blue eyes, red hair, and huge bodies," 4.1). Their indigenous nature is affirmed in their ancient songs, in which they celebrate the earth-born gods Tuisto, his son Mannus (the forefather and founder of the Germani), and his three sons (2.2).[366] By enjoying a modest upbringing in their mother's care and living a life of "sheltered chastity, uncorrupted by temptations" (*saepta pudicitia...*), men and women preserve their morality and vigor from childhood into adulthood (18-20). Boys and girls marry late and so preserve their vigor (20.2; cf. Caes., *Gal.* 6.21). Unlike nearly all foreign people, the Germani are content with a single wife only (the most praiseworthy aspect of their moral code, according to Tacitus: 18.1) and adultery is rare (19.1). Women (unlike their Roman counterparts: *A.* 3.33) share the toils and dangers of their husbands (18.3) and together they transmit their strength untarnished to their children, who retain their parents' physical and moral vigor and pass it on to *their* children, and so forth (18.3).[367] Tacitus thus describes a cyclical system which ensures a continuous supply of physically and mentally vigorous people, in contrast with the situation in Rome,

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[365] This phrase, among others, is what led Momigliano to rank the *Germania*, along with the *Iliad*, among the hundred most dangerous books ever written (1966, 112-13). The phrase was misused to posit a direct connection between the ancient Germani and modern Germans (Rives 1999, 1-11) and, in Nazi ideology, to bolster claims to racial superiority. Scholarship on the reception of the *Germania* is vast. Isaac 2004, 137 n. 327 offers a comprehensive list. See Krebs 2005 on the *Germania*'s reception and influence in the early modern period; Lund 1995 for the early 20th century. The most recent study is Krebs' *A Most Dangerous Book* (2011).

[366] The claim to an autochthonous and indigenous nature recalls the same claim made by the Athenians. See Isaac 2004, 138-40.

[367] Cf. Philostratus' comments on the way parents transmit their moral and physical characteristics to their children (*Gym.* 28).

where, as we have seen, upbringing and education (*D.* 28 ff.), the nature of the Principate, and the corruptions of the capital (note esp. *A.* 15.44.3: *sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque*) enervate public morality and performance. This image of imperial Rome recurs in Messalla's speech at *D.* 28.1-3.

The public display and appreciation of *uirtus* and a healthy competition for glory (*aemulatio*) are further aspects of Germanic *mores* that attract Tacitus' attention (7.1, 13.2-3, 14.1) and that stand out against the defective circulation of glory and the prevalence of *discordia* that mark Tacitean Rome. Tacitus is interested particularly in the relationship between the leading men (*principes*) and their retinue (*comitatus*, *G.* 13), which resembles patron-client relations and, in military contexts, bears on the relationship between a commander-in-chief and his subordinates.[368] The leading men notably are chosen for their merit (*ex uirtute*, 7.1). They lead by example (*exemplo*, 7.1) and earn respect by standing out and fighting in the front (*conspicui... ante agmen agunt*, 7.1). It is considered a disgrace (*turpe*, 14.1) for leaders to be outdone in valor by their followers or vice versa. Moreover, there is great competition (*aemulatio*) among the followers to be first in the leader's estimation and among leaders to have the largest and bravest retinue (13.2-3).[369]

In the second chapter, we explored the positive correlation between the freedom to display merit and public performance. Both Sallust and Tacitus established that connection. We also noted the 'trickle-down' effect of the conduct of those in positions of power down through the ranks and the positive impact of exemplary conduct on the performance of subordinate officers and society generally. While in the *Agricola* and the historical works Tacitus records examples of such behavior, they evidently are exceptions to the, in his view, deplorable conduct of the governing class, making the description of the workings of *uirtus* and positive *aemulatio* among the Germani all the more pointed.

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[368] Note also the resemblance to young Romans following eminent orators as part of their oratorical training (*D.* 2.1, 34.1-3).
[369] Just as noble deeds are publicly appreciated, so cowardly and criminal acts receive conspicuous punishment (12.1-3). Also note the custom among the Tencteri whereby the inheritance of certain property is granted not to the eldest son but to the one who proved himself the best and fiercest in battle (32.1).

This contrast between Germania and Rome has military implications, for the perceived opposition is one between a people relying on a continuous supply of vigorous men, who are encouraged to display *uirtus* and earn *gloria*, and the Romans, whose morality has been impaired and whose system of government discourages excellence and often appoints unqualified officials. On this view, Rome would face a formidable task against any Germanic force, however united. Indeed, it has been argued that one thing Tacitus intimates in the *Germania* is that, owing to the loss of its traditional moral qualities, Rome's "hope of success against the Germans lies, at the moment, not in her arms, but in their divisions," a point he stresses at *G.* 33.2: *nihil iam praestare fortuna maius potest quam hostium discordiam.*[370]

This side of the argument is strengthened by Tacitus' comments on Germanic *libertas* (11.1-2, 21.1, 25.2, 37.3, 44.1, 45.6). The *libertas* of the Germani is connected explicitly with their military strength and seen as the principal reason why they had held out against Rome for so long:

> *Ex quo si ad alterum imperatoris Traiani consulatum computemus, ducenti ferme et decem anni colliguntur: tam diu Germania uincitur. Medio tam longi aeui spatio multa in uicem damna. Non Samnis, non Poeni, non Hispaniae Galliaeue, ne Parthi quidem saepius admonuere: quippe regno Arsacis acrior est Germanorum libertas. Quid enim aliud nobis quam caedem Crassi, amisso et ipse Pacoro, infra Ventidium deiectus Oriens obiecerit? At Germani Carbone et Cassio et Scauro Aurelio et Seruilio Caepione Maximoque Mallio fusis uel captis quinque simul consulares exercitus populo Romano, Varum tresque cum eo legiones etiam Caesari abstulerunt; nec impune C. Marius in Italia, diuus Iulius in Gallia, Drusus ac Nero et Germanicus in suis eos sedibus perculerunt...'* (*G.* 37.2-4)

> If we count from then until the second consulship of our emperor Trajan, it amounts to roughly two hundred and ten years: so long have we been in conquering Germania. In the space of this long period there were many losses on both sides. Neither the Samnites nor the Carthaginians nor Spain nor Gaul nor even the Parthians have given us more frequent warnings. The freedom of the Germani indeed is fiercer than the despotism of an Arsaces.[371] What else can the East taunt us with than Crassus' demise, while it lost Pacorus and was crushed under Ventidius? But the Germani, with Carbo, Cassius, Scaurus Aurelius, Servilius Caepio and Maximus Mallius either routed or captured, robbed the Roman people of five consular armies at once and even robbed a Caesar of Varus and three legions with him; nor was it without loss that Gaius Marius in Italy, the divine Julius in Gaul, Drusus, Nero [Tiberius], and Germanicus in their own country struck them down...

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[370] Toynbee 1944, 41.

[371] On the meaning of *acrior*, see Lund 1988, 208. Tacitus' comments are prophetic: the Arsacid dynasty lasted until AD 226, while Germanic tribes went on to overthrow Rome's empire in the west. See Birley 1999, 122; cf. Krebs 2011, 155.

Tacitus underlines the Germani's strength by setting them apart from the Parthians, who in turn are set apart (note the force of *ne... quidem*) from Rome's other enemies.[372] Already here does Tacitus pair the Germani and the Parthians as the principal objects of his (and Rome's) attention, which they continue to be in the *Annales*.[373] But the point is the Germani's military strength, which is on full display. The argument that Tacitus here advocates a renewed military offensive misses the point.[374] He notably characterizes the wars against the Germani as a single, continuous, and unsuccessful attempt, with many losses on both sides, and the present tense of *uincitur* underlines that conquest has not been accomplished. This is one of the ways in which Tacitus denies the claims of earlier Romans to have solved the question of Germania, Domitian in particular. Noting the Cimbric victories during Marius' time, the losses suffered against Germanic tribes by Caesar, Drusus, Tiberius, Varus, and Germanicus, and during the Batavian Revolt, Tacitus stresses the numerous setbacks against the formidable Germani, a point he has Cerialis reiterate in the *Historiae* (4.73.2: *quot proeliis aduersus Cimbros Teutonosque, quantis exercituum nostrorum laboribus quoue euentu Germanica bella tractauerimus, satis clarum*). The source of the Germani's strength is their *libertas*, which made them fiercer than people living under Parthian despotism. In the *Historiae*, Civilis makes precisely the same point while exhorting the Gauls to join his revolt (*seruirent Syria Asiaque et suetus regibus Oriens*, 4.17.4).[375] While the opposition between freedom and slavery, and their association with courage and cowardice, was an ethnographic and political commonplace,[376] it had real meaning within the system of conventions and preconceptions that shaped

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[372] For a similar description of Rome's enemies, cf. Ov., *Tr.* 2.225-230 with Thakur 2008, 74 ff.

[373] Tacitus' scorn of Parthia's victories merely serves to highlight the strength of the Germani and is negated by the *ne... quidem*, which illustrates Parthia's power. Cf. *H.* 1.40.2: *igitur milites Romani, quasi Vologaesum aut Pacorum auito Arsacidarum solio depulsuri*; *A.* 2.60.4; 12.10.2; 15.13.2. On the complex view of Parthia's servility, on the one hand, and its martial courage, on the other, see Isaac 2004, 371-80. Note also *CIL* iii. 3.3676 (= *ILS* 2558), an early second century AD inscription from western Hungary, in which a Batavian soldier boasts about his swimming skills and proudly proclaims that "no Roman or barbarian ever could beat me, no soldier with his javelin, no Parthian with his bow."

[374] So, e.g., Drexler 1952, 61-66; Thielscher 1962, 15; Dauge 1981, 251-53; Timpe 1989, 81-85; Isaac 2004, 434-437; Krebs 2005, 31-110. My view here corresponds with that of Gruen (2011, 169-71). The interpretation of chapter 37 is closely connected with the interpretation of 33.2, on which more below (pp. 153-54).

[375] Not only does Civilis associate the East with despotism and slavery, he associates (albeit implicitly) the strength of the Germani with their freedom: *proinde arriperent uacui occupatos, integri fessos* (*H.* 4.17.5).

[376] Rives 1999 *ad loc*. For the opposition between freedom and slavery, associated most famously with Herodotus' Greeks and Persians, respectively, see Isaac 2004, 257-303 ("Greeks and the East").

ancient Greek and Roman thought.[377] According to this thought system, the freedom of the Germani made them fierce and courageous warriors. Chapter 37, hardly a call for resuming the offensive, forcefully underlines this image. Yet, it should be noted, Tacitus' comments on the 'free' Germani merely add another factor to an already complex discussion; they do not sway that discussion into a conclusive (in this case, pessimistic) direction. Indeed, the freedom of the Germani is qualified as well. Many tribes, on Tacitus' own account, are subject to kings and do not have access to *libertas*. Moreover, without *ratio* and *disciplina*, which only the Chatti possess, *libertas* readily devolves into *licentia*.

The appearance of the Germani, whose huge bodies and fierce countenance were awe-inspiring, added an additional factor to Roman perceptions of them.[378] On four occasions Tacitus notes the strong frames and fierce looks of the Germani – the Chatti and Suebi in particular.[379] In the *Agricola*, he posits a Germanic origin for the Britons living in Caledonia due to their red hair and huge limbs (*rutilae... comae*, *magni artus*, 11.2). The Marcomannic king Maroboduus was renowned for his physical strength (cf. Vell. 2.108.2), the Cheruscan chief Arminius for his fierce countenance (Vell. 2.118.2; Tac., *A.* 2.17.4). The Germani's appearance had a psychological impact on Roman forces. Caesar describes his men as becoming frightened by the reports of Gauls and traders, who claimed that the Germani were men of "huge stature" (*ingenti magnitudine corporum*, *Gal.* 1.39), "incredible valor" (*incredibili uirtute*), and "practice in arms" (*exercitatione in armis*), and that often, upon encountering them, they "could bear not even their countenance and the fierceness of their eyes" (*ne uultum quidem atque aciem oculorum dicebant ferre potuisse*). Imagining the size and fierceness of the Germani paralyzed Caesar's men, who had to be prevented from fleeing in disgrace (1.40). In the *Annales*, Tacitus records a similar incident under Suetonius Paulinus, who, when attacking the island of Mona, saw his men become

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[377] Cf. Rives 2012, 56.
[378] Caes., *Gal.* 2.30, 4.1, 6.20; Vell. 2.108.2, 2.118.2; Col., *de Re Rust.* 3.8.3; Vegetius 1.1.4; cf. Plut., *Mar.* 11.3; App., *Gall.* 1.3.
[379] *G.* 4.1: *truces oculi... magna corpora*; 20.1: *hos artus, in haec corpora, quae miramur*; 30.2: *duriora genti corpora, stricti artus, minax uultus* (of the Chatti); 38.2: *altitudinem* (of the Suebi). *Corpus ut uisu toruum* at *A.* 2.14.3 continues the notion. Cf. *H.* 3.24.2: *oculosque non tolerent*. Note Caligula's fake triumph over the Germani, which involved the emperor, drawing on ethnographical stereotypes, using particularly tall Gauls, dyeing their hair red, and giving them Germanic names and having them speak 'German' (Suet., *Cal.* 43-49; Dio 59.25.2–5, with Dench 2005, 37-41).

paralyzed with fear at the sight of an unconventional foe (*A.* 14.30; cf. *H.* 4.22.3: *obstupefecerant obsesses*). The psychological impact of strange and unusually fierce appearances was real, and the *Germania* offers a general rule: "in all battles it is the eyes that are conquered first" (*primi in omnibus proeliis oculi uincuntur*, 43.4). Tacitus stresses the frightening aspect of several Germanic tribes, who are aware of the psychological impact of their appearance. So the Suebi tie their hair in a knot to look taller and more frightening to their enemies (*terrorem... hostium oculis*, 38.2). But the most terrifying are the Harii, who engage in veritable psychological warfare: "their shields are black and their bodies painted black. They choose pitch-dark nights for their battles and by their terrible and gloomy appearance, like a ghostly army, they create terror, as no enemy can withstand this novel and infernal sight" (43.4).[380]

Another aspect of Germanic military strength that Tacitus stresses is the fact that their squadrons, unlike their Roman counterparts, are not formed at random or by chance musters, but by family and kinship groups (7.2). This, says Tacitus, was the principal source of the Germani's courage (*praecipuum fortitudinis incitamentum*, 7.2), as they fought for what was dearest to them. Moreover, as was common with barbarians, their wives and relatives were present during battle as further incentives to valor (*G.* 7.2-8.1-2). While this is another ethnographic commonplace (pp. 89, 191), Tacitus stresses the real value this practice could have: "it is recorded that some armies that were already wavering and about to collapse were rallied by women pleading unwaveringly" (8.1).[381] The presence of women and children near the battlefield was another unexpected sight for Roman eyes (*A.* 14.30.1).[382] The comments on the psychological warfare conducted by certain tribes, and on women and children attending battles, give Romans a sense of the unconventional situations they might encounter.

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[380] On Tacitus' evocative description of the Harii, see Benario 1999, 109. Isaac (2004, 435 n. 56) usefully notes that the Harii recall Xenophon's Thynoi, a Thracian people similarly specialized in night fighting (Xen., *An.* 7.2.22; cf. 7.4.14). According to Caesar, the Britons dyed themselves with woad (*uitrum*), which turns blue, to look more terrifying in battle (*Gal.* 5.14). The Germani also employ an enhanced battle cry to frighten enemies (*G.* 3.1).

[381] Plutarch (*Mul. Virt.* 6 on Celtic women) and the 2nd century Macedonian rhetorician Polyaenus (*Strat.* 7.50) record similar examples.

[382] A particularly gruesome practice is described by Strabo, who records that the wives of the Cimbri, who accompanied their husbands during expeditions, were attended by prophetesses, who would beat on hides stretched out over wagons to produce "an unearthly noise" and would sacrifice prisoners of war by cutting their throats and collecting their blood in cauldrons (7.2.3).

Above we identified the persistent discord and warfare among the Germani as a military advantage for Rome, in that the former rarely combine their forces and impulsively resort to war and violence. Against this perceived benefit stand opposing considerations that underline Germanic military strength. For the perpetual discord among them has served to make the Germani fierce warriors with long-accumulated fighting experience. This was one factor (*exercitatione in armis*, Caes., *Gal.* 1.39; cf. *pluris tamen bonos proeliatores bella quam pax ferunt*, D. 37.7; *diu Germanicis bellis exerciti*, H. 4.12.3) that had frightened Caesar's men. Tacitus describes many tribes as possessing respectable military skills. We already have noted the military qualities of the Chatti. The Batavi, too, are skilled fighters and known for their valor (*uirtute praecipui*, 29.1).[383] The Mattiaci match the Batavi but possess a keener spirit (*acrius animantur*, 29.2). The Tencteri have a reputable cavalry (*laus... equitum*, 32.1), while the Frisii are known for their strength (34.1). The renowned Chauci (*populus inter Germanos nobilissimus*, 35.1) always are ready and equipped to go to war (35.2), while the Langobardi are a bold people ready to face danger (*periclitando,* 40.1). The Marcomanni are foremost in glory and strength (*praecipuae Marcomanorum gloria uiresque*, 42.1) and won their territory by valor (*uirtute parta*, 42.1).[384] They, in turn, are matched in their qualities by the Naristi and Quadi (42.1). These last three tribes, Tacitus says, "form as it were the front of Germania (*Germaniae frons*) along the line marked by the Danube" (42.1). This phrase, which "evokes the idea of a battlefield with three especially powerful peoples facing Rome," reflects respect and demonstrates power.[385] A man like Maroboduus in his day could muster a force of 74,000 (Vell. 2.109.2), and it should be recalled that the Marcomanni and Quadi had crushed several Roman armies a decade before Tacitus penned the *Germania.* The prestige of the Marcomanni and Quadi is reflected further by the fact that their former kings Maroboduus and Tudrus are the only

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[383] In fact, Batavian cohorts were considered the best auxiliary forces, as we shall see below.
[384] Tacitus' claims once more are prophetic (see n. 371). During the Marcomannic Wars (166-73, 177-80) the Marcomanni and Quadi managed to invade Italy, the first Germani to achieve this feat since the Cimbri. The Marcomanni also played some part in the subsequent wars on the middle Danube, although their precise role remains difficult to reconstruct. On the Marcomannic Wars, see Birley 1987 and van Ackeren 2012, esp. 29-44, 83-91, 222-228, 229-233, with further references there.
[385] Isaac 2004, 435 for the citation.

Germanic men mentioned by name in the work (42.2). It has been argued that Tacitus' description of these tribes serves to advocate conquest, in that it would be too dangerous to leave the Germani unconquered.[386] It would be an odd way for an author, however, to advocate war and at the same time emphasize numerous factors indicating the impracticability of conquest. The sizeable list of skilled and bold Germanic tribes serves, if anything, to illustrate the massive difficulty Rome would face if it were to renew the offensive.

The *Germania* does not unequivocally advocate or discourage a renewed military offensive into trans-Rhenane Germania. While it is all too natural to mine the text for evidence on either side of this question, the simple, yet crucial, point is that Tacitus leaves the matter open.

III.2.3 Germanic *Mores*: Establishing a Trans-Rhenane Province?

The description of Germanic *mores* offers a similarly complex picture regarding the viability of establishing a Roman Germania. While the text identifies factors that suggest a basic compatibility between Roman and Germanic culture, it points up various ways in which Roman and Germanic customs are too incompatible for the customary means of acculturation to be viable.

Good arguments can be made for the viability of incorporating the Germani into the Empire. One of the principal ways the text homogenizes Germanic and Roman society is by describing features of the former in terms that are characteristic of the latter, a method known as *interpretatio Romana*.[387] The most useful way to draw meaningful comparison was through the application of similar analytical terms to both cultures. C. Krebs shows how the text describes Germania as a *res publica Germanica*, an

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[386] Isaac 2004, 436.

[387] The concept of *interpretatio Romana* most often is used by scholars of ancient religion, denoting the general identification of a foreign godhead with a member of a people's own pantheon. Although the concept is used widely in the study of ancient Roman and provincial religion, its only extant use in Latin literature is in the *Germania* (*G.* 43.3). Hence there is a real danger in applying to a wide range of texts and contexts a term specific to one section of a single work. Krebs (2005, 31 ff.) rightly distinguishes between *interpretatio Romana* and *interpretatio Tacitea*. The standard interpretation goes back to an article by Wissowa (1916-1919, 1-49). Krebs (2005, 50-53) sees the concept as a feature of Roman cultural imperialism. For Timpe (1992, 448-55), Tacitus' *interpretatio Romana* is a more abstract notion, as opposed to a concrete correspondence of Roman and non-Roman deities. Ando (2005, 41-51) disputes the traditional application of the concept in modern scholarship. Gruen (2011, 169 ff.) shows the complexity of the concept, rightly noting that its use by Tacitus is far from one-sided. See also Lund 2007, 289-310; Roymans 2009, 219-38.

actual state, on the model of its counterpart, the *res publica Romana*, and with the socio-political and religious features and appellations that characterize the Roman state.[388] The use of terms like *potestas* and *auctoritas* for the formal power of kings, *imperium* for that of generals, *legati* for ambassadors, *principes* for nobles and *comites* for their retinue, and *plebs* for the common people (who are balanced against *proceres* at 10.2) is a plain example of *interpretatio Romana* and one way the text makes Germanic society recognizable to a Roman reader. Likewise, some Germanic gods are described as similar to Mercury, Hercules, and Mars. Legends bring Ulysses and Hercules to Germania (3.2). The Germani sacrifice to Isis (9.1), venerate Castor and Pollux (43.3), and are said to take the *auspicia*, use *sortes*, and inspect the sounds and flights of birds (*G.* 10).[389] The ceremony in which young Germani are granted their first set of weapons and so are formally inducted as members into society resembles Roman youths receiving the *toga uirilis* (*G.* 13.1). The system whereby the nobles decide about small matters and the whole populace about greater ones (*G.* 11.1) recalls the traditional division between the duties of the senate and the popular assembly during the Republic. Finally, as in Rome, banquets play a significant role in Germanic society (15.1, 21.2, 22.1-3), and the Germani enjoy some form of public entertainment (24.1). These observations point up broad similarities between Germanic and Roman culture that bear on the practicability of acculturating the Germani. For the organization of "refined banquets" (*conuiuiorum elegantiam*) and other forms of public entertainment was one of the methods used by Roman governors to civilize (and corrupt) native tribes (*Agr.* 21.2). The above descriptions add to the imageability of Germania, diluting the stark differences between the two cultures and allowing a reader to imagine Germani and Romans functioning together.

This line of reasoning can be extended by considering the supposed effects on the Germani of prolonged interaction with Romans. As noted above, Tacitus suggests that the tribes living near the

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[388] Krebs 2005, 78 ff. Cf. Perl 1990, 170.

[389] On the syncretistic process through which local gods were assimilated to Roman deities, see Roymans 2009, 219-38.

Empire's frontier gradually assimilate to Roman custom through prolonged interaction.[390] This concept is underlined most forcefully in the mercantile encounters between Germani and Romans (5.3, 45.4-5), a process of exchange through which the former gain a greater recognition and appreciation (*adgnoscunt atque eligunt*) of precious metals and gradually become complicit (*probant*) in the Roman appropriation of Germania's resources. As E. O'Gorman notes, "this is Romanisation by stages: proximity, recognition, assimilation."[391] Of especial interest is the self-identification of the Ubii, who, though not ashamed of their origins, prefer to be called *Agrippinenses* after the founder of their *colonia* (*G.* 28.4; cf. *A.* 12.27.1).[392] The significance of this self-identification is evident in the Fourth Book of the *Historiae*, where we are told that, in the eyes of Civilis and his forces, the Ubii had abandoned their Germanic roots (*H.* 4.28 ff.). They consequently were besieged (4.59 ff.) and forced to join the Batavian Revolt (4.63 ff.) before the garrison was killed and the Ubii's allegiance to Rome restored (4.79).[393] Elsewhere, Tacitus stresses like assimilation of Germanic tribes to Roman custom. About the Mattiaci he writes that, although their location and boundaries place them squarely within Germanic territory, in their hearts and spirit they follow Rome (*mente animoque nobiscum agunt*, 29.2). Similarly, about the Batavi (conceptually paired with the Mattiaci: *G.* 29.2), whose territory was located within the Empire, Tacitus stresses their allegiance to Rome and the privileged status they enjoyed as a result (29.1). He does not explicitly connect the Batavi with their revolt in 69-70 (which is mentioned swiftly but not fleshed out in the 37th chapter), but emphasizes the mutual respect between them and Rome.[394] The *Germania*, in sum, offers much evidence that allows a reader to imagine a basic level of compatibility between Germanic and Roman culture.

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[390] Essential for this aspect of the *Germania* is the article of O'Gorman (1993, 135-154 = Ash 2012, 95-118), who teases out some the ways in which the text suggests that Germania can be civilized and molded through its interaction with Rome.

[391] O'Gorman 1993, 140-41 [= Ash 2012, 103-105].

[392] The point often is missed or taken as ironic. So, e.g., Gruen 2011, 165 n. 138.

[393] The Batavian condemnation of the Ubii at *H.* 4.28 ff. is paralleled by Arminius' condemnation of Segestes at *A.* 1.59.

[394] For a comprehensive archaeological and historical study of the incorporation of the Batavi into the Empire (with focus on issues of ethnic identity), see Roymans 2004. See I. Haynes 2013, 112 ff. on the Batavi as auxiliaries. On the Batavian Revolt, cf. Brunt 1960; on its literary depiction in the *Historiae*, especially the complex character of Civilis, see H. Haynes 2003, 148-77; Ash 2014, 185-200.

Once more, however, the above observations are qualified and offset by others that serve to make the opposite point: that Germani and Romans are too different from one another and that cultural incompatibility imposes limits on empire. So the positive example of the Ubii and Mattiaci buying into Roman culture is offset by the example of the Hermunduri, who, despite enjoying a privileged status as being the only Germanic tribe allowed to trade not only at the border but deep within the province of Raetia, "reject the Roman houses and villas that are laid open to them" (*his domos uillasque patefecimus non concupiscentibus*, 41.1). The example is powerful, since the Hermunduri, by virtue of their trading privileges and hence greater degree of immersion within the Empire, should (on the model posited above) assimilate more, not less, to Roman culture.

Likewise, the image of a *res publica Germanica*, built up by the use of a variety of Roman terms and concepts, is balanced by Germanic customs and character traits that undermine it. In terms of religion, while Germanic divinities are associated with Roman gods, the Germani are said to reject the building of temples or the use of statues to represent their gods, deeming it "inconsistent with the grandeur of divine beings to confine them within walls or depict them in any human likeness" (9.2; cf. *H.* 2.78.3: *nec simulacrum deo aut templum*).[395] This practice would seem to undermine the traditional methods of acculturation – explicated at *Agr.* 21 – of which the construction of temples was an important element. The Germani, moreover, practice human sacrifice, "a horrifying barbarian custom" (*barbari ritus horrenda...* 39.1), in order to appease their version of Mercury and Mother Earth (9.1, 39.1, 40.4). Germanic prophetesses, as I have noted, sacrificed prisoners of war (see n. 382), as did the

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[395] This observation, too, is qualified, for elsewhere Tacitus notes that the Germani believed that divinities accompanied them while fighting (*deo imperante*) and so removed *effigiesque et signa* from their sacred groves and carried them into battle (7.2). He also mentions a *templum* associated with the goddess Nerthus (40.3) and in the *Annales* mentions a *templum* of Tanfana, razed to the ground by Germanicus' forces (*A.* 1.51.1). It remains unclear what precisely Tacitus means when he speaks of *templa* in these cases. Most try to solve the discrepancy by claiming that the term *templum* denotes 'sacred space' and that the *effigiesque signa* are symbols as opposed to actual images (Goodyear 1972, 319; Rives 1999 *ad loc.*). Gruen (2011, 177) rejects such attempts and argues that the apparent inconsistencies show that the Germani were not uniform in their rejection of temples and statues. Again we may consider here the ethnography of Judaea. The Jews built temples, but, like the Germani, condemned images of divinities (*H.* 5.5.4). Moreover, unlike Germanic and Roman religion, Jewish religion was monotheistic (5.5). These discrepancies posed difficulties, as is illustrated by Caligula's order to have a statue of himself set up in the Temple in Jerusalem, a decision that instigated fierce resistance (*H.* 5.9.2). The basic incompatibility between Roman and Jewish religion was one cause of recurrent unrest in Judaea, exemplified by the revolts of 66, 115-17, and 132-35 (the Bar Kokhba Revolt). The *Historia Augusta* reports another revolt under Antoninus Pius (*Ant. Pius* 4-5).

Germani who defeated Varus and his legions (as Germanicus and his men discovered in the Teutoburg Forest: *A.* 1.61). Germanic religious practice, then, despite possessing familiar elements, generally is perceived as being incompatible with Roman religious thought. For difficulties negotiating such discrepancy we need only look at the persistent unrest in the province of Judaea (see n. 395).

Other customs described in Roman terms, such as the holding of assemblies and the induction of youths into society, likewise are qualified by their peculiarities. So the *libertas* of the Germani causes them to disregard calls to convene, with the result that it often takes them two or three days to assemble (11.1). They deliberate while drunk (22.2-3) and in arms, which they brandish wildly to show their assent (11.2). In fact, Tacitus writes, most public and private business is conducted under arms (13.1), a practice starkly different from what was deemed proper in Rome, where most people were not supposed to bear arms.[396] While rapid disarmament of a population was not the first act of settling a province,[397] what matters here is perception: the way the Germani are perceived to conduct business is ill matched with Roman ways. In the *Historiae*, this contrast is underlined by Civilis, who complains about this very aspect of Roman administration (*uel, quod contumeliosius est uiris ad arma natis, inermes ac prope nudi sub custode et pretio coiremus, H.* 4.46.1). Likewise, the formal induction of Germanic youths into society, while broadly analogous to the advancement of Roman youths, is described in terms that at once complicate the analogy. The distinction between the toga that defines the advancement of Roman youths and the weapons that mark that of young Germani serves to draw a contrast between the civil and peaceful ideals of Roman adult life and the warlike and violent aspects of Germanic adulthood.[398]

The distinction between the Roman toga and Germanic arms bears, in a more nuanced way, on acculturation. For a principal marker of the success of Agricola's policies in Britain was that it

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[396] On the bearing of arms and the presence of a police force in Rome, see Nippel 1984, 20-29.

[397] Brunt 1975, 260-70.

[398] Cicero, by metonymy, uses the word 'toga' to denote 'peace' and the word 'arms' to denote 'war' (*de Orat.* 3.167): Rives 1999, 180. Pertinent also in this case is Cicero's famous adage that "arms should yield to the toga" (*cedunt arma togae, Off.* 1.77).

encouraged the Britons to go about clad in togas (*frequens toga*, *Agr.* 21.2). There is no indication anywhere in the *Germania* that the same success could easily be achieved among the Germani, as Varus' failures had shown. We may in this instance look forward to the First Book of the *Annales*, where Tacitus puts in Arminius' mouth an anti-Roman sentiment that makes the same point: "the Germani will never excuse their having seen between the Elbe and the Rhine the Roman rods, axes, and toga" (*A.* 1.59.4).[399] Likewise, while the Germani display an interest in public entertainment, the latter was limited in scope (*G.* 24.1; cf. 19.1) and unlike the broad range of public entertainment in Rome, a contrast underlined by the disinterest of Frisian chiefs when witnessing a performance in Pompey's theater (*ignari*, *A.* 13.54.3). Moreover, as we have seen, the Germani's non-urban infrastructure and idiosyncratic lifestyle are described as remarkably ill suited to the construction and use of such venues as baths and theaters.[400]

Other defining Germanic customs and character traits raise questions about the viability of establishing a peaceful Roman administration. Tacitus records the actions of Agricola to advocate a gubernatorial policy geared towards the establishment and maintenance of peace and stability. While this policy had the intended pacifying effect on the Britons, the Germani are described as possessing a unique set of characteristics that suggest the impracticability of those traditional methods. Aside from being (like most barbarians) a scattered and warlike people, the Germani are described as placing great value on their sense of *libertas* (and as eager to defend it), as being generally indifferent to Roman practice, and, perhaps most problematic, as possessing a lifestyle that thrives on violence, war, and unrest. The tradition that developed around the Varian disaster centers precisely on this aspect. Varus entered his province with a vision of the Germani that seems to have equated the latter with other

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[399] Also note Tacitus' comments on the advance through Italy of Aulus Caecina Alienus, who, clad in foreign garments, was received poorly by the toga-clad citizens of the towns and colonies he passed through (*H.* 2.20).
[400] The Roman penchant for public entertainment, and its destructive effects on public morality, are decried by Messalla at *D.* 29.3-4, a passage that may well look back to the *Germania*.

foreign peoples long conquered by Rome.[401] He applied the customary methods of cultural

imperialism to the Germani, which, however, were wholly unfit to deal with the latter and backfired.

Holding the Germani to be a people that "enjoy the blessings of peace" (*uiros pacis gaudentes*, Vell.

2.117.4) and expecting that "men who cannot be subdued by arms can be softened by the

administration of law" (*hominum*, *quique gladiis domari non poterant*, *posse iure mulceri*, Vell. 2.117.3; Tac., *A.*

1.58.2, 2.46.2), Varus both displayed a lack of understanding of Germanic *mores* and demonstrated the

shortcomings of the model underpinning the Roman imperial mission. Whether or not this

reconstruction of Varus' actions is accurate (Velleius' account seems aimed at vindicating Augustan

and Tiberian policy and laying blame with the governor), it reflects contemporary perceptions of the

Germani and offers an explanation for failed Roman policy in dealing with them.[402]

That Germani and Romans were indeed very different people is further suggested by Tacitus'

depiction of Germanic client kings in the *Annales*. There we see a pattern whereby royal hostages, who

either have grown up in Rome or spent a long time there, are sent out as client kings to rule a country

that is by now completely foreign to them.[403] They often are ill received, despised as foreigners, and

soon deposed. The example of Italicus is particularly apt. This man was sent out by Claudius in 47 to

rule the Cherusci, who had applied to Rome for a king (*A.* 11.16 ff.). The son of Arminius' brother

Flavus, Italicus was born and raised in Rome (*apud urbem*) and was practiced in both Germanic and

Roman ways (*in patrium nostriumque morem exercitus*). Before sending him off, Claudius advised Italicus to

consider himself a *ciuis*, not an *obses*, going to an *externum imperium*, advice that, as Gowing notes,

reflects a poor understanding of Germanic *mores* and was unlikely to guarantee success.[404] After an

initially warm reception, the Cherusci soon came to despise him, as one raised *hostili in solo* and *infectum*

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[401] On the notion that Varus functioned as a governor of a traditional *provincia* and conducted himself in the manner typical of Roman governors, see Eck 2010, 14: "Dass diese *provincia Germania* somit als Untertanengebiet Roms zu leiten war, entsprach nicht etwa nur einer Sichtweise, die Varus für sich selbst entwikelt hatte, das war vielmehr die Ansicht aller Römer in diesen Jahren."
[402] See Eck 2010 for a redeeming account of Varus' conduct.
[403] On Tacitus' description of client kings in the *Annales*, see Gowing 1990. For Tacitus' view on hostage-taking generally, see Allen 2006, 224-44.
[404] Gowing 1990, 321. Claudius' advice to Meherdates (*A.* 12.11) about the Parthians reflects similar ignorance of non-Roman custom.

alimonio seruitio, cultu, omnibus externis, and consequently as a threat to *ueterem Germaniae libertatem*. He was soon deposed, then restored, after which he is recorded as *res Cheruscas adflictabat* (*A*. 11.17.3). Conceptually, Italicus' example is significant, for by virtue of his birth and education in Rome his appointment as king over the Cherusci virtually is analogous to the appointment of a Roman governor over a province. Italicus' case illustrates the failure of Roman policy with regard to the Germani, similar to Varus' failure four decades earlier. The episode underscores the notion of cultural incompatibility. Notably what is seen to be insufferable to the Germani is Italicus' moral corruption, which, despite his Germanic qualities, renders him servile and foreign and made him a threat to the Germani's sense of racial purity. The phrase *infectum… omnibus externis* that characterizes Italicus evokes the *nullis aliis aliarum nationum conubiis infectos* that characterizes the Germani collectively at *G*. 4.1, underlining a major obstacle in the way of negotiating Germanic and Roman culture.[405] In the *Historiae*, the same point is made by the Tencteri, who, in urging the Ubii to join the Batavian Revolt and renounce Roman culture, stress Germanic racial purity (*sincerus et integer*, *H*. 4.64.3). Once more, Judaea is a pertinent comparandum. Tacitus stresses in both the *Historiae* and the *Annales* that, much like the 'pure' and self-contained Germani, the Jews "viciously hate all outsiders" (*aduersus omnis alios hostile odium*, *H*. 5.5.1; *odio humani generis conuicti sunt*, *A*. 15.44.4). One reason for the recurrent unrest in the province of Judaea (see n. 395) was a basic incompatibility between Roman and Jewish *mores*. Tacitus' characterization of the Germani points up similar difficulties.

The mismatch between Roman and Germanic *mores* and the Germani's aversion to foreign influence raises concerns about the viability of the model of Roman cultural imperialism. For that model is based on a vision in which a morally superior power (in this case Rome), through a complex process of exchange and collusion, imposes its culture on a morally inferior and less developed native population, resulting in what may be called a 'hybrid' culture ('Gallo-Roman,' 'Romano-British,'

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[405] Cf. Allen 2006, 224-44; Malloch 2013 *ad loc.*

'Romano-Spanish,' etc.) and the successful incorporation of the latter into the empire of the former. The native population is supposed to benefit from this process by becoming civilized, while their gradual pacification (i.e. their becoming less warlike as a result of their civilization) serves the interests of the ruling power.[406] One concern is that the model, in order to be successful, requires there to be a sufficient degree of cooperation and common ground between the two cultures. In other words, both cultures should be sufficiently compatible for the acculturation scheme to be viable to begin with. In the other representative case in Tacitus, that of Britain, this requirement seems to have been sufficiently satisfied, not least because the Britons, on Tacitus' own conjecture, were a medley of people with different origins.[407] The Germani, in contrast, are perceived to be an indigenous people that has preserved its racial purity by avoiding intermingling with outsiders. This racial and cultural exclusivity raises questions about compatibility and imposes demands on the acculturation model that it is not designed to accommodate. Tacitus recounts what he presents as the views of former Germani on Roman power and culture to underscore the point. The anti-Roman rhetoric mentioned above is placed in the mouth of Arminius and, in Italicus' case, in that of the Cherusci collectively. This technique of bringing one's audience into dialogue with contemporary observation is typical of Tacitus' works and a potent way to underline ethnographic and socio-political conceptions.

A second concern with the model is that it presupposes the moral superiority of the colonizing power. Pliny the Elder celebrates the idealized version of the model, in which Rome, as the center of the world, spreads *humanitas* (through softening peace and the promotion of the Latin language) and brings together into one nation, as it were, the discordant and wild peoples of the world (*Nat.* 3.39). This is the model Tacitus approvingly shows Agricola executing in Britain. Martial, in one of his epigrams, echoes the party line, praising the Roman qualities and refinement of Claudia Rufina, a lady

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[406] For the view of Romanization or acculturation not as a systematic and one-directional process, but as a process of negotiation, see Mattingly 2011, an excellent treatment of Romanization, the theoretical problems inherent in the model, and the ugly realities of colonization and acculturation.

[407] While he admits that he has no evidence to prove his conjectures, he uses geographical proximity and similarities in appearance to argue that the Caledonians have Germanic roots, the Silures Iberian roots, and the Britons nearest Gaul Gallic roots (*Agr.* 11).

of British origin (11.53). Already in Vergil do we witness the same sentiment: "remember, Roman, to rule nations through your *imperium* (these will be your skills) and to crown peace with civilization, to spare the conquered, and to war down the haughty" (*tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento (hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem, parcere subiectis et debellare superbos, Aen.* 6.851-3). What happens when the model is disturbed, when it is acknowledged that the colonizing power is morally corrupt?[408] Contemporary Romans challenge the model by directing attention to the moral corruption of the capital. In such accounts, the process of acculturation predominantly is perceived as negative, in that what is spread across the world are not virtues and noble qualities, but vice and luxury. Tacitus acknowledges that the *humanitas* spread by Rome essentially consists of vice and that what the Britons gain from prolonged contact with Rome is nothing short of moral depravity and servitude (*Agr.* 21). While he endorses the ultimate goal of pacifying the Britons and subjecting them to Rome's *imperium*, he recognizes that the method used to achieve this goal is not the noble process advocated by his senatorial peers, but one geared towards having foreign populations mirror the depravity of the capital. In the *Historiae*, he has the Tencteri articulate this notion from the provincial viewpoint: "renounce the pleasures through which, rather than through their arms, the Romans secure their power over their subjects" (*abruptis uoluptatibus, quibus Romani plus aduersus subiectos quam armis ualent, H.* 4.64.2). In the *Dialogus*, he has Messalla make the same point: "the evils which first came up in Rome soon spread through Italy and are now diffusing themselves into the provinces" (*quae mala primum in urbe nata, mox per Italiam fusa, iam in prouincias manant, D.* 28.2). Tacitus' contemporaries Juvenal and Pliny, with whom he shares stylistic and intellectual affinities, express similar criticism, describing Rome as the center of the disease of corruption, infecting the world, much like a disease infecting the body (Juv. 2.78-80; Plin., *Ep.* 2.27).[409] Like Tacitus, Juvenal uses the example of royal hostages being morally corrupted in

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[408] O'Gorman 1993, 146 ff. [= Ash 2012, 111 ff.]; D. Braund 1996, 9, 162 ff.; Pagán 2014, 85.
[409] The core of Juvenal's Second *Satire* "presents an image of disease and rot spreading uncontrollably from the centre outwards in images drawn from farming (pigs) and viticulture" (S. Braund 1996 *ad loc.*). Pliny's outlook is on display in a letter to Rufus

Rome to illustrate the point (2.159-170).[410] In the accounts of such authors, the act of conquest is divested from its expected meaning since the moral gradient has been reversed.

The *Germania* takes all this a step further, for the Germani possess freedom and simplicity and are ascribed the kinds of moral qualities that Rome once possessed but has long since lost or abandoned. Not only is Rome a locus of moral corruption, but the Germani are in some ways the morally superior party and, in a reversal of the acculturation model, it is Rome that ought to learn from and adopt aspects of Germanic culture as opposed to the other way around. This is in line with the distinction – prevalent throughout the Tacitean corpus and relevant to the provincial origins of many of the senatorial class (including Tacitus himself) – between the corruption of contemporary Rome and the simplicity and integrity of provincial life.[411] This distinction underlies much of Claudius' argument about the admission of Gauls into the senate (*A.* 11.24). O'Gorman elucidates the complex narrative layers in which Germania, by virtue of its simplistic and pure qualities, conceptually is aligned with Rome's past, whereas contemporary Rome, by virtue of its moral corruption, is aligned with the East, the region Romans commonly associated with such defects.[412] Yet the text still presupposes Rome as the center and as the conquering power imparting its values and customs on the nations of the world. These different narrative layers challenge the traditional vision of conquest and acculturation, adding yet further complications to the discussion fostered by the text.

My discussion of Germania's *situs* and *mores* has served to show that the *Germania* does not

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Sempronius (*Ep.* 4.22). In it, he relates the decision taken by a committee (on which he served) to abolish a gymnastic contest at Vienne, since "it had corrupted the *mores* of Vienne, just as our contests have corrupted the *mores* of the entire world. For the vices of Vienne stay within their own walls, but ours spread far and wide. Just as in the human body, so in the body of the state, the gravest illness is the one that spreads from the head. Farewell." For Rome as the center of corruption, note Tac., *A.* 15.44.4 and *A.* 16.5.1.

[410] "We have indeed extended arms beyond the shores of Ireland and the recently captured Orkneys and the Britons content with the shortest night, but the things that now occur in the city of the victorious people those whom we have conquered do not do. Nonetheless, one Armenian, Zalaces, is said to have been more effeminate than the other young boys and to have given himself to a passionate tribune. Look at what our exchanges accomplish: he had come as a hostage, but here men are made. For if an extended stay will have put the city onto the boys, a lover will not ever be lacking. They will dispense with their trousers, knives, bridles, and whip: that is how they bring the *mores* of Roman youths back to Artaxata" (Juv. 2.159-170).

[411] On the other hand, the emphasis on the corrupt methods of acculturation has potentially uncomfortable implications, since, as 'Romanized' Gauls, Tacitus and Agricola are ultimately end products of this ugly process: O'Gorman 2014, 180.

[412] O'Gorman 1993, 146 ff. [= Ash 2012, 111 ff.]. Also note how the proper circulation of *gloria* in Britain under Agricola is conceptually aligned with a past era, in which merit and achievement were properly recognized and awarded: "in Britain, then, we see in action a historical era that on the Continent has already passed" (Sailor 2008, 92).

unequivocally advocate or discourage a renewed military offensive into Germania and that it does not

conclusively demonstrate or negate the practicability of a *provincia Germania.* The text illustrates and

reflects the complex nature of Roman foreign policy, particularly as regards Germania and its tribes,

whose geography, topography, resources, and customs imposed an unconventional set of restraints on

Roman perceptions of space and *imperium.*

III.2.4: Foreign Policy and Imperialism in the *Germania*: Conclusions

The *Germania* does not advocate a particular foreign policy. The text should not be used to

argue that Tacitus is fundamentally in favor of continued expansion nor to make the opposite claim

that he is wholly pessimistic and in favor of limitation. Both arguments are undermined by evidence to

the contrary.[413] Tacitus' attitude in 98, as it emerges from the text, plainly lies somewhere between

these two extremes. Several of the authorial comments laid out at the start of this discussion (see p.

118) show that Tacitus connects imperial expansion with morality, in that he sees unwillingness to

expand the Empire as a sign of moral weakness. Similar dissatisfaction underlies his remarks on

Augustus' disinclination towards expansion into Britain (*Agr.* 13.2). This attitude perhaps is not

unconnected to the fact that Tacitus was the son-in-law of an imperialist governor who enjoyed the

type of gubernatorial latitude that apparently was more the norm under Vespasian than other

emperors. Trajan, too, was a product of that age. At the same time that Tacitus deplores imperial

limitation, however, he shows an acute awareness of the financial, cultural, and military constraints that

impose limits on empire. If there is anything we may conclude from the *Germania* about Tacitus'

attitude in 98, it is that it is highly complex, which is what we would expect given the divergent and at

times conflicting factors that bear on the formulation of foreign policy and that influence Roman

perceptions, ranging from the moral and the emotional to the cultural, economic, and military. Placing

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[413] The argument that the *Agricola* (e.g. Rutledge 2000; Sailor 2008, 81-89; Mambwini Kivuila-Kiaku 2014, 98) and the *Germania* (e.g.
Laederich 2001; Isaac 2004, 436; Krebs 2005) serve to urge Trajan to further expansion is problematic given the complexities of
Tacitus' attitude, which ought not be classified as either 'pro-imperalism' or 'contra-imperialism.'

Tacitus on either side of a spectrum would be to miss the point.[414]

Arguments about Tacitus' outlook on imperialism in the *Germania* to a large extent depend on one's interpretation of *G.* 33.2, where Tacitus utters the following sentiment: "may the tribes retain if not love for us, at least hatred for each other. For, with the destiny of empire pressing onward, fortune can give us no greater boon than the discord of our enemies" (*maneat, quaeso, duretque gentibus, si non amor nostri, at certe odium sui, quando urgentibus imperii fatis nihil iam praestare fortuna maius potest quam hostium discordiam*, 33.2). Just before uttering this statement, Tacitus records the destruction of the Bructeri at the hands of fellow Germanic tribes, an event that in part reflects, according to our author, divine favor towards Rome (*seu superbiae odio seu praedae dulcedine seu fauore quodam erga nos deorum*, 33.1). The above lines, among the most controversial in all of Tacitus, have generated a mass of literature.[415] Scholarship has, on the whole, taken up two opposing positions. The reference to the destiny of empire is either taken to be positive, in that Tacitus refers to the continued successful expansion of the Empire, or pessimistic, in that he intimates that the age of conquest has passed and that Rome is now dependent on the discord of its enemies for the successful maintenance of its imperial rule.

While I suspect that Tacitus, seemingly referring to cyclical theories of the development of states or empires, is pessimistic here, the interpretation of the reference ultimately is inessential to the larger point he makes. For the current extent of the Empire already imposes structural military, financial, and cultural pressures on its maintenance that only would be exacerbated by further extension. The crucial point is that the greatest advantage to Rome, regardless of whether the Empire is extended or not, lies in the continued internecine strife amongst Germanic tribes. This notion applies to other peoples beyond the Empire's frontiers as well. Supported by its persistent emphasis on Germanic discord and violence, the text suggests that Rome would do well to leave the Germani to their internal dissensions and pursue a policy of indirect influence ('soft power'), one based on

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[414] Claims that the *Germania* lacks nuance (e.g. Mellor 2010, 51) simply are not borne out by the text.
[415] Benario (1968, 37-50) and Lund (1991, 2127-47) offer useful overviews of the literature produced on these lines up to their time.

projecting power outward (by inspiring terror) and maintaining *imperium* through collaboration with native chiefs.[416] The first aspect is reflected by Tacitus' remark on the allegiance of the Batavi and the Mattiaci: "the greatness of the Roman People has pushed forward fearful respect for the Empire out beyond the Rhine and the old frontiers" (*protulit enim magnitudo populi Romani ultra Rhenum ultraque ueteres terminos imperii reuerentiam, G.* 29.2). The 'soft' power gained in exchange for military and, more frequently, financial aid to the Marcomanni and Quadi is reflective of the second aspect (*sed uis et potentia regibus ex auctoritate Romana. raro armis nostris, saepius pecunia iuuantur, nec minus ualent,* G. 42.2; *iam et pecuniam accipere docuimus,* 15.2).[417] This is the policy that Tiberius pursued when he decided to recall Germanicus and forgo re-annexation of the land between the Rhine and the Elbe (*A.* 2.26), and so the *Germania* may be seen as implicitly endorsing Tiberius' policies in Germania.[418] This policy finds adherence in contemporary accounts. In a letter to a certain Macrinus, written around the same time as the *Germania*, Pliny writes that Vestricius Spurinna was awarded a triumphal statue by Nerva in 97 for having installed a client king among the Bructeri and for having subdued this ferocious tribe by the mere threat of war, by terror, "which is the most splendid kind of victory."[419] That notion, analogous to *G.* 33.2, recurs in the *Panegyricus*, delivered two years into Trajan's reign.[420]

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[416] On 'soft power,' see Potter 2013, 319-32. On Rome's grand strategy as based on image and instilling fear in the minds of its enemies, see Mattern 1999. Nearly half a century after the composition of the *Germania*, Appian wrote that Rome had preserved its empire through "prudence" and imperial limitation, by not incorporating into the Empire "poverty-stricken" and "profitless," and therefore "useless," barbarian tribes (*Praef.* 7). This outlook echoes that of Strabo, who, at the end of his *Geography*, divides the world into civilized and taxable parts, which are under Roman control, and uncivilized and profitless parts not worthy of incorporation into the Empire (17.3.24-25; cf. 2.5.8 on the minimal profits he thought could be had from lands on the fringes of the inhabited world).

[417] Also note Civilis' perspective on Roman payments to the Germani at *H.* 4.76.2.

[418] This policy had yielded results with regard to Cappadocia as well, which had been reduced to stipendiary status not by force of arms but through Tiberius' *auctoritas* (Vell. 2.39.3).

[419] *Nam Spurinna Bructerum regem ui et armis induxit in regnum, ostentatoque bello ferocissimam gentem, quod est pulcherrimum uictoriae genus, terrore perdomuit* (*Ep.* 2.7.2). On the addressee and the date of the event related here: Whitton 2013 *ad loc.*; cf. Sherwin-White 1966, 154-55, who draws different conclusions. On the date of the second book of letters: Sherwin-White 1966, 20-41; Whitton 2013, 16 ff. Both Sherwin-White and Whitton offer plentiful references to the scholarship on each of these issues up to their own day. The Bructeri were some of Rome's fiercest Germanic enemies in the first century AD: Rives 1999, 256 with further references.

[420] *Pan.* 12.1, 14.1, 16.4, 56.7-8. The notion that bloodless victories are the most glorious recurs throughout Tacitus: see p. 91 and n. 244.

III.3 Foreign Policy and Imperialism in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*

In the second part of this chapter, I explore Tacitus' outlook on Roman power and foreign policy as it emerges from his historical works, focusing on his accounts of Germania, Britain, and the East and seeking to determine to what extent, if any, his outlook changes over the course of Trajan's reign. In so doing, I make two principal claims. The first is that Tacitus' view of the nature of Roman *imperium* and control and his attitude towards Roman imperialism remain consistent across this works. As in the *Agricola* and the *Germania*, Tacitus approves of military initiative, but the many factors he points up that impose limits on empire reveal his conviction that extension should occur sensibly and that, more often than not, defensive consolidation is the more economical course of action. My second claim is that Tacitus' description of the Germani in the historical works largely follows their description in the *Germania*. Here I take issue with the common view that the Germani are portrayed less favorably in the historical narratives and, consequently, that Tacitus' view of them shifts over the course of his literary career. I show, instead, that the depiction of Germania as a region and the Germani as a people remains, by and large, consistent throughout. While single tribes can be characterized differently in the three works, they still conduct themselves in typically 'Germanic' fashion.

III.3.1 Preliminaries

Just as an examination of the *Agricola* and the *Germania* ought to limit itself to what Tacitus knew and could know in 98, so the historical narratives are delineated by the context in which they were written and the historical time period they cover. The *Historiae* were composed during the expansionist campaigns into Dacia and Arabia, while the *Annales* were written before, during, and after Trajan's Parthian War.[421] Both works cover earlier time periods, the *Historiae* the civil wars of 68-69 and the Flavian Principate, the *Annales* the Julio-Claudian era from the accession of Tiberius to the

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[421] For a Hadrianic date for the completion of the *Annales*, see p. 159.

death of Nero. In each case, we ought to keep in mind the context in which Tacitus composed these works and the extent to which they reflect contemporary socio-political and military conditions.

Trajan pursued a policy of diplomacy and indirect control with regard to Germania, invaded and annexed Dacia after two bloody wars (101–102, 105–106) only after Domitian's and his own policy of consolidation and frontier security failed to ensure stability, and annexed the Nabataean kingdom and turned it into the province of Arabia (in the spring of 106), apparently with no serious war involved.[422] Reconstructing the emperor's Parthian War is more problematic, as our evidence is scanty, consisting of Xiphilinus' excerpts from Dio, some fragments of Arrian's contemporary *Parthika*, several late fourth-century allusions, and numismatic and epigraphic evidence offering some insight into the war's chronology.[423] The official cause for the war was that the Parthian king Osroes had deposed Axidares (ca. AD 113), the king of Armenia sanctioned by Rome, and replaced him with a new king, an overt violation of the Neronian arrangement. But later sources, most notably Fronto and Dio, present this violation as a pretext and in hindsight ascribe Trajan's decision to his excessive eagerness for military glory. To be sure, Trajan's decision to annex Armenia and make war on the Parthians constituted an overt departure from the policy pursued by Corbulo, who, in response to similar violations and provocations, had contained the situation by avoiding outright war with Parthia.

To posterity, Trajan's policy will have seemed rash. But it is crucial to remember that lack of evidence prevents us from knowing what had transpired in Armenia and Parthia to motivate the emperor's decision. It is not inconceivable that events in Armenia, whatever their nature, reminded him of the persistent unrest in Dacia and urged him to depart from the policy pursued by the Julio-Claudians, which often had failed to control this border zone effectively. Indeed, not everyone thought

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[422] Germania: Bennett 1997, 74. Dacia: Griffin 2000, 109-13, 126. Arabia: Bennett 1997, 176 ff.; Griffin 2000, 123, 126. Griffin suggests that Trajan's decision to annex Arabia, as opposed to appointing the son of the dead vassal king as its next client king, reflects his having learned from Decebalus that such arrangements could not be expected to preserve peace and stability.
[423] On Trajan's Parthian War: Griffin 2000, 123-28 with further references there.

Trajan's plans overambitious.[424] Given our lack of evidence we probably should assume that Trajan had good reason to divert from a policy that had worked well for him in the past. It is also crucial that we keep in mind that, before his death, Trajan had realized the impracticability of his designs and had started the process of withdrawal and stabilization continued by Hadrian. Trajan, then, as far as our evidence allows, generally pursued a cost-efficient foreign policy geared towards consolidation and avoidance of unnecessary warfare. This arrangement was altered in contexts that saw recurrent instability: Dacia and possibly Armenia. We have noted the endorsement of this policy in Pliny, who lauds cost-efficient victory as the best type of victory, as well as in Tacitus' *Germania*.

III.3.2 The Nature and Limits of Empire

Britain was thoroughly conquered and at once neglected.	*perdomita Britannia et statim omissa.* (*H.* 1.2.1)
He then came to Elephantine and Syene, once the gateways of the Roman Empire, which now extends to the Red Sea.	*exim uentum Elephantinen ac Syenen,* *claustra olim Romani imperii,* *quod nunc rubrum ad mare patescit.* (*A.* 2.61.2)

The above two statements are essential for understanding Tacitus' attitude towards Rome's *imperium* and the maintenance of the Empire. They contain the answer to the question of whether he regarded provincial boundaries as the limit of Roman *imperium* or whether he saw them as mere physical boundaries beyond which *imperium* could extend. The answer to this question in turn bears on his outlook on foreign policy and Rome's control of areas outside the Empire's *termini*.

The first statement, from the opening chapters of the *Historiae*, is a reference to the Flavian conquest of Britain, culminating in Agricola's victory at Mons Graupius in 83, and to Domitian's subsequent neglect of its final completion.[425] In the *Agricola*, Tacitus reveals the Roman belief that

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[424] As Griffin notes (2000, 127), the four Trajanic commanders put away at the beginning of Hadrian's reign probably belonged to those who thought Hadrian should have tried to regain the lost provinces: SHA, *Hadr.* 7.1-2. Fronto criticized Hadrian for the same reason (*Princ. Hist.* (Haines) II.213 paragraph 14, II.207 paragraph 10).
[425] On the gradual withdrawal of forces from Caledonia following Agricola's victory, see Fulford 2000, 559-66; cf. Chilver 1979, 40-41.

Agricola's victory had broken the British resistance in Caledonia and had constituted the final battle in the conquest of the island. So much is clear from *perdomita* at *Agr.* 10.1, recalled by our phrase here, and from Agricola's words at *Agr.* 33-34. The victory was reinforced by the establishment (in 84) of the legionary fortress at Inchtuthil (on the river Tay) for *legio XX.*[426] But the final advance was never made. Agricola was recalled and the process of withdrawal soon started. Already during the governor's tenure some troops were transferred to Germania to serve in Domitian's Chattian campaigns. The Dacian campaigns during the next years necessitated the transfer of additional forces from Britain, including the withdrawal of *legio II Adiutrix* (which was replaced by *legio XX* at Inchtuthil) and an unknown number of *auxilia.* This was followed later by the abandonment of the fortress at Inchtuthil (still unfinished) and ultimately (throughout Tacitus' lifetime and beyond) of the system of auxiliary forts stretching southward through Caledonia down to the line of Stanegate and the rivers Tyne and Solway.[427] Several factors underlie Tacitus' indignation at *H.* 1.2.1. There can be no doubt that he condemned Agricola's recall ahead of the finalization of the island's conquest. He probably also disapproved of Domitian's sudden decision to make war on the Chatti in 82-83, which necessitated the transfer of forces from Britain to the Rhine frontier. But, above all, he suspected imperial jealousy of Agricola's achievements. That, as we have seen, was in line with his view of the imperial system of government and the behavior it inspired in its emperors, a persistent theme that recurs here in the opening chapters of the *Historiae*: a decade after the *Agricola*, his resentment clearly had not subsided.

A second, and no less important, factor underlying Tacitus' indignation was the reduction of Rome's *imperium* as a result of Domitian's policy-making. Post-Augustan discussions about the nature of power distinguished "between the concept of the soft power of Rome – its hegemony – as opposed to the hard power represented by the boundaries of the provinces."[428] Tacitus held the same view,

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[426] Fulford 2000, 562.
[427] Chilver 1979, 40; Fulford 2000, 563.
[428] Potter 2013, 319.

seeing the boundaries of the provinces as the physical limits of the Empire, as opposed to Rome's

imperium, which could extend beyond them. This is evident from his description of the extent of the

Empire at *A.* 2.61.2 (*claustra olim Romani imperii, quod nunc rubrum ad mare patescit*), where he distinguishes

between the *claustra*, also used elsewhere to denote physical boundaries (*H.* 2.82.3; *A.* 2.59.3), and

Rome's *imperium*.[429] For Tacitus, indirect power was real power and in areas that did not bear the cost

of annexation this was accomplished in part by the use of client kings and native chiefs. In his

description of the Empire's defenses at *A.* 4.5, it is clear that Tacitus saw client kings as part of the

Empire.[430] This is confirmed in the Thirteenth Book of the *Annales*, where we are told that eastern

client kings were instructed to prepare military forces to support Corbulo's campaigns under Nero.[431]

It is these conceptions of power that shed light on the military contexts alluded to at *H.* 1.2.1 and *A.*

2.61.2, the two citations with which we began.

The evidence provided by the inscriptions of the Bronze Herakles from the Mesopotamian

kingdom of Mesene, discovered and published in the mid-to-late 1980s, suggests that, after Trajan's

and, shortly thereafter, Hadrian's withdrawal from Mesopotamia, Mesene remained a Roman client

kingdom.[432] If this is right (and it seems to be), it follows that, after the abandonment of the province

of Mesopotamia, Tacitus still saw Rome's *imperium* as extending to the Persian Gulf. The implication

for the composition of the *Annales* would be that the work was completed after 117.[433]

In contrast with the situation in Mesopotamia, the withdrawal of Roman forces from northern

Britain in the mid 80s to early 90s was not followed by the installment of client kings or native chiefs

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[429] Potter 1991, 288.

[430] *Mauros Iuba rex acceperat donum populi Romani. cetera Africae per duas legiones parique numero Aegyptus, dehinc initio ab Syriae usque ad flumen Euphraten, quantum ingenti terrarum sinu ambitur, quattuor legionibus coercita, accolis Hibero Albanoque et aliis regibus qui magnitudine nostra proteguntur aduersum externa imperia. et Thraeciam Rhoemetalces ac liberi Cotyis, ripamque Danuuii legionum duae in Pannonia, duae in Moesia attinebant* (*A.* 4.5), with Potter 1991, 288-89.

[431] *Haec atque talia uulgantibus, Nero et iuuentutem proximas per prouincias quaesitam supplendis Orientis legionibus admouere legionesque ipsas propius Armeniam conlocari iubet, duosque ueteres reges Agrippam et Antiochum expedire copias quis Parthorum finis ultro intrarent; simul pontis per amnem Euphraten iungi; et minorem Armeniam Aristobulo, regionem Sophenen Sohaemo cum insignibus regiis mandat. exortusque in tempore aemulus Vologesi filius Vardanes: et abscessere Armenia Parthi, tamquam differrent bellum* (*A.* 13.7).

[432] As expounded by Potter (1991, 277-90).

[433] There is no space here to discuss the difficulties of *A.* 2.61 and its implications. I follow Syme (1958a, 465-80), Rutledge (1998, 141-43), Potter (1991, 287-91), Birley (2000), Pagán (2012, 3), and others in seeing a Hadrianic date for the completion of the *Annales*.

to maintain Rome's *imperium*. Domitian and especially Trajan and Hadrian seem not to have regarded the loss of northern Britain of major strategic importance.[434] For Tacitus, however, the extent of Rome's *imperium* was bound up intimately with Roman morality and "anything other than full subjugation of the island was to him inconsistent with *uirtus exercituum et Romani nominis gloria* (*Agr.* 23.1)."[435] The reduction of Rome's *imperium* in Britain stood in marked contrast to its extension into Dacia and Arabia, which were added to the Empire while Tacitus was writing the *Historiae*. The same vision of power underlies his resentment in the *Germania* about the losses of Germanic territory. The loss of territory between the Rhine and the Elbe ('hard' power), compounded by the loss of indirect influence ('soft power') due to Arminius' meddling with other Germanic chiefs, constituted a real reduction of Roman control beyond the Rhine frontier.

For Tacitus, then, indirect power was real power. This is not to say that he approves of every aspect of the client king system. As we have seen, he stresses the persistent failure of Roman-bred clients to establish peaceful rule in areas whose culture and customs are incompatible with those of Rome.[436] But the use of loyal clients or chiefs who enjoy the respect of their countrymen offered a means of exerting control and ensuring stability in areas that did not bear the cost and effort of annexation, allowing Rome to concentrate its resources elsewhere.[437]

Tacitus' attitude towards imperialism largely corresponds with post-Augustan notions of power, in which expansion continued to be glorified but recognition that the Empire had all but reached its natural limits favored limitation and defensive stabilization.[438] What emerged was a

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[434] Fulford 2000, 563. The gradual withdrawal from northern Britain prefigured the major Hadrianic fortifications that turned the Empire into a fortified camp and that served as a polarizing boundary between Roman and non-Roman. On the importance of this shift in ideology, which Tacitus did not follow, see Potter 1991, 286 n.32, 288 n.43.

[435] Chilver 1979, 41.

[436] Gowing 1990, 315-30.

[437] Cf. Laederich 1991, 291.

[438] On Roman ideology of empire during the Republic and the Principate and the different scholarly positions on the matter, see the useful introduction in the *Companion to Roman Imperialism* (ed. Hoyos, 2013). Crucial in the scholarly debate are Luttwak 1976 (for long-term, grand strategy and a defensive mindset); Isaac 1992 (against long-term coherence and for expansionist mindset); Potter 1996 (middle ground between Luttwak and Isaac); Mattern 1999 (on asserting hegemony and dominance through an outward policy of intimidation and military superiority). The essays collected in Champion 2004 remain useful as well.

complex and dynamic foreign policy that had to negotiate glory and prestige with cost and local

realities. Tacitus, as we have seen, generally approves of expansionist policy, while he tends to connect

avoidance of expansion with moral weakness. But imperial expansion often could be impractical and

expensive, and dominance over foreign tribes could be achieved in other ways. Hence a policy of

outward projection of power (intimidation), geared towards "universal recognition of their empire's

maiestas, its "greaterness,"" and towards cowing enemies into deference based on Rome's

acknowledged military superiority.[439] This aspect of Rome's foreign policy is reflected in our texts by

the frequent occurrence of such nouns and phrases as *terror, metus, uis Romana, uis principatus, magnitudo*

populi Romani, magnitudo Romana, and of such verbs as *exterrere, minitari, arma ferre/ostendare*. This was a

policy that allowed for the preservation of peace and stability without incurring unnecessary cost and

bloodshed and that could be made to fit into the traditional ideology of victory, glory, and

supremacy.[440] So, as we shall see, Corbulo earned great military glory for his accomplishments in the

East, although he did not engage the Parthians in a single pitched battle. A passage from the *Historiae*

affords an insight into the Roman endorsement of this policy. Eprius Marcellus celebrates it – and its

execution by Corbulo – in his speech against Thrasea Paetus: "is it the peace throughout the world or

victories won without loss to our armies that displease him?" (*pacem illi per orbem terrae an uictorias sine*

damno exercituum displicere?, *A.* 16.28.3). Marcellus' words may reasonably be taken to reflect

contemporary attitudes in Tacitus' own time. If diplomacy and intimidation failed and enemies

resisted, they would be engaged and the image of Rome's superiority brutally restored. This ideology

already is on display in Vergil: "remember, Roman... to spare the conquered and to war down the

haughty" (*tu... Romane, memento... parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*, *Aen.* 6.851-3). Expansion is reserved

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[439] Mattern 1999, 209-10. On international recognition of Rome's military superiority, cf. Livy, *praef.* 7: *ea belli gloria est populo Romano ut cum suum conditorisque sui parentem Martem potissimum ferat, tam et hoc gentes humanae patiantur aequo animo quam imperium patiuntur.*
[440] Appian (*Praef.* 7) and Aelius Aristides (*Or.* 26.10, 22-29) claimed that Rome did not need to further expand its boundaries, since in magnitude and duration the Roman Empire had surpassed any former empire and it already possessed the best of the world's lands and seas. Appian regarded the areas bordering the Empire as insufficiently profitable to bear the cost of annexation. Aristides claimed that, since Rome was powerful enough to expand its empire at will, it did not need to do so.

for areas outside the Empire that saw recurrent instability: so Agricola's task to complete the subjugation of all of Britain and Trajan's annexation of Dacia and perhaps Armenia. A final important strategy was the incitement and exploitation of internal discord and war among tribes located outside the Empire's *termini*. In the following sections, I lay out how the above policies and considerations are expounded in the historical narratives. What emerges is that the latter develop in greater detail and complexity the same vision of empire as does the *Germania*.

Numerous passages in the historical works confirm Tacitus' general endorsement of military initiative and expansionist designs. This is reflected perhaps most explicitly in his criticism of imperial restrictions on governors. Tacitus, a product of the Vespasianic and Trajanic age, plainly was an advocate of gubernatorial adventurism.[441] This is one of the factors (his view of client kings as part of the Empire is another) that show that he did not share in the change in ideology under Hadrian, who was less interested in gubernatorial initiative and whose major frontier fortifications cordoned off the Empire, drawing a dividing line between the Empire and the world outside it.[442] Imperial jealousy and the hackneyed nature of the *triumphalia ornamenta* (cf. pp. 31-44) are the most frequently adduced factors curbing imperial expansion. Fear and jealousy, Tacitus alleges, urged Domitian to recall Agricola from Britain (*Agr.* 39; *H.* 1.2.1) and to offer him an appointment as governor of Syria (*Agr.* 40; cf. *A.* 2.5.1, 2.43). Jealousy also is alleged or intimated in Germanicus' recall by Tiberius (*A.* 2.26),[443] Corbulo's recall by Claudius (*A.* 11.20.1-2), and the same general's enforced suicide under Nero (Dio 62.17).[444] The civil wars of 68-69 had revealed "that secret of empire, that an emperor can be made elsewhere than in Rome" (*euulgato imperii arcano posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri*, *H.* 1.4.2; cf. 2.76.4), a maxim that articulates the danger posed by distinguished commanders who enjoyed the

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[441] As the disproportionate attention given to the activity of Agricola, Germanicus, and Corbulo reflects: see pp. 39-40.

[442] App., *Praef.* 28; SHA, *Hadr.* 12.6, with Potter 1991, 286 n. 32, 288 n. 43, with further references there.

[443] Tiberius' alleged jealousy of Germanicus: *passim* Books 1 and 2, 3.2-3, 4.1.

[444] Tacitus' claim that Tiberius felt comfortable honoring Furius Camillus' military achievements in the senate because of the modesty of the man's life is telling (*A.* 2.52.5). The fact that Gn. Lentulus Gaetulicus, one of Sejanus' close adherents, escaped punishment and kept his command in Upper Germany during the purge of Sejanus' former supporters (*A.* 6.30) showcases the power of, and the threat posed by, commanders of militarily powerful provinces.

loyalty of their legions. That it took until then for a *princeps* to be made outside of Rome may be surprising. Tacitus' resentment at imperial jealousy of great commanders reflects his appreciation of republican-style military initiative (underlined by the bitter remark *beatos quondam duces Romanos* ascribed to Corbulo at *A.* 11.20.1) and underlines one of the main factors curbing expansion. Gubernatorial enterprise is discouraged further by the triviality of the *triumphalia ornamenta*, which Tacitus constantly deplores. His criticism of the inaction of some of Britain's governors and of imperial disinterest in expansion (cf. *Agr.* 13.3; *A.* 4.32.2: *princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus*) confirms his general outlook.

Tacitus' approval of military initiative and expansion is balanced by his understanding of structural pressures (internal and external) on the Empire that advocate limitation and stabilization. It had long been acknowledged that the extent of the Empire made it difficult to manage and defend.[445] It was no secret that legions (at times) and auxiliary cohorts (often) had to be moved to pressured regions (*A.* 4.5.4), opening up other areas to attack. Tacitus describes the Dacians as taking advantage of legions having been withdrawn from Moesia (*H.* 3.46), the Aedui as breaking out in part because of the distance between them and the nearest Roman forces (*A.* 3.43), and Tacfarinas as encouraging revolt by spreading rumors that the Empire was facing attacks elsewhere and forced to transfer troops from Africa (*A.* 4.24). Elsewhere, C. Dillius Vocula is concerned to prevent similar information from spreading throughout the world during the Batavian Revolt (*H.* 4.58.5).

Tacfarinas' rumors point up a related, no less serious, danger: simultaneous incursions into the Empire at different points.[446] Roman power would have been overthrown, says Tacitus, had Mucianus not prevented the simultaneous attack on the Empire by the Germani and the Dacians (*H.* 3.46). Throughout the narrative of the Batavian Revolt, Tacitus hints at the possibility of a Gallo-Germanic coalition under Civilis attacking the Empire from multiple points, while elsewhere he writes that Gaul gained courage from incoming reports that the winter camps in Moesia and Pannonia were being

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[445] Note Tiberius on the *magnitudo imperii*, the *tanta molis* of its management, and the *fortuna* to which it was exposed (*A.* 1.11.1).
[446] This would lead to massive problems under Marcus Aurelius and in later periods. For the wars under Marcus: Birley 2012, 217-33.

threatened by Sarmatian and Dacian bands and that camps in Britain were facing similar treats at the same time (*H.* 4.58).

Revolts and incursions into the Empire often occur as a result of Roman internal discord, both in the provinces and the capital. While discord is a typically barbarian trait in Tacitus, he points up its persistent occurrence among Romans as well and, just as Rome knows how to take advantage of barbarian conflict, so barbarian tribes capitalize on Roman instability (real or alleged) to make incursions into the Empire. The civil wars of 68-69 are the principal example of internal discord facilitating barbarian attack. The Sarmatian Rhoxolani took their chance when "people's minds were so turned to the civil war that foreign affairs were neglected" (*conuersis ad ciuile bellum animis externa sine cura habebantur*, *H.* 1.79.1). Civilis initiates his revolt in the knowledge that Rome is being torn apart by civil strife (*H.* 4.55.4). The Dacians monitor the war and break in as soon as they learn that "the entire empire is divided against itself" (*cuncta in uicem hostilia*, *H.* 3.46.2), while the Gauls look for Rome to be "broken by a continuous series of civil wars and internal disasters" (*si populum Romanum continua ciuilium bellorum series et interna mala fregissent*, *H.* 4.54.3). The burning of the Capitolium above all signified Rome's capacity for self-destruction and roused the Gauls (*H.* 4.54.2), for whom the burning of the temple was an encouraging reminder of the Gallic sack of Rome in 390 BC.[447] Under Tiberius, Germanic tribes are expected to attack the Empire if they hear about the mutiny among Germanicus' legions (*A.* 1.36.2), while Vespasian is concerned to send envoys to Parthia and Armenia to prevent revolt in his rear when his legions are engaged in the civil war (*H.* 2.82.3; cf. *H.* 4.51.2; *A.* 15.27.2).

Another structural problem, explored in the second chapter (pp. 91-95), was that continued expansion made Rome ever more dependent on *auxilia*, who increasingly were incorporated into the imperial system and, by Tacitus' time, had become a significant force in their own right, not merely ancillary to the legionaries. Tacitus, as we have seen, identifies two principal problems associated with

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[447] On the significance of the Capitolium in Tacitus' *Historiae*, see Sailor 2008, 205 ff. For the various ways in which the Vitellians in the *Historiae* resemble the Allia Gauls in Livy and Plutarch, see Ash 1999, 37-55.

this development. The first is the increasing 'barbarization' of Roman armies. The second is that *auxilia*

often are perfidious, unruly (especially Germanic cohorts), and dangerous to rely on in battle. The

Cheruscan and Batavian revolts had demonstrated the dangers of having powerful auxiliary forces

desert Rome and incite other tribes to join them. The *Germania* offers essential information about

Germanic *mores* – particularly about their predisposition to rashness and violence – that serves to

explain the many cases of desertion and/or revolt initiated by Germanic auxiliaries or trans-Rhenane

tribes. What made native revolts particularly dangerous is that they often were initiated by men who

once served in Roman armies themselves. Such men were intimately familiar with Roman military

strategy and the workings of the Empire. Arminius and Civilis masterfully exploited their knowledge of

the Empire's weaknesses.[448]

There were financial constraints on continued expansion as well. The Augustan military

system, a development of long adjustment, was based on a model in which soldiers serving in the

standing armies accounted for a percentage of the Empire's total adult male population. Payment of

the standing armies was connected to the tax system and the imperial budget, an arrangement that

proved inelastic over time and did not leave much room for economic shortfall.[449] Failure to pay

legions caused unrest, as the great mutinies of the German and Pannonian legions exemplify. Aside

from the cost of military salaries and bonuses, it was expensive to campaign in regions that, like

Germania, were inhospitable and lacked resources. So, Tacitus tells us, Claudius wisely refrained from

undertaking war in the Bosporan Kingdom (modern Crimea), "a country without roads, on a sea

without harbors... with a soil devoid of crops, where delay would cause weariness" (*auio itinere,*

importuoso mari... solum frugum egenum, taedium ex mora, A. 12.20.1). Armenia was similarly inhospitable and

exacting. Corbulo and his men, despite having incurred no losses, suffered from scarcity of food and

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[448] Perfidy: *H.* 1.43, 1.51-52, 3.5, 3.46, Books 4-5 *passim* (Batavian revolt); *A.* 1.57, 2.17, 4.73. Unruly conduct: *H.* 1.64 (Batavi), 2.27 (id.), 2.66 (id.), 2.69 (id.). Relying on auxiliary forces: pp. 91-93 and n. 250. Experience gained in Roman armies: *H.* 3.40, 3.42, 3.43 (Florus and Sacrovir), *H.* 4.17 (Civilis), *A.* 2.10, 2.13, 2.45 (Arminius), *A.* 2.52 (Tacfarinas), *A.* 11.18 (Gannascus).
[449] For the economics of this arrangement, see Potter 2013, 323-24 with plentiful references.

water, physical hardship, scorching heat, and long marches (*ipse exercitusque ut nullis ex proelio damnis, ita per inopiam et labores fatiscebant... ad hoc penuria aquae, feruida aetas, longinqua itinera...*, *A.* 14.24.1). Parthia's geography, Tacitus notes, was similar to that of Armenia (*situ terrarum… Parthis propiores*, *A.* 13.34.2).

Another major expense was the construction and maintenance of permanent garrisons, especially in economically underdeveloped areas. Appian wrote that Rome had preserved its empire through prudence (δι' εὐβουλίαν) and imperial limitation (τὰ κράτιστα γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης ἔχοντες σώζειν ἐθέλουσι μᾶλλον ἢ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐς ἄπειρον), that is by declining to incorporate into the Empire "poverty-stricken" (πενιχρὰ) and "profitless" (ἀκερδῆ), and therefore "useless" (οὐδὲν... χρησίμους), barbarian tribes (*Praef.* 7). According to Appian, Antoninus Pius would not annex new territory unless it could bear the cost its own garrison (*Praef.* 7.26). Dio criticized Septimius Severus' annexation of Mesopotamia for this reason (Dio 65.3.3). It is evident from the *Annales* that Tiberius had similar qualms about Germania, whose resources he did not deem adequate to defray the cost of continued campaigning and annexation. He also seems not to have considered the plundering of Germanic territory a viable way to make up the delayed payment of Germanicus' legions. The information in the *Germania* about Germania's resources and economic potential largely bears out the emperor's views.

A final constraint on expansion that Tacitus often adduces is cultural incompatibility, an issue we explored at some length in the *Germania* above. Just as some areas do not bear annexation economically, others do not bear it culturally. Germania and Parthia are the principal examples of this notion. The description of Germanic and Parthian royal hostages, who accustom themselves to Roman culture and subsequently fail to re-integrate within their native culture, is one way in which Tacitus illustrates this. He develops and underlines this notion by recording non-Roman views of Roman culture. For example, at the imposition of the Parthian royal hostage Vonones on the Armenian throne, the Parthians are said to have felt shame for having sought a king "from another world" (*alio ex orbe*), one "infected with the training of the enemy" (*hostium artibus infectum*, *A.* 2.2.2).

Italicus' reception by the Cherusci is described is similar terms (*A*. 11.16 ff.; pp. 147-48). Neither Germanic nor Parthian culture, on Tacitus' account, is compatible with or receptive to Roman culture. In addition to being military and geographical boundaries, the Rhine and Euphrates are conceived of as cultural barriers as well. Another non-Roman viewpoint, placed in the mouth of the Tencteri (who urge the Ubii to desert Rome), stresses the limits on the traditional methods of cultural imperialism:

> *instituta cultumque patrium resumite, abruptis uoluptatibus, quibus Romani plus aduersus subiectos quam armis ualent. sincerus et integer et seruitutis oblitus populus aut ex aequo agetis aut aliis imperitabitis.* (*H*. 4.64.3)

> Resume the manners and customs of your country and renounce the pleasures, through which, rather than through their arms, the Romans secure their power against subject nations. A pure and untainted race, forgetting your past bondage, you will be the equals of all or will even rule over others.

Passages such as this one, composed with the benefit of hindsight, offer one explanation for why Roman expansion was halted in the north at the Rhine and in the east at the Euphrates. As for the Parthians, it would seem that Tacitus' account both reflects and endorses Trajan's decision (upheld by Hadrian) to abandon the provinces briefly held in modern Iraq.

In addition to cultural incompatibility, there is the problem of the moral corruption of the capital and the way this inverts the traditional model of cultural imperialism. We discussed this notion as it emerges from the *Germania*. It recurs in the historical works, where Tacitus illustrates it in a variety of ways. The moral corruption of the governing class is on display throughout both works. Tacitus, evoking Sallust, connects Rome's moral corruption with the expansion of the Empire and the massive wealth that poured into the capital (*A*. 3.54). The provinces retained their simplicity, while Rome became ever richer and more corrupt; the contrast runs through both historical works.[450] Tacitus' reader is left with an ugly image of Rome and its imperial mission: the City is the center of corruption, where all shameful things come together and whence, in turn, they are spread throughout the world

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[450] On the simplicity of provincial life as contrasted with the excesses of the capital, note *A*. 13.54.3, 15.44.4, 16.5.1 On non-Roman forces losing their vigor and mental hardiness while staying in Rome: *H*. 2.89, 2.99. Authorial digression on Roman luxury: *A*. 3.54-55. Weak Roman vs. strong foreign troops: *A*. 3.40.3.

through military and cultural imperialism. Rome thus is the catalyst for universal corruption.

Tacitus' outlook on foreign policy and imperialism remains highly complex in the historical works. As in the *Agricola* and the *Germania*, the moral and emotional arguments for aggression and expansion are balanced, and in many ways outweighed, by structural pressures that advocate defensive consolidation. While the analysis of imperial rule is more complex and multifaceted in the historical narratives, the latter can be read profitably alongside the *Germania*, which explores the same problems (albeit it in a different generic framework and with a more circumscribed focus) and which explicates, on the whole, the same vision of empire. In the following pages, I explore in more detail how this vision emerges in the historical works, focusing on Tacitus' account of early imperial foreign policy in Germania, Armenia, and Britain.

III.3.3 Germania, Armenia, and Britain

The military, financial, and cultural limits on empire that Tacitus adduces shaped a foreign policy of consolidation geared towards the maintenance of peace and stability. This policy was based on three main concepts: the maintenance (or expansion) of Rome's *imperium* through diplomacy and client kings ('soft power'); the outward projection of Roman military superiority (terrorization) to cow enemies into obedience; and the instigation and exploitation of internecine strife and warfare among barbarian tribes located beyond the Empire's frontiers. Often these concepts were at work at the same time, making for a dynamic process of adjustment and calculation.

III.3.3a Germania

After Germanicus' recall from Germania, Roman policy with regard to the area was grounded in the expectation that the Germani, when left undisturbed, would suffer from persistent discord and wear each other down. Tiberius' rationale was that Germanicus had accomplished enough in the way of revenge and that, in the past, more had been achieved in Germania through policy than by arms

(*plura consilio quam ui perfecisse*, *A.* 2.26.3). The Germani could be left to their internal feuds (*internis discordiis relinqui*, 2.26.3). While Tacitus ascribes Germanicus' recall in part to imperial jealousy, the rest of the *Annales* bears out Tiberius' vision. Roman withdrawal soon leads to an eruption of violence between the Marcomanni under Maroboduus and the Cherusci under Arminius (AD 19).[451] The conflict, deliberately inflamed by Drusus (*A.* 2.62), led to the expulsion of Maroboduus and his successor Catualda (*A.* 2.63) and ultimately to the demise of Arminius.[452]

In Tacitus' account, the Roman response to the outbreak of this violence was carefully calculated to ensure the maintenance of Rome's *imperium* and the avoidance of military involvement. Tiberius declined Maroboduus' request for military aid and sent his son Drusus to deal with the situation (*A.* 2.46.5). When Maroboduus soon was expelled by Catualda, Tiberius settled him in Ravenna, nominally out of respect for his reputation, but in reality to use the threat of his potential restoration as a means to keep his former subjects in check (*A.* 2.63.4). In addition to such cost-efficient methods of intimidation, Tiberius used client chiefs to maintain indirect control.[453] When Catualda was driven out by the Hermunduri under Vibilius and settled in Forum Iulii in Narbonese Gaul, Tiberius, to prevent those attending the chief from harassing Roman territory, had Drusus settle them beyond the Danube among the Suebi under another client king, Vannius of the Quadi (*A.* 2.63.6). In the same year, Arminius would perish through the treachery of his kinsmen (*A.* 2.88.2). Tiberius' policy of leaving the Germani to their internal feuds and of maintaining *imperium* at a low cost evidently bore fruit and is endorsed by what we read in the *Germania*, particularly at *G.* 33.2.

The outward projection of Roman power and its impact on the Germani is underlined by the words ascribed to the Cheruscans Segestes and Flavus. The latter, attempting to persuade his brother

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[451] *Nam discessu Romanorum ac uacui externo metu <u>gentis adsuetudine</u>... arma in se uerterant* (*A.* 2.44.2): "at the departure of the Romans and free from the fear of the foreigner, the tribes, <u>in accordance with the nature of their race</u>... turned their arms on one another."

[452] *Ceterum Arminius abscedentibus Romanis et pulso Maroboduo regnum adfectans libertatem popularium aduersam habuit, petitusque armis cum uaria fortuna certaret, dolo propinquorum cecidit* (*A.* 2.88.2): "after the Romans had left and Maroboduus had been expelled, he aimed for the kingship but had opposition from his compatriots' love of freedom, and having been attacked by arms he fought with varied success, until he fell through the treachery of his kinsmen."

[453] On Tiberius' use of intimidation as opposed to actual force in responding to problems abroad, cf. Suet., *Tib.* 37.4.

Arminius to lay down arms against Rome, extols the greatness and resources of the Empire and stresses the grave punishment meted out against the conquered and the mercy offered to those who surrender (*magnitudinem Romanam, opes Caesaris et uictis grauis poenas, in deditionem uenienti paratam clementiam, A.* 2.10.1; cf. *magnitudo populi Romani, G.* 29.2). Segestes, too, is described as understanding the nature of Roman foreign policy and as choosing loyalty and peace over revolt and subsequent destruction (*A.* 1.58). Civilis' initial hesitation to go through with his revolt is described as due in part to his reflection on Rome's power (*uim Romanam, H.* 4.21.1), while Julius Auspex of the Remi considers peace for the same reason (*uim Romanam, H.* 4.69.1). Elsewhere, Mucianus and Tiberius stress the display of the might and prestige of imperial power as a principal method to keep foreign tribs in check (*uim fortunamque principatus, H.* 4.85; *magnitudinem imperii extollens, A.* 3.47.1).[454] The aim was to avoid warfare by intimidating enemies and holding out the prospect of peace, which, if accepted, would affirm Roman superiority.[455] If intimidation failed and the enemy opted for war, he would be engaged and Roman authority mercilessly restored. So, in AD 15, Germanicus' legate Caecina, by displaying his arms, discouraged the Cherusci from aiding the Chatti (*A.* 1.56.5), but he engaged and crushed the Marsi, who had continued to resist (*A.* 1.56.5). The next year the Angrivarii, anticipating an attack by Germanicus' legate Stertinius, surrendered and received full pardon (*ueniam omnium, A.* 2.22).[456]

The account of the Frisian revolt of AD 28 (*A.* 4.72-74) is informative in terms of how Tacitus describes Tiberius' response and of what the emperor's real motivations might have been. The Frisii, oppressed by the unbearable demands of the centurion Olennius, revolted, killing a number of soldiers and investing the Roman fort at Flevum. A drawn out battle followed in which the Frisians ultimately

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[454] Cf. *H.* 4.26.3: *paulo ante Romanorum nomen horrebant.* The roles can be reversed as well, with barbarians intimidating Romans. So Civilis at *H.* 4.76.1: "we should await the arrival of the trans-Rhenane tribes, the terror of whose name will crush the shattered strength of Rome" (*Ciuilis opperiendas Transrhenanorum gentis, quarum terrore fractae populi Romani uires obtererentur*).

[455] The method of terrorizing enemies into obedience is closely connected with the notion of the importance of first impressions in war: see pp. 85-87. Note *Agr.* 18.3-4, 38.2-4; *H.* 1.63.2, 2.20.2; *A.* 12.31.2, 14.23.1.

[456] Similarly, in dealing with Tacfarinas, Tiberius instructs his legate Blaesus to hold out the offer of amnesty to the rebels (which many of them accepted), but to capture Tacfarinas at all cost, as he had for so long defied Roman supremacy (*A.* 3.73-74).

were driven back, but in which, so deserters reported, 900 Romans died. Another 400 perished in a mass suicide, fearing betrayal at the hands of one Cruptorix, a former mercenary whose villa they had occupied. The governor L. Apronius did not attempt to avenge these losses and the Frisii were allowed (for now) to retain their independence. Tacitus writes that Tiberius kept the losses a secret because he did not want to entrust the war to another general (*A.* 4.74.1). This explanation is in line with other cases where Tacitus suspects an emperor of jealousy when making policy decisions. However, as in other cases (such as the recalls of Germanicus and Corbulo), the narrative shows that jealousy was merely one factor. The casualty numbers that Tacitus reports (recall that he often declines to do so: n. 244) suggest that Tiberius' decision not to commit more men and resources was quite sensible. In any case, the decision to allow the Frisii their independence reduced Roman *imperium* and no doubt it was in part this that led Tacitus to call these events a source of dishonor (*dehonestarentur, A.* 4.74.1) and to accuse Tiberius of jealousy.

The foreign policy in Germania executed under Tiberius stood the test under Claudius and Nero. In AD 47, Roman *imperium* was ensured among the Cherusci by granting their request for a king, Italicus, who, however, was soon ousted (*A.* 11.16-17). Around the same time, the Chauci made an incursion into Lower Germany under Gannascus (*A.* 11.18), the Roman response to which conforms to the policy outlined above. Corbulo, likely on imperial orders, drove Gannascus out of the province. He followed up this success by imposing harsh discipline on his legions and keeping them under arms at all times near the frontier, a sight that intimidated the Frisii (*terror, A.* 11.19.1).[457] The latter, independent since their revolt in 28, were cowed into giving hostages and settled in territories assigned to them by Corbulo, who established a garrison to keep them in check (*A.* 11.19.2). Thus the governor re-established Rome's *imperium* among the Frisii without having to wage war.

The ideology of costless victory is evidenced further in Claudius' response to Corbulo's

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[457] Corbulo's *mandata*: Potter 1996, 52 (*contra* Isaac 1990, 379).

subsequent actions. The governor had sent men to entice the Greater Chauci to surrender and to have Gannascus murdered through treachery. The ruse was successful and hence, according to Tacitus, an acceptable stratagem (*nec... degeneres*, *A.* 11.19.2). But the result was that it roused the Chauci to renew their rebellion, prompting Claudius to order Corbulo to retreat beyond the Rhine and revert to prior protocol (*A.* 11.20.1-2). The contemporary response to Corbulo's actions (*apud quosdem sinistra fama*, *A.* 11.19.3) suggests that the attempt on Gannascus' life was his own decision and that it conflicted with Claudius' aim, which was to oust the rebel and avoid further commitment and expense.

Three years later (AD 50), Vannius, the Roman client set over the Suebi by Drusus in AD 19 (*A.* 2.63.6), was ousted by Vibilius of the Hermunduri and Vangio and Sido, sons of Vannius' sister (*A.* 12.29). Claudius' handling of this conflict mirrors Tiberius' handling of the conflict between the Cherusci and Marcomanni. Like Tiberius, Claudius avoids military involvement and promises Vannius a place of refuge. He orders Palpellius Hister, governor of Pannonia, to recognize Vangio and Sido as the new Roman clients (thus maintaining *imperium*) and to place a legion and a number of *auxilia* along the Danube as a deterrent to the victors (*terrorem aduersus uictores*, *A.* 12.29.2). While Vangio and Sido, then, replaced Vannius as clients of Rome, the latter was settled in Pannonia (*A.* 12.30.2), likely in part as a check on the new clients, just as Tiberius had used Maroboduus' potential restoration as a deterrent. Thus the situation was contained and Roman supremacy reaffirmed. Claudius' policy with regard to Germania largely follows that of Tiberius: maintenance of control and supremacy at little to no military cost.

Under Nero, matters in Germania mostly were peaceful. Tacitus bitterly ascribes this state of affairs to a lack of initiative of the part of the governors, who, since the *triumphalia ornamenta* had become commonplace, hoped for greater honor (*decus*) if they maintained unbroken peace (*peruulgatis triumphi insignibus maius ex eo decus sperabant si pacem continuauissent*, *A.* 13.53.1). While the words reflect Tacitus' displeasure with inaction, the concern to maintain peace is in line with imperial ideology.

In AD 58, the Frisii, noticing this inaction, left the reservation assigned to them by Corbulo (*A.* 11.19.1-2) and began occupying land east of the Rhine that was to be used by the frontier garrisons (*A.* 13.54).[458] Again we see the typical Roman response. Dubius Avitus uses terror methods (*minitando uim Romanam*, 13.54.2) to force Verritus and Malorix, the Frisian instigators, to request a new abode from the emperor. When Nero's order to depart from the territory was scorned, Avitus sent in auxiliary cavalry to enforce it, capturing or killing those whose resistance was firmest (*A.* 13.54.4).

The Ampsivarii were dealt with similarly. This tribe had requested a place to settle and, when refused, resorted to war, urging the Bructeri, Tencteri, and other Germanic tribes to join their cause (*A.* 13.56). Again the Germani are described as being intimidated into obedience. Avitus had Curtilius Mancia, legate of the upper army, cross the Rhine and display his forces in the enemy's rear, while he himself marched into the territory of the Tencteri and threatened them with destruction (*excidium minitans*), if they did not forsake the Ampsivarii. The Tencteri obeyed, as did the Bructeri, "terrorized by a like dread" (*pari metu exterriti*). The Ampsivarii, now abandoned, withdrew and eventually, after Germanic custom, were destroyed by fellow Germanic tribes. Further internecine slaughter occurred in the same year, with the Hermunduri crushing the Chatti in a major battle for the rights to a salt-producing river (*A.* 13.57).

Finally, the response to the Batavian Revolt (69-70) was executed in the same way. Roman governors (Hordeonius Flaccus, C. Dillius Vocula) or their legates and prefects (Herennius Gallus, Alpinius Montanus) extend offers of mercy and threaten force to avoid having to engage in a full war-effort. When these methods fail, Mucianus, from Rome, orders no less than seven legions (including ones from Spain and Britain) to cross into Gaul to terrorize the Gallic tribes and meanwhile sends Cerialis to Mogontiacum (modern Mainz) (*H.* 4.68).[459]

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[458] Furneaux 1896, vol. II, p. 223.

[459] Failed intimidation and/or offers of mercy: *H.* 4.21, 4.23, 4.32, 4.57-58, 4.68, 4.69 (Julius Auspex of the Remi convinces his people and other Gallic states to lay down arms, but the Treviran Julius Valentinus persists). Cf. *H.* 4.77. For the distribution of the legions

The anticipation of this massive legionary force instills terror into many Gallic states, who, encouraged by Julius Auspex of the Remi, renounce the revolt (4.69.1-2). The Treviri and other states, however, fired up by Valentinus and Tutor, had persisted, as had Civilis and Classicus further north, by the time Cerialis arrived in Mogontiacum (4.69-70). Forced now to take military action, Cerialis takes Rigodulum (modern Riol) and captures Valentinus before entering the capital of the Treviri at Trier (4.70-71). The desire of Cerialis' men to burn the place to the ground and brutally avenge Treviran crimes reflects the common Roman response to treachery and disregarded warnings and peace offerings (4.72). However, recalling the fate of Cremona and concerned not to incite further revolt elsewhere, Cerialis wisely restrains his men. He next wins over the Treviri and Lingones with a calculated speech that explains the principles of empire (see pp. 98-99) and that encourages the former rebels to choose submission and peace (*obsequium cum securitate*) over rebellion and destruction (*contumaciam cum pernicie*, 4.74.4). Intimidation and rhetoric prevailed upon the tribe, which had feared a harsher punishment (*grauiora*), and so, without expense, the Treviran territory was re-occupied and Roman supremacy restored.

Civilis, Tutor, and Classicus remained defiant, however, and now marched on Trier, where an indecisive battle was fought (4.75-78). This was followed by Roman victories at the Colonia Agrippinensis (modern Cologne) and Vetera (modern Xanten) and by engagements at Novaesium (modern Neuss) and Bonna (modern Bonn), with mutual losses (4.79, 5.14-22). At this point, Cerialis again holds out the prospect of mercy to Civilis and Veleda and threatens vengeance if they fail to obey (5.24). Reflecting on the constant reinforcement of the Roman legions and their own losses of life and home (Cerialis had mercilessly destroyed the island of the Batavi: 5.23), the Batavi force Civilis to surrender (5.25-26). As the *Historiae* break off here, it is uncertain what happened to Civilis, but the

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on 1 January 69 and the subsequent moves throughout the civil wars and the Batavian Revolt, see Chilver-Townend 1985, 14-19.

Batavi, as far as we know, received favorable treatment (*G.* 29.1; *H.* 4.12).[460] The Roman response to the Batavian Revolt, then, was executed along the same lines we have seen thus far. Intimidation and offers of mercy are employed to cow the rebels into obedience. While the Gallic tribes were terrorized into abandoning the revolt, Civilis persisted, urging Rome to move in with full force, moving legions from other provinces to eventually secure the end of the revolt.

In sum, Roman foreign policy as regards Germania, based on leaving the Germani to their internal struggles, on retaining control through client kings, and on intimidating foes by displays of force, was cost-efficient and, by and large, successful. This policy, though it failed initially to check the Batavian Revolt, eventually stood the test during that conflict as well. In the *Germania*, this imperial strategy is already on display, with *G.* 33.2 reflecting Tacitus' endorsement of the policy of letting the Germani destroy one another, and with *G.* 29.2 and *G.* 42.2 reflecting the outward projection of Roman power and methods of indirect control, respectively. This policy, in turn, is supported by what the text as a whole tells us about the Germani's predisposition to internecine discord and about the economic drawbacks of their land. It is one of the crucial conceptual links between the *Germania* and the historical works that the former articulates Tacitus' approval of, and offers information that endorses, the foreign policy explicated in the latter.

III.3.3b Armenia and Parthia

Julio-Claudian policy in Armenia was grounded in the same methods, except that the emperors interfered here more than they did in the north.[461] Tensions between Rome and Parthia, which had

[460] Apparently an allied people before the revolt, afterward the Batavi seem to have been reorganized into a *civitas* (*CIL* xiii. 8771). Their former capital Batavodurum, destroyed by Cerialis during the revolt (*H.* 5.23), was rebuilt under Vespasian and was named Ulpia Noviomagus (modern Nijmegen) under Trajan. The privileges attested by Tacitus at *G.* 29.1 otherwise are unattested and lack of evidence leaves it unclear whether they belong to the period before or after the revolt. In any case, after the revolt, the Batavi continue to be employed extensively as auxiliaries and as guards in the imperial bodyguard. See Rives 1999, 238-41 with further references.
[461] On Roman views and representations of Parthia and its culture, see Schneider 1998, 95-127 and Rose 2005, 21-75 (with focus on triumphal imagery and plentiful references to earlier scholarship). On the narrative function of the Armenian and Parthian sections in the *Annales*, see Gilmartin 1973, 583-626; Keitel 1978, 462-73; Vervaet 1999, 289-97; Ash 1999, 114-35, all variously engaging with Syme. For lucid overviews of Roman-Parthian relations regarding Armenia, see Bennett 1997, 186 ff.; Braund 2013, 83-101 with further references there. My focus here is on Tacitus' description of imperial foreign policy in the East.

raged for over half a century,[462] culminated in a settlement, proposed by Augustus in 20 BC (Suet., *Aug.* 21.3; Dio 54.8.1-3), whereby Rome would acknowledge Armenia's status as a minor kingdom within Parthia's hegemony, provided that the nominee for the Armenian throne be approved by Rome. It was an ostensibly fair and diplomatic solution, but one that was not foolproof and that, despite being maintained, by and large, until Trajan's invasion, caused recurrent tension. Most nominees for the Armenian throne did not last long, either because those chosen by Rome, having resided in the capital, were too 'Romanized' for local tastes and soon expelled, or because those chosen by Parthia became too ambitious or despotic and so were a threat to Roman interests. There was also the fickle character of the Armenians themselves, who, located between two mighty empires, hated Rome and envied Parthia (*aduersus Romanos odio et in Parthum inuidia*, *A.* 2.56.1). Each time a new nominee was expelled or died (which was quite often), the selection process had to start anew, sometimes at considerable military cost. It was during such missions that the princes Gaius and Germanicus had perished.

Despite the Augustan arrangement, his successors often saw reason to interfere in Armenia, taking advantage of the persistent discord that was endemic in the decentralized Parthian system. Tiberius, after the expulsion of the Parthian king Vonones in AD 17, had Germanicus install Zeno (called Artaxias by the Armenians) on the Armenian throne (*A.* 2.56.2-3). Upon that man's death in 32, the Parthian Artabanus III attempted to seize the throne, but he was checked by Tiberius' legate L. Vitellius, who, displaying Roman arms (*ostentasse Romana arma*), threatened to invade Mesopotamia and so forced the Parthian to retreat (*A.* 6.31 ff.). While Artabanus meanwhile was being displaced in Parthia, the Iberian Mithridates was installed on the Armenian throne in 35 (*A.* 6.31 ff.). This king, having been deposed by Caligula in 37, was re-installed by Claudius in 41 (once more after threatening the Parthians with war: *A.* 11.8-10), before being expelled by the Iberian Radamistus in 51 (*A.* 12.44-

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[462] Sulla, Pompey, Gabinus, Crassus, and, after Caesar's untimely death, Antony all had interfered militarily in Parthians affairs, with many losses on both sides. Crassus and Antony suffered ignominious defeats.

51). The main threat to the Armenian throne at this time, the Parthian Vardanes, meanwhile (in 47) had been murdered by his brother Gotarzes, in yet another case of Parthian discord (*A*. 11.10). At this point, Claudius went so far as to interfere directly into Parthian affairs (and so violate the Augustan agreement), granting a Parthian request to install Meherdates (a royal hostage kept in Rome) as their king (*A*. 12.10-11; cf. *A*. 11.10), since Gotarzes' rule quickly had become despotic. Until this point, matters had been resolved diplomatically, often under Roman threats of war, and most arrangements were to both Rome and Parthia's advantage or at least could be argued to be by both.[463]

Matters became more complicated when Meherdates was deposed and replaced by Vologaeses I (*A*. 12.12-14), who revealed his ambitions by installing one of his brothers as king of Media in 51 and the other, Tiridates I, as king of Armenia in 54, after ousting Radamistus and beating back the latter's attempted comeback in 52-53 (*A*. 12.50-51, 13.6). Vologaeses' installation of his son on the Armenian throne without Roman approval was a plain violation of the existing agreement, perhaps encouraged by Claudius' earlier unsanctioned intervention in Parthian affairs. When Claudius died in the same year, it was left to Nero to restore Rome's reputation.

In accordance with imperial policy, outright war with the Parthians was to be avoided and Roman supremacy restored through diplomacy and authority. Nero's contemporaries, concerned with the young emperor's age and familiar with imperial policy, stressed that "the highest rank mainly worked through its prestige and its counsels more than by the sword and hand" (*pleraque in summa fortuna auspiciis et consiliis quam telis et manibus geri*, *A*. 13.6). The seasoned Corbulo was sent to take over Cappadocia and Galatia, and three legions were transferred there from Syria, the chief Roman province in the east (*A*. 13.7-8, 13.35). Transfers from other provinces restored Syria's full garrison, a move that weakened frontier security in other parts of the Empire and reflects the severity of the

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[463] Note especially Tacitus' comment on Tiberius' installation of Zeno (Artaxias) on the Armenian throne: "Tiberius was the more delighted at having established peace through wise policy than if he had completed the war with a battle" (*laetiore Tiberio quia pacem sapientia firmauerat quam si bellum per acies confecisset*, *A*. 2.64.1). The policy is underlined in the next clause, with Tacitus stressing that Tiberius now moved against the Thracian king Rhescuporis "with a crafty scheme" (*astu*).

situation. At the same time, the client kings Agrippa and Antiochus were ordered to ready their forces for battle (*A.* 13.7, 13.37). In typical Roman fashion, Corbulo, having made a display of strength, made an attempt at diplomacy (*A.* 13.9, 13.37): Rome would acknowledge Tiridates as king of Armenia, provided that he and Vologaeses request Nero's formal approval in Rome. When this was refused, Corbulo responded with military force and drove Tiridates from Armenia. Taking advantage of renewed internal problems in Parthia (i.e. the Hyrcanian revolt: *A.* 13.37.5), Corbulo took the Armenian strongholds of Volandum (without losses: *A.* 13.39), Artaxata (the capital, which was demolished because it was too expensive to be garrisoned, but whose inhabitants were spared because they surrendered: *A.* 13.41), and Tigranocerta (*A.* 14.23-25),[464] forcing Tiridates to give up the idea of war and installing the pro-Roman Tigranes in Tigranocerta (AD 60). The new king was supported by a substantial force of legionaries and auxiliaries, while parts of Armenia were placed under the control of the Roman clients Pharasmanes, Polemo, Aristobulus, and Antiochus (*A.* 14.26.2). Corbulo's successes were celebrated in Rome, where, upon the destruction of Artaxata, Nero was hailed *Imperator* (*A.* 13.41.4). Corbulo, capitalizing on Parthia's problems elsewhere, had made himself master of Armenia with minimal losses and without having to engage in open warfare.

In the next stages of the conflict, Rome's policy remained geared towards preserving peace through diplomacy and threats of war. While Corbulo had been redeployed to Syria, Tigranes (against Nero's instructions) attacked and occupied territory controlled by Parthia, forcing Vologaeses to go to war (*A.* 15.1-2). The latter again crowned his son Tiridates king of Armenia and prepared to besiege Tigranocerta, which held out in part because the Parthians had no knowledge of siege warfare (15.2-4). When Corbulo received tidings of Vologaeses' plans, he sent two legions into Armenia, secured Syria, and posted his remaining forces on the banks of the Euphrates (15.3.2). To execute war efficiently in

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[464] Given the persistent emphasis in the *Annales* on Roman methods of terrorization, it may be surprising that Tacitus omits what Frontinus records about Corbulo: that the general catapulted the head of a captured nobleman over the walls into Tigranocerta, causing the besieged to flee (*Str.* 2.9.5).

Armenia and, at the same time, properly secure Syria, Corbulo requested that an additional general be sent to Armenia (15.3.1). He now threatened to cross the Euphrates and carry the war into Parthian territory, if Vologaeses did not stop harassing what the general now called a Roman *provincia* (15.5.1). This threat cowed the Parthian to retreat and to attempt a diplomatic solution by now agreeing to Corbulo's original proposal that he ask for Nero's formal recognition of his son Tiridates (15.5.4). This second-hand attempt was, for unclear reasons, refused. Corbulo's success again was celebrated in Rome as a glorious victory, earned through efficient terrorization of his Parthian enemy (*formidine regis et Corbulonis minis*, 15.6.1).

The refusal of Vologaeses' request incited the Parthians to make open war, attacking both Armenia and Syria. While Corbulo, through an imposing display of Roman power on the banks of the Euphrates, discouraged Parthian designs on Syria (*A.* 15.9), the new general, the incompetent Caesennius Paetus, pursued a more aggressive strategy (whether on imperial instructions or on his own volition is uncertain). The Parthians threw a large army at him, besieged him at Rhandeia, and soon forced the surrender and disgraceful withdrawal of all Roman forces from Armenia (*A.* 15.7-16). In the aftermath, Corbulo, having no *mandata* to avenge this setback, managed to secure a settlement whereby he would remove the fortresses on the bank of the Euphrates and Vologaeses would abandon Armenia, leaving Tiridates in place (*A.* 15.17).

After Paetus' setback, Nero and his advisers resolved on war, granting Corbulo *imperium maius* to recover Armenia (*A.* 15.25). The general pursued active diplomacy with Vologaeses and secured an agreement whereby Parthia would retain the right to nominate the king of Armenia and Tiridates would have to receive his royal diadem officially from the emperor's hand in Rome (*A.* 15.27-31). The way Corbulo secured this agreement was three-fold: by alerting Vologaeses to the persistent internal problems he faced and the fierce tribes he ruled over, while Nero enjoyed universal peace; by taking ruthless action against those Armenians who had first revolted from Rome, destroying their fortresses

and spreading terror (*metus*, 15.27.3); and through his personal authority (15.28.1). In an alteration to the Augustan arrangement, the Armenian throne henceforth would be occupied by a member of the Arsacid house chosen by the Parthians, while Rome's involvement would be limited to bestowing the royal diadem on the new nominee. The Neronian settlement would remain in place until it was violated by Trajan's invasion during his Parthian War.

Tacitus' account shows that, despite significant differences between Germania and Armenia, Roman foreign policy in both regions largely was executed with the same methods. The aim was to preserve peace and stability, while maintaining and extending Rome's *imperium* beyond the northern and eastern boundaries of the Empire. Client kings, intimidation, and exploitation of barbarian discord remain the central components of the policy pursued by the emperors. The celebrations of Corbulo's successes show that these methods, which amounted to a careful avoidance of warfare, could be celebrated as bestowing military glory on Rome.[465] The foreign policy pursued in Germania and the East illustrates the prevailing imperial ideology starting under Tiberius and reflects the basic similarities between Germanic and Parthian *mores*, underlined by the internal discord endemic to both regions and the failure of Roman-bred royal hostages to last long in their native lands. Tacitus' characterization of the Germani can usefully be brought to bear on his view of the Parthians.

III.3.3c Britain

After Caesar, Claudius was the first *princeps* to undertake a military campaign into Britain. Augustus and Tiberius were disinterested (*Agr.* 13.2), while Caligula made preparations for a campaign that was never executed (*Agr.* 13.2; Suet., *Cal.* 19.3; Dio 59.25, 29). Having lost the books of the *Annales* that covered the British campaigns under Aulus Plautius and Claudius himself, we do not know how Tacitus conceived of the motivations behind the emperor's designs. In contrast with

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[465] Suetonius Paulinus' desire to match Corbulo's recovery of Armenia (*Corbulonis concertator*, *A.* 14.29.1) shows that the latter achieved massive military glory, even though he never engaged the Parthians in a pitched battle.

Claudius' foreign policy elsewhere, the invasion of the island seems peculiar and may well have been motivated, as Levick suggests, by personal insecurity.[466] In any case, the evidence from both Dio and other sections of the *Annales* suggests that the conquest of Britain was a complex process of adjustment and *ad hoc* decision-making rather than a concerted effort at aggressive expansionism.

According to Dio, Plautius was sent to Britain in 43 in response to a request for military aid by a certain Bericus, who had been ousted from the island (Dio 60.19.1; cf. Suet., *Cl.* 17.1). A useful pretext had thus presented itself for a *princeps* who needed military glory to establish his credentials. In that year, Plautius (together with his legates Vespasian, the latter's brother Sabinus, and Hosidius Geta) advanced up to the Thames, in preparation for Claudius' joining the campaign (Dio 60.20-21.2).[467] The emperor (whose departure from Rome for this campaign signifies its importance to him) defeated several tribes and took Camulodunum (modern Colchester), after which he returned to Rome to celebrate a triumph (Dio 60.21.2-23.6). Claudius exploited the occasion for personal glory. Not everyone bought into the spectacle. Suetonius calls the campaign "of little importance" (*modicam*, *Claud.* 17.1). By 47, Plautius had overrun most of lowland Britain (cf. *Agr.* 14.1) and secured the services of Cogidumnus as a client managing areas beyond the frontier (14.1), when he was replaced by Publius Ostorius Scapula, in the middle of whose tenure the *Annales* pick up at *A.* 12.31.1.

The bulk of the action undertaken by Ostorius was in response to persistent unrest caused by British tribes (*A.* 12.31). Much like the Germani, Armenians, and Parthians, the Britons were seen as a warlike and discordant people, and their internal discord or harassment of Roman territory required constant military intervention. It would seem that most of Britain's governors enjoyed greater latitude than governors elsewhere to decide how to proceed against such tribes on the fringes of the Empire.[468] Most (to Tacitus' chagrin) did little more than consolidate territory and engage in operations to put

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[466] Levick 1990, 148.
[467] On the veracity of Dio's claim that Plautius requested Claudius' personal involvement because he dreaded advancing beyond the Thames, see Levick 1990, 142.
[468] Potter 1996, 59-60.

down rebellious tribes and preserve frontier security. Again we note the priority placed on preventing

unrest and costly response operations by intimidating people or holding out the prospect of mercy.

Ostorius defeats and punishes the rebellious Iceni and then immediately moves against the Decangi,

aware that first impressions often induce submission. The policy also worked in the case of the

Brigantes, who had broken out in mutual violence and caused unrest: a few were annihilated, causing

the remainder to accept an offer of pardon. The Silures, however, were indifferent to either

intimidation or mercy (*Silurum gens non atrocitate, non clementia mutabatur*, *A*. 12.32.2). Ostorius thus was

forced to move against them, earning a cost-efficient and glorious victory over the renowned chief

Caratacus, with the help of Cartimandua, queen of the Brigantes, who surrendered Caratacus to him

when the latter sought her protection (*A*. 12.33-37; *H*. 3.45.1). The ideal of cost-efficient victory is

reinforced in the inscription on the Arch of Claudius (*CIL* vi. 920a = *ILS* 216), constructed in 51-52 in

honor of the Roman gains in Britain under that emperor: *q]uod / reges Brit[annorum XI devictos sine] /*

ulla iactur[a in deditionem populi Romani redegerit].[469] But even this setback did not quiet down

the Silures, who renewed their effort and induced other tribes to join, eventually causing the demise of

the governor, who succumbed to his labors and anxieties (*A*. 12.39).

In 52, Ostorius was replaced by Aulus Didius Gallus, who principally was concerned with

containing the Silures and consolidating prior gains (*A*. 12.40). There continued to be unrest amongst

the Brigantes. Discord between Cartimandua and her husband Venutius was anticipated and dealt with

in traditional Roman fashion, by letting the Britons wear each other down (in this case, by supporting

Cartimandua with a small force: *A*. 12.40.3). Despite Tacitus' misgivings (see p. 43), Gallus had

stabilized the province and prepared it for the next push, which, it seems clear from *A*. 14.29, was the

complete annexation of the island up to the Forth-Clyde isthmus. Quintus Veranius was supposed

carry out this mission (14.29.1), but his sudden death left the task to Suetonius Paulinus (14.29.2).

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[469] For the whole inscription and useful notes, see Boatwright 2015, 246 n.73.

Paulinus' *mandata* would have given him scope to deal with the British tribes south of the Forth-Clyde line as he saw fit in preparing the complete subjugation of that part of the island. It seems that his decision to attack Mona, a place of refuge for rebellious Britons, was his own (*A.* 14.29.2). A combination of factors, including the oppressive conduct of his procurators, led to the Boudiccan revolt, which would occupy Paulinus until his recall (*A.* 14.31-37). After his procurator Decianus and his legate Cerialis suffered substantial losses, due in part to rashness and disorganization, Paulinus restored order by gaining a crushing victory over Boudicca and the Iceni (equal to the victories of old: *clara et antiquis uictoriis par ea die laus parta*, *A.* 14.37.2). The losses at once were made up by the transfer of two thousand men from the Rhine legions, eight cohorts of auxiliaries, and a thousand cavalry (*A.* 14.38.1), and those tribes that remained hostile were brutally crushed.[470] In the aftermath, the alleged misconduct of the new procurator Classicianus (*A.* 14.38.3) caused the province to remain unstable and in part for this reason (the malicious letters about Paulinus sent to Rome by Classicianus were another) the governor was recalled and replaced by the 'milder' Petronius Turpilianus, who took limited military action during his tenure (again, to Tacitus' displeasure: *A.* 14.39.3; *Agr.* 16.3).

During the civil wars of 68-69, when Vettius Bolanus was governor, the recurrent unrest among the Brigantes came to a head, when Cartimandua divorced Venutius and took as her new husband a certain Vellocatus, Venutius' former standard-bearer (*H.* 3.45.2).[471] A civil war broke out between a faction supporting the queen and an anti-Roman faction headed by Venutius. Bolanus ultimately intervened and rescued Cartimandua, but Venutius now gained control of Brigantia. The replacement of the loyal Cartimandua by the hostile Venutius meant the loss of a friendly kingdom

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[470] Cf. the discussion about Paulinus' procurators and his harsh response to the revolt on pp. 50-52.

[471] Similarities between the episodes at *H.* 3.45 and *A.* 12.60 have led some (e.g. Hanson and Campbell 1986) to see the latter as a 'doublet.' On this view, Tacitus placed these events in the year 69 in the *Historiae*, only to change his mind and place them in the 50s in the *Annales*. Aside from the implausibility of such an error, the differences between the two episodes (in the description of Venutius and of Cartimandua's fate, and in the mention, in the *Historiae*, of Vellocatus) show that Tacitus relates separate events. The passage in the *Historiae*, as D. Braund (1996, 130) points out, "reprises, as summarized background to the events of AD 69, the events of the 50s AD, which Tacitus was later to relate in the *Annals*." In other words, already in the 50s there was continued unrest, which ultimately led to the divorce and the outbreak of civil war in 69.

that functioned as a buffer from the tribes in the far north and that now threatened to destabilize the areas that only recently had been pacified after the Boudiccan revolt. These developments compelled Vespasian, upon the completion of the Roman civil wars, to attempt the annexation of Brigantia, a task that was accomplished by Cerialis in 71-74 (*Agr.* 17.1) and consolidated by Agricola in 77-78 (*Agr.* 20). Similar considerations compelled the subjugation of the Silures, accomplished by Frontinus (Cerialis' successor) in 74-76 (*Agr.* 17.2). Finally, Agricola was the first governor who was granted permission to campaign north of the Forth-Clyde line. The *Agricola*, as we have seen, tells us how he executed his assignment, by combining the implementation of traditional methods of acculturation and financial reforms with instillment of fear to preserve stability. It appears that his task was, by stages, to effect the subjection of the entire island. The vital point is that, much like Trajan's annexation of Dacia, the decision to subjugate all of Britain was as much, if not more, driven by a desire to eliminate recurrent instability as by a desire to gain military glory for the Flavian house.

The above sections on Rome's foreign policy in Germania, Armenia, and Britain show that, notwithstanding the dynamic adjustments made in localized contexts, the prevailing imperial ideology, starting under Tiberius, was one aimed at peace and stabilization as opposed to expansion.[472] Understanding the limits of empire, Tiberius preferred to direct foreign policy through diplomacy and indirect influence rather than war. Suetonius' succinct summary illustrates the policy's success and consistency across the Empire (*Tib.* 37.4).[473] The emperor's successors by and large followed his example, despite adjustments in particular areas that necessitated a commitment of military forces and money. In Germania, the prevailing ideology remained that of containment. Domitian departed from this policy, before Trajan, with his extensive experience in the area, reverted back to Julio-Claudian precedent. In Armenia, too, despite many modifications, open military intervention was kept at a

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[472] Note, in this sense, also *H.* 1.89.2 (*sub Tiberio... pacis aduersa ad rem publicam pertinere*), *H.* 5.9.2 (*sub Tiberio quies*), and *A.* 15.46.2 (of Nero's reign: *quippe haud alias tam immota pax*).

[473] *Hostiles motus nulla postea expeditione suscepta per legatos compescuit, ne per eos quidem nisi cunctanter et necessario. Reges infestos suspectosque comminationibus magis et querelis quam vi repressit; quosdam per blanditias atque promissa extractos ad se non remisit, ut Marobodum Germanum, Rhascuporim Thracem, Archelaum Cappadocem, cuius etiam regnum in formam prouinciae redegit.*

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minimum and outright war with Parthia avoided. The internal discord endemic in Germania and the East was recognized, carefully incited, and subsequently exploited. Unnecessary cost and loss of life were prevented by attempts not to have to engage in warfare at all, typically by displaying force and spreading fear, and by extending offers of mercy, which, if accepted, affirmed Rome's supremacy. At the same time, *imperium* was maintained or extended through client kings and local chiefs. Although Britain at first seems to be an exception to this pattern, its conquest was a complex process of adjustment and *ad hoc* decision-making. Most of its governors were concerned with containment and stability, not with continued expansion of the Empire's *termini*, a course of action typically pursued to alleviate persistent unrest and revolt. While Tacitus disapproves of such inaction on the part of the governors, the policy they pursued was in line with imperial foreign policy, geared towards consolidation and prevention of overextension. The crucial point for our purposes is that the above policy and Tacitus' general endorsement of it are enunciated already in the *Germania*.

Tacitus' conception of Rome's *imperium* and his attitude towards foreign policy remain consistent throughout the corpus. From the *Agricola* and the *Germania* to the *Historiae* and the *Annales* he reveals an emotional and moral penchant for military initiative and expansion. At the same time, he endorses the cost-efficient and defensive foreign policy initiated under Tiberius, showing himself to be acutely aware of the financial, military, and cultural limits on empire. Hence denunciation of military inactivity and frustration over lost territories balanced by endorsement of prudent policy-making. This attitude already is on display in the *Agricola* and the *Germania*. The latter voices Tacitus' disappointment over lost territory (and knowledge: cf. *Agr.* 10, 22.1) beyond the Rhine, while at the same time offering information on Germania and its tribes that endorses Tiberian and post-Tiberian Germanic policy as it unfolds in the historical works.

Tacitus' attitude is reflected further in his famous methodological statement at *A.* 4.32-33 about imperial foreign policy and the limits it placed on an historian's narrative material. Tacitus'

complaint that his predecessors could recount major battles, sieges, and glorious deaths, whereas his own narrative is circumscribed by nearly unbroken peace, reflects, *inter alia*, the nature of imperial ideology, calculated to prevent the dramatic (and costly) battles that his predecessors were able to recount. Germanicus' campaigns ahead of his recall and Paulinus' massive battle against the Iceni provided Tacitus with material for traditional battle narrative, but these campaigns were exceptions to the defensive and cost-efficient policy that underlies the bulk of his material.[474]

Judging from his outlook as it emerges from his corpus, Tacitus will have approved of Trajan's annexation of Dacia and the extension of the frontier and Rome's 'hard' power (and intelligence) beyond the Danube. He will have approved of the glory that these wars bestowed on his *princeps* and the city, advertised by Trajan's Forum and Column.[475] In contrast, he likely disapproved of the emperor's ambitions in the East, which, despite being suited to Rome's ambition for world domination, were costly and impracticable in the long run. Hence he likely endorsed the abandonment, initiated by Trajan himself and continued by Hadrian, of the provinces briefly held in Iraq. Roman superiority there had been reaffirmed and neighboring kings integrated more firmly within Rome's sphere of influence. For Tacitus, as for Hadrian, this was sufficient. Yet it is evident from the *Annales* that Tacitus did not share in Hadrian's more distinctly defensive policy, which saw, among other things, the abandonment of trans-Danubian territories annexed under Trajan.

III.4 Germania and the Germani in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*

In the first part of this chapter, I explored the depiction of Germania in the *Germania*, establishing the principal features of the land and the characteristics of its tribes. I then moved to

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[474] It is not necessary (though, of course, possible) to argue that Tacitus is "deliberately slanting his narrative in such a way as to make the warfare appear less significant and less exciting" (Levene 2009, 231) or that Corbulo's campaigns in the East somehow are disappointing because he did not engage in open warfare, or that Tacitus is concerned primarily to describe Germanicus as a 'republican-style' general. The differences in the descriptions of these campaigns simply reflect imperial foreign policy: Germanicus was charged with recovering the territory lost by the Varian disaster, until Tiberius recalled him, while Corbulo's instructions had been to recover Armenia without engaging the Parthians in battle or suffering unnecessary cost and loss of life.

[475] Although it has been noted that Tacitus often is reticent about monuments and building programs: Rouveret 1991. I owe the reference to Sailor 2008, 187 n. 4.

Tacitus' outlook on imperial foreign policy as it emerges from the *Agricola*, the *Germania*, and both historical works. I have argued, among other things, that the *Germania* sets out Tacitus' vision of imperial rule and that it offers information about Germania and its tribes that may be taken as endorsing the cost-efficient and defensive foreign policy intitated by Tiberius. In the final pages, I look at how Germania and its tribes are characterized in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, showing that, while Tacitus' treatment of the Germani becomes more complex and multifaceted in the historical works, their portrayal largely remains consistent and based on the essential characteristics ascribed to them in the *Germania*.

While there are noticeable differences between the ways in which individual tribes are characterized in the three texts, modern scholarship has placed undue emphasis on these differences to posit a change in Tacitus' attitude towards the Germani. It often is argued that the latter come off much better in the *Germania*, where, it is said, they are idealized, than in the later works, where, it is argued, Tacitus has a less favorable view of them.[476] This view is a manifestation of the preconception that there must exist between the monographs and the historical works a significant distinction in maturity and analysis.[477] The depiction of the Batavi commonly is mustered as evidence of Tacitus' changed outlook, since this tribe changes from loyal allies in the *Germania* to violent rebels in the extant books of the *Historiae*. Likewise, special emphasis is placed on the description of the rebellious Cherusci and other tribes in the opening books of the *Annales*, which is used to argue that the Germani as a whole are characterized less positively there than they were in the *Germania*.

While the Batavi and other Germanic tribes certainly come off worse in some ways in the

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[476] Note, e.g., Christ 1965, 63-72: "Das im übrigen bekannte, in der Germania so eindrucksvoll gestaltete Germanenbild erfährt indessen bereits in den Historien... eine bemerkenswerte Veränderung" (63)... "Ihr Bild ist weniger idealisiert als in der Germania" (64)... "In den Annalen hat sich Tacitus dann von seiner ursprünglichen Germanenkonzeption am weitesten entfert" (65). Cf. Rives 1999, 49: "the presentation of the Germani in the two works [i.e. the *Germania* and *Historiae*] is strikingly different." Cf. Mellor 2010, 50-51: "the *Germania*... was less about the real Germans than an idealized picture to contrast with the moral failings of Rome... There is little place for nuance in this idealized world. But when Germans appear in Tacitus' *Annals* and *Histories*, they are far less sympathetic, as we see instances of cruelty, hypocrisy, and torture." A more recent examination of the connections between the *Germania* and the historical works, that of Ash (2014, 185-200), although it usefully emphasizes similarities and interactions, uses the example of the Batavi to ultimately stress difference rather than continuity (esp. p. 199).

[477] Note Syme 1958a, 128-29; Martin 1981, 57-58; the assumption is implicit in more recent work as well: e.g. Mellor 2010, 50-51.

historical works, we would do well not to make too much of any differences in depiction. First, the differences are less stark than the above arguments suppose, for, to begin with, the Germani are far from idealized in the *Germania*. Second, the characterization of the Batavi and the Cherusci is far from one-sided, for their courage, military strength, and intelligence are much on display as well. Civilis and Arminius are characterized in a similarly balanced way as are Germanicus, Cerialis, and other Roman generals (*H*. 4.34 and 5.16-17 are good examples). But most important is the fact that, although Tacitus' characterization of the Germani consists of more factors and considerations, and hence is more nuanced, in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, their essential features and character traits remain the same throughout. Tacitus ascribes to the Batavi and the Cherusci (as indeed to other Germanic tribes) the stereotypical traits he ascribed to the Germani collectively in the *Germania*. Put differently, while the depiction of certain tribes or individuals becomes more complex, they nonetheless conduct themselves in typically 'Germanic' fashion; there is no compelling reason to assume that Tacitus' view of the Germani changed over the course of his literary career. Hence, in the following pages, I should like to highlight some of the ways in which the depiction of the Germani and their land remains consistent across the three works, as well as to show how a reader was expected to use the monograph as a reference point when reading the *Historiae* and the *Annales*.

III.4.1 Germania and the Germani across the Tacitean Corpus

As in the *Germania*, so in the historical works, Germania is described as a dreary place marked by forests, swamps, and trackless plains.[478] Its harsh climate, as in the *Germania*, is cold, stormy, and rainy, with short summers and long winters.[479] While in the later works Tacitus illustrates methods to deal with these challenges (i.e. the construction of plank roads and bridges, the cutting down of

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[478] Forests/groves: *H*. 2.25.2, 2.42.2, 4.14.2, 4.22.2; *A*. 1.50-51, 1.56.3, 1.59-64, 1.67-68, 2.5.3, 2.11-12, 2.14.2, 2.16-17, 2.19-20, 2.25.2, 2.45.3, 4.72-73, 13.54.1, 13.57.1. Swamps/mires: *H*. 4.73.3, 5.14-15, 5.17.2, 5.23.3; *A*. 1.61.1, 1.63-65, 1.67-68, 2.5.3, 2.19-20, 13.54.1. Trackless plains/deserts: *H*. 4.73.3; *A*. 1.61-64, 2.14.2, 2.17.3, 13.55.2. Neighboring Pannonia has a similar make-up: *A*. 1.17.3.
[479] *H*. 2.32, 2.80.3, 2.94.1, 2.99.1, 4.26.1, 5.18.2, 5.23.2-3; *A*. 1.56.2, 1.70, 2.5.3, 2.7.2, 2.15, 2.23-24, 2.26.2, 13.57.3. Cf. *A*. 1.17.3 and *G*. 5.1 on Pannonia.

forests), the terrain remains treacherous and uncomfortable for Roman armies.[480] Its geography and climate made Germania an unpopular place to be stationed and a dangerous environment for military campaigns.[481] The Germani held a distinct military advantage in their natural environment, with their swimming skills and experience fighting in forests, swamps, and rivers frequently on display.[482]

Germania continues to be described as broken up by streams, rivers, and tributaries, which provided logistical opportunities but, amidst storms, were dangerous passageways.[483] Ocean, that formidable mental and physical boundary, remains trackless, treacherous, and full of mystery.[484] Germanicus' naval disaster exemplifies the dangers of seafaring in stormy Germania (*A.* 2.23-24).

In terms of Germania's natural and mineral resources, the later works likewise transmit the same picture. Most of the soil is poor (*H.* 4.73.3), its principal crop wheat (*H.* 4.26.1, 4.27.1, 4.35, 4.58.3), its livestock mostly undersized (*A.* 4.72.2). Only the Mattiaci have silver mines, but these are slender and short-lived (*A.* 11.20.3). The Colonia Agrippinensis (modern Cologne) may have had access to silver as well (*H.* 1.57.2). All this is in line with what Tacitus writes in the *Germania* about areas along the Rhine having greater access to natural and monetary resources. The lack of any mention of iron or gold reaffirms the absence of these resources in Germania (*G.* 5.3, 6.1). Timber naturally was abundant in this forested land (*G.* 16.3; *H.* 4.23.3, 5.20.2). The general poverty of Germania's resources is affirmed by Germanicus' reliance on aid from Gaul, Spain, and Italy to make up for losses (*A.* 1.71.2) and was one reason why Tiberius decided to recall his nephew and re-establish the frontier at the Rhine. Lack of provisions caused Roman legions trouble during the Batavian Revolt (*H.* 4.35.1; cf. 4.26-27, 5.23.3). In the case of these last examples, the *Germania*

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[480] Roads and bridges: *A.* 1.56.1-3, 1.61.1, 1.63.3-4, 4.73.1; plank roads: *A.* 1.63.3-4; cutting down forests: *A.* 1.50.3.

[481] Unpopular place: *H.* 2.80.3; *A.* 1.17.3 (on Pannonia); dangers of fighting in Germania: *H.* 4.12.1, 5.14 ff.; *A.* 1.63 ff.

[482] *Agr.* 18.4; *H.* 2.35, 2.42-43, 4.12.3, 4.66.2, 5.14-19, 5.21.2; *A.* 1.56.3, 1.63-68, 2.5.3, 2.8.3, 2.11-12, 2.19-20, 13.54.1, 14.29.3. Note also Dio 69.9.6 with *CIL* iii. 3676 (= *ILS* 2558). Dio records that in AD 121 Hadrian, wishing to intimidate several trans-Danubian tribes, had some Batavian troops swim the river in full armor. The inscription was set up by one of these Batavians, boasting of his skills. On Batavian confidence in their swimming skills, cf. Hassall 1970, 131; Speidel 1991.

[483] Cerialis: *H.* 5.18.2, 5.23.3; Germanicus: *A.* 1.56.2, 2.15.2-3, 2.23-26; P. Vitellius: *A.* 1.70.

[484] Boundary: *H.* 1.9.2; *A.* 1.9.5, 14.39.2; trackless: *A.* 2.15.2; treacherous: *A.* 1.70, 2.6, 2.23-24, 11.20.2, 13.53.2; immeasurable: *A.* 2.24; marvels: *A.* 2.24, 14.32.1, 15.37.2.

provides essential information that clarifies military realities and Roman decision-making as they are recounted in the historical works.

As in the *Germania*, the Germani inhabit rural *vici* and *pagi* that lack Roman-style urbanization.[485] The difference between Germanic and Roman-style settlement is most evident in the description of Roman military camps or *coloniae*, such as the Colonia Agrippinensis, which has villas and city-walls (*A.* 13.57.3; cf. *H.* 4.59.3: *circumdatos Agrippinensis*). The latter notably are seen as *munimenta seruitii* (*H.* 4.64.2). The Germani continue to be described as living in scattered dwellings. So the Ubii, maintaining their loyalty to Rome during the Batavian Revolt, manage to slaughter all Germani in the *colonia* because the latter were, in Germanic fashion, "scattered throughout their dwellings" (*dispersos in domibus*, *H.* 4.79.1; cf. *dispersos*, *H.* 4.37.3). That the Germani do not like living in close proximity (*G.* 16.1) is underlined by the fact that, when they are in Rome with Vitellius, they cannot handle the city crowds and incite brawls with whomever they run into (*H.* 2.88.3). Moreover, the fact that the Germani enjoyed only one kind of public performance (*G.* 24.1; cf. 19.1) explains why the Frisian chiefs Verritus and Malorix, "in their ignorance" (*ignari*, *A.* 13.54.3), did not enjoy the spectacle staged in Pompey's theater when they were in Rome. As is clear throughout, the *Germania* variously functions as a reference point in the later works, offering background information which Tacitus assumes his readers have gleaned from the monograph.

The Germani continue to be described as a "pure" and "untainted" people (*sincerus et integer*, *H.* 4.64.3) that place great value on their *libertas*, to whatever degree they have access to it. Some are ruled by kings, some by women, while most are led by chiefs like Arminius, Maroboduus, and Civilis.[486] Such chiefs, as in the *Germania*, lead large retinues, while tribes compete with one another for glory (*H.* 4.23.2: *quo discreta uirtus manifestius spectaretur*). Women continue to be described as enjoying great respect

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[485] *G.* 6.3, 12.3, 16.1, 19.1, 39.3; *H.* 4.15.3, 4.26.3, 4.28.2; *A.* 1.50.4, 1.56.3, 13.57.3.
[486] Pure race: *H.* 4.64.2; *libertas*: *H.* 4.17, 4.64-65, 5.25.2; *A.* 1.59.6, 11.16.2-3; led by kings: *A.* 2.44.2, 2.63, 11.16, 12.29, 13.54; by women: *H.* 5.25.

and authority within Germanic society. The notion that the Germani valued women's advice and ascribed "a certain sanctity and prescience," and even divine qualities, to the sex (*G.* 8.2) is recalled at *H.* 4.61.2, and Veleda remains an authority figure throughout (*G.* 8.2; *H.* 4.61.2, 4.65.4, 5.22.3, 5.24.1; cf. 5.25.2). The position of women and the closeness of Germanic family ties (*G.* 18-20) made the Germani dread captivity for their women more than for themselves (*G.* 8.1). For this reason, the strongest way to cement ties with other states or tribes was to include among the hostages a girl of noble birth (*G.* 8.1; cf. *H.* 4.28.1). This information functions as another reference point in the later works, explaining the hostility between Arminius and Segestes (the former had carried off the latter's daughter: *A.* 1.55.3, 1.58), as well as Arminius' frenzy about the fact that his wife (Segestes' daughter) was taken captive by Germanicus' forces (1.57-59.1, 2.10.1, 2.46.1; cf. 2.13.3) and that his future child would be born a slave (1.59.1, 2.46.1). It also allows us to discern the significance of C. Silius' capture of the wife and daughter of Arpus, chief of the Chatti (*A.* 2.7.2), and of the Ubii's offer to give up Civilis' wife and sister and Classicus' daughter to Cerialis if he relieves them (*H.* 4.79.1). Likewise, it explains Civilis' indignation at the *dilectus*, which snatches children from their parents, brothers from brothers (*H.* 4.17.3). The courage with which Arminius' wife is said to have endured her captivity (*A.* 1.57.4) reflects the hardiness and valor expected of Germanic women (*G.* 18.3). Women and children continue to be present near the battlefield to incite their husbands, sons, and fathers (*G.* 7.2-8.1; *H.* 4.18.2, 5.17.2; cf. *Agr.* 32.2). Allusions to both the *Agricola* and the *Germania* (*hortamenta uictoriae, H.* 4.18.2 ~ *uictoriae incitamenta, Agr.* 32.2; *feminarum ululatu, H.* 4.18.2 ~ *feminarum ululatus, G.* 7.3) underline the consistency of Tacitus' analysis across the different works. Finally, the militaristic nature of Germanic education (*G.* 13.1-2) is evoked by Civilis' using prisoners as targets for his little son's shooting practice (*H.* 4.61.1).

As in the *Germania*, the Germani deliberate while armed (*H.* 4.64.1) and show assent by shouting and clashing their arms (*H.* 5.17.3: *ita illis mos*; cf. 5.15.2). This custom is mirrored in military

contexts, with the Germani shouting in massive roars and wildly clashing their arms before engaging

their foes (*G.* 3.1; *H.* 2.22.1, 4.18.3, 5.17.3, 5.22.2; *A.* 4.47.3). They are slow to assemble, however,

since "they do not obey orders, cannot be controlled, and do everything according to their own

wishes" (*H.* 4.76.2; *G.* 11.1-2). The fact that Arminius and Civilis managed to unite numerous

Germanic tribes was an enormous feat of leadership.

In terms of religious practice, the major Germanic gods remain (the equivalents of) Mars,

Mercury, and Hercules (*H.* 4.64.1; *A.* 2.12.2, 13.57.2). Most tribes do not have temples (see n. 395), but

they consecrate woods and groves (*H.* 4.14.2, 4.22.2; *A.* 1.59.3, 1.61.3, 2.12.1; cf. 13.57.1) and engage

in human sacrifice (*A.* 1.61.4, 13.57.2). Their celebration of Arminius in songs (*A.* 2.88.3) recalls the

earlier statement that songs were the only way in which the Germani preserved a record of their past

(*G.* 2.2). Moreover, the practice among the Chatti of not cutting one's hair and beard until one has

slain an enemy (*G.* 31.1) is evoked by Civilis' letting his hair grow long and finally cutting it upon

slaying Roman legionary forces during his revolt (*H.* 4.61.1).

As regards their physical characteristics, the Germani remain characteristically Germanic,

having red hair (*G.* 4.1; *H.* 4.61.1), being extraordinarily tall, and possessing huge bodies that

accommodate short bursts of energy but cannot endure persistent force or labor (*H.* 2.99.1, 5.14.2,

5.18.1; *A.* 1.64.2, 2.14.3, 2.21.1). Their appearance remains terrifying to Roman eyes (*G.* 4.1; 20.1; *H.*

3.24.2; *A.* 2.14.3).

Germanic *mores* remain, by and large, consistent as well. Tacitus continues to depict the

Germani as a fierce, warlike, and discordant people who thrive on conflict and violence and often act

impulsively.[487] Discord and violence mark Germanic conduct at every level: within tribes, between

tribes, and between Germanic *auxilia* and Roman legionaries.[488] The Germani continue to be described

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[487] *H.* 1.64.2, 3.84.5, 4.14.2, 4.23.2-3, 4.64.2, 5.14.2; *A.* 1.57.1, 1.59.1, 2.10-11, 2.14.3, 2.63.3, 11.19.3, 13.54.4, 13.56-57.
[488] Within tribes: Batavi: *H.* 4.12; Cherusci: *A.* 1.57-58, 2.10, 2.88, 11.16; Chauci: 11.18; Suebi: 12.29-30. Between tribes: *H.* 4.28, 4.63 ff.; *A.* 1.57, 2.44, 2.63, 2.88, 11.16, 12.28-30, 13.55-56, 13.57; *Agr.* 28. Germanic cohorts and Roman legionaries: *H.* 1.64 (Batavi), 2.27

as indolent and drunk, traits that increased their violence and rashness.[489] Their national character is on display when Germanic cohorts join Vitellius in Rome, where the luxuries of the capital ruin their discipline and where they get into brawls with city crowds (*H.* 2.88-89). The blow that one Germanic soldier is said to have aimed at Vitellius (*H.* 3.84.5), when the latter was paraded through the capital in chains (or at the tribune Placidus who led Vitellius along), underlines Germanic rashness; one can take Germani out of Germania but not Germania out of Germani. Other pervasive character traits include anger, arrogance, greed for booty, and treachery. This last aspect is prominently on display in both the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, in the account of the Batavian Revolt, Arminius' rebellion, and other instances of Germanic perfidy (see below).

The above character traits impaired the Germani's military discipline and performance. More than once Germanic rashness leads to poor decision-making and opens up opportunities for Roman generals.[490] Likewise, drunkenness and greed for booty cause Germanic forces to be unprepared for battle, to fight out of order, or to throw away victories.[491] Cerialis escapes defeat because his Gallic and Germanic foes "engage in a perverse struggle for booty, while forgetting the enemy" (*H.* 4.78.2). Germanicus' forces slaughter the Marsi, who lie in a stupor and, having posted no sentries around their camp, are taken by surprise, thus displaying indolence, carelessness, and lack of discipline (*A.* 1.50.4). This context evokes the maxim that Tacitus offers in the *Germania*: "if you indulge their drunkenness by offering them as much as they want, they will be overcome no less easily by their own vices than by arms" (*G.* 23.1).

In addition to the above faults, the Germani continue to be depicted as having physical limitations and inferior weaponry that restrict their military capacity. Their large bodies impair their movement in the densest forests, cause them to be clumsy at times, and make them ready targets for

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(id.), 2.66 (id.), 2.69 (id.).

[489] *H.* 2.21, 2.88-89 (Germanic cohorts in Rome) 4.29, 4.79; *A.* 1.50-51, 1.65, 11.16, 12.27.

[490] *H.* 2.22.1, 4.29, 4.76; *A.* 1.68, 2.17, 12.28.1.

[491] Drunkenness and stupor: *H.* 2.21.1, 4.29.1, 4.79.3; *A.* 1.50-51, 11.16.2, 12.27.3. Greed for booty: *H.* 1.79.2, 4.63.1, 4.76.2, 4.78.2, 5.17.1; *A.* 1.65.6, 1.68.1, 12.27.3; cf. *A.* 1.57.5.

Roman weapons (*A.* 2.21.1), while their lack of endurance was a distinct liability in drawn out conflicts (*A.* 2.14.3).[492] Hence the decision of Germanic chiefs to engage Roman armies in marshes and forests – where they inflicted the greatest losses – and not on open plains suitable for pitched battles. In terms of arms, the three works transmit the same picture: Germanic warriors commonly lacked a cuirass or helmet and they carried a large, though flimsy, shield, and either a short or long spear, but rarely a sword. Roman forces were more heavily armed, wearing full body-armor and helmet and wielding javelins and short-swords.[493] In most contexts, Roman arms were superior and decisive. This was acknowledged and emphasized in pre-battle speeches.[494] Finally, Germanic tribes continue to fight in predictable and static wedge formations (*cuneus*) and to abandon their lines when hard-pressed.[495]

However, as in the *Germania*, the characterization of the Germani is far from one-sided, for their strengths and virtues often are on display as well. As a whole, the description of the Germani yields a complex picture that variously accentuates Roman military glory or explains why Germania had defied conquest and inflicted crushing defeats on Roman armies. The Germani were fierce and courageous fighters, whose valor Tacitus frequently highlights. They were Rome's most feared enemies, and it is no accident that the Rhine legions were considered the strongest legions and Germanic cohorts (particularly Batavian ones) the most powerful *auxilia*.[496] As in the *Germania*, the Batavi, Chauci, Chatti, and Frisii are singled out for their strength and valor.[497] Throughout the corpus, Tacitus never lets the reader forget the numerous setbacks Rome suffered against the Germani, either recalling these himself (*G.* 37; *A.* 4.72-74) or having Roman generals (Cerialis: *H.* 4.73.2) and Germanic chiefs (Civilis: *H.* 4.17; Arminius: *A.* 1.59; Maroboduus: *A.* 2.46) do so.

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[492] On Germanic clumsiness: J. Williams 2001, 47.

[493] Germanic and Roman arms: *G.* 6.1; *H.* 2.88.3, 5.14.2, 5.18.1; *A.* 1.64.2, 2.14.2-3, 2.21.1.

[494] Note the speeches of Caecina (*A.* 1.67) and Germanicus (*A.* 2.14) and Tacitus' comments at *A.* 2.21. Cf. Agricola at *Agr.* 33.5.

[495] Wedge formation (*cuneus*): *G.* 6.4, 7.2; *H.* 4.16.2, 4.20.3, 5.16.1, 5.18.1; fleeing from battle: *G.* 6.4; *A.* 1.68.5 (Arminius and Inguiomerus), 2.14.3 (Germanicus commenting on Germanic tendency to flee), 2.17.3.

[496] Respect for Germani: *G.* 37; *H.* 4.21.2, 4.28.1, 4.61.1, 4.73.2; *A.* 1.24.2, 1.62.2, 1.67.2, 2.63, 3.46.1. Strength of the Rhine legions: *H.* 2.23.1, 2.58.2, 2.75.1, 2.77.1, 3.2.2; *A.* 1.47.1, 4.5.1, 4.67.4, 11.1.2, 13.35.2, 14.38.1. Strength of Germanic auxiliaries: *Agr.* 36; *H.* 1.59.1, 2.28, 4.15; *A.* 14.38.1.

[497] Batavi: *G.* 29.1; *passim H.* bks 4 and 5; Frisii and Chauci: *G.* 34-45; *H.* 4.16.2; *A.* 4.72-74; Chatti: *G.* 30.

In many respects, Germanic shortcomings are balanced by corresponding strengths. For instance, their height, despite its limitations, facilitated their ability to swim, to fight and maneuver in waters and marshes, and to strike their foes from a distance (*H.* 5.18.1; *A.* 1.64.2), while their explosiveness allowed for swift attacks and quick movements in confined areas like woods.[498] Likewise, when fighting in marshy conditions or waters, the weight of the otherwise superior Roman armor was a hindrance, while the lighter armed Germani moved more freely (*H.* 5.14.2). The contrast between Germanic and Roman military strategy, too, is to some extent elided, for Tacitus frequently stresses the intelligence of Germanic chiefs, Civilis and Arminius in particular.[499] The latter, having previously served in Roman armies, know how to hurry or delay a campaign (Civilis often is swift in carrying out raids, sieges, and attacks: *H.* 4.33, 4.77), how to divide their lines in response to enemy strategy (*H.* 5.20; *A.* 2.45), to choose long-term diplomacy over immediate gain (*H.* 4.56, 4.63), to use the landscape (*passim*), and to capitalize on Roman errors (*H.* 5.22). Moreover, they lead by example, are conspicuous in battle, and are able speakers who manage to unite great numbers of discordant and unruly Germani (*G.* 7; *H.* 4.14, 4.17, 4.78, 5.17; *A.* 1.59-60, 1.65, 2.15). Although the Germanic narratives in the *Historiae* and the *Annales* are directed towards a clear conclusion – the beating back of the Batavian and Cheruscan rebellions and the restoration of Roman supremacy – neither of those wars was a straightforward affair, with substantial losses on both sides. Tacitus' characterization of Civilis and Arminius, and of their Roman foes Cerialis and Germanicus, is complex and, on the whole, quite balanced, with each of the four generals ascribed virtues and shortcomings.

Finally, one of the principal charges leveled in modern scholarship against the Germani of the later works – that they are perfidious – is undermined not only by numerous examples of Germanic loyalty to Rome but by the fact that Tacitus describes Germanic rebellions as exceptions to, by and

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[498] J. Williams (2001, 47) and Ash (2014, 192) emphasize the shortcomings of the Germani's height, but from Tacitus' works it is clear that the reality was more complicated.
[499] For Tacitus' depiction of Civilis as a cunning shape-shifter, see Ash 2014, 185-200.

large, unbroken loyalty. References to the Batavi's status at *G.* 29.1, *H.* 4.12, and *H.* 5.25, chapters that

enjoy close affinity, show that the tribe was loyal and enjoyed a favorable status both before and after

the revolt. In the *Agricola* and the *Annales*, which cover periods after and before the revolt, respectively,

the Batavi appear as loyal allies delivering valuable military service to Germanicus (*A.* 2.8.3, 2.11.),

Corbulo (*A.* 13.35.2), Paulinus (*A.* 14.28 ff.; *H.* 4.12.3), and Agricola (*Agr.* 18.4, 36; *H.* 4.12.3). There is

every reason to believe that in the lost books of both historical works the Batavi were characterized

favorably as well. Their unfavorable description constitutes merely a portion of their overall

characterization, and it is premature to use the Fourth and Fifth Books of the extant *Historiae* alone to

argue for a change in Tacitus' perceptions.

Similarly, aside from their revolt against Varus and, subsequently, Germanicus, the Cherusci

were loyal Roman allies (since at least AD 4). They did not, as far as we know, participate in the

Batavian Revolt and, aside from internal dissensions, continued to be quiet subordinates of Rome.[500]

The Cherusci also were not unanimous in their rebellion under Arminius, for his brother Flavus and

Segestes (and no doubt others) retained their allegiance to Rome throughout. All this is more in line

with Tacitus' description of the Cherusci at *G.* 36 than often is assumed.[501]

The Frisii, though more recalcitrant, broadly follow the same pattern. They were loyal allies

since at least 12 BC, aided Drusus the Elder when low tides left his ships stranded (Dio 54.32.2-3), and

offered Germanicus a local remedy for poisonous water (Plin., *Nat.* 25.21). They did not participate in

Arminius' rebellion and remained loyal in its aftermath. However, in 28 they revolted (*A.* 4.72-74), in

58 they left the settlement (*A.* 13.54) in which Corbulo had placed them (*A.* 11.19), and they joined

the Batavian Revolt and supplied Civilis with forces (*H.* 4.14-16, 4.79.2). By the time Tacitus wrote the

Germania, they were back under Roman control (*ILS* 1461), and in the second century they are attested

as serving in the imperial horse-guard (*CIL* vi. 3230) and as auxiliary cavalry in Britain (*RIB* i. 109) and

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[500] See Rives 1999, 268-69 for details and further references.
[501] As Rives (1999, 269) rightly notes as well.

Raetia (*CIL* xvi. 105). The Frisii, then, arguably are the most perfidious Germanic tribe in Tacitus. Yet

it is significant that the historian stresses that their initial revolt in 28 was more the result of Roman

maladministration than Frisian inability to endure subjection (*nostra magis auaritia quam obsequii*

impatientes, *A*. 4.72). The revolts of Arminius and Civilis had similar causes. Tacitus locates the origin of

the revolts not in Germanic character but in Roman oppression.

Finally, the argument that the Germani of the *Historiae* and the *Annales* are more perfidious

than those in the *Germania* is undermined further by the many examples of Germanic loyalty that

Tacitus records and, in some cases, highlights explicitly. Just as the Batavian Revolt constituted an

exception to longstanding loyalty, so the siege executed by the Chatti, Usipi, and Mattiaci on the

Roman legionary fortress at Mogontiacum (modern Mainz) "put a stain on their excellent services to

the Roman people" (*donec egregia erga populum Romanum merita mox rebelles foedarent*, *H*. 4.37.3). Elsewhere,

Tacitus stresses the *uetus obsequium* and *fides* of the Suebi (*H*. 3.5.1), the *fides* and *constantia* of the

Cheruscan chiefs Segestes (*A*. 1.57-58) and Flavus (*A*. 2.9.1), and the *egregia aduersus nos fides* of the

Sueban chiefs Sido and Vangio (*A*. 12.30.2).[502] In Tacitus, we cannot speak straightforwardly of

Germanic 'loyalty' or 'perfidy.' Germanic conduct across the corpus is marked by a range of stances

toward Rome, many of which are indeed favorable and loyal. Our texts do not bear out the claim that

Tacitus' attitude towards the Germani changes and becomes less favorable in his later works.

III.5 Conclusions

I began this chapter with a citation that illustrates the prevalent scholarly approach to the

Germania, one which examines the work in a vacuum – undoubtedly in part due to its genre – and

which, when read in conjunction with the historical narratives, focuses on the differences between the

three works. D. Sailor's exclusion of the *Germania* and the *Dialogus* from his 2008 volume, on the

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[502] Other examples are the loyalty of the Ubii (*H*. 4.28, 4.79), Italicus (*A*. 11.17), and Boiocalus, chief of the Ampsivarii (*A*. 13.55). Tacitus records the military aid provided by the Chauci (*A*. 1.60.2), depicts the Angrivarii as restoring to Germanicus some shipwrecked men (*A*. 2.24.3), and writes that Mallovendus, chief of the Marsi, indicated where one of Varus' eagles was kept (*A*. 2.25.1).

theory that they show less affinity than the *Agricola* with the later works, is a good example of this approach.[503] In this chapter, I have demonstrated that in fact there exist many conceptual connections between the *Germania* and the later works, as regards Roman foreign policy and its complexities, Tacitus' outlook on imperial rule and *imperium*, the polarity between Roman and non-Roman culture, and Tacitus' perception of Germania and its tribes. As we have seen, there are various concerns and viewpoints that cross the generic boundaries that might be seen to divide an ethnography from a historiographical work. My reading of the *Germania* as a meditation on the factors informing the formulation of foreign policy frees the text from its generic constrictions and suggests a way to account for its apparent complexities. The thematic and conceptual continuities between the *Germania* and the *Historiae* and the *Annales* make it imperative that we read the three texts in conjunction.

Despite the open-endedness of the text, Tacitus' attitude reveals itself largely to be in tune with post-Augustan foreign policy. The understanding that barbarian discord should be exploited and that a conservative and cost-effective foreign policy – based on diplomacy, indirect control, and outward projection of power – is the most prudent response to existing pressures on the Empire is set out in the *Germania* and taken up in the later works. That is not to say that Tacitus wholly favors imperial limitation. The *Agricola*, *Germania*, *Historiae*, and *Annales* show that Tacitus has a record of endorsing expansion on moral and emotional grounds. His view of Roman power and control is, above all, complex and, crucial for the argument of my study, remains by and large consistent throughout.

The characterization of Germania and its tribes remains broadly consistent as well. In the historical works, Tacitus ascribes to the Germani the defining traits that he had ascribed to them collectively in the *Germania*. Likewise, the depiction of Germania's *situs moresque*, as it unfolds in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, largely mirrors that offered in the monograph. In addition to these broader connections, the *Germania* often serves as a specific reference point in the later works, which often

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[503] As is Suerbaum's exclusion of the text (2015, 7) and the fact that the recent volume devoted to the *opera minora* (Devillers 2014) contains only one chapter on the *Germania*.

recall or elaborate on information offered in the monograph. Tacitus seems to expect his readers to be familiar with his earlier treatment of the Germani by the time they come to his historical works.

The *Germania* reveals intellectual and thematic affinity with the *Agricola* as well. Both texts are concerned with imperial rule and its execution. The account of Britain's *situs moresque* and those of Germania both are bound up with the desirability and/or practicability of the Roman occupation of different areas. The *Agricola* shows a Roman governor dealing with the sorts of geographical challenges on campaign and the gubernatorial challenges in administering a province that the *Germania* shows a governor would face beyond the Rhine. Both works compare and contrast Roman and non-Roman culture, a type of analysis that bears on the limits of cultural imperialism and offers implicit commentary on contemporary Rome. The *Dialogus* explores the Principate from an entirely different perspective and in yet another generic and narrative framework. It is to the last of Tacitus' monographs that I now turn.

Chapter IV

Dialogus de Oratoribus, *Historiae*, *Annales*

IV.1.1 Introduction: Manuscript Tradition and Reception

Tacitus' *Dialogus de Oratoribus* received no certain mention in antiquity. Aside from a possible

contemporary reference to *D.* 9.6 at Plin., *Ep.* 9.10.2, the dialogue completely disappeared from view.

While the *Agricola* and the *Germania* were available to Cassiodorus and known in the Middle Ages,[504]

knowledge of the *Dialogus* did not surface until the discovery in 1425 of the Hersfeldensis (the Hersfeld

codex), a 9th century manuscript containing in order the *Germania*, *Agricola*, and *Dialogus* of Tacitus and

the *de Grammaticis et Rhetoribus* of Suetonius. Poggio Bracciolini's correspondence with Niccolo Niccoli

about the MS's contents is notable for what it reveals about scholarly attitudes towards Tacitus' corpus

and the *Dialogus* in particular. For to Poggio the three monographs were *ignota*. As noted in the general

introduction (see pp. 1-3), the monographs and the historical works descend through different

manuscript traditions.[505] A further complexity is that early readers of the *Dialogus* doubted that it was

actually Tacitean. A letter from Panormita to Guarino in 1426 shows that the Hersfeldensis ascribes

only the *Agricola* and the *Germania* to Tacitus. As for the *Dialogus*, Panormita wrote that the MS also

contained "quidam dyalogus de oratore … et est, ut coniectamus, Cor. Taciti." In the following

centuries, Tacitean authorship continued to be doubted. Beatus Rhenanus (1519), for instance,

questioned the work's authenticity in his edition of Tacitus; Justus Lipsius, Tacitus' most important

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[504] Rudolf of Fulda used the *Germania* in the ninth century, while Adam of Bremen (before 1075) and Peter the Deacon (ca. 1135) seem to have known the *Agricola*.

[505] It is significant that the three monographs were grouped not with the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, but with Suetonius' *de Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*. For modern scholarship on the manuscript tradition of Tacitus' works, see n. 6.

early editor, ascribed the dialogue to Quintilian (he later rejected this idea); and J. H. Nast ascribed it to Pliny the Younger in his 1787 translation of the text. Tacitus' authorship still was doubted as recently as 1995.[506]

In addition to persistent doubt about its authenticity, the text was subject to frequent scribal interference. The Hersfeld codex, from which all our extant MSS derive indirectly, itself was corrected substantially by its scribe, and subsequent scribes made numerous other corrections. It is thus important to remember, as R. Mayer notes, "that our text is the product of much philological toil."[507] This, too, bears on perceptions (since the early Renaissance) of the text's 'Ciceronian,' and so ostensibly 'non-Tacitean,' style. Responses, aside from ascription of the text to other authors, included insistence on a pre-Domitianic date of composition on the theory that Tacitus had not yet found his characteristic style. It was not until the early 19th century, when A. G. Lange detected the possible reference to *D.* 9.6 at Plin., *Ep.* 9.10.2, and until the end of that century, when F. Leo (in a review of Gudeman's 1894 edition) argued that the Ciceronian style was not a sign of early composition but due to the work's genre, that its authorship and rightful place in the corpus were established more firmly.[508]

The *Dialogus* never quite recovered from its status as an anomaly.[509] Although scholarship on the text has increased in quantity and sophistication in the past decades,[510] systematic examinations of its connections with the historical works are rare.[511] The conscious exclusion of the *Dialogus* and the

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[506] Crook 1995, 10, 174, 184.

[507] Mayer 2001, 49.

[508] Lange 1832; Leo 1898, reprinted in Leo 1960, vol. II, 285-93. Leo's arguments were supported by Norden 1909, vol. I, 322-26.

[509] Goldberg 1999, 73-74: "the fraught complexity of such questions finds its frankest exploration in that great anomaly of the Tacitean corpus, the *Dialogus de Oratoribus.* The work is not a treatise, not a history and not written in 'Tacitean' style." Cf. Rutledge 2012, 62: "The *Dialogus*, though not easy by any means, would provide some refreshment to the student, were it not for the simple fact that it is rarely read since it is not considered representative of Tacitus' language or his ethos."

[510] Bibliographic reviews can be found in Benario 1986, 107-09; 1995, 120-23; 2005, 281-84; Bo 1993. Mayer (2001, 16-47) and Levene (2004) offer plentiful bibliography as well. Van den Berg 2014 is the most recent book-length study of the text and offers an extensive and up-to-date bibliography. The major commentaries are Gudeman 1914, Bo 1974, Güngerich 1980, Mayer 2001 (now standard). Scholarship increasingly has moved away from the argument of decline, embracing the dialogue's complexity and competing viewpoints, placing the text within its broader historical and cultural milieu, and allowing for greater flexibility in its interpretation. The latest product of this approach is van den Berg 2014, which confronts previous scholarship head-on and offers a new model of interpreting dialogue ("argumentative dynamics").

[511] Note Sailor 2008, 5: "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." Similarly, Suerbaum 2015, 7. Examples of scholarship examining the connections between the *Dialogus* and the historical works include Levene 1999 and

Germania (likewise often studied in isolation) from recent studies of Tacitus is telling.[512] With respect to the *Dialogus*, isolation occludes plain connections with the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, in terms of subject matter (the nature and scope of *eloquentia* in imperial Rome), the regime in which the dialogue is set (that of Vespasian), the men it mentions (Cassius Severus, Publius Vatinius, Eprius Marcellus, Vibius Crispus, Helvidius Priscus, Vipstanus Messalla, Aquilius Regulus), matters of style (many of the stylistic principles advertised by Aper mark Tacitus' own writing in the historical works: brevity, use of *sententiae*, poetic language), and the nature of the Republic and the Principate and their perceived impact on *eloquentia* and the production of literature (including Tacitus' own works). In particular, the *Agricola*, *Dialogus*, *Historiae*, and *Annales* all are concerned with the relationship between political and generic change and with the skewed appreciation of merit and ability in imperial society. Furthermore, the historical works, in exploring the position and influence of accusers and *delatores*, elucidate a major point of debate in the *Dialogus*.[513] The many examples of powerful informers who lose their emperor's support and subsequently are destroyed showcase the frailty of power that does not stand on its own but is dependent on that of others, and variously support and undermine the claims made by Aper and Maternus in the dialogue (*D*. 5.5-7, 8, 13.4).[514]

2009 on deliberative and judicial speech in the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae*; van den Berg 2012 on deliberative oratory in the *Dialogus* and the *Annales*.

[512] By Sailor (2008, 5) and Suerbaum (2015, 7).

[513] Both historical works shed light on Aper's claims about the influence of *delatores* (*D*. 5.5-7, 8) and Maternus' claims that the latter do not enjoy greater *libertas* and security and that their *potentia* is but feeble (*D*. 13.4). The distinction between accusers working in the employ of a province or the senate and those who bring charges on their own accord (the technical meaning of *delator*) and use the interests of the *princeps* and the state as pretexts to abuse the legal system and to eliminate their enemies has not been sufficiently stressed in the scholarship. The archetypical *delator* Romanus Hispo seems to belong to the second category: the point of *subscribente* at *A*. 1.74.1 is that he is putting himself forward to join the case brought by Caepio Crispinus against Granius Marcellus. Aper advances arguments that redeem *delatores*, showing that their activity and motives fit within the contemporary system of Roman aristocratic values.

[514] The senatorial debates at *H*. 4.6-8 and 4.42-43 show the extensive, but ultimately fragile, network upon which a *delator*'s power depended. *H*. 4.6.1 illustrates that, if Marcellus should fall, a host of informers associated with him also would go down (cf. *H*. 4.43; *A*. 13.33.3 for his network). Marcellus, like other *delatores*, depended on the good graces of his *princeps* and the latter's close associates (cf. *A*. 11.5-6). Helvidius Priscus' words at *H*. 4.7.3 indicate the virtual immunity that a man like Marcellus enjoyed when supported by his *princeps* (cf. Vibius Crispus' position at *H*. 4.41). Marcellus remained a powerful associate of Vespasian until he suddenly fell out of favor and was destroyed in 78. The frailty of Marcellus' (or any informer's) position is underlined by the fact that he appears as a preeminent *delator* in the *Dialogus* and was ruined a few years after its dramatic date. The contrasting fate of men like Crispus (with whom Marcellus is paired in the *Dialogus*), Aquilius Regulus, and Baebius Massa (cf. *H*. 4.50) reinforces the point. This aspect of power frequently is on display in the *Annales*. Note how Tiberius uses powerful informers and, when he grows tired of them, discards them (*A*. 4.71.1). The language (on which see Martin-Woodman 1989 *ad loc.*) hints at the eagerness (and questionable morality) of these officials (cf. *D*. 8.3; *A*. 1.74.1) and reflects their precarious position. *Delatores* typically grow in influence and wealth as they ruin others but eventually ruin themselves: *A*. 1.74.2. Examples include Annius Faustus (*H*. 2.10), P. Celer (*H*. 4.10, 4.40), Catus Firmius

The *Dialogus*, in sum, has long been marginalized and modern scholarship has sustained and mirrored attitudes already present in antiquity and beyond.[515] While C. S. van den Berg's monograph (2014) succeeds in recovering the dialogue and in dismantling some of the major assumptions that have obstructed full appreciation of the text, it does not entirely deliver on its promise to explore its interactions with the historical narratives. The call for more inclusive readings of the Tacitean corpus continues.[516] Before further exploring some of the scholarly responses to the text, it will be useful to set out its contents and structure.

IV.1.2 Format and Structure

The *Dialogus* is a fictional debate about the history and state of oratory consisting of an introduction (1.1-5.2), three pairs of speeches on three distinct, but related, issues (5.3-41.5), and a conclusion (42.1-2). The speeches are broken up by "interstitial passages" (to use van den Berg's term), the "dramatic statements outside speeches that direct a reader towards key themes and that include metacritical commentary."[517] The debate, set ca. 25-30 years in the past, takes place among three speakers – Marcus Aper, Vipstanus Messalla, and Curiatius Maternus – in the presence of a young attendee, Tacitus, and another attendee, Julius Secundus, who for the occasion acts as 'judge.' The broad question underlying the debate is announced in the opening lines: Tacitus' friend Fabius Justus repeatedly has asked him why it is that, whereas past ages flourished in men of genius and renown, their own age has lost the distinction of *eloquentia* and hardly uses the term "orator" anymore (*cur, cum priora saecula tot eminentium oratorum ingeniis gloriaque floruerint, nostra potissimum aetas deserta et laude eloquentiae orbata uix nomen ipsum oratoris retineat*, 1.1). Justus' question (discussed more fully below) touches on

(*A.* 4.31), Sextius Paconianus (*A.* 6.3.4), and P. Suillius (*A.* 11.5-7, 13.42-43). Tacitus, commenting on Agrippina the Younger's downfall, offers a formula that gets at the heart of the issue and bears on the position of *delatores*, imperial women, and imperial freedmen alike: *nihil rerum mortalium tam instabile ac fluxum est quam fama potentiae non sua ui nixae* (*A.* 13.19.1).

[515] The fact that R. Mayer's commentary (2001, still standard) was the first English commentary on the dialogue in nearly a century is another indicator of the work's reception.

[516] Devillers' edited volume on the *opera minora* (2014) contains several welcome chapters on the *Dialogus* (by Cytermann, Joseph, and Sailor) that, however, do not explore in depth its connections with the historical works. Devillers 2015, 137-53 explores the place of the *Dialogus* within the Tacitean corpus, focusing primarily on Tacitus' changing attitudes towards various ruling emperors.

[517] Van den Berg 2014, 15. For a detailed overview of scholarship on the dialogue's structure, see Bo 1993, 319-37.

both the quality of *eloquentia* (has it declined over time?) and the way it is evaluated within society (is *eloquentia* no longer appraised the way it used to?).

The question, as it emerges, enunciates a tension between decline in ability (*ingenium*) and its recognition by society (*laus*) that runs through the dialogue.[518] Tacitus responds by saying that he will not take up the question himself, but that he will reproduce from memory a debate he attended as a young man that was concerned with the very same question.[519] Having explained to Justus that the interlocutors, who occupied different positions, all made plausible (*probabiles*) arguments, Tacitus sets the scene and introduces the men. It is the day after the poet Maternus recited a play called *Cato*, which has offended powerful men (*potentes*). With the whole city discussing the play, Maternus is visited by his friends Aper and Secundus, eminent orators, who are accompanied on this occasion by one of their pupils, the young Cornelius Tacitus. The three men find Maternus in his bedroom holding the manuscript of the *Cato*. Worried for his friend's safety, Secundus urges him to revise the play to make it less objectionable. Maternus responds that he will not and that whatever his *Cato* has left unsaid will appear in his next play, a *Thyestes*. Aper then criticizes Maternus for having abandoned oratory and his forensic duties in favor of writing poetry, a point that introduces the subject of the first debate: which employment of *eloquentia* is better and earns more recognition, poetry or oratory?

Aper begins and argues for oratory and against poetry (5.3-10.8) on the grounds of *utilitas*, *uoluptas*, *honestas*, financial reward, and fame. At the end of his speech he urges Maternus to abandon poetry and return to the bar, because he is a talented speaker and it is safer to offend the authorities on behalf of others. Aper does not have a problem with poetry *per se*, but with men who are talented enough to be good orators and yet choose to be poets.

Maternus in response (11.1-13.6) argues for poetry, claiming that it has afforded him more

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[518] Tacitus nowhere proclaims oratory's decline in his own voice, but puts arguments of decline in the mouth of the speakers (cf. Goldberg 1999, 226). Messalla uses the words *fracta*, *deminuta* (26.8), *desciscere* (28.2), and *corrupta* (34.4) to designate 'decline.' Maternus uses the verbs *degenerare* (27.3), *debilitatur*, and *frangitur* (39.2).

[519] The claim that people debated the very same problem under Vespasian as they did under Trajan is significant, since it suggests that the intervening years brought no improvement.

fame than his oratorical endeavors (here he refers to his destruction of the Neronian *scurra* Vatinius); that it is not corrupt and marred by the bloodthirstiness that marks modern oratory (exemplified by the *delatores*); that he prefers peace and seclusion over statues and hordes of clients; and that poets enjoy no less, if not more, fame than orators (here he points to Ovid and Vergil, among others).[520]

At this point Messalla enters (14.1-16.3). He pokes fun at Aper for following today's rhetoricians more than the orators of old. Aper retorts that Messalla admires only what is old, even though he himself (as well as his brother Regulus) is an exponent of modern oratory. Messalla rejoins by claiming that all men know there is a difference between ancient and modern oratory and suggests the utility of investigating its causes. The subject of the second debate is set.

Aper begins and defends modern oratory (16.4-23.6). He starts by challenging the efficacy of the labels "ancient" (*antiquus*) and "new/modern" (*novus*), suggesting that it has only been 300 years from Demosthenes' time until their own day and a mere 120 since Cicero died. What *is* "ancient"? Why *should* Cicero be counted among the "ancients"? The truly "ancient" orators were men like Servius Galba or Gaius Carbo, and their style was unpolished. Oratory changes with the times and requires innovation, as Cassius Severus had realized. The changed nature of public oratory has rendered the old style redundant. In any case, the models that Messalla admires (Cicero, Caesar, Brutus) each had their faults, too.

Maternus now turns to Messalla and asks him not to give a defense of the ancients, whose superiority is taken for granted, but to explain why he thinks oratory has declined (24.1-3). Messalla, however, immediately launches into a defense of the old orators whom Aper had criticized (25.1-26.8). Of course they had their faults, but collectively they possessed greater genius. Modern orators are just like actors: their style is effeminate and excessively dramatic. By the way, Aper has not mentioned a

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[520] Maternus' preference for life outside the city is evoked at times in the *Annales*, where prominent Romans wish to leave the capital due to the anxiety spread by the *delatores*. Note Lucius Piso (2.34.1), Vibius Serenus (4.28.3), Sejanus' advice to Tiberius (4.41.3), Cocceius Nerva's suicide to flee from the state's miseries (6.26.1-2), and Seneca's wish to retire (14.53-54, 14.56).

single modern orator. Messalla will gladly point out why they are inferior to their predecessors!

Maternus now interferes and urges Messalla to stick to the task at hand (27.1-3): explain what you think are the causes of the decline of oratory. This marks the end of the second pair of speeches and we now move to the final debate: why has oratory declined?

Messalla takes a moral and cultural approach (28.1-35.5): there has been a decline in the upbringing of young Romans. Elementary education is neglected and rhetoricians are incompetent. Modern orators lack the broad base of knowledge that a Cicero possessed (and advertised in his *Brutus*). Knowledge of law and philosophy are essential to good oratory. The *tirocinium fori*, the practice whereby young Romans learned the tools of the trade by attending eminent orators as they practiced, has been abandoned for inadequate classroom experience. The rhetorical exercises of declamation (the *suasoriae* and *controversiae*) are unrealistic and therefore useless.

After a lacuna, the text resumes in the middle of Maternus' speech, the last in the work (36.1-41.5). Maternus takes a historical approach, explaining oratory's alleged decline in terms of the political changes from the Republic to the Principate. Oratory flourished in the license and turmoil of the Late Republic, when it was unbridled and great matters were at stake. The peace and tranquility of the Principate, in which matters are decided by one man, render great oratory superfluous. License, not freedom, fosters oratory. If the interlocutors had been born in the Late Republic, they would have earned recognition for their *eloquentia*, whereas, if men like Cicero and Brutus had been born under the Principate, they would have been relegated to the same moderation and restraint that marks modern oratory: great renown and great security simply do not coexist. Let each generation appreciate the merits of its own times and not disparage other periods.

In a succinct conclusion (42.1-2), the interlocutors agree that more discussion is needed and decide to take up the debate at a later time. They have a good laugh and then depart.

IV.1.3 Choice of Format and Authorial Stance

The *Dialogus'* interactions with Cicero's *de Oratore* have been discussed at length and do not require lengthy exposition here.[521] Two middle-aged authors, in response to a supposed question from a friend, report on a debate about the state of oratory that took place when they were young. The debate, set several decades in the past, takes place in the home of an older man, between several distinguished orators (in both cases, two of the author's former teachers take part), who discuss a principal question from different sides, in the Aristotelian and Academic tradition of arguing *in utramque partem*. The authors themselves do not participate in the discussion, but merely record the different arguments without taking sides.[522] These are some of the more obvious connections.

Two points merit further comment: the choice of format and the author's stance. For both bear on a work's purpose and on the conclusions that a reader is formally sanctioned to draw from it. For a work on oratory, the dialogue format was a logical choice, a respectful nod to a model (and a tradition), but it was not obligatory. Quintilian, Ciceronian in heart and mind, opted for a didactic treatise, while Pliny explicated his views in a carefully edited collection of letters. One of the dialogue format's principal virtues is that it facilitates the exposition of multiple viewpoints (often of men other than the author), allowing readers to examine different arguments side-by-side and, depending on the author's stance, to form their own opinions. Tacitus' preference for a dialogue over a treatise and for presenting other men's views over his own, despite his authority to speak on the subject, stands in contrast to the work of his contemporaries and is a first indication of his aims. His authorial stance complements his choice of format.

Beyond choosing a work's formal structure, an author must define his own position with regard to it. In the case of a dialogue, in which the author himself does not participate, he must clarify

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[521] For detailed examinations of the *Dialogus'* borrowings from Cicero, see Haß-von Reitzenstein 1970; van den Berg 2014, 208-93.
[522] Unlike Tacitus, Cicero was not present at the debate, but claims to have been told about it by his friend Cotta (*de Orat.* 1.26-29, 3.16).

whether any of the opinions or arguments set out may be taken to reflect his own opinion. There were various ways to go about this and Cicero, who usually is clear about what readers may infer from his dialogues, once more is paradigmatic.[523] In the preface, Tacitus, variously recalling Cicero's dialogues, carefully delineates the work and his stance.[524] First, he claims that Justus' question has come up *saepe* (1.1). The adverb, often used in philosophical texts to indicate complexity, at once signals that the debate to follow is unlikely to be straightforward (this impression is reinforced by *frequenter et assidua contentio* at 4.1).[525] Next, Tacitus states explicitly that he will not take up Justus' question himself, thus signaling the withholding of his personal opinion. This is followed up by the claim that the interlocutors took up different positions, signaling a debate along the lines of contemporary declamation and of the Academic Skeptical method of debating an issue *in utramque partem*.[526] Each of the interlocutors, moreover, is said to have spoken *subtiliter* and *grauiter* (1.3) and to have offered arguments that seemed *probabilis* ("probable" or "convincing," 1.3). This last term, again common in Cicero's rhetorical and philosophical texts, typically signaled an open-ended inquiry.[527]

Tacitus does not pick sides. The prefatory claims are echoed in the conclusion. What is said there is as significant as what is left unsaid. The interlocutors agree that further discussion is needed and Tacitus foregoes statements about the plausibility of the arguments (42.1-2). Neither he nor the appointed 'judge,' Secundus, declare a 'winner:' the debate goes on.[528] Tacitus leaves it to his readers to draw their own conclusions. His stance is underlined further by the fact that he does not anticipate the discussion by a lengthy introduction or exposition of his views on related topics. Tacitus takes for

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[523] An author may clarify in the preface that he favors the arguments of one of the interlocutors. Note Cicero at the start of *de Senectute* (*iam enim ipsius Catonis sermo explicabit nostram omnem de senectute sententiam*, 1.3). On the other hand, an author may state explicitly that readers should *not* seek his personal opinion in any of the arguments. So Cicero in the preface of the *de Natura Deorum* (*qui autem requirunt quid quaque de re ipsi sentiamus curiosius id faciunt quam necesse est*; *non enim tam auctoritatis in disputando quam rationis momenta quaerenda sunt*, 1.10). Alternatively, an author may conclude a work by siding with a particular argument (either outright or more obliquely, as Cicero does in the final line of the *de Natura Deorum*), by stating that readers are free to draw their own conclusions (e.g. at *de Div.* 2.150), or by merely recording the concluding thoughts of the interlocutors (as at the end of each of the books of the *de Orat.*).

[524] On the preface's borrowings from Cicero's dialogues, see van den Berg 2014, 59 ff.

[525] Van den Berg 2014, 64.

[526] Van den Berg 2014, 41, n. 76. On declamation and its connection with the *Dialogus*: van den Berg 2014, 41-47.

[527] Van den Berg 2014, 41, 64.

[528] As indeed it did, seeing that the same question was still debated under Trajan. The only pronouncement Secundus makes on any of the arguments is at *D*. 14.2 and it is a balanced one.

granted that his readers know many of the things that Cicero elaborates upon; the discussions in the

three books of the *de Oratore* are preceded by 23, 11, and 16 prefatory chapters, respectively.

The open-endedness of the discussion is evidenced in the arguments, which neither pursue a

single thesis nor reach a conclusion or 'solution.' The complexity of the different emphases, of the

interactions between the arguments and other elements of the text, of the allusions to and reworkings

of literary forerunners, and of the divergent approaches to aspects of *eloquentia* ultimately defy a unified

message. What is more, each of the arguments betrays inconsistencies and self-contradictions, making

it difficult for readers to side with any of the speakers and undermining "character-oriented" and

"persuasion-oriented" readings.[529]

The assumption that the dialogue, despite its open-endedness and marked complexity, points

to a single conclusion (i.e. oratory's decline) arguably has been the greatest obstacle to its appreciation

and its useful study alongside the later works.[530] In order to uphold this assumption, scholars have

been forced to explain away inconsistencies or resort to other measures to create coherence. Hence

attempts to paint Aper as devil's advocate, even though his arguments are sensible and, crucially,

reflected in Tacitus' own style in the historical works;[531] explanations of inconsistencies as somehow

ironic, as a form of "double-speak," as reflecting lack of revision, or as an essential and familiar aspect

of declamatory practice.[532] This is not the place for a detailed account of the scholarly responses to the

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[529] Character-oriented readings seek to establish which interlocutor best represents the author and his opinion. Persuasion-oriented readings seek to equate the author with a single overarching position. It is now accepted that neither of the interlocutors can be taken to represent Tacitus' opinion. See van den Berg 2014, 56 ff.

[530] Van den Berg 2012, 189-90; 2014, 49-50; 52-97 (outlining the approaches to the text common in modern scholarship).

[531] Van den Berg 2014, 65-66 recaps the scholarship. For rehabilitating accounts of Aper: Goldberg 1999; Champion 1994 on Aper's arguments; Sinclair 1995 on Tacitus' sententious style; Dominik 2007 on the ways in which Aper's stylistic precepts are taken up by Tacitus himself.

[532] Mayer (2001) reads the dialogue as demonstrating the single thesis of 'decline.' Luce (1993) explains the text's inconsistencies as a feature of declamatory practice, whereby the speakers take up a side in each of the issues under debate and argue that case to the best of their ability: thus inconsistencies between different speeches are expected and would not have troubled a rhetorically trained reader. Winterbottom (2001) explains the inconsistencies between Maternus' two speeches as resulting from a lack of revision. The argument of irony used to be prominent in German scholarship (Köhnken 1973 is an exponent), especially with regard to Maternus' arguments. Bartsch (1994, 98-125) builds on this approach to argue for 'double-speak,' an intriguing and lucidly argued solution that, however, depends on several assumptions (not the least of which is the date of composition, which Bartsch places in AD 97). Strunk 2010 is a more recent exponent of the theory of 'double-speak.'

text's inconsistencies.[533] Suffice it to say that each of the solutions proposed, ingenious though they are, are not foolproof, being themselves riddled with inconsistencies, supported by (unverifiable) assumptions, and excellent at clarifying single problems but not others. Van den Berg's model of "argumentative dynamics" (2014), which builds to some extent on Luce's declamatory explanation (1993), arguably comes closest to accommodating the text's complexities. This model, based on the notion that dialogue is a dynamic process that offers viewpoints that are then challenged or even abandoned in favor of others naturally comes with its own problems and assumptions.[534] Yet, it is attractive because it is not hampered by the assumption that inconsistency is inherently problematic and, consequently, approaches it as a positive feature that enhances the work's meaning.[535] I broadly follow this approach and, as I elucidate below, seek to understand the chronological and conceptual inconsistencies from the perspective of time and memory and methods of reconstructing the past. I suspect that the work's inconsistencies would have troubled an ancient reader considerably less (if at all) than it has modern readers. There are good reasons for this. Suspension of judgment and indecision were traditional features of philosophical and intellectual debate (and, indeed, of ancient literature more broadly).[536] Dialogues did not, traditionally, confine themselves to the question posed in the preface nor were they, as a matter of course, designed to explicate a single thesis, as is evident from the extant body of Ciceronian dialogues.[537] Finally, the open-endedness and complexity of the *Dialogus* is akin to that in the *Germania*, which likewise is organized in such as way as to preclude a single thesis or conclusion, and it anticipates the historical works, in which Tacitus rarely offers uncomplicated characterizations or explicit judgments on individuals and actions, leaving it to his

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[533] Van den Berg 2014, 52-97 recently has offered just such an overview.

[534] Well articulated in a recent review of the book (Pagán 2015).

[535] On the model: van den Berg 2014, 90 ff.

[536] This is an aspect of ancient literature that, I think, is still underappreciated. O'Hara 2006 deals lucidly with the way in which ancient authors employ poetic and rhetorical inconsistencies. While 'complexity' and 'ambiguity' are popular terms in Tacitean scholarship (as is evident from my own analysis in this study), the notion often is applied inconsistently.

[537] Goldberg (1999, 224) aptly notes that there is no basis for the claim that the *Dialogus* clearly demonstrates decline. Note also van den Berg 2014, 111: "the *Dialogus* repeatedly suggests that thesis [i.e. oratory's decline] while subtly undermining the presentation of evidence in favor of it."

readers to form their own judgment based on the totality of the information provided.[538] The open-endedness and complexity of the *Dialogus* neither is exceptional nor does it stand alone within the Tacitean corpus.

Finally, it should be noted that some of the ostensible 'inconsistencies' might not have struck a Roman reader as such, and there is a danger in thinking in too absolute terms when analyzing the text's arguments (e.g. in using the labels 'pro-Principate' and 'anti-Principate' when reading Maternus' speeches). For instance, a common argument is that Maternus' arguments are inconsistent or reflect a change of attitude, since he first condemns the Principate as corrupt, fostering the bloodthirsty and venal activity of *delatores*, and then produces a favorable image of it as an institution bringing order and peace under the leadership of a single wise man (*sapientissimus et unus*). For one thing, he simply answers two different questions. In arguing why poetry should be preferred to oratory, he describes the latter in the worst possible way, focusing on the *delatores*. When answering the question of why contemporary oratory has declined, he argues that the order and stability brought by the Principate has made great oratory redundant. These are rhetorically apt (if exaggerated) responses to the particular questions posed. Moreover, his ostensibly 'pro-Principate' stance is offset by his emphasizing a firm break between the republican and imperial systems of governments, which goes against the Augustan and post-Augustan claims to have restored and maintained the Republic. Finally, Maternus' claims are not inconsistent, for they point to different aspects of the same political system that were not mutually exclusive. *Delatores* were a persistent feature of Roman legal practice from the Republic into the

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538 Cf. Champion 1994, 162 on Aper: "The Tacitean character is always complex; moral judgments on Tacitus' historical characters are rarely uniform. The character of Marcus Aper in the *Dialogus* should be read in this vein." While the *Germania* and the *Dialogus* rarely are connected in modern scholarship, likely due to their divergent subject matter and genres, there are crucial similarities. Both works examine complicated subjects of socio-political import that defy straightforward answers. In both, Tacitus withdraws his personal opinion and presents (to greater or lesser degrees) other people's opinions. Many observations in the *Germania* are reported fact (reflected in the use of passive verbs like *uidetur, narratur, habetur*, etc.), while the dialogue is centered almost entirely on other people's views. Moreover, anyone familiar with the speeches in the *Agricola* and the historical works knows that those rarely are aimed at making straightforward, uncomplicated points. It also should be kept in mind that, as in the *Dialogus*, in the *Historiae* and the final books of the *Annales*, Tacitus does not include himself as an actor in the narrative, even though he was alive and politically active under the regimes narrated there. In contrast with the *Dialogus*, in the historical works, Tacitus does, of course, intrude into the narrative in the authorial voice. Cf. Suerbaum 2015, 66-71.

Principate. The activity of these men, one of whose major concerns was to protect the emperor's

interests and who thus posed dangers to members of the governing class, largely was independent

from the particular emperor in charge. Hence Maternus can criticize delation as an oppressive and

dangerous aspect of the imperial system of government (which was true), while at the same time

claiming that that system, under *any* emperor, offers a stability and order that the Republic had not

(also true), or that, if the phrase *sapientissimus et unus* refers to Vespasian, that the latter is a good man

(in many respects, yes). Maternus' arguments need not reflect a change in attitude, towards either the

Principate or Vespasian. The virtue of the dialogue format is precisely that it allows Tacitus to point up

and explore contradictory aspects and perceptions of systems (Republic vs. Principate) or practices

(delation, oratory, poetry, education, etc.).

For the purposes of this chapter it ultimately is less important that we read the dialogue

within an airtight or precisely defined model than that we determine what the text reveals about

particular concerns and how these are taken up in the historical works. It is essential that we take

account of the entire text. Just as the *Agricola* and the *Germania* cannot be reduced to a single thesis (e.g.

pro or contra expansion), so the *Dialogus* is not geared towards demonstrating a single point (e.g.

decline of oratory or diminished recognition of *eloquentia*), but towards exploring a range of issues that

themselves had a long and complex history and were not amenable to easy and straightforward

answers. That approach is eminently 'Tacitean' and is one of many aspects that integrate the corpus.

IV.1.4 Chapter Overview

My purpose in this final chapter is to discuss several essential points of interaction between the

Dialogus and the historical works and to explore some of the ways in which the three works connect

with and elucidate one another. Like the *Agricola* and the *Germania*, the *Dialogus* establishes concerns

and methods of analysis that recur in the later works. I propose to read the dialogue and its

chronological and conceptual inconsistencies from the perspective of Roman memory and methods of

reconstructing the past. Each of the interlocutors, in associating socio-political and generic change

with major individuals and/or events, reconstructs the development of *eloquentia* and its aspects in

broad chronological schemas that are plausible but eventually reveal internal inconsistencies. Similarly,

the discussion establishes tensions between concepts and values (*laus* and *ingenium*, *libertas* and *eloquentia*)

that run through the dialogue and ultimately remain unresolved. The competing arguments, and the

chronological and conceptual opacity they establish, illustrate that different narratives and realities are

possible in historical and cultural reconstruction, and that socio-political and generic change cannot be

analyzed accurately within tidy frameworks. The text forces readers to navigate different, convincing

arguments and to adjudicate between competing reconstructions of the past, and in so doing urges

them to apply a more nuanced analysis to the past and their own present. In essence, I argue, the

Dialogus serves as a call not only to apply a more critical, complex analysis of cause and effect to

discussions of *eloquentia*, but to bring greater intellectual rigor to discussions of time, periodization, and

history generally.[539] This is particularly crucial in a society whose ruling elite relies precisely on tidy

reconstructions of the past and on Romans' tendency to think and remember in such terms.

After a short overview of the principal texts with which the dialogue interacts, I start by

examining the prefaces of the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus* and the antithesis between past and present, and

the relationship between political and generic change, explored in them. Here I show that, in both

prefaces, Tacitus, while distinguishing between the general past and present (broadly to be identified

with the Republic and the Principate), obfuscates where the break might be located chronologically or

whether we can pinpoint it at all. This chronological opacity sets the tone for the rest of the dialogue,

which is marked by constant chronological shifts and inconsistencies and ultimately shows that change

cannot be analyzed by drawing polarizing distinctions or firm chronological boundaries. I further show

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[539] On the meaningful use by ancient authors of inconsistencies, see O'Hara 2006. See van den Berg 2014 *passim* on the designed inconsistencies in the arguments of the *Dialogus*.

how the dialogue's preface establishes a tension between oratorical ability (*ingenium*) and its public appraisal (*laus*) that takes up one of the principal concerns of the *Agricola*. I then proceed to demonstrate how this tension runs through the rest of the debates. One of the observations that emerges is that, while oratory's scope has diminished under the Principate, whether it has declined is left undecided. While the preface of the *Agricola* shows that under the early Principate biographical literature declined in volume *and* quality, the preface of the *Dialogus* suggests that the political climate may have a different impact on oratory than on the writing of literature.

I end this part of the chapter by exploring the different reconstructions of the past advanced by the speakers and the different stances they take up toward the imperial regime. Here I illustrate the chronological inconsistencies between and within the different arguments, arguing that the ostensible incoherence issues from consistent methods of analyzing the past. Imperial ideology, finally, depends on tidy reconstructions and the drawing of firm chronological associations. The interlocutors take up various stances toward the regime that serve to show that multiple realities are possible and hence that official versions can be challenged.

In the third part of the chapter, I move to the *Historiae*, starting with the preface and illustrating the way it takes up several of the essential concerns set out in prefaces of the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus*: the relationship between political and generic change, the tension between radical and gradual change, and the aim to complicate imperial ideology. The preface of the *Historiae* shows socio-political change and transition to be one of the work's central preoccupations. I explore this concern in more detail in the subsequent sections, looking at how Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian, variously reconstructing the past and analyzing the present, navigate the void left by Nero's death. While Galba and Vitellius reveal themselves ignorant of the nature of socio-political transition and Otho initially succeeds but ends up parroting Augustan ideology, Vespasian and Mucianus are described as good 'historians,' aware of historical precedent and carefully managing the transition from civil war to peace.

I end my discussion of the text by exploring how the senators, knights, and people analyze the civil wars of 68-69 in light of the republican civil wars (*H.* 1.50) and how Tacitus, in an authorial digression (2.38), corrects their analysis with his own, more nuanced, reconstruction of the past. Moreover, he frequently offers historical examples to demonstrate how awareness of historical precedent can help one make sense of analogous events in the present. One of Tacitus' aims in the *Historiae*, I argue, is to put on display both simplistic and perceptive ways of reconstructing the past and to train his readers, as he does in the *Dialogus*, to apply a more rigorous analysis of both the past and present.

In my analysis, I bring several scholarly approaches to ancient historiography to bear on the *Dialogus*. Recent scholarship has stressed the importance of passages in which characters in an historian's narrative analyze their past (these periods prior to the characters' present and the work's chronological scope are called the 'plupast') to come to grips with their present.[540] Such passages are of didactic utility because they allow a reader to see how different characters (fail to) analyze the past and apply its lessons to their present.[541] A second recent approach, promoted by J. Grethlein, stresses the way prose authors use experiential narrative to place readers back into the past and allow them to experience the past as though they were there while it was happening.[542] In this approach, ambiguity and complexity become especially useful didactically because the narrative reproduces the same feelings in the readers' present as the witnesses felt at the time. Put differently, the narrative replicates the struggle of the characters to grasp present realities and allows a reader to share in these challenges. One case explored by Grethlein is Tacitus' account of Germanicus' possible murder at the hands of Piso.[543] The designed ambiguities in that account, which occlude a clear answer about Piso's guilt or Tiberius' motivations, show that the truth was as unclear to contemporary onlookers as it is to readers now. Finally, earlier scholarship stresses the way in which characters in a narrative can 'stand in' for the

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[540] Grethlein and Krebs 2012.
[541] See Joseph 2012, 156-74.
[542] Grethlein 2013.
[543] Grethlein 2013, 131-79.

historian, in the sense that through their depiction he can advertise proper methods of analysis and steer readers away from simplistic reconstructions.[544] I would suggest that such approaches may be applied fruitfully to other genres, in this case dialogue. Like the characters in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, Tacitus has the interlocutors engage with their past (the plupast) and, through them, advances a complex of chronological and conceptual reconstructions and viewpoints without offering a final answer or conclusion, leaving this to the reader instead.

In the final part of the chapter, I turn to the *Annales*. I again start with the preface, which is closely connected with the other prefaces and takes up recurrent concerns. The succinct summary of Roman history in the opening lines establishes chronological ambiguities that, as in the *Dialogus*, prefigure a complex analysis of Roman history and socio-political transition in the rest of the work. After examining the preface, I focus on two contexts in which Tacitus recounts how characters in the narrative reconstruct the past and shows them to be misguided in their analysis: *A.* 1.9-10 (the putative Roman perceptions of Augustus' regime in the direct aftermath of his funeral) and *A.* 15.38-44 (Nero and the onlookers connecting the great fire to earlier episodes in Rome's history). These passages neatly show Roman 'anniversary' thinking and memory's tendency to operate in terms of major individuals and/or events. Next, I demonstrate how Tacitus, taking up an essential concern in the dialogue and the *Historiae*, points up the continuity in internecine discord and violence from early Roman history through the Republic into the Principate, identifying *causae* of human behavior and cutting through imperial ideology. Elsewhere, Tacitus shows that, when analyzing the past from different angles (e.g. Roman law [3.26-28] and table luxury [3.55]) different narratives develop. One observation that emerges from reading these passages in conjunction is that the past is not always better than the present, a point that also emerges from the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae* at places. I end by showing how particular developments in imperial Rome – restrictions on freedom of speech (*libertas*),

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[544] Cf. Christ 1994, 167-202 (on Herodotus).

restrictions on the public celebration of military glory of men outside the Imperial family, *inter alia* –

have different starting and turning points and, consequently, cannot be firmly tied with single events,

individuals, or even institutions. That is one of the conclusions advanced in the *Dialogus* as well. What

emerges from reading the dialogue and the historical works from the perspective of time, memory, and

historical reconstruction is that analyzing the past and socio-political change inevitably yields

inconsistencies and that tidy chronological and conceptual frameworks are unlikely to reflect reality.

IV.1.5 The *Dialogus* within the Tacitean Corpus and the Rhetorical Tradition

The *Dialogus* and the *Historiae* deal with the same time period and were composed in close

conjunction. The dramatic date of the dialogue, derived from Aper's remarks at *D.* 17.2-3, is either

74/5 or 77/8, ergo under Vespasian, whose reign Tacitus narrated in detail in the lost portions of the

Historiae.[545] The date of composition for the dialogue remains controversial. Possible dates range from

as early as 97/8 to as late as 108/9, taking into consideration initial composition, possible revisions and

recirculation, and eventual 'publication.'[546] Establishing dates, to a large extent, is tied up with the text's

interactions with Pliny's *Letters*, whose dates of composition are not without controversy themselves,

particularly now that Sherwin-White's book dates have been shown to be too narrow.[547] The year 102,

when the *Dialogus*' dedicatee, Fabius Justus, was consul, is a plausible year of composition, with the

likelihood that Tacitus revised the text in the following years and 'published' it as late as 108/9. The

evidence is inconclusive and the date of composition reasonably could lie anywhere between 100 and

108/9. While knowing the exact date of composition is of considerable import for reconstructing

Tacitus' biography, what is significant for our purposes is that he likely was at work on the *Dialogus* at

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[545] Aper's remark that it has been "120 years since Cicero's death until the present day" (a calculation echoed by Maternus at 24.3) points to the year 77/8, while his remark that they now are in the sixth *statio* ("year" or "reign"; the exact meaning is uncertain) of Vespasian's reign points to 74/5. See Mayer 2001, 142-43; van den Berg 2014, 31-32. The loss of the books on Vespasian's reign undoubtedly has contributed to the scarcity of examinations of the connections between the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae*.
[546] Van den Berg 2014, 32 ff. offers a useful summary of the problem with relevant bibliography. I follow the *communis opinio* in dating the *Dialogus* as Tacitus' third work and in finding any date before 100, though not impossible, unlikely.
[547] Whitton 2013, 15-20. Cf. Whitton 2012, 349-50. Edwards 2008 revisits the possible dates and the connections with Pliny's *Letters*. For Sherwin-White's book dates, see Sherwin-White 1966, 20-65.

the same time that he was collecting material for and composing the *Historiae*; hence, in addition to material points of contact, an affinity in treatment and analysis.[548]

The *Dialogus* has many conceptual connections with the *Annales* as well, despite the fact that they are concerned with different time periods and more time separates their composition. The history of the Julio-Claudian Principate and the developments in deliberative (in the senate), judicial (in the law courts), and epideictic (at funerals or to the *princeps*) oratory is directly relevant to a debate on the state of oratory set in the mid-seventies, just as the narrative of the Flavian Principate in the *Historiae* would be. The representation of public speech in those works, in terms of its scope, style, and capacity to confer fame, bears directly on the observations made in the dialogue, and Tacitus will have had the latter in mind while he composed the *Historiae* and the *Annales*.

To focus exclusively on the dialogue's interactions with the historical works, however, would be to ignore the work's retrospective aspects. The dialogue shares various conceptual and organizational aspects with the *Agricola* and the *Germania*. All three monographs explore the workings of the Principate from a comparative or indirect perspective. The *Agricola* and the *Dialogus* both are concerned with the connection between political and generic change and with freedom of speech (written and spoken) in imperial Rome, while the *Germania* and the *Dialogus* share a fundamental aspect in that they are both left open-ended. Specific topics, moreover, are explored in all three works and, indeed, recur in the historical narratives. For instance, Tacitus' remarks on Agricola's youth and training (*Agr.* 4-5) should be read in conjunction with his comments about Germanic upbringing (*G.* 18-20), with Messalla's remarks about the education and training of young Romans (*D.* 28 ff.), with Tacitus' own position as a pupil in the dialogue, and with his remarks in the *Historiae* and the *Annales* about depraved characters and their troubled childhoods (see p. 45 and n. 110).[549] Another example is the influence of Roman conquest on foreign populations. Here the comments on the corrupting

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[548] Cf. Syme 1958a, 672-73.
[549] On the concept of youth in the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus* and its implications for Tacitus' own career, see Sailor 2014, 101-13.

influence on the Britons of Agricola's measures (*Agr.* 21.2) should be read together with the description of the unimpaired moral and physical vigor of the Germani, with Messalla's claims about the spread of vice from Rome throughout the world (*D.* 28.2), and with analogous comments Tacitus makes in the historical works (esp. at *A.* 13.54.3, 15.44.4, and 16.5.1).

Beyond the *Agricola* and the *Germania*, the *Dialogus* looks back to an entire Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, stretching from Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle through Cicero into the early Principate. Despite the importance and range of the Greek tradition, Romans looked primarily to one man: Cicero. The latter produced an authoritative body of theory on oratory and the orator, in the traditions of Plato and Aristotle, in two dialogues (the *de Oratore* of 55 BC and the *Brutus* of 46 BC) and a treatise (the *Orator* of 46 BC). In these works, set against a background of civil strife, Cicero was concerned, *inter alia*, with the history and development of Roman oratory until his own time (esp. in the *Brutus*), with its role within the state and its scope under despotic rule (in the *de Orat.* and *Brutus*), with the education and knowledge of the ideal orator (in the *de Orat.*), and with the ideal rhetoric style (esp. in the *Orator*). The *de Oratore* is the chief model for the *Dialogus*, suggesting format, style, organization, dramatic date, and interlocutors. The connections between the two dialogues are myriad and scholarship has become increasingly sophisticated in teasing them out.[550] Beyond the *de Oratore*, the *Dialogus* interacts with many other texts concerned with oratory and *eloquentia*, both Ciceronian and post-Ciceronian, both prose authors and poets.

In the first century AD, many authors discussed the state of oratory (and, in some cases, of literature and artistic talent more broadly), most avowing a decline both in style and scope as compared with the Ciceronian age. So Seneca the Elder, Velleius, Petronius, Seneca the Younger, Pliny the Elder, and Tacitus' contemporaries Quintilian, Pliny the Younger, and Juvenal.[551] The cause usually is seen as

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[550] The most advanced and recent examination is in van den Berg 2014, 208-40 *et passim*.
[551] Depending on his dates, Pseudo-Longinus might be included here as well. He is dated variously to the first or third century AD.

a decline in morality and education, while the influence of declamation often is mentioned as well.[552]

The topos of decline was common among the poets, one manifestation of which was the frequent

reference to a (now lost) Golden Age.[553] An important source for Tacitus was Horace and the literary

criticism explicated in his *Satires* and *Epistles*.[554] To what extent the argument of decline reflects

historical reality remains difficult to determine with exactitude. While the advent of the Principate

undoubtedly brought change, many aspects of rhetorical practice remained the same or similar, and it

was, in any case, common among the ancients to set their own times against a better past.[555]

Among the extant authors that wrote about contemporary oratory Quintilian was the most

optimistic. He composed a now lost work on the causes of oratory's decline (the *de Causis Corruptae*

Eloquentiae of ca. 89/90), but, given his favorable attitude towards the Flavians, it is unlikely that he

ascribed the decline to political change, and, judging from his masterpiece, the 12-book didactic

treatise *Institutio Oratoria* (published ca. 95/6, before Domitian's assassination), he was hopeful that it

could be overcome.[556] In his treatise, Quintilian, who served as the first salaried professor of rhetoric

in Rome, produced an extraordinarily comprehensive study of the education of the ideal orator, from

babyhood all the way to late adulthood. Imbued with the Catonian ideal of the *uir bonus dicendi peritus*

and Ciceronian principles of style and education, his aim was to produce great orators, and he clearly

thought a revival of oratory in the post-Domitianic era possible. His optimistic outlook is reflected in

his claim that there were contemporaries in the Forum (his pupil Pliny and Tacitus presumably among

them) who could rival the orators of old and whose works would last (*Inst.* 10.1.122). While Quintilian

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[552] For discussion of the topic of decline, see Kennedy 1972, 446-64; Williams 1978, 6-51; Heldmann 1982; Kennedy 1994, 186-92. It is a curious fact that these pessimistic pronouncements about contemporary oratory begin to appear only under Tiberius, in the aftermath of the reign of Augustus, under whom literature flourished.

[553] The Golden Age topos goes as far back as Hesiod (*Op.* 106-201). Examples of the latter or of comments on the decline of poetry include: Ter., *Ad.* 302-7; Cat. 64.382-408; Verg., *E.* 4; *G.* 2.458-540; *Aen.* 6.791-800, 8.319-27; Ov., *Met.* 1.89-243; Hor., *Epod.* 16; *Carm.* 2.15, 3.6, 4.15; Luc. 1.61-2; V. Fl. 1.555-67; Sil. 3.622-4; Mart., *Ep.* 8.55; Juv. 6.1-24286-313.

[554] On the interactions between the *Dialogus* and Horace's works, see van den Berg 2014, 241-93.

[555] Oratory remained an avenue to self-enrichment and promotion, as the success of Quintilian, Pliny, and Tacitus shows. Domitian had added a contest in Greek and Latin oratory to the Capitoline Games (Suet., *Dom.* 4.4; 20), while Suetonius composed biographies of prominent contemporary rhetors. On the continuities in rhetorical practice between the Republic and the Principate, note the discussions in Rutledge 1999 and 2001 (on the continuities in the style and activity of *delatores*); Rivière 2002 on the essential role of *delatores* in the republican and imperial legal system; see also Rutledge 2012; Dominik 2007; Roller 2011.

[556] On the scope of the *de Causis Corruptae Eloquentiae* and its relationship with Tacitus' *Dialogus*, see Brink 1989.

was a confirmed Ciceronian and critical of the postclassicizing style that had developed in the first century (represented by the speeches of Seneca (*Inst.* 10.1.26) and advocated by Aper in the *Dialogus*), he did not want an anachronistic renewal of Ciceronianism, but rather a Ciceronian injection into the more restrained style that he and his contemporaries favored.[557]

A final source to be considered is Pliny the Younger, whose work reveals a complex view of the state of oratory. He laments the decline of oratory and the moral failures of modernity (e.g. *Ep.* 1.5.12, 2.14). He professes dissatisfaction with the circumscribed scope of oratory as it exists in his day (e.g. *Ep.* 6.2). Deliberative oratory dealt with trivial themes (e.g. *Ep.* 3.20.10, 9.2-1-3). As for judicial oratory, court cases are now limited in time and lawyers hurry to finish their argument (*Ep.* 6.2). Hence shorter speeches and the terse and violent style championed by men like Regulus (*Ep.* 1.5), Marcellus, and Aper. Despite these perceived drawbacks, Pliny must have thought oratory to be in fairly good shape. Activity in the law courts flourished at this time and men like Pliny, Quintilian, and Tacitus owed their influence, wealth, and status in large part to their career at the bar.[558] Oratory was still a principal avenue to advance politically and financially. Like Quintilian, Pliny explicitly praises the talent of young contemporaries, some of whom took him as a model and teacher (e.g. *Ep.* 6.11). Tacitus, too, despite the common but unverifiable claim that he abandoned forensic oratory after the *Dialogus*, continued to be a model (*Ep.* 7.20, 8.7, 9.23.1-3). With such talent and exemplars oratory was not so poorly off, after all. The status of rhetors and grammarians at this time is reflected in Suetonius' composition of their biographies in the *de Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*, a segment of the larger *de Viris Illustribus*, composed between 107 and 119.[559] Suetonius' place within the contemporary debate about oratory is difficult to assess given the fragmentary state of the *DVI* (which contained a now lost section '*de Oratoribus*'). Already by 97 he had established a reputation as an author and scholar, as his

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[557] See Kennedy 1972, 506; Dominik 1997, 57.
[558] See Crook 1995 on the flourishing of advocacy at this time.
[559] On this work, only partly preserved, see Kaster 1995.

correspondence with Pliny shows (Plin., *Ep.* 1.18, 24).[560] Beyond this we do not know how the work

was received nor can we readily derive from it a good sense of Suetonius' personal opinion on the state

of oratory. His composition of biographies of grammarians and rhetoricians may be indicative of

optimism. That he will have been a respected voice may readily be granted.

Pliny championed Cicero's classicizing style and longer speeches (e.g. *Ep.* 1.2.4 1.5.12-13,

1.20.14–15). In the *Letters* and the *Panegyricus*, both carefully revised for publication, he shows himself

to be "one of the most rhythmic of Latin writers."[561] His advocacy of longer speeches is evidenced

both by the massive *Panegyricus* (which will have been exceptional in length even before its revision)

and by his effort throughout his writings to distance himself from the modern oratory of the *delatores*,

exemplified by his enemy Regulus.[562] Like his model Cicero and his teacher Quintilian, Pliny

responded to oratory's perceived problems by championing a particular style and a kind of oratory.

Tacitus variously engages with all the above authors, in particular with Cicero, Quintilian, and Pliny,

the latter two his close acquaintances.[563]

Finally, in addition to looking both backward and forward, the *Dialogus* of course also looks

inward, in the sense that what Tacitus writes about the nature of the Principate and the alleged state of

oratory in the mid-seventies (and about its development in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*) bears, in

various ways, on the situation at the time of writing.[564] Given its multidimensionality, it quite simply is

insufficient to read the work in isolation. The *Dialogus* positions itself not only as the latest member of

a Greco-Roman tradition on oratory but as an integral part of the Tacitean corpus.

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[560] Suetonius' reputation is further evidenced by the progression of his career, for he would go on to hold the three secretaryships *ab epistulis*, *a studiis*, and *a bibliothecis* under Trajan and Hadrian. For the significance of these positions, see Millar 1967, 9-19.
[561] Whitton 2012, 361.
[562] The intricate organization and virtuosity of the *Letters*, consciously shaped as a unified whole for contemporary and future appreciation, has received much scholarly attention recently: Marchesi 2008; Gibson and Morello 2012; Whitton 2010; 2012; 2013.
[563] On the relationship between Quintilian and his contemporaries, see Kennedy 1972, 487-552 (515-26 on Tacitus and Quintilian). On Tacitus and Pliny, see Syme 1958a, 59-120, esp. 112-20; Griffin 1999; Whitton 2012.
[564] Cf. van den Berg 2014, 35: "the *Dialogus* responds both to the more immediate imperial context and to the *longue durée* of rhetorical texts, the challengers and champions of public speech in the Greco-Roman world." The contemporary relevance of the work (*nostra aetas* at 1.1 includes the Trajanic present) and some of the characters (especially Aquilius Regulus, Messalla's brother: 15.1) is evident.

IV.2 Republic and Principate: Political and Generic Change

The most obvious place to start an examination of the interactions between the *Dialogus* and the historical works is at the start, with the prefaces. I begin with a few observations about the preface of the *Agricola* before turning to that of the *Dialogus*, to preserve both the order in which Tacitus conceptualized the problems with which he engages and the experience of the ancient reader, who came to the *Dialogus* having read Tacitus' remarks in the *Agricola* about the history of (auto)biography and the issue of the representation and public appreciation of merit (*uirtus*) and ability (*ingenium*). For the same reason, I explore the prefaces of the *Historiae* and the *Annales* only after those of the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus*, because the historical works (and the history of historiography in their prefaces) were composed against the backdrop of the monographs and their history of (auto)biography and oratory there, not vice versa.

IV.2.1 The *Agricola*: the Evaluation, Production, and Transmission of *Virtus* and *Ingenium*

> *Clarorum uirorum facta moresque posteris tradere, antiquitus usitatum, ne nostris quidem temporibus quamquam incuriosa suorum aetas omisit, quotiens magna aliqua ac nobilis uirtus uicit ac supergressa est uitium paruis magnisque ciuitatibus commune, ignorantiam recti et inuidiam. Sed apud priores ut agere digna memoratu pronum magisque in aperto erat, ita celeberrimus quisque ingenio ad prodendam uirtutis memoriam sine gratia aut ambitione bonae tantum conscientiae pretio ducebantur. Ac plerique suam ipsi uitam narrare fiduciam potius morum quam adrogantiam arbitrati sunt, nec id Rutilio et Scauro citra fidem aut obtrectationi fuit: adeo uirtutes isdem temporibus optime aestimantur, quibus facillime gignuntur. At nunc narraturo mihi uitam defuncti hominis uenia opus fuit, quam non petissem incusaturus: tam saeua et infesta uirtutibus tempora. (Agr. 1)*

> The practice of handing down to posterity the deeds and ways of famous men, common in the past, is not even neglected by the people of our times (uninterested in their own though they are), on the rare occasions when some great and noteworthy excellence has overcome and gone beyond that defect, common to small and large states alike: ignorance of what is right, and envy. Yet, just as among those who came before us it was easy and more in the clear to do things worthy of recording, so the most celebrated talents were led to publish a record of their merit without partiality and unambitiously, but by the reward of a good conscience only. And in fact very many in the past thought that to narrate their own life was tantamount to confidence in their behavior, not self-aggrandizement. Rutilius and Scaurus, in doing so, were not without credibility nor were they criticized: so true is it that virtues are appreciated best in those times in which they are generated most easily. But, as things are, when I was going to record the life of a dead man, I needed to seek pardon, which I would not have needed to seek if I were going to reproach that man's life: so savage and hostile to virtues are the times.

The opening chapter of the *Agricola* introduces a nucleus of terms and issues that signals the work's primary concern and that encapsulates a problem with which Tacitus would continue to engage in the *Dialogus* and the historical works: the relationship between the recognition by society, the production by individuals, and the proper transmission by authors of merit (*uirtus*) and ability (*ingenium*).[565] The opening words, which recall the opening of Cato the Elder's *Origines*, define the genre of biography as being concerned with the transmission for future generations of the actions and ways of famous men. Unlike historiography, biography is not concerned with *any* actions or *anyone*'s character, but with the *facta* and *mores* of elite men, men who had displayed *uirtus* and *ingenium* and earned public recognition for their achievements.

The aim of biographical work is the public appreciation of excellence, while *laus* is the medium through which to recognize and transmit it. As soon becomes clear, this practice of representation does not stand on its own, being dependent on the conditions imposed on it by the society in which it is produced. Tacitus, drawing a broad chronological divide, writes that in the past (*antiquitatus/apud priores*) excellence earned recognition and that the conditions of that time encouraged Romans to produce noteworthy deeds and authors to record them; *usitatum* signals the profusion of both excellence and works that transmit it. Elite Romans even composed autobiography. At this time, production, evaluation, and transmission stood on equal footing, with individuals and authors taking it as axiomatic that excellence earns praise. Hence, the "economy of representation," to use D. Sailor's term, was such that authors did not write for ulterior motives, but merely were concerned with the accurate transmission of the record of conspicuous men.[566] Even autobiographical work was credible and truthful. This economy of representation was predicated on the *libertas* that Romans enjoyed (*Agr.* 2.3), meaning, *inter alia*, a freedom of expression stemming from a freedom from the relations of

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[565] For bibliography on the preface of the *Agricola*, see n. 53.
[566] For the economics of representation in the preface of the *Agricola*, see the lucid discussion in Sailor 2008, 53 ff.

reciprocity (especially with the *princeps*) that would impair truthful representation in imperial Rome.

In the present (*nostris temporibus/nunc/tempora*), conditions have changed. Not only is there a general disinterest (*incuriosa suorum*) in examples of excellence, but there is an active hostility to it. Only truly exceptional *uirtus* can overcome this attitude, while *facta* and *mores* that would have been noted in the past now fall into oblivion. It is clear that Agricola's achievements belong to the latter category and that the text largely serves to restore to him his due praise. Disinterest and hostility affect performance, discouraging Romans from displaying their ability and authors from writing biographies, let alone autobiographies; *quotiens* signifies a shortage of both *magna ac nobilis uirtus* and biographical literature. When biographies *are* composed in this period, we are to understand, by the extended contrast with the past, that their authors lack credibility and that their depictions are distorted. This is one aspect, as Sailor shows, of the skewed economics of representation at this time: "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… *gratia* ("favor") and rewarded ambition."[567] Extending the contrast with the past, the present, then, is marked not by *libertas*, but by its opposite, *seruitus*, that is by the obligations and ambition that render authors dependent.

To sum up for the moment, several important points emerge from the *Agricola*'s preface. First, the production of *uirtus* and the exercise of *ingenium* are linked with public recognition, a point Tacitus makes explicitly: *adeo uirtutes isdem temporibus optime aestimantur, quibus facillime gignuntur* (see p. 38). Second, the different conditions under which ancient and modern authors work are conceptualized through the common dichotomy between freedom and slavery, signifying, respectively, freedom from and dependence on the obligations that impair freedom of speech and truthful representation.[568] Finally, the appreciation, production, and representation of excellence are connected with political climates. Without explicitly linking generic and performative change to political change, Tacitus points

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[567] Sailor 2008, 57.
[568] On slavery and domination as a social metaphor in imperial elite discourse: Roller 2001, 213-87; Sailor 2008, *passim*; Lavan 2013.

to the transition from Republic to Principate as the principal cause for the above developments.

Within the broader distinction between Republic and Principate, Tacitus distinguishes between the immediate past under Domitian and the Trajanic present. The bleak attitude towards merit that characterizes the Principate generally was extreme under Domitian, who executed and banished authors and philosophers and had their books burned (2.1-2). *Delatores* scrutinized people's words and actions (2.3). Under such a regime, Romans faced not just restricted opportunities to exercise their *ingenium* and display *uirtus* (whether in action or in writing), but no opportunity at all: hence *silentium* (3.2) and *libertas* nearly abolished (2.2-3, 3). Under Domitian, the writing of biography was not just impaired by such motives as *gratia* and *ambitio*, which entangled authors in relations of reciprocity, but by sheer oppression: authors did not write at all. Hence, complete lack of independence and lack of free speech, the mark of a slave: "just as the people in the past saw *libertas* to the greatest degree, so we saw *seruitus* to the greatest degree" (*et sicut uetus aetas uidit quid ultimum in libertate esset, ita nos quid in seruitute*, 2.3; *seruitutis*, 3.3). Inactivity and lack of independence became so dominant, Tacitus admits, that he and his fellow senators developed a love of *inertia* and *desidia* (3.1), the ultimate symptom of oppression and the culmination of performative decline.

In contrast with the immediate past, which was extreme (*ultimum in seruitute*), Nerva and Trajan "restored" *libertas* (cf. *Libertas Restituta*: *ILS* 274), which effectively meant that there was *relatively* greater freedom for individuals and authors to display their merit and ability. As we have seen, the claim that Nerva 'reconciled *principatus* and *libertas*' ought not be taken to mean that Rome had returned to the ideals of the Republic as defined earlier in the prologue. Unlike past biographers, Tacitus must seek *uenia* from his *princeps*, which bound him in obligation. That he, consequently, had to work against the potential charge of *gratia* or *ambitio* – by professing to have written the work out of a sense of *pietas* – reflects not republican *libertas* but the conditions imposed on authors under the Principate. The current age (*tempora*) that is hostile to *uirtutes* (1.4), which is set in contradistinction to the general past

(1.1-3), designates the Principate as a whole and by necessity includes the rule of Nerva and Trajan (see pp. 27-28). The broad distinction that Tacitus draws in the opening chapters is between two systems of government that properly recognize, transmit, and foster excellence on the one hand, and disregard, distort, and discourage it on the other. This distinction broadly seems supported by what we find in the extant Latin literature. For a close inspection of the works of the eminent authors of the later Republic (especially Cicero and Sallust) reveals that there it is still taken for granted that outstanding *ingenium* meets with *laus*, *gloria*, or *claritudo*, whereas that link is complicated in early imperial literature. The *laudatio* for Verginius Rufus, which Tacitus delivered in 97 (Plin., *Ep.* 2.1.1), and the *Agricola*, composed the next year, shared a similar aim in demonstrating how excellence shines through under bad *principes*.

While in the opening chapters of the *Agricola*, then, Tacitus establishes a polarizing divide between the Republic and the Principate, he does not clarify at what point he thinks that divide occurred nor what periods are subsumed under the designation "past." Are the *priores* to be identified with the Late Republic or does the term include the Middle Republic and even earlier eras? Does the past end at Caesar's dictatorship or his assassination? With Cicero's death? In 31, 27, or 23? Earlier still, with the Gracchi, Sulla, or Pompey, or later, with the first peaceful transition with Tiberius? These questions are no mere hairsplitting, for they bear on the essential link between political, societal, and generic change. The preface offers little chronological precision. Tacitus mentions two men from the general past, M. Aemilius Scaurus (cos. 115) and P. Rutilius Rufus (cos. 105), who are paired elsewhere as luminaries of a past generation (Cic., *Brut.* 110-16). While their autobiographies are fine examples of the authorial fidelity on which Tacitus comments (Scaurus was lauded for his *fides*: Cic., *Brut.* 112), their mention as examples of the 'age of freedom' is less salutary. Rufus did not write his *de Vita Sua* in Rome but while exiled in Smyrna and both men enjoyed the heyday of their political career ca. 60-70 years before Caesar's assassination and 75-85 years before Actium. Thus their example is of little value

as evidence for the conditions of the past as a whole (let alone for the Late Republic) and therefore has little bearing on the essential difference between the Republic and the Principate drawn in the preface. Ancient and modern readers alike may reasonably guess that Actium is the unstated, but assumed, turning point. But not every author drew the line there and the deliberate ambiguity of the temporal markers used (*antiquitatus/apud priores/nostris temporibus/nunc*) suggests that there was room for doubt, room to draw the line elsewhere or, indeed, to question the act of drawing a line at all.[569]

IV.2.2 The *Dialogus*: the Evaluation of *Ingenium* and the Production of *Eloquentia* in Past and Present

The relationship between generic and political change, set out in the preface of the *Agricola*, is taken up in that of the *Dialogus*, where Tacitus offers a succinct history of oratory along similar lines as the history of biography, engaging with similar issues and using similar terms of analysis:

> *Saepe ex me requiris, Iuste Fabi, cur, cum priora saecula tot eminentium oratorum ingeniis gloriaque floruerint, nostra potissimum aetas deserta et laude eloquentiae orbata uix nomen ipsum oratoris retineat; neque enim ita appellamus nisi antiquos, horum autem temporum diserti causidici et aduocati et patroni et quiduis potius quam oratores uocantur. 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, uix hercule auderem, si mihi mea sententia proferenda ac non disertissimorum, ut nostris temporibus, hominum sermo repetendus esset, quos eandem hanc quaestionem pertractantis iuuenis admodum audiui. Ita non ingenio, sed memoria et recordatione opus est, ut quae a praestantissimis uiris et excogitata subtiliter et dicta grauiter accepi, cum singuli diuersas sed probabilis causas adferrent, dum formam sui quisque et animi et ingenii redderent, isdem nunc numeris isdemque rationibus persequar, seruato ordine disputationis. Neque enim defuit qui diuersam quoque partem susciperet, ac multum uexata et inrisa uetustate nostrorum temporum eloquentiam antiquorum ingeniis anteferret.* (*D.* 1.1-4)

> Often you ask me, Fabius Justus, why it is that, whereas past ages flourished in the genius and glory of so many eminent orators, our age above all, having been deserted and having lost the distinction of *eloquentia*, hardly preserves the term "orator"; for we do not call anyone by that term except the ancients, but the fluent men of our times are called "pleaders," "counselors," "defenders," and anything but "orators." To respond to this inquiry of yours and to take on the burden of a question that is so weighty that either we must judge poorly of our talents, if we are unable to accomplish the same, or of our judgments, if we are unwilling, is a task I hardly would dare to undertake if I had to offer my own opinion and not to recall a discussion among the most fluent men (taking into account our times), whom I heard dealing with this same question when I was a mere boy. Hence I do not require talent, but memory and recollection, in order to recount now, with the same divisions

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[569] I assume that the ambiguity is deliberate given the meticulous care that Tacitus otherwise bestows on the preface and given that the ambiguity recurs in much the same way in the *Dialogus*.

and lines of reasoning, and preserving the order of the discussion, those precise reflections I heard, spoken with conviction, by the most eminent men, each offering different but plausible arguments and thereby displaying an outline of his feeling and disposition. For there was a speaker who took up the opposite position, too, and he, having at length criticized and ridiculed antiquity, maintained the superiority of the eloquence of our times over the talents of the ancients.

Like that of the *Agricola*, the preface of the *Dialogus* is concerned with the essential connection between the public evaluation and the production of particular qualities or abilities. The concern now is not biography but oratory, and *uirtus*, the principal criterion of proper male elite conduct, has been replaced with *eloquentia*, the principal criterion by which public speakers are judged. While in the *Agricola* the connection between achievement/production and cultural recognition is straightforward and explicit, in the *Dialogus* it is ambiguous and complicated.

The opening lines of the *Dialogus* formulate the work's principal concern and the categories with which the reader is to analyze the development and state of *eloquentia*. Tacitus displaces onto his friend Justus the question underlying the discussion: why is it that, whereas past ages flourished in the genius and glory of so many eminent orators, our age above all, having been deserted and having lost the distinction of *eloquentia*, hardly preserves the term *orator*? The question is followed by an explanatory sentence: "for we do not call anyone by that term except the ancients, but the fluent men of our times are called "pleaders," "counselors," "defenders," and anything but "orators."" The *communis opinio* has it that Tacitus here pronounces oratory's decline, on the ground that *deserta* and *orbata* indicate a decline in oratorical ability along with renown.[570] This reading is attractive in light of what other imperial authors write about decline and of what Tacitus himself told us in the preface of the *Agricola*. Since there he explicitly links achievement and production with public recognition, it stands to reason that he holds a similar view about the development of oratory: *eloquentia* earns less recognition under the Principate and has declined as a result. This view, however, is undermined by his

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[570] See van den Berg 2014, 99 ff. with references to scholarly responses in the notes.

stance and by the ambiguous language of the preface, which complicates the problem of decline.[571]

Tacitus carefully distances himself from the opening question by displacing it onto Justus and from the general attitudes of his age by distinguishing them from his own voice.[572] The text does not advance a single thesis about *eloquentia*. Tacitus nowhere proclaims oratory's decline in his own voice but ascribes the argument of decline to Messalla and Maternus.[573] Nor does the preface explicitly state that modern orators possess less raw talent or accomplish less. While the juxtaposition of past and present implies the loss of ability and/or quality along with renown, the Latin simply states that the current age has lost not *eloquentia*, but *laus eloquentiae*, i.e. the recognition for, or the distinction of, eloquence. Indeed, the following clause, which serves to clarify (*enim*) the preceding one, stresses the way society *labels* modern speakers and makes no explicit claim about natural ability or achievement: the words *laus eloquentiae*, *nomen oratoris*, *appellamus*, and *uocantur*, and the labels *causidici*, *patroni*, and *aduocati*, all are concerned principally with the act of classifying or naming, not with *ingenium* or achievement, even though the terms may be seen as obliquely reflecting on the latter as well.[574] The Latin is ambiguous. As van den Berg notes, the noun *laus* can designate both the act of praise and the reputation of an object or person deserving of that praise – i.e. both fame and merit.[575] It is significant that Tacitus did not write *orbata eloquentia*, which would have condemned modern oratory explicitly. Cicero indeed was much more explicit: *post Hortensi clarissimi oratoris mortem <u>orbae eloquentiae</u>* (*Brut.* 330). Saying that an age no longer receives the same recognition or distinction for *eloquentia* does not mean that its speakers are less talented or achieve less.[576] Of course, one way to get around this view would be to take *deserta* absolutely ("is barren") and assume that Tacitus intends for us to supply *ingenium* from

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[571] See van den Berg 2014, 101 ff. with relevant scholarship in the notes.

[572] On the way Tacitus displaces the question of decline onto Justus, see Goldberg 1999, 225-26; Syson 2009, 50-51; van den Berg 2014, 101 ff. On the way Tacitus distinguishes between his own opinion and that of his age, see van den Berg 2014, 104 and n. 14.

[573] Cf. n. 518.

[574] Van den Berg 2014, 103. Cf. Syson 2009, 52: "is the label orator withheld because there is no eloquence that deserves the name or because the current received wisdom is all against glorifying modern speakers with a word so loaded with expectations in the rhetorical tradition?"

[575] Van den Berg 2014, 102 n. 8.

[576] See Syson 2009, 52; van den Berg 2014, 102.

the previous clause: "our age, barren of ability and having lost the distinction of eloquence…" While this reading would link oratory's decline to its diminished appreciation and thus would be in concert with the analysis in the *Agricola*, it requires much work on the part of the reader and would be to make the Latin fit our presuppositions. Gudeman's gloss, *neglecta* (1914 *ad loc.*), for *deserta* is attractive in light of *suorum incuriosa* at *Agr.* 1.1 and would locate the problem squarely in diminished recognition as opposed to diminished ability. In the end, the language is designedly ambiguous. Tacitus prepares the reader to make a distinction between natural oratorical ability and the way it is appraised by society.

In addition to diminished recognition, Tacitus points to oratory's diminished scope and employment. The distinction between the term *orator*, signifying the oratorical authority of former speakers, and the terms *causidici*, *patroni*, and *aduocati*, designating contemporary speakers, while implying a difference in distinction, achievement, and ability, primarily reflects a change in oratory's employment within society. The breadth of activity subsumed under the term *orator* stands in contrast with the more circumscribed activity in the modern courtroom, an issue on which Maternus will elaborate in his final speech. While modern speakers may achieve some renown in the courtroom, they do not have the same opportunities to display their ability as ancient orators did. The language reinforces the tension between *ingenium* and the political climate in which it is exercised. For the fact that modern orators enjoy fewer opportunities does not necessarily mean that they are intrinsically less talented or that their oratory is of lesser quality. Tacitus directs the reader's focus to the uneasy relationship between raw talent and the cultural climate in which it is employed, stressing the diminished recognition and scope of *eloquentia* in imperial Rome, while at the same time leaving open the possibility of, but not explicitly asserting, a concomitant decline in talent and/or achievement.[577] In the preface of the *Agricola*, Tacitus had asserted that under the Principate the writing of biography declined in both volume *and* quality: people write less and are less credible. The preface of the *Dialogus*

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[577] Here I follow the principal argument of van den Berg's third chapter (2014, 98-123).

suggests that the imperial system of government may have a different impact on oratory than on the writing of literature.

The tension between ability and recognition is reflected in Tacitus' response to his friend's question: upholding Justus' claim means that "either we must judge poorly of our talents, if we are unable to accomplish the same [i.e. as the ancients], or of our judgments, if we are unwilling…" (*ut aut de ingeniis nostris male existimandum sit, si idem adsequi non possumus, aut de iudiciis, si nolumus*, 1.2). *Iudicium* denotes aesthetic judgment and taste and, like the term *laus*, bears on cultural attitudes towards *eloquentia*. The distinction once more is between innate ability and public evaluation. And again Tacitus leaves open various possibilities. His words often are explained away by those seeing decline as the dialogue's thesis, since they clearly suggest that modern orators can match their ancient counterparts.[578] The judgment is in line, however, with the rest of the preface and the dialogue, in which the superiority of ancient oratory is assumed, but never actually demonstrated, by two of the speakers (Maternus and Messalla) and the superiority of modern oratory is argued for, more directly and at greater length, by the other speaker (Aper). Tacitus gives pride of place to this last argument in the final words of the opening chapter (1.4).

The reputation of the work's interlocutors exemplifies the tension between fame and ability. Tacitus introduces the speakers as "the most fluent men, taking into account our times" (*disertissimorum, ut nostris temporibus, hominum*, 1.2). The words usually are taken to reflect Tacitus' opinion that the men, despite being great speakers, fall short of ancient *eloquentia* and that the choice of *disertissimorum* over Cicero's *eloquentissimorum* – of the interlocutors in the *de Oratore* (*hominum eloquentissimorum*, 1.24) – underlines this.[579] This may well be correct. But, like the rest of the preface, Tacitus' words are more ambiguous than we would like, and a reader may just as readily take them to mean that the men are indeed great speakers, despite the fact that the current cultural disposition restricts their opportunities

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[578] E.g. Reitzenstein 1915 and Mayer 2001, 89-90.
[579] Mayer 2001 *ad loc.*

and/or fails to acknowledge their talent.[580] That Tacitus' words here bear more on oratory's

diminished scope and recognition than on diminished ability or achievement is suggested by claims

elsewhere in the text. In the immediately following chapter, Tacitus stresses society's flawed appraisal

of his mentors' abilities: even though they were the most distinguished talents of the day (*celeberrima tum*

ingenia fori nostri, 2.1), many unjustly and maliciously (*maligne*) thought that Secundus did not have a

ready tongue (*promptum sermonem*) and that Aper had earned a reputation for *eloquentia* by his genius and

natural talent rather than by training and letters (*ingenio potius et ui naturae quam institutione et litteris*, 2.1).

The words, as is well known, recall the opening of the second book of *de Oratore* (2.1). Like Cicero,

Tacitus is concerned to correct the flawed assessment of the interlocutors' education and knowledge.

Unlike Cicero, Tacitus extends his focus to rhetorical ability: Secundus was in fact a fluent speaker and

Aper, wishing to earn greater glory, pretended to lack the learning he really possessed (2.2). The adverb

maligne is significant since it reflects social attitudes. The term *malignitas* often is used in contexts of

social recognition and rewards, of people unjustly refusing to accord recognition to other people's

abilities.[581] Aper's need to feign lack of learning in order to earn true appreciation of his abilities is a

telling indication that, in this period, *ingenium* and *laus* are not properly aligned.[582]

     The second relevant passage comes from the final chapter, in which Maternus addresses his

fellow speakers with words that recall Tacitus' words in the preface:

> *credite, optimi et in quantum opus est disertissimi uiri, si aut uos prioribus saeculis aut illi, quos miramur, his nati essent,*
> *ac deus aliquis uitas ac uestra tempora repente mutasset, nec uobis summa illa laus et gloria in eloquentia neque illis*
> *modus et temperamentum defuisset: nunc, quoniam nemo eodem tempore adsequi potest magnam famam et magnam*
> *quietem…* (*D.* 41.5)

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[580] One possible way to elucidate the meaning of the phrase is to compare it with similar phrases elsewhere. Recall, e.g., how Tacitus described Frontinus' achievements as governor of Britain: he was *uir magnus, quantum licebat* (*Agr.* 17.2). These words do not indicate that Frontinus was a less capable general than the generals of old, but that the principate curbed his ambitions and/or true potential.

[581] See van den Berg 2008 on *malignitas* as a term in literary criticism, esp. pp. 421-27 on the *Dialogus*. The term often is used to promote the proper evaluation of merit: by accusing others of *malignitas*, an author can underline and advance what he thinks is the right appraisal of someone's ability or virtue, and so the term often has a corrective function.

[582] Aper's dissimulation of knowledge and learning recalls Cicero's Crassus and Antonius, who similarly feign ignorance (either of Greek rhetoric or of learning altogether) in order to appear more authoritative (*de Orat.* 2.4). Although the intertext underlines the engagement with similar challenges across time-periods and political systems, Aper's need to act and pretend is particularly poignant given the way the Principate, according to Tacitus, evaluates and fails to acknowledge *uirtus* and *ingenium*.

> Believe me, my most excellent <u>and, as far as our age requires, most fluent fellows</u>: if you had been born in former times or those men, whom we admire, had been born in our times, or if some god suddenly had switched your life and time-periods, you would not have lacked that eminent praise and glory for *eloquentia* and they would not have lacked moderation and self-control. Now, since no one can, at the same time, enjoy great fame and great tranquility…

Maternus' focus is on oratory's diminished scope and on the diminished recognition of oratorical ability. The phrase *in quantum opus* reflects the circumscribed employment of *eloquentia* in imperial Rome and the diminished opportunity for speakers to exercise and display their *ingenium*. As Maternus says in the preceding lines, in the presence of a *princeps*, there is no need (*opus*) for long speeches in the senate or to the people, and there are fewer voluntary prosecutions under a peaceful system like the Principate. Such a limited playing field for *eloquentia* affects its value and appraisal within society; great tranquility and great fame cannot coexist. The two passages elucidate Tacitus' words in the preface and underscore the tension between natural ability and the cultural climate in which it is employed. The language continues to make the problem of decline profoundly ambiguous.[583]

In its diminished recognition of ability, the current age is described in similar terms as in the *Agricola*, where Tacitus describes the present as not fairly appraising and transmitting *uirtus*. The unjust refusal to appreciate people's *ingenium* reflects similar social attitudes as the hostility to *uirtus* deprecated in the *Agricola*. Both *ingenium* and *uirtus* are less on display and less appreciated. Both texts work against this problem. Just as the *Agricola* serves in part to restore a fair circulation of glory by distributing praise and blame where they are due, so the *Dialogus* promotes a realignment of fame and ability by correcting poor aesthetic judgment and putting on display the *ingenium* and knowledge of its participants (including that of the author himself). The text preserves for posterity the speakers' ability and, in doing so, fulfills one of Aper's predictions, namely that the interlocutors will, in the future, gain the fame that the malice and envy of their own age denies them (23.6). Thus emerges one of the

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[583] The phrase *in quantum opus est* may be read in light of *A.* 14.47.1: *Memmius Regulus, auctoritate constantia fama, in quantum praeumbrante imperatoris fastigio datur, clarus*. Here, too, the problem is one of diminished opportunity, not of innate quality: Regulus, who was a good and able man, would have achieved more had he not lived in the shadow of a *princeps*.

essential aspects that unify the Tacitean corpus; just as the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus* work to rectify false representation, so the *Germania*, the *Historiae*, and the *Annales*, in their effort to work against official versions and to accurately depict people, actions, motives, and places, have the same aim.

IV.3 The Imperial System of Government and Oratory

In both the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus*, Tacitus correlates the advent of the Principate with the restrictions imposed on both literature and oratory and with the skewed mechanics of recognition and fame. In the *Dialogus*, he elucidates in more detail the connection between political and generic change that he had pointed up, but not elucidated, in the *Agricola.* There, he drew a distinction between the *libertas* enjoyed by former authors and the restrictions imposed on modern authors, due in large part to the erosion of social equality in the presence of a *princeps*. In the *Dialogus*, the issue of *libertas* recurs in the analysis of the development of *eloquentia.* Aper, in his argument for oratory over poetry, links the exercise of *eloquentia* to independence, arguing that, when defending others (as opposed to oneself, as Maternus has done), one may more freely offend, both in terms of what one says and whom one addresses.[584] In those contexts, says Aper, one's "outspokenness" may be "excused" (*libertas excusata*, 10.8). The language suggests that, outside the social context singled out here, *libertas* readily offends. At the end of his second speech, Aper addresses Maternus, Secundus, and Messalla with similar language (*sic libertatem temperatis*, 23.6), once more underscoring the limitations of free speech.[585] Indeed, the interlocutors carefully avoid offending one another (27.1-2) and show awareness that their comments may reach beyond Maternus' bedroom and offend others (26.7, 32.7).[586] These comments, made in the text's metacritical asides, reinforce the image, sketched in the speeches, of imperial society and the restrained employment of *eloquentia* within it. The description of anxiety about the scrutiny and

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[584] See van den Berg 2014, 138-39.
[585] Levene (2004, 179) notes that, while the phrase may refer to an aesthetic quality here, it likely has political overtones.
[586] Recent scholarship has suggested that Maternus, recognizing Aper's solidarity with the *delatores* and Messalla's relationship with the *delator* M. Aquilius Regulus, changes his tone and his attitude towards the Principate in his second speech. So, e.g., Strunk 2010; cf. Reitz 2014. On the danger of offending powerful individuals as a serious obstacle to free speech, see Gallia 2009. While the impact of the *delatores* on modern oratory is everywhere apparent, the term *delator* notably does not occur in the *Dialogus*.

reception of one's words is akin to the description of the paralyzing effects on authors and officials of the activity of *delatores* at *Agr.* 2.3.

The impact of such social pressures on the employment of *eloquentia* is taken up by Maternus, whose remarks to Messalla suggest that diminished freedom of expression negatively affects the quality of *eloquentia*. Messalla claims not to feel offended by Aper's remarks about modern oratory and promises that his own arguments about the poor state of education will not offend: "for you all know that the rule in these sorts of discussions is to express our convictions without impairing mutual affection" (*sciatis hanc esse eius modi sermonum legem, iudicium animi citra damnum adfectus proferre*, 27.2). Messalla's maxim reflects a limitation on what a speaker may say and, while his words may simply mean that friends should not offend each other in private discussion, they bear on the broader connection between *libertas* and *eloquentia*. They suggest that modern speakers, even in private settings, cannot speak their mind with complete freedom and that they must tiptoe around particular topics or tread carefully when speaking about certain people. This is the issue with which Maternus is concerned when he urges Messalla to "carry on… and use ancient freedom, from which we have fallen away even more than from eloquence" (*perge… utere antiqua libertate, <a> qua uel magis degenerauimus quam ab eloquentia*, 27.3). Maternus expects that Messalla will not to speak his mind freely and that this will impair his argument and *eloquentia*. The call to use ancient *libertas* underlines the fact that modern speakers enjoy less of it. Maternus' words recall the connection between *eloquentia* and its cultural-political climate that was raised in the preface and prefigure its more detailed analysis in his final speech. In the current passage, he explicitly connects *libertas* and *eloquentia*, but the connection is not strict: the current age has fallen away from *libertas* more than from *eloquentia*. This suggests that the degree of political and oratorical freedom that speakers enjoy influences the quality of their oratory, but that "free speech and qualitative speech do not exactly mirror each other."[587] Maternus only

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[587] Van den Berg 2014, 117-18.

cautiously claims that the quality of oratory has declined and emphasizes the restrictions on *libertas*.

It is not until the final speech that Tacitus elaborates on the impact of the Principate on the nature and scope of *eloquentia*. The speech, which offers a historical explanation for oratory's alleged decline, engages with each of the issues raised thus far – natural ability (*ingenium*), independence (*libertas*), cultural recognition/fame (*laus/gloria/claritudo*), and oratorical opportunity/scope. It should be recalled that the speech (like Messalla's) does not serve to *demonstrate* oratory' decline, but, rather, to explain it – *assuming it is true* – in light of political climates.[588] It also should be noted that Maternus' speech does not, in any way, 'cap' the work's 'thesis of decline.'[589] Tacitus, as we have seen, does not gear the text towards this conclusion, and Maternus' arguments about oratory's diminished scope and quality are balanced by Aper's emphasis on its novel qualities and avenues.

The extant portion of Maternus' speech opens with an account of the vital role of oratory in the past. In both the past and present, Romans enjoyed the typical advantages that *eloquentia* brings to peaceful and prosperous societies, but past orators enjoyed the additional advantages derived from social and political turmoil (*D.* 36.1-40.4). *Eloquentia* flourished in the strife and discord of the Late Republic. The persistent unrest and strife of that period allowed *eloquentia* to grow and made being *eloquens* essential to political success and survival. Strife amongst all orders, and men of all stations prosecuting one other, made for grand cases of enduring fame that allowed men to exercise their talent. Speakers operated in the open forum or other venues more or less accessible to crowds and hence conducive to great oratory. In criminal trials, speakers were not constrained by the time restrictions later imposed on speeches in the civil courts. Moreover, the nature of senatorial deliberation was such that it encouraged and required men to support their arguments with *ingenium* and *eloquentia*. In accordance with its scope, *eloquentia* reaped great rewards. Good speakers easily gained

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[588] It is significant that Messalla is about to launch into a detailed explanation of oratory's decline (*quibus gradibus fracta sit et deminuta eloquentia*, *D.* 26.8), when Maternus interrupts him and urges him to take up his argument about modern educational standards.
[589] As Mayer 2001, 215-16, following much prior scholarship, argues.

office, enjoyed authority with the people and senate, and earned fame for their *eloquentia* in Rome and abroad. At the same time that *eloquentia* was nourished by strife and turbulence, it also fed it; eloquence is both a defensive and an offensive tool. Hence, a cyclical system of strife and *eloquentia* continually feeding one another. This is the rationale behind Maternus' comparison of *eloquentia* to fire: *magna eloquentia, sicut flamma, materia alitur et motibus excitatur et urendo clarescit. Eadem ratio in nostra quoque ciuitate antiquorum eloquentiam prouexit*, 36.1). Like fire, *eloquentia* feeds on its fuel and consumes what gives it strength. Like fire, it shines most brightly when it has the most energy. Other metaphors reinforce the point: ancient oratory was like uncontrolled fields that produce unusual herbage (40.4) or like military performance, which improves when it is exercised in wartime (37.8). For this reason, Maternus argues, great *eloquentia* does not require merely *libertas*, but *licentia*, i.e. the chaos that exercises and fosters it most intensely. Maternus describes three political climates that roughly can be equated with three political periods: the Catonian period, when Romans enjoyed *libertas*, the Ciceronian period, when *libertas* turned into *licentia*, and the Principate, which restricts *libertas*. Great oratory was not produced in well-regulated states like Sparta or Crete, or among absolute regimes like Macedon or Persia, or indeed under the Principate. Rome of the past was more like classical Athens, where members of all orders could do anything (*omnia omnes poterant*, 40.3). In the past, in sum, *eloquentia* had free reign, was exercised and stimulated constantly, and earned speakers fame and reward. Maternus closely ties oratorical scope with political disorder.

In contrast, the present climate, marked by political and legal order and stability, and governed by the authority of a single man, has restricted oratory's scope: prosecutions are fewer, cases less grand, popular assemblies and senatorial deliberation circumscribed. In the civil courts, advocates now face time restrains and judges frequently impose silence. Advocates wear cloaks that impair their movements, and the great majority of cases are not heard in the open forum, but in confined hearing

halls and record offices.[590] While such measures promote justice and the uncovering of the truth (38.1), they negatively impact *eloquentia*: extending the metaphor of fire to the present, *eloquentia* cannot feed on anything and peters out. In accordance with its circumscribed scope, oratorical ability is less on display and earns less appreciation; merit goes unrecognized and great oratory is denied *laus* and *gloria*.

Modern speakers, Maternus argues, do not possess less ability (*ingenium*) than their ancient counterparts, but *eloquentia*'s diminished scope and appreciation prevents them from exercising and cultivating that ability. Grand cases, says Maternus, foster a speaker's *uis ingenii* (37.5), that is the *force* of his talent, not his *ingenium* itself (cf. similar implications at 36.7, 37.3, 37.5, 40.1). The language again is precise. The nature of the material with which speakers work or the venues in which they operate does not increase or decrease their ability, but determines whether they can exercise their talent to its full potential. If *eloquentia*, that is the quality of oratory, has indeed declined, on Maternus' view this is due to its circumscribed scope in the current political climate.

The text does not sanction the reader to equate Maternus' view with that of Tacitus. As F. Klingner and C. Brink argue, the principal categories used to distinguish the Republic from the Principate – order, peace, and tranquility - are limited and naturally in favor of the former.[591] Second, Maternus' argument about the distinction between the Republic and the Principate is balanced by Aper's argument about periodization, in which he all but elides the political transition (17.2),[592] and by his claims about the ways political change has forced *eloquentia* to adjust and find different avenues. The stylistic features of modern oratory deprecated by Messalla (brevity, the use of *sententiae*, poetic adornment) are championed by Aper as improvements suitable to oratory's more restrained role. While Maternus claims that it was ancient orators who earned greater fame in Rome and abroad, Aper argues that modern speakers (such as Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus) enjoy as much, if not

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[590] On the importance of clothing and venues for oratorical performance, see Frier 2010.
[591] Klingner 1965, 506-07; Brink 1989, 485; van den Berg 2014, 119.
[592] See Levene 2004, 173-74; Strunk 2010, 256, 261-62.

more, renown.[593] As van den Berg suggests, the speeches of Aper and Maternus may be read together as illustrating a continuation of oratorical norms and practices.[594] Certainly, Tacitus' own career accords well with Aper's arguments. No single thesis is established about the state of oratory. What the men *do* seem to agree on is that modern speakers are intrinsically as talented as the ancients, that the political transition from the Late Republic into the Augustan Principate reshaped and, in some ways, circumscribed oratory's role in society, and that oratorical ability no longer receives the recognition and fame it used to. The work ends with this last point: the interlocutors *would* have received the *laus* and *gloria* that ancient speakers did, if they had enjoyed the latter's circumstances. Since great renown and great tranquility cannot coexist, let each man enjoy the blessings of his own age without disparaging other ages (*bono saeculi sui quisque citra obtrectationem alterius utatur*, 41.5).[595] After Aper's criticism of ancient oratory and Messalla's denunciation of modern education, Maternus concludes with a historical perspective, stressing the limits imposed on oratory. Despite their restrictive impact, such limits were a political necessity and offered a stability and order that the Republic could not provide. The latter, in contrast, suffered discord and civil war that offered a climate in which ability and merit were recognized and oratory's scope was great. Both political climates have their merits and drawbacks, and one would do well to appreciate the former without denouncing other periods. Far from capping the work's 'thesis of decline,' the text's final words, which recall the preface, redirect our focus to the tension between *ingenium* and renown that was enunciated there. The final words establish the reality of oratory's diminished scope and appreciation. Whether *eloquentia* has in fact declined is left undetermined.[596] What has in fact happened throughout the dialogue is that the speakers, through their discussion, have moved from epiphenomena of the problem (changes in taste and educational practice, as advanced by Aper and Messalla) closer to its essence, that is to the political transition from

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[593] This argument derives strength from the fact that Tacitus' own style in the historical narratives reflects it.

[594] Van den Berg 2014, 165-207.

[595] The interaction between the final words of the *Dialogus* and *A.* 3.55 will be discussed below (pp. 279, 281, 293-94).

[596] My view of the text thus corresponds in various ways to van den Berg's, although I would hesitate to see the text's final words as reflecting Tacitus' optimism (van den Berg 2014, 121).

the Ciceronian into the Augustan age that reduced oratory's scope and broadly accounts for the epiphenomena, but which in itself does not get us to a conclusive answer. Hence the call for further discussion, which likely would proceed to undermine Maternus' argument and take the debate increasingly further.

The analysis in the *Dialogus* shares clear conceptual connections with that in the *Agricola*, yielding the following picture: in the past, the political climate is supposed to have been such that Romans enjoyed independence of speech and thought (*libertas*), both written and spoken, and had the opportunity to exercise and display their ability (*ingenium*), whether in the form of eloquence (*eloquentia*), virtuous conduct (*uirtus*), or good, credible literature. In this period, ability and merit earned renown and were appraised and transmitted properly. The production, appraisal, and transmission of ability and merit, all functions of their political climate, were aligned properly. In both works, the establishment of the Principate imposed conditions that occasioned generic change. Romans are discouraged from writing or speaking their mind freely; outspokenness (*libertas*) and honesty may offend the powerful, while the malicious activity of *delatores* and other officials inspires fear. Both arts have seen a reduction in productivity: authors write less and public speakers have fewer opportunities to exercise their *eloquentia* and display their *ingenium*.[597] In the modern age, ability and merit are not properly appraised and transmitted. In the case of literature, the consequence is described as generic decline: authors are no longer credible and produce tainted literature (or at least tainted biographies). In the case of oratory, the consequences are more complicated: many would have it that *eloquentia* has declined, but Tacitus constructs an entire dialogue on the premise that others saw it differently.

IV.4 Analyzing Change: Periodization and Stances toward the Regime

In addition to their similar analyses of political and generic change, the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus* enunciate a variety of stances toward and perceptions of the imperial system of government and its

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[597] Secundus' *Vita* of Julius Africanus is presented as a welcome exception that confirms the *status quo* (*D*. 14.4).

relationship to the political climate that preceded it. As we have seen, in the preface of the *Agricola* Tacitus complicates the polarizing distinction between both systems of government, using ambiguous chronological markers to define the past and present and obfuscating the point at which one system morphed into another. This chronological opacity recurs in the preface of the *Dialogus*, which similarly sets a general past against a general present and which similarly distinguishes between the reigns of two *principes* within the broader present.[598] Although the distinction between the Domitianic and Trajanic regimes in the *Agricola* is marked and essential to that work's message, both are subsumed under the broader label "present" and display systemic features (restrictions on *libertas*, hostility to *uirtus*) that mark the Principate as a whole. Similarly, though the *Dialogus* distinguishes between the Vespasianic and Trajanic regimes, what is stressed is a shared, and persistent, concern (underlined by the adverb *saepe*, the present tense of the verb *requiris*, and the phrase *eandem hanc quaestionem*). Tacitus goes back a generation to explain conditions that still hold true at the time of writing. Despite the distinctions between different *principes*, then, the prefaces of the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus* invite a reader to analyze the Principate as a single system.

As for the past, the language is more ambiguous. Do *priora saecula* and *antiquos* take us back to the early Principate or the Late Republic? Or do the terms specify a broader era, such as the Republic as a whole, or does it include even earlier eras, such as the age of Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, and Aeschines? The preface offers no clarification and the text offers various suggestions. Most equate *priora saecula* either with the Late Republic, based on the periods established in the final four speeches,[599] or with the Ciceronian age, based on the canon of seven authors from the Late Republic

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[598] In the preface of the *Dialogus*, Tacitus distinguishes between "past ages" (*priora saecula/antiquos/antiquorum*) and the "present," marked by the terms *nostra aetas/horum temporum/ut nostris temporibus/nostrorum temporum* ("our age", "our/these times"). As in the *Agricola*, the broad distinction is between a general past and present, both only partially defined. In the *Agricola*, the distinction appears to be broadly between the Republic and the Principate, while a further distinction is drawn within the latter between the reigns of Domitian and Trajan. In the *Dialogus*, the distinction is between a general past, presumably the Republic but, on first sight, possibly including earlier periods, and the Principate, and again a distinction is made within the latter between different reigns: the Trajanic present (*requiris/nostra aetas*) and the Vespasianic past (*iuuenis admodum*).

[599] Mayer 2001, 88. That *priora saecula* may be equated with the Late Republic is implied by the fact that Maternus caps his historical argument about the differences between the Republic and the Principate with the words *prioribus saeculis* (41.5).

and early Principate singled out in the discussion of oratory: Cicero, Caesar, M. Caelius Rufus, C. Licinius Calvus, M. Junius Brutus, Asinius Pollio, and Messalla Corvinus (17.1).[600] The *Dialogus*, like the *Agricola*, does not establish at what point "ancient" becomes "modern," raising essential questions about the transition from the Republic into the Principate, or from the Ciceronian into the Augustan age. This has obvious import for one's stance toward imperial ideology, which variously sought to stress or gloss over the disruption of the 40s and 30s. The chronological opacity also bears directly on Messalla's argument about educational change and on the connection, drawn by Maternus (and by Tacitus in the *Agricola*), between political climates and generic development. Those arguments are prefigured and complicated by Aper's claims about periodization, which question the utility of analyzing social and cultural change on the basis of arbitrarily chosen transition points and which all but elide the transition between the Republic and the Principate.

Each of the speakers advances a particular view of the political transition during the 40s and 30s and all take up complex stances toward the imperial regime that, when taken together, reflect both the challenge of analyzing change and the complexities of Tacitus' own outlook. Aper's arguments reveal him to be an adherent of imperial ideology. He claims that oratory has not declined since the Ciceronian age but merely changed along with changing tastes (18.2, 19.2). While he acknowledges change, he refuses to link to it to political events and glosses over the disruption between the Republic and the Principate. He elides the transition from the former to the latter by stressing that Augustus' first consulship fell in the year of Cicero's death in 43 BC (17.2), a point also advertised on the *fasti Praenestini* and in the *Res Gestae*.[601] He further obfuscates the transition by saying that there are still men who knew Augustus and that he himself met a man in Britain who claimed to have fought against Caesar, and that such a man could have heard Caesar, Augustus, and Aper alike (17.4-6); on the grand

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[600] See van den Berg 2014, 34, 208 ff., 244 with references.
[601] Cicero and Augustus were connected in a different way as well: Octavian was born in 63 BC, the year of Cicero's first consulship (Vell. 2.36.1).

scale, the Republic and early Principate were but 'yesterday.'[602] Aper's loyalty to the regime is reflected

further by his allegiance to and connections with the *delatores*, who, like him, protect the interests and

enjoy the confidence of the *princeps* and his associates (7.1, 8.3).[603] It is no surprise, then, that Aper

explicitly pronounces the *felicitas* of Vespasian's rule (17.3). In fact, he carefully distinguishes between

"that long year of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius" (*illum Galbae et Othonis et Vitellii longum et unum annum*)

and the six happy years under Vespasian, obscuring the latter's record in the civil wars.

Unlike Aper, Messalla acknowledges the disruption between Republic and Principate and

stresses oratory's decline under the latter. He calls into question Aper's argument of periodization and

maintains a firm distinction between the past and present that runs through his argument. However,

while he blames oratory's decline on educational and cultural deterioration (much like Quintilian in de

de Causis Corruptae Eloquentiae), he nowhere explicitly connects these developments with political

events.[604] He identifies Cicero's death as a turning point but does not acknowledge its concurrence

with Augustus' first consulship, carefully disavowing any connection between oratory's decline and the

advent of the Augustan Principate. His stance may be explained by his political connections and close

relationship with his half-brother Regulus, the infamous *delator* and imperial favorite lauded by Aper at

D. 15.1. Moreover, Messalla was an influential speaker and respected member of the governing class,

indicating that he knew how to work within the system.

Maternus' attitude, finally, is complex. In his first speech, he reveals himself to be critical of the

imperial system of government – in part because it has ruined *eloquentia* and facilitated the power of the

delatores – and his poetic activity shows that his political allegiance lies squarely with fellow dissidents

(Pomponius Secundus and Helvidius Priscus) unwilling to relinquish their *libertas*. He is the only

speaker who explicitly connects oratory's decline with the establishment of the Augustan Principate:

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[602] Aper's claims stand in marked contrast to Tacitus' exclamation at *A.* 1.3.7: *quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publicam uidisset?*
[603] On the institution of *amici principis*, see Crook 1955, 21-30.
[604] On the views of Messalla and Quintilian, see Barwick 1954, 8-18; Brink 1989, 484-88.

under Rome's first *princeps*, there was lasting *quies*, *otium*, *tranquillitas*, and *disciplina* that pacified everything (including *eloquentia*) and set the tone for subsequent regimes (38.2, 41).[605] While Aper and Messalla gloss over the disruption of the 40s and 30s, Maternus stresses it: his emphasis on discord, civil war, and bloodshed, particularly Cicero's destruction at the hands of the triumvirs and Rome's first *princeps* (40.4), undermines imperial ideology, which sought to smooth over these events. It is notable that Maternus, like Messalla, clouds his intellectual and political views in cautious language. The main indictment of the imperial regime – that the pervasive peace and order under the leadership of a single, wise man has pacified and restrained everything – is articulated in terms that reflect imperial propaganda. For it was precisely the peace and tranquility that the Augustan and Vespasianic regimes imposed in the aftermath of civil war that allowed them to smooth over the disruption and justify the new order.[606] It was also a tenet of Augustan and post-Augustan propaganda that the Principate was necessary precisely because it offered a stability that the old political configuration could not guarantee. Maternus carefully uses imperial ideology to indict the Principate.

What emerges is a range of stances toward the imperial regime and a range of explanations for oratory's development and its connection with major personalities and events. Of course, the text's format, which allowed Tacitus' to advance a variety of viewpoints without taking authorial responsibility, itself constitutes a stance, one similar to those he takes up in the *Agricola* and the *Germania* and, in a different way, in the historical works.[607] A modern reader would do well to resist the urge to find a single message in the text. While a good case could be made for a radical change in the world, particularly for the art of oratory (some venues of which simply ceased to exist), "Tacitus constructs a whole dialogue on the premise that some people might not see it this way."[608] The

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[605] Maternus' words are recalled in the prefaces of the historical works, where Tacitus describes Augustus' usurpation of power.
[606] The opening chapters of the *Res Gestae* reflect this effort and it is Augustus' claims there to which Tacitus responds in his description of the man's usurpation of power at *A*. 1.10.1-4. Cf. *SCPP* 47; Vell. 2.89. Vespasian carefully modeled his position on that of Augustus. The preface of the *Historiae* and *H*. 2.101 point up how the Flavian record in the civil wars was sanitized.
[607] On Tacitus' authorial stance in the historical works, consult especially Sailor 2008.
[608] Sailor 2008, 132.

transition of the 40s and 30s was difficult, if not impossible, to conceptualize with exactitude. Augustus and his successors presented their regime as a return to, or restoration of, the Republic. Under Augustus, this return was reinforced visually both in his forum, whose statuary traced the emperor's lineage back to Rome's founders, and on the *fasti consulares*, *fasti triumphales*, and other lists and calendars. There was no separate nomenclature to designate a novel system of government; the emperor was called *princeps*, a republican term used to designate the most authoritative member of the senate, and the new system simply was named after him: *principatus*. At the same time, Augustan and post-Augustan thought distinguished between two systems (as modern scholarship does), each with peculiar characteristics and socio-political dynamics, in part to justify the new order and the power invested in a single man; the new status quo, as Maternus points out, offered peace and stability in place of instability and incessant strife. The various changes and continuities from the Republic into the Principate, and the official versions promoted by the *principes*, will have been challenging to navigate (cf. *D.* 17.6), particularly for later generations, and promoting a single interpretation would seem shortsighted – all the more so since the notion of the Principate as an institution safeguarding peace and order was seriously undermined by the outbreak of the civil wars in 68 and the near eruption of another major conflict in 97.

Tacitus' analysis reflects this. Through the interlocutors, he advances a nexus of interpretations of political and cultural change that reflect the complexity of the issues at hand. The dialogue illustrates and reflects the way Romans reconstructed their past. Memory is attached to great personalities and events, which in hindsight are identified as responsible for, or associated with, major turning points in Rome's social and political history.[609] Romans thought in terms of individuals, not years, and analyzed contemporary or recent events in light of various analogous events in the past. As such, a Roman author might connect particular developments with different events or individuals. Taken together,

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[609] On Roman computations of time and reconstructions of the past, see Feeney 2007.

such associations yield an incoherent picture, as changes in socio-political practices, customs, or forms of social behavior are shown to set in at different moments and so cannot be associated with a single person, event, or historical moment. This ostensible incoherence, however, results from a coherence of methods of thinking and analyzing. This is evident from the chronological inconsistencies and the various turning points for different aspects of oratory identified by each of the speakers.

One example is the identification of Cicero's death and the advent of the Augustan era as watershed moments in oratory's development. Velleius closely connects Cicero and Octavian, and his words neatly reflect Roman 'anniversary'-thinking: not only did the former's death coincide with the latter's first consulship, but the latter was born in the year (63 BC) in which the former held *his* first consulship (Vell. 2.36.1). One of the purposes of the *Dialogus* is to complicate such tidy chronological boundaries and frameworks. So, while Cicero's death and the advent of the Augustan Principate both are identified as turning points in *eloquentia*'s development, Aper and Messalla (albeit for different purposes and to different effects) point to Cassius Severus' vigorous oratory as the moment Roman style truly changed (19.1, 26.4).[610] On Tacitus' account, Severus was the first man to be charged (in AD 8 or 12) with *maiestas* for producing *famosi libelli* about distinguished men and women that provoked even the *princeps* himself (*A.* 1.72.4, 4.21.3).[611] Severus was banished from Rome and died in exile.[612] He also was one of the first men to have his books burned.[613] It stands to reason that these events solidified the later tradition that Severus' style marked a definitive change. However this may be, the fact that the heyday of Severus' oratorical career lay well into the Augustan regime weakens the direct connection of Cicero's death or the advent of the Principate with a definitive change in oratory, or at least suggests that the effects of those events were gradual, not immediate. This last notion derives

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[610] On the men's arguments on style and their use of Severus as an example, see van den Berg 2014, 82, 111, 137, 166-68, 182, 271 ff.

[611] For his biography: *PIR*² C 522. For the technicalities of the charge and the veracity of Tacitus' claim, see Goodyear 1981, 151.

[612] That he was exiled to Crete (*A.* 4.21.3), a place argued by Maternus to be highly unfavorable to oratory (*D.* 40.3), is both apposite and ironic.

[613] According to Seneca the Elder (*Contr.* 10 *pr.* 5-8), Titus Labienus (in AD 12) was the first whose books were burned and Severus the man who pronounced the verdict. Severus' books were burned while he was in exile.

strength from Maternus' claim that Rome has "fallen away" (*degenerauimus*, *D.* 27.3) from *libertas* and *eloquentia*, and that at different paces (*antiqua libertate*, *a qua uel magis degenerauimus quam ab eloquentia*). The verb *degenerare*, which technically means to fall from a former standard, suggests a gradual loss of essential nature.[614]

The tendency to connect change with major events and individuals can be seen elsewhere in Messalla's argument, which is marked by various chronological inconsistencies. Messalla, while drawing a firm distinction between Ciceronian and post-Ciceronian education, singles out the mothers of the Gracchi, Caesar, and Augustus as exemplars of proper upbringing (28.4). When we add to this the fact that Agricola (and perhaps Tacitus himself?) was educated in a similar fashion (note the intertext between *Agr.* 4.2 and *D.* 28.5), we are left with three major personalities (the Gracchi and Caesar) that fit Messalla's chronological schema and two (Augustus and Agricola) that fall outside it. Similarly, his claim about the abeyance of the *tirocinium fori* (the practice whereby young Romans gain oratorical experience by attending experienced speakers as they practice: Cicero again is the paradigm) is undermined by Tacitus' own apprenticeship under Aper and Secundus (2.1), which suggests that the practice still flourished in Tacitus' time (or at least was thought by him to have).[615] Similar inconsistency underlies his argument about the extravagance of modern oratory, which, again, he connects with particular individuals (26.1). He associates the modern theatrical style with Maecenas, Augustus' friend and agent, and L. Junius Gallio, a later orator who was a friend of Ovid and Seneca the Elder. While Maecenas is a fine example of the theatrical style that Messalla condemns (the man's style disconcerted following generations), his association with the 'modern' age is problematic. His dates place him squarely within the canon of authors labeled by Messalla as *antiqui* – in fact, Pollio and Corvinus outlived him. Though one could argue that not every speaker from the age of the *antiqui*

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[614] This is one of several verbs used throughout the text to designate 'decline.' Messalla uses *fracta*, *deminuta* (26.8), *desciscere* (28.2), and *corrupta* (34.4), while Maternus uses *degenerare* (27.3), *debilitatur*, and *frangitur* (39.2). Some of these verbs suggest a radical break, others a more gradual development.

[615] Van den Berg (2014, 72 ff.) suggests that the inconsistency between Messalla's claim and Tacitus' own training ultimately serves to liken the author to Cicero; like the latter, Tacitus enjoyed the proper oratorical training and developed into a rhetorical luminary.

need necessarily meet Messalla's standards, he groups the speakers together and stresses their likeness and affinity (*similitudo et cognatio*, 25.4), not allowing for the finer gradations within generations that Aper promotes. Extravagance, then, is not confined to the modern period, and the firm distinction between past and present is difficult to sustain.[616] The examples of Asinius Pollio and Messalla Corvinus, who are counted among the *antiqui* but lived into the first century AD, similarly challenge the arguments of Messalla and Maternus. Finally, we may note Messalla's claim that professional rhetoricians are in part responsible for modern educational decline, a point complicated by his own admission that these men appeared in Rome *before* Cicero's time (35.1) and so were not a strictly modern phenomenon, and Maternus' association of the Principate with time limits and other restrictions imposed on speakers (38.1; cf. 19.5), a connection weakened by his own claim that it was Pompey who first introduced such measures (38.2).[617]

The above examples illustrate essential points about Tacitus' view of socio-political and cultural change and the way Roman memory operates. While Tacitus, like his interlocutors (all of whose arguments, it should be recalled, he calls *probabiles*), distinguishes between a general past and present, he continually offers evidence that complicates this distinction. Different events and personalities are connected with particular developments, undermining any attempt to identify a single event or personality as marking *the* defining turning point in Roman social, political, and cultural history. Imperial authors reconstructed the past in various ways. In the *Agricola*, Tacitus claims that *libertas* and truthful biography ceased with the advent of the Principate. Seneca the Elder saw different turning points: *ueritas* first declined at the onset of the civil wars in the time of the Gracchi, while *libertas* declined at Brutus' death.[618] Velleius saw the destruction of Carthage and Corinth as the onset

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[616] Van den Berg 2014, 182.

[617] On the *lex Pompeia de ui et ambitu* and the *lex Iulia*, see Mayer 2001, 206.

[618] The *de Vita Patris* of Seneca the Younger tells us that his father's *History* covered the time "from the beginning of the civil wars, the point at which *ueritas* declined for the first time" (*ab initio bellorum ciuilium, unde primum ueritas retro abiit*, fr. 1). It is commonly assumed that Seneca the Elder, like other authors, located the onset of moral decline in the period surrounding the destruction of Corinth and Carthage in 146 BC and that he dates the onset of the civil wars to the period of the Gracchi shortly thereafter. So Sussman 1978, 141-43; Calboli,

of moral decay and the period of the Gracchi as the origin of the civil wars (2.1-3). Yet he glossed over the break between the Republic and the Principate, in part by excusing Octavian's role in Cicero's proscription and by stressing that the latter, through his enduring fame, lives on (2.66): like Cicero, the Republic was not really dead, and Rome merely moved from a Republic to a better Republic.[619] The *Dialogus* shows that there are multiple ways to look at the past and that Roman history, rather than being marked by a one watershed moment, is characterized by a series of developments, with different origins, that variously fit within or cut through imperial ideology. In essence, the *Dialogus* urges readers not only to apply a more nuanced analysis of cause and effect to discussions of *eloquentia*, but to bring greater intellectual rigor to discussions of time, periodization, and history generally.

In the historical narratives, to which we will now turn, Tacitus takes up the concerns and the methods of analysis set out in the *Dialogus*. The relationship between past and present, the analysis of socio-political transition (particularly after civil war and disruption), the relationship between political and generic change, and the degree to which imperial ideology and official versions reflect reality continue to occupy him throughout. While his focus shifts to a different genre and subject matter, his methods of analyzing political and cultural change, the techniques with which he illustrates Roman perceptions of the past, and his view of the relationship between the Republic and the Principate remain, by and large, consistent throughout.

IV.5 Past and Present in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*

Above we saw how the prefaces of the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus* distinguish between the general past and present but obfuscate the precise point at which one turned into the other. I have shown how this chronological opacity informs the rest of the dialogue, both challenging the notion of a radical change in the world and enunciating a complex vision of time, and of historical and cultural

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Brill's New Pauly (2006), s.v. Seneca. *Libertas* and Brutus: *amissa enim libertate, quam Bruto duce et auctore defenderat* (Lact., *Div. Inst.* 7.15.14)
[619] Gowing 2005, 41-48.

change, that variously accords with or negates imperial ideology. In the preface of the *Historiae*, Tacitus

continues to explore these issues, constructing a history of historiography along similar lines as the

history of biography and oratory in the monographs.

IV.5.1 Political Transition and Imperial Historiography: the Preface of the *Historiae*

Initium mihi operis Seruius Galba iterum Titus Vinius consules erunt. nam post conditam urbem octingentos et uiginti prioris aeui 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 ueritas pluribus modis infracta, primum inscitia rei publicae ut alienae, mox libidine adsentandi aut rursus odio aduersus dominantis: ita neutris cura posteritatis inter infensos uel obnoxios. sed ambitionem scriptoris facile auerseris, obtrectatio et liuor pronis auribus accipiuntur; quippe adulationi foedum crimen seruitutis, malignitati falsa species libertatis inest. mihi Galba Otho Vitellius nec beneficio nec iniuria cogniti. dignitatem nostram a Vespasiano inchoatam, a Tito auctam, a Domitiano longius prouectam non abnuerim: sed incorruptam fidem professis neque amore quisquam et sine odio dicendus est. quod si uita suppeditet, principatum diui Neruae et imperium Traiani, uberiorem securioremque materiam, senectuti seposui, rara temporum felicitate ubi sentire quae uelis et quae sentias dicere licet. (H. 1.1)

The starting point of my work is the year that Servius Galba (for the second time) and Titus Vinius were consuls. The reason is as follows: of the former period, many authors have related the 820 years after the city's foundation and, while the affairs of the Roman people were being commemorated, they did so with as much eloquence as freedom of expression; after the Battle of Actium and when it was in the interest of peace that all power be transferred to one man, those great geniuses departed; at the same time, the credibility of historiography was impaired in many ways, first because of ignorance of the *res publica*, as though it was someone else's, soon out of a desire to flatter or alternatively out of hatred against those in a position of mastery: to such a degree has neither group had regard for posterity, when they were either hostile or subservient. But while one instinctively rejects ambition in a writer, detraction and spite are met with ready ears; for flattery involves the disgraceful charge of slavishness, whereas malice comes with a false appearance of freedom. I had no acquaintance with Galba, Otho, or Vitellius, either from favor or injury. That my standing commenced under Vespasian, was increased by Titus, and still further advanced by Domitian I would not deny: but those who have professed uncompromised truthfulness must speak of all without love or hatred. Should my life be long enough, however, I have set aside for my old age a richer and safer subject, the Principate of the divine Nerva and the rule of Trajan, in these rare and happy times when one may think what one wishes and say what one thinks.

In the opening words of the *Historiae*, Tacitus takes up the relationship between generic and political

change that he explored in the prefaces of the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus*. The starting point of the work

is the year AD 69 and the alleged reason lies in the way that historiography has declined during the

century following the Battle of Actium. The adverb *nam* is significant, for it explains not only the

sentence it begins but also those that follow it.[620] Tacitus at once ties the development of historiography to constitutional history. Many authors have recounted the 820 years from Rome's foundation (ca. 753 BC) to the year AD 69. While the affairs of the Roman people (*res populi Romani*) were recounted, authors wrote with equal *libertas* and *eloquentia*, but the Battle of Actium and the advent of the Principate imposed conditions that impaired the writing of history, causing authors to write compromised accounts. Tacitus' words are dense and, like the preface of the *Dialogus*, at once introduce chronological complexity. The phrase *dum res populi Romani memorabantur* conflates the writing of republican history, which both republican and imperial historians did, with writing history under the Republic. The phrase technically means the former, but given the perils of writing republican history under the Principate (cf. Cremutius Cordus' fate under Tiberius) it is likely that the phrase means "while the subject matter was the affairs of the Roman people," hence "during the Republic."[621]

The preface demonstrates that both the subject matter of history and its mode of writing have changed since Actium.[622] The former, as D. Sailor shows, has changed in two ways, both in the agency and ownership of history. After Actium, the agency of history was transferred from the people to the *princeps* and, consequently, post-republican history became concerned with recording the achievements of that man, that is his *res gestae*. The *res publica*, which used to be the *res populi Romani*, has become the *res priuata* of the *princeps*. Hence Tacitus emphasizes historians' inexperience with the *res publica ut alienae*, since the *res publica* now belongs to someone else.[623]

A related change lies in the ownership of history. Since the business of the state now belongs to the *princeps*, only he has full access to the transactions of the state, and it lies with him to determine which version of the truth is propagated. While republican historians merely had to transcribe the *res*

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[620] Steinmetz 1968, 251-62; Marincola 1999, 397 n. 33; cf. Sailor 2008, 160-61 n. 85.

[621] If we take the phrase to mean "republican history," we are to suppose that there were imperial historians writing republican history with equal *libertas* and *eloquentia*. This would cut right through Tacitus' argument.

[622] Sailor 2008, 119 ff.

[623] For the scholarly discussion on the meaning of the phrase *inscitia rei publicae ut alienae*, which may also refer to political inexperience, see Sailor 2008, 124 ff. with plentiful references in the notes.

populi Romani, which were the public property of the people, imperial historians only have partial access to the truth; they have to draw on official versions promulgated by the *princeps*, who in effect has become an historian himself.[624] Dio makes similar observations about the challenges of writing imperial Roman history (53.19). Historians' inexperience with the new political order and their restricted access to the truth are two reasons why *ueritas* has been broken.

Finally, Tacitus identifies a shift in the mode in which history is written. The connection, drawn in the *Agricola*, between freedom of expression (*libertas*) and the production of good and reliable biography, taken up by Maternus, who associates *libertas* with aesthetically pleasing speech (*eloquentia*), recurs in the preface of the *Historiae*, where Tacitus ties *libertas* with the production of truthful and eloquent writing (*eloquentia*). Taking up his analysis in the *Agricola*, he conceptualizes the political transition and its impact on historiography through the common metaphor of slavery. As in the *Agricola*, he points to relations of reciprocity between authors and their *princeps* as a principal reason why truthful writing has been impaired. Whereas republican authors enjoyed the material (the *res populi Romani*) and the socio-political climate (*libertas*) that allowed them to transmit the truth freely and eloquently (the hallmark of a healthy economy of representation), imperial authors, due to their exchange relationship with their *princeps*, write either out of favor and ambition or out of spite. While writing out of spite gives off the appearance of *libertas*, given that the emotion prevents authors from transmitting the truth, it renders them as subservient as those writing with an eye toward pleasing their 'master.'

Having firmly linked post-Actian historiography with slavishness and compromised fidelity, Tacitus next explains why his own *opus* will not suffer from these faults. In order to extricate himself from a charge of *ambitio*, *gratia*, or *obtrectatio*, he stresses that he had no connection, favorable or hostile, with Galba, Otho, or Vitellius. As for the Flavians, under whom his career advanced, he promises an

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[624] Sailor 2008, 126.

impartial account, free from favor or hatred. By claiming to be impartial, Tacitus characterizes himself

as impervious to the social forces that have compromised historiography and aligns himself with past

ingenia. It is his stance toward the current regime that allows him to do so.[625] Tacitus' *libertas* (hence his

authority as an historian) is underlined by his *not* choosing to write about the current regime. Yet, *his*

choice not to do so is ingeniously couched as a celebration of the new regime, which *allows* him not to

take up contemporary events. Tacitus' attitude towards the Principate and the emperors suggests that

the preface's final words do not advance his true opinion, but serve to establish his authorial persona.

This rhetorical shiftiness recurs throughout the corpus. It is akin to his postponement in the *Agricola* of

composing a work on the regimes of Domitian and Trajan and to his profession to have written the

biography out of *pietas*. It is evidenced in the *Germania*, which, though topical at the time of writing,

presents itself as not bearing directly on a particular regime and which lacks a preface, possibly to make

a reader feel as if the author does not *need* to prove his impartiality. As in the *Agricola* and the *Historiae*,

in the *Dialogus* Tacitus avoids contemporary events, going back to the Flavian Principate and

constructing his authorial *libertas* by claiming merely to record a discussion he attended; like republican

authors, he allegedly has no other motive than transmitting the truth and so only requires *memoria*.

Each of the stances Tacitus occupies allows him to claim to be free from the motives and exchange-

relationships that impair imperial literature. This in turn allows him to reconstruct Roman history

without clinging tightly to official versions and the chronological and ideological reconstructions of the

past promoted in them.

IV.5.2 The Nature of Change

The prefaces of the *Agricola*, the *Dialogus*, and the *Historiae* reveal Tacitus' tendency to connect

political and generic change and to blame the Principate for literature's decline.[626] Through Maternus,

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[625] See the discussion in Sailor 2008, 119-82.
[626] Cf. Giua 1985, 12.

he offers a compelling explanation for why political revolution should have caused generic and artistic decline, and we often take his view as received wisdom. Yet one of the merits of reading the *Dialogus* in conjunction with the other works is that it allows for different narratives and urges closer scrutiny of the relationship between political and cultural change.

It is not until the *Historiae* that Tacitus explicitly mentions Actium as a watershed moment in Roman history and historiography. While he firmly ties the decline of historiography to the advent of the Principate, it at once becomes clear that the connection is not as strict as the language at first suggests. It has been noted that there is an inconsistency between Tacitus' claim that Actium marks a turning point in Roman historiography and the fact that he does not start there but in the year 69. Whether he first chose his starting point and then set out to justify it (so Marincola) or whether his purpose is to pin the blame for historiography's decline squarely on the Principate only to extricate himself from its implications (so Sailor),[627] the language suggests that the effects of Actium set in only gradually: *ueritas* was broken first (*primum*) by inexperience with the new political order and, as time went on (*mox*), by flattery and malice. This process lasted several generations and was complete by 69, the year in which Tacitus' narrative begins.[628] In the preface of the *Annales*, Tacitus similarly identifies Actium as the turning point and, while there, too, he posits a gradual process of decline, he sees it as completed much earlier, toward the end of the Augustan regime, the starting point of that work. Marincola argues that the different computations are best understood as a strategy of presentation rather than a change of opinion.[629] However that may be, I should like to stress the similarities in analysis in both prefaces. Rather than arguing that Actium ruined historiography at once, Tacitus suggests that social and generic development gradually follows shifts in power (*postquam… omnem potentiam ad unum conferri*). His description of Augustus' measured solidification of power and the

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[627] Marincola 1999; Sailor 2008, 141 ff.
[628] Marincola 1999, 397-98 and n. 33.
[629] Marincola 1999, 398.

gradual decline in public morality (*A.* 1.1-4) underlines this view. This analysis of time and change is already at work in the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus*. In the former, Tacitus describes the moral decline of the senatorial class under Domitian and its recovery after Trajan's succession as a gradual process (*subit quippe etiam ipsius inertiae dulcedo, et inuisa <u>primo</u> desidia <u>postremo</u> amatur*, 3.2).[630] In the *Dialogus*, as we have seen, Aper and Messalla identify Cicero's death as the event that changed *eloquentia*, but point to Severus' oratory as the turning point in Roman style, a computation broadly in line with that at *A.* 1.1. As for the notion that the effects of major events set in gradually, we may further note that Messalla, though he argues that Roman education declined after Cicero's death and ties this decline to moral degeneration, sees the latter as having spread only gradually (*mala <u>primum</u> in urbe nata, <u>mox</u> per Italiam fusa, <u>iam</u> in provincias manant*, 28.2). What emerges is that Tacitus, like other Romans, identifies change with major events or personalities, but that he avoids strict correlations, firm dichotomies, and schematic analyses. He hardly could omit Actium in a history of the early Principate, but his description of historiography's gradual decline urges a reader not to view post-Actian Rome as a static entity, shaped definitively and absolutely in 31 BC. Seneca the Elder (like Messalla) drew the line at Cicero's death and condemned post-Ciceronian *ingenia* altogether (*Con.* 10 *pr.* 6-7). Tacitus knew better.

The *Dialogus* and the *Historiae* can be usefully read together regarding political transitions, both that from the Ciceronian into the Augustan period and that from the civil wars of 68-69 into the Flavian Principate. We have seen how the dialogue's interlocutors advance competing views of these transitions and take up different stances toward imperial ideology, constructing different narratives and realities. The *Historiae* closely engage with the same issues, narrating a series of civil wars and the establishment of a new regime, which, like that of Augustus, was concerned with constructing its legitimacy and sanitizing its relationship with the past. The *lex de imperio Vespasiani* formalizes Vespasian's imperial powers with reference to those of Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius. The grant of

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[630] The *Agricola* also supports Tacitus' computation at *A.* 1.1.2: among the *decora ingenia* who recounted the early years of the Augustan regime must still be included Livy, whom Tacitus characterizes as *eloquentissimus* at *Agr.* 10.3.

tribunician power and proconsular *imperium maius* to Titus followed Augustus' elevation of Tiberius (and that of Agrippa, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, and Agrippa Posthumus). At *A.* 3.56.1, Tacitus writes that, starting with Augustus, the bestowal of *tribunicia potestas* became an official mark of a man's designation as heir (*summi fastigii uocabulum*, *A.* 3.56.1; cf. 13.17; 15.65). Nerva and Trajan, narrowly avoiding a new civil war, followed the same procedure in 97, in part by sharing *tribunicia potestas*. Nerva explicitly followed Vespasian's *modus operandi*, as Pliny the Younger attests (*simul filius, simul Caesar, mox Imperator, et consors tribuniciae potestatis, et omnia pariter, et statim factus es*: *quae proxime parens uerus tantum in alterum filium contulit*, *Pan.* 8.6). The founders of Rome's first three imperial dynasties largely adopted the same strategy in navigating the transition between civil war and peace. Hence Tacitus' analysis of the civil wars of 68-69 and the establishment of Vespasian's rule bears meaningfully on the transition from the Republic into the Principate and on the advent of the Trajanic regime.

In light of these considerations, Tacitus' starting point is significant. His decision to include the events of the years 68-69 is motivated by the fact that Flavian historians had distorted the Flavians' role in the civil wars, emphasizing their care for peace and country (*H.* 2.101). The glossing over the disruption and the distortion of the victors' motives will have followed official versions propagated by the regime, which echo Augustan propaganda (note esp. Aug., *RG* 1-3; Vell. 2.89; *SCPP* 47; Tac., *A.* 1.8-9). By including the civil wars and not glossing over the Flavian involvement (this is the implication of his claim to be free from motives of flattery), Tacitus at once reveals that the present work will take a critical, inward look at imperial ideology.[631]

One of the justifying arguments for the Principate's existence, as Maternus told us, is that it offers general peace and order, whereas the late Republic was marked by continuous strife and unrest. Including the civil wars in a history of the Flavian Principate takes issue with this vision and at once underlines that the Principate in fact had *not* guaranteed peace. Where imperial regimes gloss over the

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[631] As indeed he does, especially towards the end of the Third and at the start of the Fourth Book. See Sailor 2008 (*passim*) on the way Tacitus positions himself as an historian vis-à-vis the imperial regime.

disruption of war and sharply distinguish between the latter and the subsequent peace, Tacitus emphatically removes such distinctions: "I approach a work rich in disasters, harsh in battles, rent by seditions, vicious even in peace" (*opus adgredior opimum casibus, atrox proeliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace saeuom, H.* 1.2.1). In the summary of disasters and *exempla* that follows, there is no distinction between those produced in war and those produced during peace (note *plerumque permixta, H.* 1.2.1). The inversion of social values during civil war continued in peace: nobility, wealth, and display of merit were grounds for accusations and the activity of *delatores* posed the same threats as civil war (1.2.3), a notion that recurs in the *Annales*. The impression of continued crisis is reinforced by the organization of the rest of the preface (1.4-11), which is ordered geographically, not chronologically. Tacitus thus announces that he will merge Principate with civil war, which is exactly what happens when the wars are over: "after Vitellius' death it was more the case that war had stopped than that peace had started" (*interfecto Vitellio bellum magis desierat quam pax coeperat*, 4.1.1).[632] The preface of the *Historiae* reveals the work to be concerned with exploring socio-political change and transition and, as such, takes up one of the principal issues explored in the *Dialogus*. It is extremely unfortunate that we have lost the books that narrated Vespasian's regime and the rest of the Flavian dynasty. Nonetheless, the extant *Historiae* recount the way four emperors, in a crisis in which values, meanings, symbols, and expectations are turned upside down and confused, navigate the crisis and construct their position vis-à-vis the Republic, the Julio-Claudian Principate, the immediate Neronian past, and one another. Just as the dialogue demonstrates that different narratives and realities are possible, depending on one's analysis of time and reconstruction of the past, so the *Historiae* show how different emperors make sense of their present based on their perceptions of the past. And just as the dialogue points up the drawbacks in analyzing change in too broad or rigid terms (especially by narrowly associating values and institutions with major personalities or events), so the *Historiae* show why, in a context of transition

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[632] Sailor 2008, 190-91.

and shifting expectations, Galba, Piso, and Vitellius fail and Otho (initially) and Vespasian (ultimately) succeed. One essential ingredient of success, as it emerges, is the ability to carefully apply the lessons of history to one's present.

IV.5.3 Galba: Imposing Radical Change

Galba's adoption of Piso is recounted at *H*. 1.12 ff.[633] Tacitus grants Galba a rare speech in *oratio recta*, in which the *princeps* explains his rationale for adoption over hereditary succession and for choosing Piso over Otho. The speech, which does not appear in the parallel tradition, probably was Tacitus' own invention and had obvious relevance for his contemporary readers. It is accorded great significance within the narrative of Book One.[634] Although the loss of many Roman texts and documents, in particular Nerva's adoption speech, hampers our understanding of Tacitus' account and its relationship to the events of 97, it is evident from Pliny's *Panegyricus* (e.g. 5.2) that, after Nerva's successful adoption of Trajan, the idea of adoption was perceived as less problematic than the selection of a suitable candidate. My focus here is on how Galba's speech and the surrounding narrative illustrate the *princeps*' failure to grasp the realities of power in the city.

Galba justifies the practice of adoption by drawing sharp chronological distinctions. He argues that Rome has long accepted the necessity of the Principate: the Republic is past and the burden of the Empire requires a single ruler. Whereas under Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius the state had passed from one family member to another, as though it belonged to them, Galba will create a new configuration, in which the sitting *princeps* chooses his successor from the body politic as a whole. While he draws a distinction between the Julio-Claudian Principate and his own proposed system, he cannot claim to be going back to the Republic, which is a dead letter. Instead, his new government will

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[633] The literature on Galba's succession speech is extensive. On the speeches in the *Historiae*, see Sage 1990, 920-926; Keitel 1991 and 1993; Levene 1999 and 2009. See Keitel 1991 and 1993 for an examination of their function and mutual responsion. Ullmann 1927, 202-05 treats the rhetorical aspects of these speeches. On Galba's short period in power, see Ash 1999, 73-83; Morgan 2006, 31-56.
[634] Cf. Klaassen 2014, 73-75 (with plentiful references) on the techniques Tacitus uses to draw attention to the speech.

offer Romans a substitute for *libertas* (*loco libertatis*), which consists of having the opportunity to

reinvent themselves at each new accession instead of being passed down passively as the property

(*quasi hereditatis*) of the *principes*.[635] This claim is significant in light of the preface, where Tacitus stressed

that after Actium the *res populi Romani* became the emperor's *res priuata*. Galba seeks to break with Julio-

Claudian precedent to put in its place something that approximates republican *libertas*.

As H. Haynes shows, while Galba recognizes that Rome cannot return to the Republic and

breaks ideologically with the Julio-Claudians, his actions do not live up to his claims: "his precepts are

informed by the former and haunted by the latter."[636] Galba's claim to be making the process of

succession a public affair is undermined by the fact that it is conducted privately.[637] Furthermore, his

choice of successor does not accord with his chronological schema. His preference for Piso, on

account of the man's ancestry and old-fashioned demeanor, shows him to be steeped in republican

values, and he elects an heir who, like himself, belongs squarely in the Republic. Indications

throughout the narrative of the widespread displeasure with Galba's own stern character, which does

not accord with the recent Neronian spirit and the leniencies of civil war, makes the selection of a man

who closely resembles him highly dubious. Finally, while Galba claims to be following Augustan

precedent, the contrast between Augustus' chosen successor, a seasoned military commander and

politician, and Galba's favorite, a man who had been exiled and had not gained any meaningful

political experience, suggests that the *princeps* has shockingly misconstrued the past.

The holes in Galba's configuration are evidenced further by the shiftiness with which he uses

the term *libertas* throughout his speech. His claim that Piso will bring *fides*, *libertas*, and *amicitia* to the job

(aside from being an oversimplification of the qualities required of a *princeps*), does not accord with his

aim to be establishing something *loco libertatis*. At the end of his speech, he advises Piso that he will rule

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[635] H. Haynes 2003, 50.

[636] H. Haynes 2003, 52.

[637] I.e. in a *comitia imperii* (*H.* 1.14.1). Cf. Damon 2003 *ad loc.*: "*comitia*, properly of an assembly of the *populus Romanus*… real *comitia* were crucial institutions of popular sovereignty during the Republic but in the Principate (as T. describes it) the term rings hollow."

a people "who can neither endure compete slavery nor complete freedom" (*nec totam seruitutem pati possunt nec totam libertatem*). Piso's prolonged exile would not seem to have prepared him to display the various applications of *libertas* that Tacitus highlights throughout his works. Moreover, the three uses of the term *libertas* have different meanings: first, a generic marker of conduct, but otherwise undefined; next, an aspect that marks the Julio-Claudian Principate and that Galba now aims to replace with a substitute; finally, *libertas* as an absolute term defined by its opposite, *tota seruitus*. What emerges is a flimsy justification for the choice of a candidate supported with an argument that does not hold together. As Haynes puts it, "though he intuits the political climate, which depends upon the notion of *libertas* as the lack of *uetus res publica*, he does not fully understand that changing it is not a matter of calling attention to it in order to announce something new."[638] Indeed, later in the narrative, Tacitus has Otho criticize Galba precisely for misusing language in this manner (1.37.4). Finally, Galba's advice to Piso to act as he would wish other *principes* to act betrays ignorance of the nature of the Principate and presupposes more freedom in a *princeps'* conduct than that system of government allows for.[639] We may see Galba's misguided advice in part as reflecting the lack of a formalized set of 'rules' about what was required of a *princeps*, about how the latter ought to act and how, in turn, his subjects ought to act toward him. The *Res Gestae*, the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, Tacitus' *Agricola*, and Pliny's *Panegyricus* each constitute attempts at clarifying these rules and expectations.[640] The extant books of the *Historiae* demonstrate the difficulty for emperors and their subjects to navigate political transition and analyze shifting expectations.

Galba's naïve perception of socio-political transition is evidenced further by his inelastic stance toward the Neronian past and his rejection of Otho as his adopted heir. Galba's promotion of a firm

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[638] H. Haynes 2003, 53.

[639] Seneca's explanation to Cato that it does not matter whether Pompey or Caesar wins, since the victor is unable *not* to be worse (*non potest non peior esse qui uincerit*, *Ep*. 14.13), shows sensitivity to the impact of absolute power on an individual's conduct.

[640] To these documents and texts we may add the *senatus consultum de Pisone patre* and the *tabula Siarensis*, which reveal shifts in what acceptable senatorial conduct looks like. The continued emergence of these texts and documents, which notably do not show up during the later Principate, reflects the efforts of the early Principate to figure out its existence.

break with the Julio-Claudians includes promoting a government wholly opposed to the Neronian regime. Tacitus, describing the strife amongst Galba's intimates Vinius, Laco, and Icelus, carefully records Galba's attitude towards Nero and Otho. Vinius promoted the latter, while Laco and Icelus worked against him. Galba, says Tacitus, was aware of the *amicitia* between Vinius and Otho, and rumors circulated that the former planned on marrying the latter to his widowed daughter, making the one son-in-law and the other father-in-law (*neque erat Galbae ignota Othonis ac Titi Vinii amicitia; et rumoribus nihil silentio transmittentium, quia Vinio uidua filia, caelebs Otho, gener ac socer destinabantur*, 1.13.2). Unlike Plutarch, who records this plan as fact (*G.* 21.1), Tacitus describes it as a rumor, pointing up the confusion dominating the capital at this time. The connection between Vinius and Otho was one reason for Galba to pass over the latter. The combination *gener* and *socer* evokes the alliance between Pompey and Caesar, famously described with these words by Catullus (29.24), and suggests that Galba prudently used lessons of history to avoid similar ties, and potential conflict, between Vinius and Otho.[641] The subsequent account, however, shows him to be misguided in his analysis of current social attitudes and in rejecting Otho. Indeed, an additional reason for Galba to pass over Otho is that he resembles Nero and that, so Galba assumes, if a break with the Neronian reign is to be actualized, adopting Otho is the wrong way to go. Tacitus next offers a succinct sketch of Otho's character, which in part justifies Galba's suspicions but at the same time shows the latter to be unaware of popular sentiment and the realities of power. Tacitus already told us (*H.* 1.4-7) about the instability of social attitudes towards Nero – amongst the soldiers and the different social strata – and hence warned against overhauling the system too swiftly and decidedly. Galba does not see this and misses what is crucial: that most of the soldiers favored Otho and that Nero's court, too, inclined to him because he was like him (*fauentibus plerisque militum, prona in eum aula Neronis ut similem*, 1.13.4).[642] Nero's suicide left a

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[641] Furthermore, as Geiser (2007, 177) points out, it would place Galba in a precarious position if his successor would be under obligation to one of his own advisers.
[642] Galba's disregard for the portents that warn against Piso's adoption (*H.* 1.18.1) solidifies the impression that he misses essential

vacuum in which each of the pretenders to the purple needed to connect, in some way, with the recent

past, as opposed to breaking away from it completely.[643] The *Dialogus* and the preface of the *Historiae*

prepare a reader to scrutinize the realities constructed by the emperors and their associates. Galba's

principal failure lies in his unawareness that social attitudes do not change overnight. His blindness to

this truth is poignant given his own inability to adjust his stance toward the praetorians and his failure

to enforce different rules.

IV.5.4 Otho: Delicate Balancing

While Piso, like Galba, attempts to break with the past and refuses to acknowledge current

realities (his speech at *H.* 1.29-30 shows that, like Galba, he makes naïve assessments, glosses over

disagreeable realities with agreeable language, and unwittingly reveals that the adoption has offered

nothing in place of the *uacua nomina* "Republic," "Senate," and "People"), Otho proves himself more

aware of the complexities of socio-political change and hence more flexible.[644] He adroitly exploits the

moment of transition (*opportunos magnis conatibus transitus rerum*, 1.21.2) by hovering in the middle and

not explicitly aligning himself with any particular regime or side. Aware of the impracticability of a

radical break with the past, he exploits his perceived links with the Neronian regime, while "invoking

only the shadow of Nero with his resemblance to him."[645] Where Galba, in a context of trauma and

disorientation, imposes and alienates, Otho carefully entices. So, when marching with the soldiers, he

evokes the memory of their former *princeps* (*memoria Neroniani comitatus*) by calling them *contubernales* and

complaining about the rigorous discipline imposed on them by Galba. In doing so, he carefully

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things. It was a republican custom to break off an election in such circumstances. We would expect the old-fashioned man to conform to ancient custom, but he once more proves himself inconsistent. Cf. *H.* 1.27.1, 1.29.1.

[643] Cf. H. Haynes 2003, 54: "Not only does the crowd not accept Galba because it prefers the easier image of life that Nero in some respects provided, Nero also represents what makes it possible to go on believing in a positive form of political reality, or gives positive shape to the abyss of anarchy that confronts the populace now that he and his dynasty are over. Nero as specter provides the link in the symbolic chain between Julio-Claudian and Flavian rule, which throughout the *Histories* comes close to breaking."

[644] It is notable that Piso's speech largely depends on moral arguments as opposed to arguments of expediency: Levene 1999, 209. On Piso's misguided views and flawed speech, cf. also Morgan 2006, 66-67. On Otho's short reign, see Ash 1999, 83-94; Morgan 2006, 91-111.

[645] H. Haynes 2003, 55.

constructs an image of himself that reminds them of their easy service under Nero (1.23), an image he then feeds by bribing and sympathizing with the soldiers (1.25). He employs a similar strategy when addressing the praetorians (1.37-38), claiming that he is not sure how he has presented himself up to this stage (*quis ad uos processerim commilitones, dicere non possum*, 1.37.1). Moreover, he carefully undermines Galba's claims, not least by stressing that the latter's freedman Icelus already has amassed more than Polyclitus, Vatinius, and Egnatius, notorious Neronian freedmen. Without explicitly referencing Nero, he shows Galba's anti-Neronian claims to be hollow. While his view of the future is shortsighted, Otho knows how to play to the tastes of his audience, a skill singled out by Messalla at *D.* 30.5: *ad utilitatem temporum, cum uoluptate audientium possit.*

Once in power and a slave to the armies that elevated him, Otho's stance gradually begins to reveal inconsistencies. While he continues to muster support (among other things, through careful appointments: *H.* 2.77-78), he evidently struggles to maintain the liminal status he has cultivated so far. According to Plutarch and Suetonius, he begins to actively align himself with Nero – appointing Neronian officials, financing further construction of the *domus aurea*, planning on marrying Nero's former wife Statilia Messalina, and sending documents under the name "Otho Nero" – and that eventually he ceased these efforts because they offended important men.[646] Tacitus has a different emphasis: it was *believed* (*creditus est*) that Otho had suggested celebrating Nero's memory; some set up statues of Nero, while on certain days the people and soldiers called him "Nero Otho" in an attempt to honor him. Otho, says Tacitus, kept the matter undecided, afraid to forbid these things or ashamed to acknowledge them (1.78.2). While Damon (2003 *ad loc.*) suggests that Tacitus omits Otho's agency either to preserve the "honouring Nero" theme for Vitellius (2.95.1) or to keep Otho's characterization consistent, I suspect that it also serves to highlight the difficulty for any *princeps* and his subjects to perceive meaning and social attitudes in a context of confusion and shifting expectations: Otho, while

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[646] Damon 2003, 256-57 for references and commentary.

trying to avoid it, gives the impression that he aligns himself with Nero.[647] The mismatch between imperial presentation and popular reception is also evident from the fact that Otho, despite his delicate strategies to deal with public perception, inspired fear and mistrust (2.31.1). As the *Agricola*, the *Dialogus*, and the early narrative of the *Historiae* show, in imperial Rome social attitudes and values are fickle and difficult, if not impossible, to grasp, particularly during civil war. Neither Galba nor Otho ultimately succeeds in doing so.

Otho's position remains shaky, and Tacitus gradually shows him to be less able to speak in his own voice, as he slowly takes to parroting Augustan ideology.[648] In his speech to the praetorians after their nighttime riot (1.80-82) Otho glosses over the inevitable collapse of discipline, while his praise of the senate as the body on which the state depends has no place in a struggle in which matters are decided by legions and praetorians (1.83-84). In particular, his claim that the endurance of the Empire, global peace, his own safety, and that of the praetorians depends on the senate's security, and that the latter has continued unharmed from Romulus into the Principate shows him using Augustan ideology to construct a reality that does not exist (1.84.3-4). The next chapter, describing the senate's flattery and dissimulation, at once undermines his claims. He virtually repeats himself before setting out for battle, enlarging on the dignity of the state, the consensus between the senate and people, and the ignorance, as opposed to the audacity, of the Vitellian legions (*H.* 1.90.1-2). Otho started as an independent voice cleverly navigating his way to the purple but ends up talking like a Julio-Claudian. That he has his speech composed for him by an experienced orator (Galerius Trachalus), who knows exactly what the senate wants to hear, ironically makes him resemble Nero, who had Seneca write his speech for him at Claudius' deification (*A.* 13.3). Whereas under Nero the senators could still see through Seneca's words, on this occasion they are wholly taken in: they slavishly flatter Otho and see him off as though he were Caesar or Augustus (*quasi dictatorem Caesarem aut imperatorem Augustum*

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[647] His destruction of Tigellinus (*H.* 1.72) and restoration of Poppaea's statues (*H.* 1.78.2) likely contributed to this impression.
[648] H. Haynes 2003, 4-7.

prosequerentur, *H.* 1.90.3). Thus the supposed continuity of Roman institutions is matched by a concomitant decline in morality. It perhaps should be noted here that in the extant books of the *Historiae* oratorical skill often is used by morally corrupt characters to persuade listeners of futile and destructive policies, a notion that complicates the discussion in the *Dialogus* of the role of *eloquentia* in imperial Rome and its connection with *uirtus*. In the *Historiae*, the ideal of the *uir bonus dicendi peritus* has all but crashed.[649]

IV.5.5 Vitellius: Misunderstanding Past, Present, and Future

Tacitus' Vitellius fails in nearly every way to establish himself, being insensitive to historical precedent, failing to navigate the present, and being careless about the future (*praeterita instantia futura pari obliuione dimiserat*, 3.36.1).[650] Of particular interest for this chapter is the way he unwittingly associates himself with different personalities of the past, evoking memories and establishing connections that work against him. For instance, he takes the title "Germanicus" (1.62.2) and bestows the same title on his little son while parading him in front of the legions dressed in the *paludamentum* (formerly a general's cloak but now a symbol of imperial power) and invested with imperial *insignia* (2.59.3). The title "Germanicus" implied victory in Germania, a precarious claim given Rome's persistent struggles with Germanic tribes. Second, "Germanicus" was an emotive and prestigious *cognomen* of the Julio-Claudian family, originally awarded to Tiberius' dead brother Drusus and his descendants by the senate (Suet., *Cl.* 1.3). Third, it evoked the memory of the actual Germanicus, even more so because, just as the latter had his little son Caligula with him on the Rhine front, dressed in miniature military outfit (Suet., *Cal.* 9), so Vitellius parades his little "Germanicus" in front of his men. These associations do not work in his or his son's favor. The title "Germanicus," promoted in his letters and on his coinage, evidently was hollow when it came to his character: even his own mother is

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[649] Levene 1999, 214-15.
[650] On Vitellius' short reign, see Ash 1999, 95-126; Morgan 2006, 139-69.

recorded as saying, after receiving a first letter from him, that she "had born a Vitellius, not a Germanicus" (2.64.2). As for grooming the little "Germanicus" for succession, the implications are more unsettling. Vitellius shows himself ignorant of Roman custom, for it was traditional for a son to cover himself with a cloak at his father's funeral (Plut., *Mor.* 267a).[651] Moreover, the boy evidently could not compete with Vespasian's sons Titus and Domitian, making his designation as heir apparent dubious at best. Finally, the title did not help the son, for he was swiftly executed by Mucianus (*H.* 4.80.1), likely in part due to his conspicuous name (cf. *H.* 3.66.2).

If his naïve employment of the title "Germanicus" makes Vitellius seem unaware of historical precedent, present realities, and future hazards, so does the way he positions himself. While the title "Germanicus" aligns him firmly (though unrealistically) with the Julio-Claudians, he refuses the titles of "Augustus" and "Caesar" even while assuming the powers associated with them (*H.* 2.62.2). After the collapse of the Othonian cause, Vitellius, now clearly a Caesar but not identifying himself as such, approaches the capital cloaked and on horseback – as though Rome were a captive city – before, on advice of the senators with him, disingenuously continuing on foot wearing only a toga (*H.* 2.89). On the same day, he bestows on his mother the title "Augusta"(2.89.2), linking him with Tiberius (Livia) and Claudius (Antonia), while on the next day he again refuses the title "Augustus" before accepting it under pressure of the people, revealing complete ignorance of popular perceptions (2.90.2). It is not until his cause is lost that he is said to finally assume the title "Caesar," out of fear and superstition (3.58.2). At this stage, Vitellius is so out of touch with reality that his soldiers have to *remind* him that he is a *princeps* (3.62.2). The confusing misalignment between his actual powers and his self-identity is worsened by his open admiration for Nero, which he fosters both by his own conduct and by performing funeral rites for Nero in the Campus Martius. What is more, he has the sacrifices performed by the Augustales, a priesthood dedicated by Tiberius to the Julian family, just as Romulus

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[651] Ash 2007a *ad loc.*

had once done for king Tatius (2.95.1). These actions disgusted members of the nobility. Vitellius'
schizophrenic self-positioning, his inability to grasp current perceptions, and his lethargic, Neronian
conduct did not promote a clear stance toward the republican, Julio-Claudian, and Neronian past, and
it is unsurprising that, first, Caecina and Bassus betray him and that, soon thereafter, the senate,
people, and soldiers abandon him.

Like Galba and Otho, then, Vitellius fails to navigate the present and to fill the traumatic void
left by Nero's death. Tacitus describes all three as having different perceptions of the past and present
and as constructing different realities. One purpose of the narrative, as it unfolds, is to demonstrate, as
the *Dialogus* had done, that different versions and realities *are* indeed possible, not only for
contemporary actors but also for the reader. Tacitus' style and content in part serve to replicate the
difficulty that the emperors and the onlookers (and the reader now) had in creating meaning and
identity in a society that, even in peace, inevitably was a construct, one in which rules and expectations
rarely were well defined and values never absolute. In this respect, the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus*, in
narrating how Agricola and the interlocutors navigate the changing values, concepts, and meanings
under the Principate, has prepared a reader to expect a similar mental exercise in the historical works.
As we have seen, one way to analyze the present and anticipate the future is by carefully scrutinizing
the past. The *Dialogus* shows the interlocutors attempting to make sense of contemporary oratory and
society in part by constructing divergent narratives and associating change with different individuals
and/or events. Similarly, in his historical works, Tacitus traces how the actors in his narrative (fail to)
analyze and use the past to make sense of their present. Where Galba, Otho, and Vitellius reveal
themselves to be unaware of or careless about historical lessons, Vespasian and Mucianus, as it
emerges, turn out to be much better 'historians.'[652]

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[652] Mucianus' attention to historical precedent is intriguing in light of his later literary career, which included, *inter alia*, memoirs of
Vespasian's eastern campaigns and a volume devoted to 'memorabilia,' used extensively by Pliny the Elder in the *Nat*. On Mucianus as
a source for Pliny, see Baldwin 1995, 291-301.

Tacitus is concerned to stress the historical lessons and precedents missed by Vitellius and his advisers. Awareness of Rome's civil war past would have told Vitellius that entering the capital in military cloak and on horseback, as a conqueror, was unlikely to promote peace and consensus. His ignorance stands out against the terror of the senate, knights, and people, who anxiously recall the civil wars and the times Rome had been taken by its own generals (*H.* 1.50). He displays similar insensitivity to Rome's past when, as *pontifex maximus*, he does not observe the religious proprieties on the 18th of July, the anniversary of the defeat of the Fabii by the Etruscans from Veii (477 BC) and Rome's defeat at the hands of the Allia Gauls (390 BC): "so ignorant was he of all civil and religious precedent" (*adeo omnis humani diuinique iuris expers*, 2.91.1). Tacitus carefully records it when people notice Vitellius ignoring precedent. So, when Rosius Regulus completed the single day that was left of the consulship of the traitor Caecina, experienced men noted that an unlawful election of this sort had never occurred before and connected it with a similar event during Caesar's dictatorship, when Caninius Rebilus was consul for a single day and "the rewards of civil war had to be distributed in haste" (3.37.2).[653] The passage shows how Romans tend to analyze present events in light of analogous events in the past and underlines the fact that it was crucial to be mindful of public perception. Such passages also serve to remind readers to pay attention to the details, not only in reading the narrative but in analyzing their own present.

A final example concerns a misremembering of past events that has destructive consequences for the City. When Vitellius agrees with Flavius Sabinus to a peaceful surrender, his advisers convince him to persist, on the theory that, should he surrender, Vespasian inevitably will execute him and his family: after all, they claimed, "Pompey was not left unharmed by Caesar, nor Antony by Augustus" (*non a Caesare Pompeium, non ab Augusto Antonium incolumis relictos*, *H.* 3.66.2). The claims are inaccurate, and Tacitus is clear about the import of knowing one's history: "if Vitellius had been able to change

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[653] Cicero scoffs at these proceedings in a letter to Manius Curius (*Fam.* 7.30.1)

the minds of his partisans as easily as he had himself yielded, Vespasian's army would have entered the city without bloodshed" (*quod si tam facile suorum mentis flexisset Vitellius, quam ipse cesserat, incruentam urbem Vespasiani exercitus intrasset*, H. 3.66.1).[654]

IV.5.6 Vespasian and Mucianus: Good 'Historians'

Like historians, Vespasian and Mucianus, while awaiting events, 'read' their rivals' failures from hindsight. Though by no means sanitizing Flavian policies, Tacitus shows how Vespasian and Mucianus successfully navigate the transition from civil war to peace, avoiding some of the errors committed by Galba, Otho, and Vitellius and constructing an attractive reality.[655] As emerges from the narrative, Vespasian's success is based on several closely connected factors. One was the careful promotion of his rise to power as the result of *fortuna*. The Flavians actively promote Vespasian's divine backing,[656] capitalizing on the *superstitio* sparked both by the omens presaging his Principate (2.78) and by his healing miracles in Alexandria (4.81), and using this as a mechanism to shape a new role for the *princeps* as a leader in whom subjects could believe.[657] The impact of this ideology evidently was powerful. Tacitus, in hindsight, admits that he himself, along with everyone else, believed (after the fact) that Vespasian's victory was divinely sanctioned (*occulta fati et ostentis ac responsis destinatum Vespasiano liberisque eius imperium post fortunam credidimus*, H. 1.10.3). Romans had a history of thinking of civil war as a type of divine punishment (e.g. Cic., *Marc.* 18; Tac., *H.* 1.3.2, 1.18.1, 2.38.2, 4.3.3, 4.54.2) and of seeing the winner in such conflicts as divinely favored. So Caesar, so Augustus, and so Vespasian. As Damon notes, Flavian propaganda apparently was effective in getting the divine aspect of Vespasian's rise to power into the historical record.[658] The most forceful promotion of Vespasian's

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[654] Of course, Vitellius, his brother, and his son are indeed murdered, but only after they had continued the war.
[655] On the start of Vespasian's reign, see Levick 1999, 43-123; cf. Ash 1999, 127 ff.
[656] This seems to be in part the design of Titus' trip to the temple of Paphian Venus on Cyprus (2.2-4.1) and of Vespasian's trips to Carmel (2.78) and the temple of Serapis (4.82-84).
[657] On this aspect of Flavian imperial ideology, see H. Haynes 2003, 112-47. Cf. Ash 2007a, 73-77.
[658] Damon 2003, 123. Note Tac., *H.* 2.1, 2.4.2, 2.78.2-4, 4.81.1-2, 5.13.1; Jos., *BJ* 3.399-408; Suet., *Ves.* 5.2-7, 7.1-3; Plut., *O.* 4.4-5; Dio 64.9, 65.1.

divine favor was in the reconstruction of the Capitol (4.53). The ceremony was carefully staged and highly charged symbolically, restoration and continuity being the principal theme, and its impact was made stronger by the fact that Vespasian himself was not in Rome at the time.[659]

Being absent allowed Vespasian slowly to shape reality and his position vis-à-vis the senate, easing the transition after three emperors wrenched the capital around within a single year. His letter to the senate shows him deliberately speaking with both authority and deference: "Vespasian's letter, written as though the war was still ongoing, raised the senate's zeal. That is how it looked at first. But he spoke like a *princeps*, modest about himself, and outstandingly about the *res publica*" (*addidere alacritatem Vespasiani litterae tamquam manente bello scriptae. ea prima specie forma; ceterum ut princeps loquebatur, ciuilia de se, et rei publicae egregia*, 4.3.4). As H. Haynes notes, if Vespasian thinks the war is not yet over, he technically speaks as a general in the field deferring authority to the senate.[660] This stance is designed to placate the civil government and illustrates how rhetoric shapes reality. Vespasian knows the war is over: "the letter summarizes the old Augustan problem: how to rule and defer ruling at the same time."[661]

Vespasian delicately shaped his position vis-à-vis the Julio-Claudian and recent past. The *lex de imperio Vespasiani* allows us an insight into how he reconstructed the past and shaped the present.[662] Vespasian proceeds along the same lines as Tacitus does in the *Dialogus*, drawing particular chronological and conceptual divides. So he does not set his reign against a unified Julio-Claudian past but, removing Caligula, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius,[663] aligns himself with 'good' predecessors only: ergo continuity but with good elements only. While this ideology was powerful and evidently

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[659] Trajan, too, upon becoming *princeps*, stayed away from Rome during the initial political transition. When he was informed about Nerva's death (which occurred on 28 January 98), he stayed in Lower Germany until the summer, before moving to the Danube to begin preparations for the Dacian War. Only in the autumn of 99 did he return to Rome.

[660] H. Haynes 2003, 153.

[661] H. Haynes 2003, 153.

[662] On the nature of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* and the powers conferred on Vespasian, see Brunt 1977, 95-116.

[663] While Caligula's memory never was condemned officially and his *acta* remained valid, his absence in the *lex* seems a striking condemnation. Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius were condemned officially. Galba's memory was restored soon after Vespasian's accession, but evidently not before the adoption of the *lex*. Cf. Brunt 1977, 104.

effective, the senatorial debates and Flavian measures recorded at *H.* 4.6-8 and 4.40-44, and the license enjoyed by the Flavian troops in the city, reminded the senate (and the reader) that the establishment of imperial power was a delicate balancing act: even under a welcome *princeps* like Vespasian there were restrictions on *libertas*. That was the nature of the Principate, as Eprius Marcellus knew.

Marcellus' speech at *H.* 4.8 is significant for connecting the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae*, for what he basically says is that rhetoric creates the present and that history (or at least his personal history) does not matter; he remembers and even admires past regimes, but what matters is the present. His comments about restrictions on *libertas* (something Tacitus would utter *in propria persona*) problematize the Flavian construct and show his awareness of the reality behind it. His words also point up the urgency to buy into that construct, by adjusting one's conduct and, to some extent, by 'forgetting' history. This is what Helvidius Priscus, the praetor urbanus dominating events in the senate at this time, does not appreciate. His attachment to old-fashioned *libertas* is underlined by Tacitus (*H.* 4.5) and Marcellus (*H.* 4.8.3), who stress his connection with Thrasea (his adopted father-in-law) and his attachment to Brutus and Cato (4.8.3; cf. *A.* 16.22.2). Marcellus' rhetorical power and political experience allow him (for the moment) to navigate the transition, whereas Helvidius, misapplying historical *exempla* to a reality that does not accommodate them, misconstrues present realities. His conduct here foreshadows his destruction in 75. Marcellus' words further suggest that, since the present is a rhetorical construct, one can construct one's own position within that present as well; on this view, being *eloquens* is an essential element of political success and survival.

The senatorial business recounted at *H.* 4.6-8 directly evokes Aper's comments on the same events at *D.* 5.7 as well as Maternus' comments about Marcellus at *D.* 13.4, inviting us to read those passages in conjunction. There are also plain connections between *H.* 2.10, on Vibius Crispus' character and position in the state, and his portrait at *D.* 8. Aper, who holds up Marcellus and Crispus as the preeminent pleaders of his time, alludes to the former's quarrel with Helvidius, stressing how his

eloquentia and loyalty to the regime helped him overcome his inexperienced opponent. Aper builds on this example to characterize Marcellus and Crispus as archetypical *delatores* whose oratorical and financial success and favor with the *princeps* exemplify modern oratory and a particular stance toward the regime. The dramatic date of the dialogue (ca. 75) reminds a reader of Helvidius' imminent demise and at first would seem to underscore Aper's reconstruction.

But, just as the dialogue shows that different reconstructions and realities are possible, so Maternus' counterargument about Marcellus and Crispus problematizes Aper's reality. On Maternus' view, their position is unstable and precarious, depending as it is on the favor of the sitting *princeps* and his associates. Indeed, as the lost portions of the *Historiae* will have recorded, while Marcellus emerged from the senatorial attacks in 70 unscathed and remained a powerful official in the Flavian court, in 79 he suddenly fell out of favor and was destroyed (Dio 65.16.3-4). Marcellus' fate and the contrary fortune of Crispus, who would flourish into the Domitianic regime, points up the frailty of power that does not stand on its own but is dependent on that of others (cf. n. 514). The dramatic juxtaposition between Marcellus' position in the dialogue (at the height of his powers) and his imminent demise (of which the reader knows but Aper is ignorant) underscores the unpredictability of shifts in power and an onlooker's inability (in this case that of Aper and Marcellus) to anticipate them. The examples of Helvidius and Marcellus, who occupy different stances toward the regime and nonetheless both are destroyed (Maternus' destruction is hinted at in the text as well), point up one of the major premises of the dialogue: that there is no single, essential reconstruction or reality, and that it is impossible to gain an airtight understanding of a *princeps* and his motivations, in part *because* his regime is a construct and does not perfectly reflect reality. It is perhaps for this reason that Tacitus is compelled to ask (at *A.* 4.20.3) whether it is due to fate or chance of birth that emperors incline favorably to some and take offense at others, or whether the right policy or conduct can allow one to steer clear from imperial hostility. We have seen that Agricola's life is presented as typifying the second option. Yet even he was

oppressed and possibly murdered by his *princeps*.

IV.5.7 The Historian: Challenging Tidy Reconstructions and Imperial Ideology

The techniques used by the Flavians to build the image of their legitimacy depend on dealing with and reconstructing the past the way Tacitus does in the *Dialogus*. While Tacitus shows how the Flavians succeed in constructing an attractive reality – one he himself initially bought into – he complicates it by recording the greed, ambition, and violence of the victors. His emphasis on the disruption of war and the continuation of violence into Vespasian's regime assimilates civil war and Principate, exposing the distortion promoted by the Flavians and collapsing the distance between reality and representation. The narrative cuts right through imperial ideology, as Tacitus had announced in the preface, and encourages readers to apply a more nuanced analysis to the past and to their own Trajanic present. This is salutary for several reasons. Imperial regimes evidently were successful in distorting reality and getting favorable versions into the historical record. Their ability to do so can be explained both by the pressure on their subjects to flatter and write favorable accounts and by the nature of memory, which is selective and tends to operate in neat patterns and connections. Since they appear logical, linear narratives are readily absorbed and believed, and it is in part for this reason that imperial ideology works. One aim of Tacitus' writings is to work against distortion and to promote more 'truthful' and critical accounts of Rome's political and cultural history. This, as we have seen, is one of the purposes of the *Dialogus*. A closely associated aim lies in historiography's utility for the contemporary reader. By writing complex narratives that ask much from readers in the way of analysis and interpretation, the latter come away not only with a more nuanced understanding of Rome's past but with a better understanding of their own present and future. This in turn is tied to social behavior. For it is the uncritical acquiescence in the narratives propagated by the regime that facilitates the indoctrinated, servile conduct that Tacitus despises in imperial Rome. Throughout his

historical works, Tacitus illustrates how characters in the narrative fail to understand their present and misinterpret history. Of course, the historian and the reader, looking back in hindsight, have a distinct advantage over the actors in the narrative. At times, Tacitus will digress from his narrative to correct the analysis of his characters, drawing together aspects or pointing out historical patterns that the latter could not discern, but that his readers can see and learn from. Let us consider two passages, *H.* 1.50 and *H.* 2.38, in which Tacitus digresses from the narrative and introduces the republican civil wars as a precedent against which to analyze the events of 69.[664]

In the first passage, Tacitus records the public response to Galba's assassination and the hostilities between Otho and Vitellius, which now would prolong the civil wars. The passage is significant for what it reveals about how Romans analyze present events in light of past events, for what it implies about the Principate and civil war, and for what it shows about the imperfection of memory and the impact on it of literary traditions and imperial ideology. Tacitus writes that the senators, knights, and people alike complained that two most shameless men (*deterrimi*), Otho and Vitellius, were plunging the Empire into ruin, as though by fate (*fataliter*). They turn to past events to help them evaluate their current situation: "no longer did they speak of the recent horrors of a dreadful peace but they recalled the memory of the civil wars" (*nec iam recentia saeuae pacis exempla sed repetita bellorum ciuilium memoria*, 1.50.2). The language is precise, showing that, first, the people set the horrors of the civil wars (*atrocitatem recentis sceleris*, 1.50.1; cf. *atrox*, *H.* 1.2.1) against the "recent horrors of a dreadful peace" (*recentia saeuae pacis exempla*), which commonly is taken to designate the whole of the Julio-Claudian Principate.[665] This view assimilates the Principate with civil war and suggests that Rome's recent history was marked by continuous violence and mutual destruction, a powerful indictment of imperial ideology, made all the stronger by the fact that all strata of society allegedly

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[664] On these passages, see the discussions in Ash 2010, 119-31; Damon 2010, 375-88; Joseph 2012, 156-74.
[665] Damon 2003 *ad loc.* Some translate *nec iam* as "not" instead of "no longer," which has the unfortunate effect of ignoring the fact that the people assimilated the horrors of the Principate with those produced in the civil wars.

shared it.[666]

Next, their analysis takes the onlookers further back, to the republican civil wars. Whereas the

events under the Julio-Claudians were recent enough for them to remember, for earlier Roman history

they inevitably rely on literary accounts: "they spoke of how often the city had been taken by its own

armies, how Italy had been devastated, the provinces plundered, about Pharsalus, Philippi, Perusia, and

Mutina, famous names associated with national disasters" (*repetita bellorum ciuilium memoria captam totiens*

suis exercitibus urbem, uastitatem Italiae, direptiones prouinciarum, Pharsaliam Philippos et Perusiam ac Mutinam,

nota publicarum cladium nomina, loquebantur, 1.50.2).[667] These words variously recall phrases in the works

of Cicero, Sallust, Vergil, Livy, and Lucan, solidifying the impression that the onlookers' *memoria* of the

republican civil wars is fashioned by the literary accounts they read.[668] In particular, the close link

between the battles of Pharsalus and Philippi (emphasized and linked in asyndeton) mirrors the

conflation of these conflicts that started with Vergil (*G.* 1.465-514) and was taken up by Ovid (*Met.*

15.823-24), Manilius (*Astr.* 1.910), Lucan (1.680, 6.582, 7.872, 9.271), and Statius (*Sil.* 2.7.65-66).[669] The

emphasis, in both the literary accounts and the onlookers' *memoria*, is on continuity, that is Rome's

recurrent self-destruction. The series of battles that the onlookers recall, the chronological order of

which notably is incorrect,[670] ultimately takes us back to Sulla's march on Rome in 88 BC. They

continued: "the world nearly was turned upside down when the struggle for power had been between

good men (*boni*), but the Empire had continued after the victories of Caesar and Augustus, and the *res*

publica would have continued if Pompey or Brutus had won: are we now to enter temples on behalf of

Otho or Vitellius? ... one thing was certain: the winner would turn out the worse." These last words,

too, have antecedents in literary works, notably at Cic., *de Har. Resp.* 54 and Sen., *Ep.* 14.13.

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[666] The *uolgus* in Tacitus is not often granted a care for politics. The fact that all strata of society share the same view reveals a rare *concordia* at a time of great *discordia*: Ash 2010, 121-22. We may see this, too, as subtly undermining imperial creed, which associated the Principate with *concordia*.

[667] Joseph (2012, 158-59) is right, I think, in taking *memoria* here as meaning "the literature that preserves memory."

[668] Joseph 2012, 158-165 lays out the intertexts in detail.

[669] Joseph 2012, 161-63.

[670] The dates are 48, 42, 40, 43 BC, respectively.

The passage neatly shows Roman memory at work, similar to the way we see it operating in the *Dialogus*. Present developments are conceptualized in light of past events, and the past is analyzed in terms of major individuals and/or events. We note how scrutiny of the present and recent past prompts the mind to go back further in time to find antecedents – in much the same way that Tacitus goes further back chronologically across his writings. The passage also illustrates the selectiveness of human memory and some of the problems inherent in analyzing the past. The logical antecedent for the civil wars of 68-69 were the civil wars of the Late Republic, but Tacitus shows the crowd's analysis, and that of the authors on which they base it, to be flawed in several respects. The oversimplification that at once stands out is the people's designation of the protagonists of the past civil wars as *boni*.[671] This characterization is dubious at best and sets up a black-and-white polarization between men like Caesar, Pompey, Brutus, and Octavian and men like Otho and Vitellius that fails to capture historical and current realities. While we need not go to great lengths to question the label *boni*, it is instructive to look forward to *A*. 1.10, where Tacitus records the negative assessment of Augustus' career and reign held by some in the direct aftermath of his funeral. Their assessment of his conduct at Mutina is significant, as Ash points out.[672] Octavian, the *machinator doli*, had poisoned Pansa and used trickery to eliminate Hirtius (*A*. 1.10.2). Suetonius (*Aug*. 11) confirms the existence of rumors to this effect. Ash suggests that Tacitus deliberately places Mutina at the end of the list of battles to urge the reader to investigate it more closely.[673] I suspect that it also serves to show how literary traditions and imperial ideology shape public memory. Indeed, did the various groups consciously leave out Antony, who could not possibly be classified as *bonus*, or did they simply forget him? After his suicide, Antony's memory for some time became subject to *damnatio memoriae*, and subsequent history became the history of the victors.

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[671] The distinction here between *boni* and *deterrimi* may in part be one between the 'pure' and aristocratic Romans of the past and Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, whose family origins either lay outside of Rome or were of less noble stock.
[672] Ash 2010, 122.
[673] Ash 2010, 122.

The impact of literature on *memoria* is evident in the people's claim that the *res publica* would have continued with Pompey or Brutus. Brutus practically became synonymous with the republican ideal of *libertas*, while Pompey's reception was largely favorable during the early Principate.[674] His image as an honorable but tragic man, who followed the better side too late, was reinforced, shortly before the dramatic date of our passage, in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. The claim that under Pompey and Brutus the *res publica* and political freedom would have continued is reflective of these traditions and of the tendency to connect socio-political elements, even institutions, with major individuals. As regards imperial ideology, the sanitization of Augustus' career and reign constructed a favorable version of the events of the 40s, 30s, and beyond that was reinforced in the following generations. The fact that the governing class and the people in 69 think of Augustus as *bonus* reflects the success of this sanitization.

While the onlookers and the authors they read are correct in stressing the continuity of civil war across Rome's history (as do the Gallic chiefs at *H*. 4.55, in language that recalls that of the onlookers at *H*. 1.50), their perception of the participants in the past wars lacks nuance and leaves them with bleak expectations. Regardless of how matters turn out (including the possibility of Vespasian marching on the city like a latter-day Sulla: 1.50.3), Rome's *imperium* will endure and since, in their reconstruction of the past, they are stuck not with *boni* but *deterrimi* and *ignaui*, there is nothing they can do but await a dreadful future; the character contrast they have constructed leaves them feeling as if their current predicament is somehow extraordinary.

In the second passage (*H*. 2.38), Tacitus freezes the narrative before the Battle of Bedriacum to offer another digression about the republican civil wars, recalling the above passage and setting his own analysis against those of the groups at *H*. 1.50. Tacitus, with the benefit of hindsight, advances a

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[674] His assessment in contemporary literature was balanced. Cicero praised (*de Imp. Cn. Pomp.* passim; *Fam.* 8.2.8) and criticized (*Att.* 8.16.1) him. According to Sallust, "he has an honest face but a shameless character" (*Hist.* fr. 16M; Suet., *de Gramm.* 15). Livy (3.2) is sympathetic towards him, Valerius Maximus lauds his *clementia* and *humanitas* (5.1.9, 10), Velleius calls him *sanctissimus et praestantissimus uir* (2.53.3), and Pliny the Elder equates him with Alexander, Hercules, and Liber Pater (*Nat.* 7.95). Plutarch gives a positive portrayal that "reflects a long line of Pompeian propaganda" (Edwards 1991, 280). See Grenade 1950 on the 'Pompeiani' in the early Principate; Syme 1958a, 433-34 on the prominent descendants of Pompey in the first century AD.

more nuanced analysis. He goes further back and, unlike the onlookers, who merely recognize a recurrent pattern, identifies a principal *causa* for human conflict (an innate desire for power: *uetus ac iam pridem insita mortalibus potentiae cupido*, 2.38.1), the process through which it grew (Roman conquest: *cum imperii magnitudine adoleuit erupitque*), and the turning point after which it became excessive (the subjection of the world and the destruction of Carthage (*subacto orbe et aemulis urbibus regibusue excisis securas opes concupiscere uacuum fuit, prima inter patres plebemque certamina exarsere*). The other notable aspect in Tacitus' reconstruction is that he moves from institutions/offices to individuals: first there were struggles between patricians and the people, then between tribunes, then between consuls wielding unconstitutional powers (these struggles constituted "practice for civil war": *temptamenta ciuilium bellorum*), before Marius and then Sulla established personal *dominatio*. They were followed by Pompey, "whose true character was more disguised but not better" (*occultior non melior*), and the subsequent struggles for absolute power. Where the onlookers do not name the individuals with whom Rome's *discordia* became excessive, Tacitus identifies Marius and Sulla. Moreover, he identifies the *causa* that ties together the recurrent power struggles in Roman history: each of the major personalities involved in these conflicts proceeded from the same innate motivation, *potentiae cupido*: "the *same* divine anger, the *same* human madness, the *same* origins of crime led them into discord" (*eadem illos deum ira, eadem hominum rabies, eaedem scelerum causae in discordiam egere*, 2.38.2).[675] The only difference between the past civil wars and the present ones is that the latter were completed in a single blow, as it were, due to the *ignauia* of the *principes* (2.38.2).[676] His emphasis on the essential similarities between the Romans of the past and those of the present takes up one of the crucial points set out in the *Dialogus*: that the past is not always better (a point he will reiterate at *A.* 3.34 and 3.55) and that it ought not inevitably be the benchmark against which to measure the present.

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[675] On Tacitus' emphasis on the sameness of the civil wars and their motives, see Sage 1991, 3401-04; O'Gorman 1995, 119; Ash 1999, 82-83; Ash 2010, 124-26.

[676] Tacitus also emphasizes continuity in crime and corruption: Otho, Vitellius, Mucianus, and Marcellus were different men, not different characters (*magis alii homines quam alii mores*, 2.95.3).

Tacitus silently corrects the naïve reconstruction of the onlookers. While he acknowledges their assessment of Otho and Vitellius as *ignaui*, he cuts through the character contrast between the latter and the republican commanders, giving a damning assessment of Pompey's character and stressing the *causae* of conflict as opposed to individual personalities: Cinna, Marius, Sulla, Pompey, Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, and Octavian had the same motives as do Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian.[677] Tacitus, doing away with republican sentimentality, literary traditions, and imperial ideology, goes right to the heart of the issue. His emphasis on the recurrent conflict between the orders[678] shows that the onlookers in 69 are misguided in hiding behind their leaders and holding them up for blame. A more nuanced analysis of the past and of the *causae* of Roman discord would have told them that their current predicament is far from extraordinary and might have prompted them to take a less defeatist and more constructive attitude.[679]

Tacitus' claim that desire for absolute power is an innate and persistent human emotion has uncomfortable implications for imperial ideology, which sought to gloss over tyrannical aspects and stressed concern for peace and order. The historian's analysis of the nature of power urges readers to be critical of their own government, to be wary of official versions and tidy reconstructions. This is one way in which both Tacitus' analysis of Rome's history and his characters' analysis of their history and present can help readers navigate the Trajanic present and anticipate the future.

Throughout the *Historiae*, Tacitus offers examples from Roman history that suggest how the actors in the narrative might have acted differently. While the latter are ignorant of such historical precedents, the examples instruct readers how *they* might use history to guide them in the present. At *H.* 3.83, for example, Tacitus condemns the Roman people for taking joy in watching the Vitellian and Flavian forces slaughter one another, recalling the civil wars under Cinna and Sulla, in which the

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[677] This suggests one reason for why Otho's suicide did not lead to peace.
[678] Tacitus presents the struggles between Marius (*e plebe infima*) and Sulla (*nobilium saeuissimus*) and the subsequent wars (*non discessere ab armis in Pharsalia ac Philippis ciuium legiones*) as conflicts between the orders as well.
[679] Ash 2010, 124-25.

carnage had been no less but people had not acted basely. Similarly, when he recounts that a Flavian soldier had killed his brother and demanded a reward for this, he relates a similar incident during the war against Cinna, in which the perpetrator, feeling ashamed, nobly committed suicide: "so much more acute among our ancestors was the glory in virtuous action and the repentance for guilt" (*tanto acrior apud maiores, sicut uirtutibus gloria, ita flagitiis paenitentia fuit*, 3.51.1-2). Despite the bleak reality and the recurrence of civil war, then, Romans can still act in positive ways, by recalling past examples of valor and setting their own conduct against them. A programmatic statement underscores the purpose and utility of recording such historical examples: *sed haec aliaque ex uetere memoria petita, quotiens res locusque exempla recti aut solacia mali poscet, haud absurde memorabimus* (3.51.2).

As T. Joseph notes, the rejection of republican sentimentality that emerges when we juxtapose Tacitus' remarks at *H.* 2.38 with the perceptions of the onlookers at *H.* 1.50 evokes the discussion about the past and present in the *Dialogus*.[680] The dialogue complicates the glorification of the past and its utility as a yardstick against which to analyze the development of *eloquentia*. Maternus suitably ends with the maxim that, given their respective merits and drawbacks, people should enjoy the blessing of their own age without disparaging other periods (41.5). In the *Annales*, Tacitus, in a digression on the history of *luxuria* in Rome, remarks that "not all things were better among the ancients, but our age, too, has produced many an instance of excellence in the arts that deserves to be imitated by posterity" (3.55.5). This passage, discussed more fully below, may be seen as a continuation of the open-ended and balanced message in the *Dialogus*.[681]

The identification of *causae* and *origines* for particular developments is a persistent concern throughout Tacitus' writings. While he, like any Roman, analyzes the past in terms of major personalities and events, he goes beyond the identification of epiphenomena (e.g. the recurrence of

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[680] Joseph 2012, 172-73.
[681] Cf. van den Berg 2014, 104 n. 14, with a slightly different emphasis. Woodman and Martin (1996, 409 n. 2) suggest that the words may be meant as a "partial riposte" to the opening of the *Dialogus*. Such a rendering depends on reading the opening of the dialogue as a condemnation of modern *eloquentia*, a view I do not share.

civil war) to establish broader problems and their causes. This is precisely what he does in the *Dialogus*, where he has Aper and Messalla identify epiphenomena of a larger issue that Maternus attempts to tie together from an historical perspective. Yet even this argument does not get us to a conclusive answer, and so Tacitus stresses that the discussion must go on. This progression toward an increasingly deeper and at times ostensibly inconsistent analysis reflects his broader historical method and is mirrored by the chronological trajectory of his corpus, which would have been supplemented by a work on the Augustan regime, if he had lived longer. It is on display at the very start of the *Annales*, where Tacitus refines the analysis he advanced at *H.* 2.38 and claims that desire for (absolute) power did not become excessive in 146 but has been a part of Rome's history from its very foundation. We now turn to Tacitus' final work.

IV.6 The *Annales*: Ambiguity and Inconsistency in Searching for the 'Truth'

I end this chapter by exploring how the methods of analysis that were enunciated in the *Dialogus* and taken up in the *Historiae* continue in the *Annales*. I begin with the preface, which is closely connected with those of the *Agricola*, *Dialogus*, and *Historiae*. Next I show how Tacitus' analysis of the past – of the transition between the Republic and the Principate and of the socio-political and cultural developments under the Julio-Claudians – broadly follows the same methods as set out in the dialogue and how it serves to make similar observations about Roman computations of time and reconstructions of the past. In particular, Tacitus continues to point up the drawbacks of associating socio-political change, even institutions, with major individuals and events. As in the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae*, in the *Annales* he does away with broad, polarizing distinctions between republican and imperial Rome, demonstrates that socio-political change is a complex and gradual, not a radical, process, and shows that accurately reconstructing the past (and indeed the present) requires moving beyond the superficial and neat computations prevalent in Roman thought.

IV.6.1 Roman History and Reconstructing the Past: the Preface of the *Annales*

Urbem Romam a principio reges habuere; libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit. dictaturae ad tempus sumebantur; neque decemuiralis potestas ultra biennium, neque tribunorum militum consulare ius diu ualuit. non Cinnae, non Sullae longa dominatio; et Pompei Crassique potentia cito in Caesarem, Lepidi atque Antonii arma in Augustum cessere, qui cuncta discordiis ciuilibus fessa nomine principis sub imperium accepit. sed ueteris populi Romani prospera vel aduersa claris scriptoribus memorata sunt; temporibusque Augusti dicendis non defuere decora ingenia, donec gliscente adulatione deterrerentur. Tiberii Gaique et Claudii ac Neronis res florentibus ipsis ob metum falsae, postquam occiderant, recentibus odiis compositae sunt. inde consilium mihi pauca de Augusto et extrema tradere, mox Tiberii principatum et cetera, sine ira et studio, quorum causas procul habeo. (A. 1.1)

The city of Rome from its inception was held by kings; freedom and the consulship were established by L. Brutus. Dictatorships were taken up occasionally; the rule of the decemvirs lasted no more than two years, nor did the consular authority of the military tribunes last for long. Neither Cinna's nor Sulla's domination was long; and the power of Pompey and Crassus soon passed into Caesar's hands, the arms of Lepidus and Antonius soon into those of Augustus, who with the name of *princeps* took everything, wearied as it now was by civil dissensions, under his command. But the successes and setbacks of the Roman people were recounted by famous authors; and there was no shortage of fine minds to tell of Augustus' times, until they were deterred by growing sycophancy. The affairs of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, and Nero were falsified through fear while they were in power and composed with hatred fresh after their fall. Hence my plan is to recount a few things about Augustus and the end of his reign, then to recount Tiberius' reign and the rest, without anger and partiality, from any motives for which I am far removed.

The preface of the *Annales* takes up the antithesis between past and present and the relationship between political and generic change explored in the other prefaces. As in the *Historiae*, Tacitus identifies Actium as a turning point in the development of Roman historiography and, as in the other works, he points to *libertas* as an essential prerequisite for truthful history and flattery as a principal cause of compromised writing. Again, as in the other works, while he identifies a firm break between pre- and post-Actian Rome, he undermines the notion of a radical break by suggesting that the impact of the transition was gradual: under Augustus sycophancy kept growing (*gliscente*) until it reached a point when great authors were deterred. Other evidence helps elucidate this process. In the early years of the Augustan regime, independent and even hostile literature was condoned (cf. *A.* 4.34). Repression began near the end of his reign (ca. 8/12 AD), when T. Labienus' books were burned and Cassius Severus was exiled. The choice now left to authors was either to write flattering accounts or to not write at all. The more prevalent sycophancy became and the more flattering accounts of recent and

contemporary events were produced (Velleius is exemplary), the more difficult it became for authors

to tell the truth; the more *adulatio* grows, the more regimes seek to repress *libertas*.[682] This account of

historiography's decline, analogous to that at *H*. 1.1, shows that the connection between political and

generic change is not strict: social and cultural change follows political change. Likewise, political

change itself is a gradual process: while the emphasis on Actium gives the impression of a radical

change, Tacitus' succinct account of Augustus' rule (*A*. 1.2-4) stresses how his measures progressively

shaped social attitudes and public morality.[683]

The opening words of the *Annales* offer a succinct but monumental summary of Roman

constitutional history that sets the scene for the work as a whole (Rome under the emperors), reveals

something of Tacitus' outlook (Rome has developed into the personal property of despots), and sets

up chronological and conceptual ambiguities that undermine simplistic reconstructions of Rome's past.

The opening words are complex and leave much to the reader's own analysis and interpretation. The

common reading is as follows: in the beginning there was *regnum*. Then, with the removal of the kings

and the establishment of the Republic, came *libertas*. Freedom was preserved as long as the holding of

power was collegial and temporary; it was impaired in times of crisis but only temporarily. The real

change came with Augustus, who established absolute power. While old forms and designations

continued, in truth *libertas* was destroyed: Rome had returned to *regnum*. This cyclical reading is logical,

plausible even, but it is not the only possible rendering. Another reading might stress the emphasis on

recurrent cases of individual power, eventually secured decisively by Augustus, suggesting that, rather

than seeing the latter's rule as a break from previous history, *dominatio* has marked Rome's political

history from the start: Augustus merely continued a persistent trend. This reading is reinforced by the

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[682] The antithesis between *ueteris populi Romani prospera uel aduersa*, on the one hand, and *temporibus Augusti* and *Tiberii Gaique et Claudii ac Neronis res*, on the other, recalls the antithesis between *res populi Romani* and *rei publicae ut alienae* in the preface of the *Historiae* and suggests that lack of information (which strengthens *adulatio*) is another deterrent for imperial historians.

[683] "Augustus, by enticing the soldiers with gifts, the people with food, all men through the sweetness of inactivity, gradually grew greater and drew to himself the responsibilities of senate, magistrates, and laws" (*militem donis*, *populum annona*, *cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit*, *insurgere paulatim*, *munia senatus magistratuum legum in se trahere*, *A*. 2.1.1).

opening words – *a principio* instead of *principio* – a conscious emphasis that seems to recall Sal., *Hist.* fr. 11M (*dissensiones fuere iam inde a principio*).[684] Desire for absolute power, and the civil bloodshed it feeds, can be traced back to Rome's very foundation, to the fratricidal strife between Romulus and Remus, and Roman authors indeed frequently allude to fratricide in describing civil war.[685] A third reading might stress the change from institutions to individuals, analogous to the way Tacitus proceeded at *H.* 2.38. *Urbem Romam* signifies that the *Annales* are concerned with the history of the city and its institutions. Without mentioning specific individuals, Tacitus moves from kingship to dictatorships and other offices, before naming individuals: the *dominatio* of Cinna and Sulla,[686] the *potentia* of Pompey, Crassus, Caesar, Lepidus, Antony, and Octavian, and finally the absolute *imperium* of Rome's first *princeps*. On this reading, the main point would seem to be that civil war is tied directly to personal *dominatio*, which started with Cinna. Thus Roman history has moved from being a history of institutions to a history of individuals, or, put differently, from *urbs Roma* and *populus Romanus* to *tempora Augusti* and *Tiberii Gaique et Claudii ac Neronis res*. However one reads these lines, and by whatever path Rome reached its current political configuration, the implication is clear: Rome has become a city of personal *dominatio*. That is a ruthless correction of the development sketched by Livy, whose work teleologically progresses towards the blessed Augustan present. It also cuts right through imperial ideology and the concern for peace and state that it advertises.

Tacitus, taking up the analysis he advanced in the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae*, complicates the polarizing distinction between the Republic and the Principate, in part by identifying a complex of turning points in Rome's history. Above, we noted how he complicates the concept of radical change by suggesting that social and cultural change follows political change gradually. He further challenges the identification of Actium as *the* decisive turning point between past and present. While broadly

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[684] Leeman 1973, 192.
[685] Fantham 2010, 207-220, esp. 214-19.
[686] Is the seven-time consul Marius not mentioned because his *dominatio* was not short-lived?

distinguishing between pre- and post-Actian Rome, he locates several pivotal changes within the former: the establishment of the Republic, the first installment of a temporary dictatorship, Cinna's *dominatio*, Octavian's victory at Actium. The emphasis on these events undermines the close association of the Republic with *libertas*, which was infringed upon on multiple occasions. Rather than at Actium, one might locate the turning point at Cinna's *dominatio*, which infringed decisively on Rome's *libertas*: after him, the Republic was marked by individual *potentia*. Or perhaps the decisive moment was the first time *libertas* was infringed upon, when a temporary dictatorship was established, the event that set in motion the gradual disintegration of freedom. Instead of drawing superficial distinctions between the republican and imperial systems of government, or the 'past' and 'present,' Tacitus advances a deeper analysis, in part by identifying *causae* of human behavior. Just as at *H*. 2.38 he cut through the distinctions between the republican civil wars and those of 68-69, so here he suggests that personal *dominatio* has marked Rome's history from Cinna's time onwards. Yet he foregoes explicit pronouncements. As in the *Dialogus*, he leaves options open, encouraging his readers to consider a complex of factors before drawing conclusions.[687]

IV.6.2 Reconstructions of the Past: Anniversary Thinking and Simplistic Analysis

We may start off by observing that the chronological schizophrenia that marks the *Dialogus* and (to a lesser extent) the *Annales* mirrors the chronological systems and methods of measuring time that existed by the early Principate.[688] Romans marked years not by numbers but by individuals and events. Traditional methods of computation were complicated by the introduction of a new calendar by Caesar and the emergence of the *fasti*, the calendars and the lists of magistrates and triumphs inscribed in the Augustan and Tiberian periods, making for the existence, side-by-side, of various computations of time and reconstructions of Rome's past that made it challenging (both at the time and in hindsight)

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[687] Cf. Goodyear 1972, 88: "he suggests rather than explains."
[688] On Roman computations of time and the development of historiography, see Feeney 2007.

to reconstruct historical development and socio-political change. Alongside the complexities inherent in Roman computations of time, there was a tendency to think in broad chronological schemes, as is evidenced by the tendency to connect change with outstanding personalities/events and by the importance of anniversaries and other chronological markers that served to create conceptual coherence. One hazard of such computations is that they cause one to blend together particular phenomena, ignore details, and create coherence where the reality was incoherent and unpredictable. Early in the *Annales* Tacitus illustrates such methods of thinking, recording how Romans, in the direct aftermath of Augustus' funeral, conceptualized his reign (*A.* 1.9.1). He notably distinguishes between the views of the majority and those of a small group of *prudentes*, moving toward an increasingly more nuanced analysis that is endorsed by the surrounding narrative. Most Romans, Tacitus shows, simply absorbed imperial ideology:

> *Multus hinc ipso de Augusto sermo, plerisque uana mirantibus, quod idem dies accepti quondam imperii princeps et uitae supremus, quod Nolae in domo et cubiculo in quo pater eius Octauius uitam finiuisset. numerus etiam consulatuum celebrabatur, quo Valerium Coruum et C. Marium simul aequauerat, continuata per septem et triginta annos tribunicia potestas, nomen imperatoris semel atque uiciens partum aliaque honorum mutiplicata aut noua.*
> (*A.* 1.9.1)

> Then followed much talk about Augustus himself. Most marveled about *empty* things, about the fact that the same day marked the beginning of his assumption of *imperium* and the end of his life, and that he had died at Nola, in the house and bedroom in which his father Octavius had died. They were also celebrating the number of his consulships (in which he had equaled Valerius Corvus and Caius Marius combined), the continuation for 37 years of his *tribunicia potestas*, the title of *Imperator* twenty-one times earned, and other honors either repeated or novel.

The reconstruction whereby Augustus' reign started in 43 BC was one of several reckonings advertised during and after his regime (there were others, from Actium or 27 or 23) that shaped a particular vision of his rise to power. As we have seen, placing the start of the Augustan regime in 43 served to elide the disruption during the 40s and 30s BC. This reconstruction of the Augustan period evidently was a powerful one, for Aper (*D.* 17.2) and Suetonius (*Aug.* 8.3) still conceived of Augustus' reign in these terms. On the *fasti*, people would have seen Augustus' assumption of the consulship, on 19

August 43 BC, on the same grid as his death, on 19 August AD 14, solidifying the impression that his

reign spanned the interval between those dates. The people's admiration for his honors and titles,

which were repeated on the *fasti* and in other lists and documents, further reflects this process of visual

reinforcement. It is notable that Tacitus does not accord this group any actual thoughts about

Augustus' reign: they simply admire his honors and titles.

In the remainder of the account, Tacitus records the views of a smaller group of *prudentes*, the

more perceptive minority. The first segment of this group also bought into imperial propaganda, as is

suggested by the similarities of their claims to the language of the *Res Gestae*: Octavian had undertaken

civil war out of *pietas* towards his father, one-man rule was the sole solution to ongoing discord, he had

not made himself *rex* or dictator but *princeps*, and his use of force was aimed at establishing peace. This

group is more perceptive than the great majority, but still uncritically follows the official version

promoted by the regime. The other *prudentes*, in contrast, are described as more discerning. They

claimed that *pietas* and the critical position of the state were mere pretexts and that Augustus' actions

were not born out of necessity but out of "a lust for supreme power (*cupidine dominandi*)… no doubt

there was peace, but it was peace stained with blood" (*pacem sine dubio post haec, uerum cruentam*). This

small group of onlookers carefully dissects the way in which Octavian removed Hirtius and Pansa,

betrayed the trust of Sextus Pompey, Lepidus, and Antony, and proscribed prominent citizens.[689] His

private life, religious practice, and choice of Tiberius as his successor are condemned as well. Just as

the favorable reception at *A.* 1.9.3-5 is expressed in language that mirrors the *Res Gestae*, so the critical

analysis at *A.* 1.10 seems designed to invert it.[690] The passages constitute a miniature case study of

different ways of analyzing the past. Where the majority of Romans and the first group of *prudentes*

uncritically follow what is prescribed for them by the regime, the final group shows itself to be good

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[689] Sen., *Cl.* 11 shows that this type of engagement with Augustus' conduct and his posthumous reputation would have been familiar to Tacitus' readers.
[690] So already Haverfield 1912, 197-99. I owe the reference to Goodyear 1972, 159-60.

'historians': they move beyond the tidy reconstructions and pretexts promoted in official versions to find *causae*, and their analysis notably is lengthier and more detailed. Their outlook and methods of analysis correspond to that of the historian, who proceeds in similar fashion in the opening chapters of the *Annales*. As he does in the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae*, Tacitus instructs his readers by putting on display competing methods of analysis and guiding them in adopting the most nuanced approach to the past.

An analogous example of anniversary thinking and of imperial efforts to capitalize on it comes from Nero's reign (*A.* 15.38-44). In the aftermath of the great fire of AD 64, Tacitus reports, there were some who recalled the burning of Rome by the Gauls in 390 BC and proceeded to make several calculations to link the two events: "there were those who noted that this fire first broke out on the nineteenth of July [fourteen days before the Kalends of Sextilis], the day on which the Senones captured and burned the City. Others took their efforts so far as to count the interval between the two fires into equal numbers of years, months, and days" (*fuere qui adnotarent XIIII Kal. Sextiles principium incendii huius ortum, quo et Senones captam urbem inflammauerint. alii eo usque cura progressi sunt, ut totidem annos, mensesque et dies inter utraque incendia numerent, A.* 15.41.2).[691] In this computation, which Tacitus reports with apparent disdain, the interval of 454 years (from 390 BC to AD 64) is broken up into 418 years, 418 months, and 418 days.[692] The calculation is artificial and inexact. Moreover, while most authors in antiquity followed Varro in dating the Gallic sack of Rome to 390, others placed the event in 386 (which would yield a computation of 414 years, 414 months, and 414 days). In Roman memory, coherence and patterns beat out detail.

The anniversary is connected with past episodes of destruction and rebuilding in Rome's history and serves to construct a sense of continuity across time: the fall of Troy, the foundation of Rome by Romulus, the foundation of the Republic under Brutus, and the re-foundation of the city by

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[691] On the concept of time, anniversaries, and reworkings of the past in these chapters, see Feeney 2007, 104-07.
[692] Feeney 2007, 106.

Camillus. These are the events that catalyze Livy's narrative as it heads toward the final turning point in his Roman history: from the Republic founded by Brutus to the *nouus status* under Augustus. Under the early Principate, the theme of rebuilding continues to be employed by the emperors. We have seen how the Flavians use the re-foundation, in AD 70, of the destroyed Temple of Jupiter (*H.* 4.53) to advertise continuity with Rome's republican past. Nero, on this occasion, advertises a similar re-foundation of the city, but Tacitus crucially stresses how the *princeps* misreads the past. Nero, unlike the onlookers, does not connect the fire with the city's burning by the Gauls and re-foundation by Camillus, but with the destruction of Troy (*peruaserat rumor ipso tempore flagrantis urbis inisse eum domesticam scaenam et cecinisse Troianum excidium, praesentia mala uetustis cladibus adsimulantem, A.* 15.39.3).[693] And unlike Camillus and Augustus, Nero appears to have advertised himself not as a new founder of the city, but as the founder of a new city, named after himself (*uidebaturque Nero condendae urbis nouae et cognomento suo appellandae gloriam quaerere*, 15.40.2).[694] The narrative makes clear, however, that with Nero the city will not move into a new historical era. As D. Feeney notes, Tacitus closely reworks the narrative at the start of Livy's Books 2 and 6, but, while Livy's narrative heads toward the foundation of a new future, Tacitus emphasizes loss, the fire having destroyed many of the great monuments dating to Rome's foundation, the regal period, and the Republic. Moreover, Tacitus' reworkings here of Vergil's description of the fall of Troy yields the same observation: while Aeneas, after the sack of Troy, engineered a new future, under Nero Rome remains stuck.[695] Tacitus once more puts on display various analyses and reconstructions of the past, only to demonstrate that they are misguided. The narrative shows the onlookers to be simplistic in connecting the fire with the Gallic sack of Rome, while the *princeps* gets it wrong by drawing connections with Troy and advertising the foundation of a

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[693] The Neronian regime indeed advertised close links with Rome's mythological origins. Stories circulated that, when Nero was a baby, snakes looked over him, suggesting a connection with Hercules (*A.* 11.11.3). Note also *A.* 12.58.1 on Nero's first public speech (at age 16) on behalf of the people of Ilium (*causa Iliensium*), in which he expounded "on Rome's descent from Troy, on Aeneas, founder of the Julian line, and on other things akin to fable" (*Romanum Troia demissum et Iuliae stirpis auctorem Aeneam aliaque haud procul fabulis*).
[694] The name was supposed to be "Neropolis" (Suet., *Ner.* 55).
[695] See Feeney 2007, 106-07 on Tacitus' reworkings of Livy and Vergil.

new city. Indeed, Tacitus emphasizes that the Romans did not fall for Nero's measures and that the *princeps* was forced to divert suspicion away from himself and onto the Christians in the capital.

IV.6.3 Analyzing Past and Present: Republic, Principate, and Civil War

Tacitus' concern with the relationship between civil war and the Principate, prominent in both the *Dialogus* and the *Historiae*, continues in the *Annales*. The preface and the chapters on Augustus' reign (*A.* 1.1-10), on the transition from the civil wars into the Principate, take up the analysis advanced in the preface of the *Historiae*. They cut through imperial ideology and stress the violence, disruption, and personal ambition that were covered up or distorted in the favorable accounts written by sycophantic historians. The Augustan regime stressed continuity, visually reinforced on the *fasti*, in the Augustan forum, and through other methods of visual propaganda. Subsequent regimes followed protocol, with every new reign starting off with promises about restoration and continuity with the past. Tacitus' assimilation of civil war and Principate, and his concern to produce 'truthful' accounts of imperial history, persists throughout the *Annales*. E. Keitel has shown how the historian's account of the Tiberian and Neronian regimes employs graphic civil war language and imagery to demonstrate how the *principes* wage war on their own people.[696] Tacitus lays special emphasis on the terror spread by the growing severity of the *maiestas* trials, as well as on the greed and savagery with which informers and senators – cooperating with the regime – plot against fellow Romans or, in turn, against the Empire. He stresses the prevalence of *discordia*, *stasis*, and the inversion of traditional morality and values – hallmarks of the late Republic that, contrary to imperial claims, were not removed with the establishment of the Principate. Indeed, Octavian's treacherous removal of his rivals in the 40s BC is mirrored by the persistent rivalries within the imperial house, which lead to the destruction of Agrippa Posthumus (*A.* 1.3.3, 1.6.1), Lucius and Gaius Caesar (perhaps through Livia's plotting: *A.* 1.3.3),

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[696] Keitel 1984, 306-25.

Drusus Caesar (4.8), Britannicus (*A.* 13.15-17), and a host of other eminent personalities. In each case, nearly without exception, the murders are covered up or glossed over, just as Augustus and the Flavians covered up the removal of their rivals. The *Historiae* and the *Annales* point out the continuity of civil strife from the republican civil wars into the Augustan Principate, throughout the Julio-Claudian Principate, and from the civil wars of 68-69 into the Flavian Principate. Tacitus exposes the speciousness of imperial propaganda, putting on display "the essential instability of… a regime which is constantly in danger of perishing by the same violent means through which it rose to power."[697]

The essential continuity between the conditions under the late Republic and those under the Principate is underlined most forcefully at *A.* 3.26-28, an authorial digression on the development of Roman law, which is closely connected with *A.* 1.1, 1.4.1, *H.* 2.38, and Maternus' claims at *D.* 12. Tacitus here presents an account of historical decline through the lens of Roman law.[698] He moves from the beginnings of mankind – the primeval, golden age when there was no crime or ambition and hence no laws, penalties, or rewards (evoking the picture sketched by Maternus at *D.* 12) – to the destruction of equality (*aequalitas*) and the emergence of *ambitio* and *uis* and, subsequently, the establishment of *dominationes*. Unlike other societies, which remained despotisms forever (e.g. Parthia), others, like Rome, preferred *leges* to *dominationes*. After Tarquin's expulsion, Rome created numerous laws to preserve *libertas* and *concordia*, culminating in the Twelve Tables, "the epitome of fair legislation" (*finis aequi iuri*, 3.27.1). The rest of the account is a sweeping summary of the subsequent abuse of the law. Romans abandoned the original purpose of the *leges*, that is the preservation of *libertas* and *concordia*, and now abused them for personal ambition, private feuds, and class struggles (3.27.1-3). The demagoguery of the Gracchi, Saturninus, and Drusus was followed by the violent removal and re-establishment of the tribune's powers (by M. Aemilius Lepidus, Sulla, and Pompey). The legal abuses

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[697] Keitel 1984, 325.
[698] On this digression, see the detailed commentary of Woodman-Martin 1996 *ad loc.*, which offers a wealth of references to Polybius, Sallust, and other authors with whom Tacitus engages in these chapters.

under these men were followed by twenty years of civil war (*discordia*), during which *mos* and *ius* ceased, until Augustus established peace and imposed legislation that was more repressive than what went on before (*acriora uincla*, *A.* 3.28.3). By AD 20, the year in our narrative, the abuse of the *leges* by the *delatores* has become such that the laws are as destructive as the crimes (*flagitia*) themselves (3.25.1).

The continuity of personal *dominatio* from the Republic into the Principate, emphasized in the opening lines of the *Annales*, is reinforced by the discussion of Rome's legal history. The plain intratext between *exui aequalitas* (*A.* 3.26.1, of the regal period) and *exuta aequalitate* (*A.* 1.4.1, of Augustus' regime), and the echo of *igitur uerso ciuitatis statu nihil usquam prisci et integri moris* (*A.* 1.4.1) at *A.* 3.28.1-3 (*non mos*, *non ius*; *deterrima quaeque impune ac multa honesta exitio fuere*, of the turmoil of the 40s and 30s BC), underlines the notion that conditions under the Republic continued into the Augustan era. At *H.* 2.38, *A.* 1.1, and *A.* 3.26-28 Tacitus offers sweeping summaries of Roman history, moving beyond the reconstructions of the past entertained by the interlocutors in the *Dialogus* and by the characters in his historical works, emphasizing the principal *causa* that propels human behavior and decision-making: desire for personal *dominatio*.

If the *Dialogus* has taught us anything, however, this is unlikely to be the whole picture. Indeed, the digression on law at *A.* 3.26-28 is balanced by an analogous digression on the development of luxury at *A.* 3.55, which advances quite a different view. Whereas in the digression on law Tacitus looked back into the prehistoric past from AD 20, at 3.55 he looks forward from AD 22 to his own time, to find the *causae* whereby the table luxury (*luxus mensae*), which had been practiced without restriction from the battle of Actium until the civil wars of 68-69, gradually (*paulatim*) went out of fashion. Tacitus posits that, "after there had been savage slaughters and the grandness of one's reputation meant ruin" (*postquam caedibus saeuitum et magnitudo famae exitio erat, ceteri ad sapientiora conuertere*, *A.* 3.55.3), the survivors gradually changed their ways. One cause was that *noui homines* from the provinces brought their modest ways with them. The main cause was the example of Vespasian's

ancient dress and diet (*antiquus cultus et uultus*): "from then there was compliance with the *princeps* and a love of rivalry more effective than either punishment by laws or dread" (*obsequium inde in principem et aemulandi amor ualidior quam poena ex legibus et metus*). Thus Rome slowly returned to the old ways. This observation prompts Tacitus to wonder whether there is not a cycle (*orbis*) in all things, whether morality operates cyclically like the seasons. He then observes that, indeed, "not everything was better in the past, but our age, too, has offered much glory in the arts, to be emulated by posterity. May we still maintain with our ancestors a rivalry in all that is honorable" (*nec omnia apud priores meliora, sed nostra quoque aetas multa laudis et artium imitanda posteris tulit. uerum haec nobis <in> maiores certamina ex honesto maneant*, A. 3.55.5).

This passage, when taken in conjunction with the *Dialogus*, *H.* 2.38, *A.* 1.1, and *A.* 3.26-28, suggests a crucial observation, namely that change is not one-directional or one-dimensional and that its analysis does not yield the same conclusions when approached from different angles. Whereas at *H.* 2.38, *A.* 1.1, and *A.* 3.26-28 Tacitus stressed continuity from the Republic into the Principate, in part to undermine the perceived superiority of the past, at *A.* 3.55 he posits a change in Roman table luxury from Actium until AD 68-69 and then a slow reversal back to old-fashioned, pre-Actian ways. While the development of Roman morality as seen through the lens of power or the law follows a linear and consistent trajectory from Rome's far past into the present, when approached from the perspective of *luxus*, the development becomes more cyclical. Similarly, while Tacitus' analysis of *potentia* and *dominatio* suggests a dynamic that is likely to persist no matter the circumstances or the particular *princeps* in power, the development of *luxus* is dynamic and more tied to personalities and contexts. Another passage offers another perspective, that of foreign policy and provincial government. At *A.* 4.34, in a senatorial debate on provincial commands, Valerius Messalinus claims "that much of the sternness of antiquity had been changed into a better and more amiable system; for the city is not, as it once was, beset with wars nor are the provinces hostile" (*respondit multa duritiae ueterum in melius et laetius mutata;*

neque enim, ut olim, obsideri urbem bellis aut prouincias hostilis esse, 4.34.1). Messalinus' claims derive support from *A.* 1.2.2, 4.32, and 15.21 (though Maternus' assertion at *D.* 41.1 complicates the issue somewhat). The past, then, is not always superior to the present, and presuming that it was, as Messalla in the *Dialogus* and various characters in the historical narratives do, leaves one with a misguided vision of the past and its misapplication to the present. This is where the onlookers at *H.* 2.38 went wrong, and this is in part why the arguments of the dialogue's interlocutors suffer from internal inconsistencies. Given that the past, then, ought not in every respect be taken as the benchmark against which to measure the present, it is fitting that Maternus ends the dialogue by urging the speakers (and the reader) to "make use of the goodness of one's own age without disparaging other periods" (*bono saeculi sui quisque citra obtrectationem alterius utatur*, *D.* 41.5).

The *Dialogus* and the historical works, in sum, combine to show that socio-political and cultural change is a multifaceted and dynamic process that ought not be analyzed in strict terms or within rigid chronological or conceptual schemas. Reading the arguments in the *Dialogus* in conjunction shows that *eloquentia* developed gradually and in diverse ways from the Ciceronian into the Augustan and later periods, that some of its aspects changed before Cicero's death, while others persisted or changed at a later dates; *eloquentia* as a concept, therefore, cannot be linked decisively to any particular period or personality. A similar picture of socio-political and cultural development emerges from the *Annales*. For instance, freedom of speech (*libertas*) was restrained already under the Late Republic and allegedly was impaired decisively at Actium (*H.* 1.1; *A.* 1.1). At the same time, however, a decisive turning point came with the exile (in AD 8 or 12) of Cassius Severus, who was the first to be charged with treason (*maiestas*) for writing libelous verses (1.72.4, 4.21.3) and perhaps also the first to have his books burned (see p. 247 and n. 613). Yet the first time a man was charged for writing a work of history (*nouo ac tunc primum audito crimine*, 4.34.1) was not until AD 25, when Cremutius Cordus was destroyed (4.34-35).

While Augustus, then, was the first to apply a charge of *maiestas* to the written word, Tiberius is

said to have revived the *lex maiestatis* (1.72.2) and, through a series of measures, gave the praetors and informers *carte blanche*, imposing on the state "a most severe form of destruction, which crept in, was then suppressed, and finally flared up and gripped everything" (*grauissimum exitium inrepserit, dein repressum sit, postremo arserit cunctaque corripuerit*, 1.73.1). The application of the *lex maiestatis*, then, did not develop linearly. Indeed, Caligula formally abolished charges of *maiestas* but continued to use it against enemies (Dio 59.4.3), while Claudius removed the charge as it pertained to writing and general conduct (Dio 60.3.6). The law was revived under Nero (*A.* 14.48.2).

The restrictions on the celebration of military glory by members outside the imperial family likewise developed gradually and cannot be firmly associated with either Augustus or Tiberius. The former's assumption of *imperium maius* in 23 BC subordinated all other officials holding *imperium* to the *princeps*. Next, in 19 BC, L. Cornelius Balbus was the last man outside the family of the sitting *princeps* to be granted a triumph (this turning point was reinforced visibly on the *fasti triumphales*, which end with this year), but it was not until AD 22 that the title of Imperator was restricted, Junius Blaesus being the last man outside the imperial family to receive it (*A.* 3.74.4).

As regards other competing 'firsts' and turning points, we may recall that Maternus firmly associates restrictions on oratory with the institution of the Principate (*D.* 38), but at the same time claims that these started with Pompey (*D.* 38.2). Likewise, the decline of Roman morality as a result of wealth and luxury could be perceived to set in after 146 BC (*H.* 2.38) or after Actium (*A.* 3.55). Other decisive changes that are tied to individual *principes* and not to institutions include the move toward a more conservative and defensive foreign policy under Tiberius and the admission, under Claudius, of the Gauls into the Roman senate. The point of these examples is that, just as the development of *eloquentia* and its aspects cannot be tied to single events, individuals, or institutions, so the development of the major aspects of imperial society (socio-political, cultural, military, or legal) cannot be directly associated with Actium, the Principate, or individual emperors. Roman history was a complex and

non-linear development of continuity and change that cannot be understood accurately within neat

chronological or conceptual frameworks. In fact, the image of the Principate itself was not static. One

might start a history of imperial Rome in 44/43 BC, with the death of Caesar or Cicero, with Actium,

in 27, 23, or 19, or, as Tacitus does, in AD 14, for only with the first successful succession can one

truly speak of an institution.[699] Suetonius, however, started his series of *Caesares* with Julius Caesar.

IV.7 Conclusions

I began this chapter by laying out the *Dialogus*' reception from antiquity to the present day and

by showing that the text has suffered a relative neglect as contrasted with Tacitus' other works. Among

the reasons for the text's status as an 'anomaly' has been that its nature, style, and subject matter seem

not to fit within the corpus. Hence the text often is read in isolation, and scholarship has focused

primarily on its connections and interactions with other texts in the rhetorical tradition. In this final

chapter, I hope to have demonstrated that there are in fact many material connections between the

dialogue and the historical narratives, not only with regard to specific issues but also with regard to

their broad methods of analysis and narrative purpose. There are many ways to explore how the three

works elucidate or build on one another. The works share many essential interests: the nature and

scope of *eloquentia* in imperial Rome, the position and role of *delatores*,[700] the essential elements of good

and deficient speeches,[701] attitudes towards imperial ideology and individual *principes*,[702] and the

continuities and changes in *eloquentia* from the Ciceronian into later periods.[703] My focus in this chapter

has been on the chronological and conceptual ambiguities and inconsistencies that pervade the

arguments of the interlocutors, as well as on the methods of analysis which Tacitus attempts to teach

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[699] Octavian held his first consulship in 43, defeated Antony and Cleopatra in 31, formally surrendered his plenary powers and returned the administrative power over the *res publica* to the Senate in 27, took up *tribunicia potestas* and *imperium maius* in 23, while 19 is the final year on the *fasti triumphales* and marks his return from the East. On the settlements of 27 and 23 BC, see Lacey 1974; 1985.
[700] Rutledge 1999; 2001.
[701] Levene 1999; van den Berg 2012.
[702] Devillers 2015.
[703] Dominik 2007; Rutledge 2012.

his readers. I have approached the competing viewpoints and the internal inconsistencies within the speeches from the perspective of memory and Roman methods of computing time. I have argued that the *Dialogus* serves in part to demonstrate that analyzing change requires moving beyond the polarizing distinctions and tidy reconstructions inherent in Roman memory and computations of time, and that different narratives and realities are possible in historical analysis.[704] The dialogue shows that a most accurate analysis of *eloquentia*'s development would require one to move beyond the individual positions and perspectives assumed by the speakers and to engage with the divergent arguments and reconstructions they offer. It is significant that the text ends without an authorial conclusion and that further discussion is needed. The dialogue forces a reader to navigate different convincing viewpoints and to adjudicate between mutually inconsistent reconstructions of the past and present. This mental exercise is meant in part to promote a more nuanced analysis of Rome's past and the nature of socio-political change. Such analysis is of crucial import in a society whose elite relies on tidy reconstructions of the past and on their subjects' tendency to think and remember in such terms.

These methods of analyzing the past and present, as well as the concern to complicate existing modes of thinking, recur in the historical works. Tacitus remains concerned with offering more nuanced analyses of Rome's past and, in so doing, with encouraging his readers to apply a more rigorous analysis themselves. While in the dialogue he lets the reader work through the speeches, in the historical works he recounts how the characters in the narrative analyze their past and present, only to correct their analysis with his own, more delicate, reconstruction(s). He does this, as we have seen, either in authorial digressions or in the narrative itself. In holding up examples both of individuals who sharply analyze the past and use this knowledge in the present and of characters who fail to do so, Tacitus shows his readers the right way of doing things and guides them in becoming better 'historians' themselves. This purpose of his work is akin to the holding up of examples of virtuous and shameful

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[704] Sailor calls such alternative narratives "unTacitean" (2008, 132). I would say that the promotion of different narratives and possibilities, as opposed to a single, authoritative account or theory is eminently "Tacitean."

behavior (*A*. 3.65) to encourage readers to emulate or avoid certain types of conduct.

While Tacitus acknowledges a break between pre- and post-Actian Rome, he continuously complicates the polarizing distinction between the republican and imperial systems of government. Each of the prefaces enunciates this concern. Tacitus' aim to go beyond such distinctions to find *causae* of human behavior or of particular developments cuts through neat chronological schemas. Of particular importance in this regard is his concern to emphasize the persistent discord and violence from the Republic into the Principate, which serves to undermine the sanitized versions of reality advertised in imperial ideology.

Finally, the dialogue's format, the inconsistencies between and within the different arguments, and the lack of a decisive conclusion reveals something essential about Tacitus' method of analysis and of his view of the nature and practice of historiography. Close analysis of the past and socio-political change inevitably yields inconsistencies and, given the way that information was transcribed and transmitted in the ancient world, getting to the absolute 'truth' is impossible, and offering conclusive and consistent accounts therefore inevitably inaccurate. The complexity that marks the *Dialogus* persists in the historical works. Tacitus' narrative of the early Principate is notoriously complex. He frequently offers multiple explanations or suggestions without explicitly stating what he thinks is the 'truth.' His accounts of the possible murder of Germanicus at the hands of Piso and of Nero's involvement in the great fire of AD 64 are excellent examples of the way he illustrates and insinuates but does not conclusively demonstrate. The ambiguity and complexity of his narratives replicate the difficulty that the characters in his works face in 'reading' their *princeps* and analyzing former and current developments.[705] Agricola, the dialogue's interlocutors, and the emperors and other characters in the *Historiae* and *Annales* all variously try to understand the nature of the imperial state and to grasp and adjust to perceived realities, in a society in which, as a matter of course, meanings, symbols, values,

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[705] A point stressed in Grethlein 2013, 131-79.

motives, and language were unstable. Furthermore, the documentary habit of the ancient world was not verbatim. The transcription of senatorial and other business and events inevitably was a version of a version and, consequently, the historian's account a version of a version of a version.[706] The designed complexity of Tacitus' works and the fact that, in many cases, he does not offer conclusive observations reflects this aspect of the ancient world and, rather than betraying an historian's effort to obscure the truth, illustrates it perfectly. This aspect of Tacitean historiography is well reflected in Hayden White's words in a review of Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting*.[707] The *Dialogus* is an essential text within the corpus, engaging with enduring Tacitean concerns and, crucially, enunciating methods of analysis and didactic aims that characterize his works throughout.

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[706] On the documentary habit of the ancient world and the manner in which senatorial proceedings were recorded and transmitted, see Coles 1966, esp. 9-27; cf. Potter 1999, 81-85. Note Suet., *Aug.* 57 on the mendacity of senatorial decrees and his preference to look at what was recorded by the other levels of society (particularly the equestrian order).

[707] "Indeed, the historian is always encouraged to defer judgments of the kind judges must make whether they have sufficient evidence or not. In the face of epistemic imperatives appertaining to the nature of the evidence, the incompleteness of the facts of the matter, the absence of witnesses for direct interrogation, and the difficulty of establishing motive and responsibility for actions and the consequences of actions taken long since, historians must always come to conclusions that can only be provisional and subject in principle to infinite revision" (White 2007, 239).

Chapter V

Conclusion

Cornelius Tacitus was at the height of his powers when he embarked on a literary career, and in his first three works he establishes models of analysis that he subsequently uses to write a complex and incisive history of a period that his fellow senators will have known virtually by heart. In the *Agricola*, *Germania*, and *Dialogus*, Tacitus theorizes the Roman state, the nature of imperial rule, and the practice of historiography, revealing himself to be a wide-ranging intellectual aware of the complexities of political and cultural analysis and the nature of his work. Tacitus uses the theories he established in his first three works to come to an increasingly nuanced understanding of the history of the early Principate; his outlook becomes more complex while his methods of analysis remain, on the whole, consistent. This is the crucial conclusion that emerges when we read the *Agricola*, *Germania*, and *Dialogus* on their own merit, outside the confines of their genre, and in conjunction with the later historical narratives.

This dissertation started out with an overview of the manuscript tradition and the transmission of Tacitus' works (pp. 1-3) and an illustration of the heuristic distinction between 'early' and 'late' Tacitus that has marked humanist and scholarly attitudes towards our author and his writings since antiquity (pp. 3-7). Tacitus entered historical consciousness as an historian, and, as we have seen, his monographs often are approached as immature and as preliminary to his historical works. In this approach, the early works are reduced to a marginal infancy, on the theory that Tacitus does not fully come into his own until the *Annales*. One expression of this approach is the notion that Tacitus became ever more disenchanted with the Principate and ever more pessimistic about the validity of

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Roman rule – a notion difficult to sustain and increasingly less supported in the scholarship (p. 31 and n. 70).

The different works, moreover, often are analyzed within the confines of their respective genres and the 'rules' and expectations that govern them (pp. 1-7, 20, 103, 198, 200-03). This generic determination, which pigeonholes texts within narrow frameworks, leaves us with a biography of a senator, an ethnography of a foreign people, and a dialogue about oratory that appear, first, to have little to do with one another, and, second, to have little meaningful connection with two historiographical works that are institutional and event-based in nature. As a result, the monographs hardly are studied in conjunction with the historical works nor are the former often read together. If we allow ourselves to look beyond these generic boundaries, however, thematic and conceptual continuities emerge that connect the shorter works, integrate the corpus, and undermine the 'early' vs. 'late' dichotomy that has dominated Tacitean scholarship.

As regards the first point, despite the generic boundaries that may be seen to divide them, the *Agricola*, *Germania*, and *Dialogus* share essential thematic and organizational aspects that reflect not disparate intellectual attempts but an analytical program in which those texts interact with and build on one another. In the *Agricola*, in which he sets out his vision of the Principate as an institution oppressive in nature and marked by systemic problems (pp. 26-45, 100-01), and in which he advocates particular strategies of senatorial conduct and career management (pp. 45-78), Tacitus establishes himself as a political theorist. The text further reveals an interest in ethnography and foreign culture (pp. 22, 72-73, 88-91) and sets out models of imperialism and provincial administration (pp. 63-88, 95-99), based on efficient but morally questionable methods of acculturation (pp. 96-100, 149-51).

Tacitus composed the *Agricola* in close conjunction with the *Germania*, where he examines in greater detail the problems inherent in imperialism and *imperium*. The text, which offers an account of the factors (natural and cultural) that bear on the practicablity of military expansion and annexation

(pp. 103-104), guides a reader in analyzing Roman power and its limits and in formulating foreign policy objectives. The work's complexity (pp. 103-04, 118-54, 198) reflects an awareness of the limits on historical and cultural reconstruction that continues to inform Tacitus' analysis throughout his corpus. Using a similar comparative approach, Tacitus reinforces observations in the *Agricola* about Roman political culture, particularly as regards power structures and social hierarchy, public morality, and education (pp. 103, 105-06, 115, 120, 127, 135, 145-46, 149-50, 199). Both works are concerned with the truthful representation of people, actions, motives, and places, and, like Tacitus' other writings, work against official versions (pp. 39-40, 52-53, 114, 234-35). Finally, the *Germania*'s format (a descriptive account without preface or conclusion) and Tacitus' authorial stance (didactic, embracing complexity, and eschewing authorial conclusions) sets out modes of analysis that guide Tacitus' thought in all his works (cf. pp. 115-17, 210-212, 218, 303).

In the *Dialogus*, Tacitus takes up concerns that he explored in the *Agricola* and assumes the same stance as he did in the *Germania*. Like the *Agricola*, the *Dialogus* is concerned with freedom of speech (pp. 202, 216-18, 223-41), the nature of imperial political culture (pp. 218, 235-41), and the relationship between political and generic change (pp. 202, 213-14, 218, 223-35). The analysis of *eloquentia*'s development is based on similar concepts as the analysis of the history of biography (pp. 223-35), but Tacitus' understanding of the relationship between political climates and artistic practice here is more nuanced, one of the main premises of the dialogue being that different narratives and realities are possible (Chapter IV *passim*). The *Dialogus* mirrors the *Germania* in its marked emphasis on complexity and inconsistency and its lack of authorial conclusions (pp. 210-11, 218, 303); both texts are didactic and serve in part to illustrate the limits inherent in cultural and historical analysis. The *Dialogus*, in essential ways, is self-reflective of the nature and practice of historiography.

In the shorter works, in sum, Tacitus models the Roman state, imperial rule, and the practice of historical analysis, increasingly elucidating and adding to his understanding of these essential issues.

The three texts reveal a rich array of concerns and showcase an extraordinarily wide-ranging author, who shows himself to be simultaneously a political theorist, a theorist of international power and cultural imperialism, an educator, a social commentator, and a complex intellectual, aware of the challenges, limits, and role of his craft.

Each of the monographs in turn possesses material connections with the later historical works. The *Agricola*, the *Germania*, and the *Dialogus* explore from their particular perspectives the central preoccupations of the *Historiae* and the *Annales*. Tacitus' analysis of the nature of the Principate, enunciated in the *Agricola* and complicated in the *Dialogus*, everywhere informs his account of the Julio-Claudian and Flavian eras. While Agricola and Domitian form only one example of the emperor-senator relationship, the latter informs Tacitus' treatment of similar relationships throughout the historical narratives. His experience under Domitian, and his portrayal of that emperor in the *Agricola*, shaped his assessment and depiction of earlier *principes* in his later works (pp. 26-45). As for Agricola, Tacitus' depiction of the man's upbringing (pp. 45-47), his development under Suetonius Paulinus and Petilius Cerialis (pp. 48-53), and his governorships of Aquitania (pp. 63-71) and Britain (pp. 72-88) articulate a model of senatorial and gubernatorial conduct that informs his depiction of other officials in the historical works. While Tacitus' characterizations become sharper and more nuanced in the historical narratives, the qualities that define Agricola's conduct remain the core criteria in the historian's assessment of men like Germanicus, Paulinus, Cerialis, Corbulo, and others (pp. 69-88 and n. 192). A good example of how Tacitus' analysis evolves while his methods remain consistent is Paulinus' characterization, which becomes more complex in the historical works, but which remains based in large part on Agricola's example and on Tacitus' bias against equestrian officials (pp. 48-52).

Similarly, Tacitus' theory of imperial rule and acculturation, set out in the *Agricola* and complicated in the *Germania*, is taken up and nuanced in the *Historiae* and the *Annales*. Reading the four texts in conjunction reveals a complex theory of *imperium* and its limits that remains, by and large,

consistent throughout (pp. 104-05, 118-19, 155-85, 198). The vision of cultural imperialism enunciated at *Agr.* 21 – which there earns Tacitus' simultaneous approval and criticism (pp. 96-100) – is developed in the *Germania*, which explains the Germani's moral and physical strength as a function of their freedom from Roman domination (see esp. pp. 133-38) and which complicates the image of Rome's moral superiority (pp. 149-51). These issues subsequently are worked out in greater detail in the historical works, where Tacitus continues to undermine the vision of a morally superior Rome spreading *humanitas* across the world and stresses cultural limits on empire (pp. 46-47 and n. 115, 133-35, 149-51, 218-19). Tacitus' depiction of Germania and its tribes, with his marked emphasis on internecine discord and violence, cultural isolation, and economic drawbacks, may be seen as an implicit endorsement of the cost-efficient and defenseive foreign policy initiated by Tiberius and continued by his successors (pp. 104, 124, 154, 166, 168-75, 184-87, 189-90). The manifold ways in which the historical works evoke or are informed by the *Germania* suggest that Tacitus expects his readers to be familiar with the monograph by the time they come to his historical works (cf. pp. 188-94, 198-99).

The *Dialogus* and the historical narratives, finally, explore a range of shared interests (pp. 202 with the notes there, 250-300), such as the scope and development of oratory in imperial Rome and various subsidiary concerns: freedom of speech (pp. 251-56, 272-74, 282-86), the power and influence of the *delatores* (pp. 202 and nn. 513-14, 258, 272-74, 293, 297), the connection between virtue and good oratory (i.e. the legitimacy of the concept of the *uir bonus dicendi peritus*: pp. 265-66; cf. 272-74), the characteristics of persuasive speech (cf. p. 265), the influence of political systems on culture (pp. 235-41, 251-54, 282-86), and the nature of historical analysis (pp. 241-300). In this case, too, it is evident that Tacitus expects his readers to be familiar with the themes he treats in the dialogue before coming to his historical narratives. The treatment of Eprius Marcellus in the three works is a good example of the way in which Tacitus' different writings interact with and elucidate one another (pp. 202 and n.

514, 272-74).

Beyond these thematic continuities, the *Dialogus* and the historical works share theories of historical reconstruction. We have seen how the three works share the aim of advocating a more rigorous analysis of past and present. In each of the three texts, Tacitus describes individuals analyzing socio-political transition and change. By recording both sophisticated and naïve attempts at such analysis, and by endorsing or refuting them in his own voice or in the narrative, Tacitus educates his readers to think in more complex ways and to take a critical stance toward imperial ideology, which relies on tidy reconstructions of the past and on the Roman tendency to think and remember in such terms (pp. 241-300). The *Dialogus*, composed in close conjunction with the *Historiae*, illustrates the challenges inherent in cultural and historical reconstruction and, as such, is self-reflective of the nature of historiography. The complexity and inconsistencies that mark the *Germania*, the *Dialogus*, the *Historiae*, and the *Annales* reflect the impossibility of getting at the absolute 'truth' and Tacitus' awareness of this essential law of historiography (see esp. pp. 297-300 and n. 707).

There are concerns and literary aims that connect and integrate all five works. For example, Tacitus has a vivid interest in education and upbringing that informs his thinking and remains a significant concern throughout (pp. 45-55, 133-35, 218, 233, 248). As for the purpose of writing literature, all five works are motivated in part by the aim to work against official versions, to restore a fair circulation of glory and recognition, and to promote the accurate representation of individuals, events, and causes (pp. 39-40, 52-53 and n. 133, 114, 135, 151 n. 412, 223-35, 253).

In light of the evidence provided by our texts, we would do well to discard the heuristic distinction between 'early' and 'late' Tacitus or between *opera* '*minora*' and '*maiora*,' as well as to rethink the generic determination on the Tacitean corpus and, concurrently, on Latin literature more broadly. These approaches create artificial divisions that are restrictive in scope and risk a misunderstanding of the progression of Tacitus' oeuvre and the development of his thinking. To draw firm distinctions

among the monographs or between the latter and the historical narratives is to lose sight of the thematic and conceptual continuities across the corpus that lend it greater coherence than scholars have assumed. Even at a most basic level, the narrative sections and pre-battle speeches in the *Agricola*, the ethnographic sections of the *Germania*, and the historiographical self-awareness of the *Dialogus* display features and techniques typical of Roman historiography, at once questioning any polarizing dichotomy between the two sets of works. The Tacitean corpus is an integrated project in which a seasoned thinker progressively shapes his thinking and adds to his canvas of early imperial history. Although Tacitus' reputation is based firmly on his historical works, he is more than simply a historian. In the monographs, he shows himself to be a wide-ranging theorist and a highly skilled author. In the *Historiae* and the *Annales*, he remains all that, bringing an already rich and mature intellectual persona to the project of writing history. This is a fundamentally different picture than the one common in modern scholarship, which sees Tacitus reaching full maturity as a thinker only in the *Annales* and which posits a substantial shift in his thinking. Reading the different texts in conjunction suggests a more leveled and gradual intellectual development. It also suggests that we ought to approach the monographs as the complex and mature pieces of literature that they are.

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